

Jews, Christians Link Arms to Help Jerusalem's Most Needy During COVID-19 Crisis

Amid recent reports of which countries are the safest, and least safe to be in vis a vis the coronavirus outbreak, Israel ranked first among the safest countries. This is partly due to strict measures and a high level of testing that came into effect relatively early. Today, Israel "only" has several thousand infected, and just crossed the threshold of 30 deaths. Tens of thousands of Israelis are under quarantine having been exposed to, or nearby, someone who has tested positive. While medically, Israelis find themselves in relatively good shape, there are other grave needs that impact Israeli society uniquely.

The ability to track this has been aided by Israel's secret service using a technology meant mostly to combat terror, and a new app released by the Health Ministry that uses a similar technology to check if someone has been in proximity with someone who is infected. (I have downloaded the app and, thankfully, since the beginning of February, have not been near anyone with the coronavirus.)

Nevertheless, as a small country of 9 million, the economic havoc has been great and will have a negative trickledown for some time. Among other sectors of the economy, the tourism industry has all but been shut down following record years of increased tourism. Before the current crisis, Israel had a remarkably low level of unemployment, around 4%. Since then, more than 1 million Israelis have filed for unemployment, just shy of 25% of the workforce. This is unprecedented in Israeli history, even during periods that Israel suffered from record inflation, economic stringencies and rationing in the early years of independence.

As a result, today, the weakest sectors of the population have been among the hardest hit. In response, to help the most needy with immediate needs, the Genesis 123 Foundation has launched an emergency appeal for needy, poor families in Jerusalem in advance of the upcoming Festival of Passover and Easter, and has called upon Christians and Jews, and anyone who loves and supports Israel, to join in this season.

In response to an urgent request from the Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, Fleur Hassan-Nahoum, the Genesis 123 Foundation responded instantly. She appealed to the Genesis 123 Foundation as an organization with a wide reach, building bridges among Jews and Christians, noting how immediate help was needed due to the impact of the coronavirus crisis.

Most know of Jerusalem as the sacred ancient and modern capital of Israel, and Israel's largest city. However, most are unaware that it is also Israel's poorest city per capita, with large Arab and ultra-Orthodox communities each having relatively high rates of poverty in normal times. The Genesis 123 Foundation campaign will help people from all sectors of Jerusalem's diverse population.

Deputy Mayor Hassan-Nahoum explained, "Israel took the correct but unprecedented measure of closing down schools and classes including those for at-risk and special needs children. This is causing incredible hardship for some 6,000 families in Jerusalem who have children in these schools, and whose families normally have the respite of a structured educational framework. Adding to the challenges of taking care of special needs children all day with no outside support, about a third of these families, 2,000 households, suffer from severe economic hardship."

In a press release, the Genesis 123 Foundation announced, "We are proud to be part of the coalition providing urgent needs to support these at-risk and special needs families, a third of whom live below the poverty line. We are grateful to our

network of Christian and Jewish partners, individuals and pastors and rabbis as well as other community leaders, who are stepping up to join us in meeting these immediate needs.”

Funds raised will help relieve these needy families’ financial strain, over and above the stress of taking care of their special needs children on their own, something many parents don’t have the ability to do. Weekly food packages are being provided to the families who have been identified by Jerusalem’s social service agencies as being most in need.

One of the first ministries to join, immediately sponsoring food for ten families, is the Jerusalem Channel. Sharing their motivation, co-founder Christine Darg, stated, “The Book of Proverbs says the Lord blesses everyone who freely gives food to the poor. We are so happy to honor the God of Israel by helping His people at this prophetic time. We encourage all watchers of The Jerusalem Channel, and everyone with a heart for Israel, to participate.”

In advance of Passover, the need is even greater in order to provide packages with special kosher for Passover staples free of leavened products. Each food package costs \$55 per week. With many Israeli families suffering additional and severe financial hardships due to the coronavirus crisis creating some 25% unemployment, the needs are projected at least through the end of April. The Genesis 123 Foundation has set a goal to provide at least two to three weeks’ worth of these emergency food packages. That’s \$110,000 per week.

Their press release they implored, “Every little bit matters. Even \$5 or \$10 can make a difference. Think of it as two bags of rice, array of canned goods, or cooking oil, staples that every home needs. We call upon everyone who cares about the needy in Israel to participate in some way.”

With a relatively low rate of deaths, so far, some have observed that if the economic crisis lingers, in Israel one

could find more deaths from depression and suicide than from the virus itself.

The Genesis 123 Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that builds bridges between Jews, Christians and Christians with Israel in ways that are new, unique and meaningful. It has launched an online grassroots campaign to enable everyone to participate.
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Donations can be made online here. For more information or for any churches, synagogues, and other ministries and organizations that want to partner, please contact The Genesis 123 Foundation at info@, 1-201-203-0983 or +972-53-761-4220.