

Simple Biblical Formula: Bless Israel and Be Blessed

We all know the scripture of Genesis 12:3, *"I will bless those who bless you, I will curse those who curse you."* But sometimes we forget that the scripture continues, *"The nations of the world will be blessed through you."*

We all want to be one with God's heart, and blessing Israel is one of the clearest mandates we have. It's not mutually exclusive to bless and pray for any other people, but it's clear that God's selection of Abraham, promising to make a great nation of his descendants, and giving the Land of Israel to the Jewish people, is His will.

The formula is very simple: bless Israel and be blessed. It's likely that God has different ideas for each of us as to how He will bless us, but we know that He is faithful and keeps His promises. I have been blessed, personally, to witness how His promise plays out, not just in my own life as an Orthodox Jew in the Land, living and benefiting from His promise every day. But I have also been blessed to witness how others, gentiles, for whom blessing Israel is a central priority, have been blessed.

Simply, it's a win-win and if asked directly whether you want to share in God's blessing, I am sure that everyone reading this would say, "Yes, sign me up."

There are many ways in which Israel is a blessing to the nations of the world. Some examples we probably all know are:

- Israel's unending contributions to the world of high tech provide innovations from which we all benefit daily
- Israel's endless scientific and medical innovations are saving lives worldwide
- Per capita, Israel produces more Nobel laureates than

every other country

- Israel provides aid and humanitarian relief throughout the world (most recently in the Philippines), and as a refuge for Filipino UN workers trapped in Syria
- Israel is a haven for African refugees, Syrians injured in their bloody civil war, and even injured Palestinians threatened or injured by their own leadership
- Israel provides its renowned agricultural advances to developing nations, creating sustenance, profit, and independence to nations trying to become self-sufficient

There are many other ways in which Israel is a blessing to others; more than I can think of. So I ask for your help: it will be a blessing to me for you to share your thoughts on these to so that I may compile a list that highlights God's scriptural promise.

In the meantime, here are two ways that are close to me and appropriate to highlight at this season that I wish to share.

We all remember where we were when we heard of the first plane hitting the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, causing panic, anguish, and concern. Some understood it was a terror attack right away. For others, that was clear only when the second plane hit the second tower. The terror attacks that day are all etched into our memory. Amid the shock, grief, anger, and prayers, we were horrified by the celebrations we saw coming from throughout the Middle East. But Israel was the exception.

In Israel, humanitarian supplies and volunteers were prepared to join the rescue and recovery. Israelis called their friends, families, colleagues, and even distant acquaintances, to see if they were OK. We prayed. Wanting to do something even more tangible and personal, Israelis lined up to donate blood in the hope that there would be lives in New York and Washington, D.C. that could be saved through a selfless act in Jerusalem.

The image of dozens of Israelis packed into one room in Jerusalem on September 12 (with hundreds more lined up outside representing the thousands who stood with the U.S. that day), reflects Israel's heart, but also God's promise—*the nations of the world will be blessed through you*. I was in New York on September 11 and will never forget it. Nevertheless, I have endless pride in knowing that Israel stood with Americans on the day the U.S. was at its lowest.

Also relating to blood in Israel, operating with little fanfare and a limited budget, this scripture plays out in another way, every day. Cord blood is the blood that's extracted from the umbilical cord following the birth of a healthy baby. From what would otherwise be medical waste, lifesaving stem cells are collected, and used to save people suffering from dozens of diseases.

It's awesome that something so simple, following the miracle of the birth of a healthy baby, can also be used to save others. But what's also so powerful about cord blood stem cells is that it precludes the need for an alternative method of harvesting the stem cells: aborting an unborn baby.

Not only is Israel leading in cord blood developments, but also Israel's national blood center operates the only free and public cord blood bank in the country. This means that Israeli parents donate their baby's cord blood stem cells to help save others. The program is relatively new, starting around the time of the September 11 attacks. Since then, over 40 matches from this program have helped save dozens of lives. Half of the matches were in Israel, among Arabs and Jews. The other half has been throughout the nations of the world.

In 2009, a Swedish "journalist" wrote a horrific blood libel accusing Israel of killing Palestinian Arabs to harvest their organs. He later admitted that he had no evidence to support it, but the damage was done. It even resurfaced this year in a New York Times article that was ultimately retracted.

What went unpublished in 2009 is that a sample of cord blood stem cells from Israel was provided to a little boy in Sweden, and that little boy was an Arab. So not only did Israel never deliberately kill Arabs to harvest their organs, but an Arab boy's life was actually saved by Israel. It's another example of the nations of the world being blessed by Israel.

As we remember this week the anniversary of the devastating terrorist attacks that struck the U.S., and with the rise of ideologically identical Islamic extremists of Boko Haram, Hamas, Hezbollah, ISIS, al-Nusra Front, al-Qaeda, and of course Iran, it's essential that those who love the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and cherish freedom, stand together. One way is by supporting Heart to Heart, which supports Israel's national blood service, one of the most tangible and meaningful ways that anyone can bless Israel.

But by supporting Heart to Heart, we also ensure that Israel—through its humanitarian nature—can also continue to fulfill God's promise of blessing the nations.

Jonathan Feldstein was born and educated in the U.S. and emigrated to Israel in 2004. He is married and the father of six. Throughout his life and career, he has been blessed by the calling to fellowship with Christian supporters of Israel and shares experiences of living as an Orthodox Jew in Israel. He writes a regular column for Charisma's *Standing With Israel*. You can contact Jonathan at firstpersonisrael@.