

The Redemptive and Unifying Power of Blood in Israel

It's been tremendously exciting watching the snowballing support for Heart to Heart in the past few months. There are many highlights and many plans ahead that are truthfully bigger than I had imagined would be happening so soon.

But what this is all demonstrating is that the importance of Heart to Heart—providing direct and tangible support for Israel's national blood center—is palpable and tangible. As a phlebotomist draws blood with careful and skilled precision, it's hard not to see the hand of God in all that is unfolding in this most meaningful way to bless Israel.

For the second time in as many months, a major ministry made it a priority to take time on its busy itinerary to donate blood in Jerusalem. Foursquare's Women in Ministry put this as a cornerstone of its agenda months ago. This week it came to fruition and was more than anyone could have expected.

Israeli guests and staff noted the sense of commitment and a festive mood among all the participants. It was so exciting that even women who knew they couldn't donate blood stayed from the beginning to the end to be part of the experience and fellowship with their friends, taking in the experience vicariously.

Thanks to the huge turnout, arrangements were made to stagger participation so the beds were always full of donors but nobody had to wait too long in line for their turn. Amazingly, not one participant who gave blood left to come back. The festive mood was infectious (something good in donating blood, but not in receiving it!), and everyone waited his or her turn happily, patiently, with a line out the door in the hallway at one point.

In a few instances, tears were shed in this incredible experience. For one woman, the tears were out of disappointment in not being eligible to donate. This is an emotional response that I have seen before. Yet for another participant, her tears were because of the opportunity to donate blood in Jerusalem for the first time in her life.

It's also not unusual that such emotions are expressed, and how people who have never donated blood before don't hesitate to donate in Israel for the first time, where the spiritual calling and sense of need is that much greater.

Yet one woman who was brought to tears expressed a level of emotion that was unique. Leah, the Jewish Israeli tour guide, upon hearing that this blood drive was planned for months and motivated the hearts behind the Foursquare Women in Ministry group, choked back tears of thanks at this unconditional expression of love and support. It's support that's widely known but rarely expressed in such a personal way.

In addition to donating blood in person, many of the participants, including those who could not donate, participated in Heart to Heart's "virtual blood donation," sponsoring units of blood financially. With a virtual blood donation, they provide additional precious resources that enable Israel's national blood services to ensure that Israel always has a safe and plentiful blood supply.

As three other ministries are preparing to donate blood in Jerusalem in the coming months, it's hard not to see this as building and strengthening a special bond between Christian blood donors and the Israeli people.

At the same time, Heart to Heart received an offering from good friends and longtime partners at the Saddletree Church of God, a Native American church in North Carolina. Upon hearing about Heart to Heart, Pastor Ken didn't hesitate to join the effort, understanding how this expresses the biblical

imperative to bless Israel like no other. Pastor Ken's response was practical and simple. He asked members of his church to donate \$1 a week.

The offering received this week was more than half of the total received from all the previous offerings, clearly expressing how meaningful Heart to Heart is to his church. From only \$1 a week, hundreds of generous Christians in North Carolina have provided resources to sponsor enough blood to save almost 5,000 Israelis.

If the only thing that comes of telling these stories is that more Israelis know how much so many Christians truly love Israel, it will be more than sufficient. However, these models are so simple and within the reach of so many others, that by sharing these stories, others get it immediately, and join us, magnifying the success and the blessing to Israel. The ability to provide extra resources for Israel's national blood center is critical.

In the coming week, Jews around the world will celebrate Passover, the festival of freedom marking our redemption and exodus from slavery in Egypt. The first plague that God brought on Egypt was blood (Ex. 7:14-25) where all the water turned to blood. Today, rather than as a plague in Egypt, blood is a blessing to save lives in Israel. The only plague is not having enough of it.

The redemptive nature of blood is highlighted later (Ex. 12:13), keeping the Jewish people safe from the plague of death of the firstborn. But today, one can save lives in Israel, from all the nations including Egypt, through Heart to Heart's virtual blood donation program.

Thanks to Foursquare Women in Ministry and the Saddletree Church of God, and the many others who provide and make this possible through Heart to Heart. Please join us.

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virtual blood donation program to bless Israel and save lives in Israel. Born and educated in the U.S., Feldstein 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@.