

# Assisting Your Church in Praying for Israel

By Dale Schlafer



A local prayer leader emailed me about how she might assist her congregation in praying for Israel. This is my response to her, acknowledging that mobilizing others to pray for Israel requires understanding of biblical prophecy, theological differences, and wisdom from the Lord:

Dear Suzan,

Thank you for your recent email asking how you, as a local prayer leader, might be able to generate prayer for Israel within your local congregation.

Christians in America tend to be poorly educated regarding the place of Israel in the Bible and what is taking place in the nation of Israel today. This ignorance stems largely from the media in this country who have essentially hijacked public opinion. Seek wisdom from the Lord as you search for accurate sources of information to bring both the truth of Israel's place in the Word and current events to your congregation.

Direct news from Israel is a good place to start. Contact [newsletter@timesofisrael.com](mailto:newsletter@timesofisrael.com) for *The Times of Israel* daily edition or [jpost.com](http://jpost.com) for the *Jerusalem Post*.

As you begin educating your congregation, it is important to note that there tends to be a wide divide between millennials and older generations. The younger generation may look at Israel as an occupier who has no right to be in the land known as Israel. This position can be largely attributed to a biased

media portrayal that is hostile to Israel.

Older folks likely were raised to see the return of Israel as fulfilling biblical prophecy. Trust that as you lead your congregation to the passages in Scripture to pray (Gen. 12–13, 15; Zech. 14; Rom. 11), millennials will come to see the truth of God's Word, and the older generations will be reenergized with a forgotten truth.

One of your most difficult tasks will be to bring both Jewish and Arab followers of Jesus Christ before your congregation. Both of these groups face enormous pressures from the nation of Israel and their respective cultures. Keep in mind that 75 percent of the nation of Israel does not follow any religious faith, but does identify as Jewish by birth. Out of a population of 8 million, only about 20,000 are serious followers of Christ. This number is broken down roughly into 15,000 Messianic Jews and 5,000 Arabs. There may be as many as 140,000 Arabs identified as Christians; however, only about 5,000 claim a commitment to Christ.

In addition to cultural pressures, theological differences between Messianic and Arab believers regarding the actual land of Israel present huge hurdles to these groups moving together in unity. In order to help identify specific issues for prayer, contact [arrowsfromzion@gmail.com](mailto:arrowsfromzion@gmail.com) to subscribe to the weekly compilation of primarily Messianic ministries. It will provide insight into many congregations and ministries in Israel.

Second, check out [hope-nazareth.org](http://hope-nazareth.org), which is a ministry led by a dynamic Arab woman who is deeply committed to the "one new man" (Eph. 2:15, Col. 3:10).

## **Peace of Jerusalem**

Something that has really changed my life in recent years is

praying for Messianic and Arab believers by name. In previous years, I followed biblical instruction and prayed “for the peace of Jerusalem” (Ps. 122:6). However, I had little emotional investment. This changed when I began praying for specific individuals, congregations, and issues. I encourage your congregation to adopt both a Messianic and an Arab congregation to help make this emotional connection as well as to illustrate the “one new man” which Christ came to create.

You asked about establishing some kind of rhythm in praying for Israel. “Rhythm” is actually an excellent choice of words. I would recommend you consider something I have found helpful—focusing corporate prayer around the timing of the three feasts God commanded Israel to celebrate each year: Passover, Shavot (Pentecost), and Succoth (Tabernacles/Booths).

Following the pattern of these feasts provides nice symmetry. Passover is always close to our Resurrection celebration, Pentecost is 50 days after that, and Tabernacles is always in the fall. By doing corporate prayer on or around these feasts, you have the opportunity to teach your congregation about the feasts as you lead them in praying for Israel.

Suzan, if you should get flack for making Israel an emphasis of prayer, refer those folks to Genesis 12:3, where God says: “I will bless those who bless you [speaking to Abraham, the father of the Jews] and whoever curses you I will curse.”

Why pray for Israel? Because we want them—and us—to receive God’s blessing. Every blessing to you as you undertake this biblical call from the Lord.

Your brother, Dale

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