

Examples of Cruciformity

10. Joseph Haddad

I met Joseph Haddad in 2001 and was impressed by his story and ministry. I was able to arrange some support for his ministry with Lebanese refugees from the Thornhill Vineyard Christian Fellowship.

Much of the following material came from an excellent book by Julia Fisher: *A Future for Israel? Christian Arabs Share Their Stories*¹ I was privileged to have a good visit with him in January 2010. Further, it was interesting to see him at Carmel Assembly on a Sabbath, where he translated the Pastor David Davis' English message into *Hebrew*.

"They call me a Lebanese with a Jewish heart!"

Joseph Haddad was born in Haifa into a Lebanese family, who were nominally Roman Catholic. When the war started in 1948, his father was employed by a Jewish man who encouraged Joseph's family to stay in Haifa and who promised to protect them. In spite of this, Joseph, who was born 10 years later, grew up with hatred towards the Jews; he was told that the Jews took the land belonging to the Arabs, mistreated the Arabs, and oppressed them. He confesses that he abused his elderly parents: "I used to mistreat them and curse them, and throw things at them . . ."

His parents arranged a marriage, bringing him a wife from Lebanon, thinking that maybe if he got married, his violent, unpleaseant behaviour would change. However, Joseph abused her also.

When Joseph and his wife were visiting some relatives, they met three people form the Baptist Church in Haifa. For the first time in his life he heard the story of salvation. He used to go to a Catholic church at Christmas and Easter, but he did not go to pray; he went "just to meet friends and pass the time of day." Joseph was convicted of his sin during this visit and prayed, "Jesus, I'm a sinner. I deserve death. Please forgive me. By your grace I want to start a new life." He felt a great burden

¹ Julia Fisher, *A Future for Israel? Christian Arabs Share Their Stories* (Sparkford, UK: J.H. Haynes Ltd., 2006) 27-46.

removed from off his back, asked his wife to forgive him, and then went to his parents' home and asked for their forgiveness. He experienced a new deep love for his wife and parents, who accepted Christ because of the change in Joseph. Further, the Lord gave him a great love for Jews, and now prays for the salvation of Jews more than for Arabs.

Joseph started "devouring" the Bible and enrolled in a Bible School in Haifa. He did a lot of evangelism and worked with David Davis at the House of Victory centre in Haifa. When the IDF pulled out of southern Lebanon, many Lebanese refugees fled into northern Israel. Encouraged by David and Karen Davis, Joseph and his wife went weekly to a kibbutz where lived many of these refugees to teach them the Bible and care for their physical needs. When 300 Lebanese families were settled in Nahariya, Joseph and his wife started a home church for them and now travel three or four times a week back and forth from Haifa to Nahariya.

"Sometimes, when I hear their sad stories, I can only hug them and cry with them," says pastor Joseph Haddad from the Lebanese fellowship in Nahariya, Israel. "But God is faithful, and through their suffering, many have recognised Jesus as the Saviour. Most were nominal Christians from a Catholic or Maronitic background. We recently held a baptism service in the River Jordan with 12 new believers." Haddad is convinced: "God has a plan. They came to Israel to find Jesus as their Saviour, be filled with the Holy Spirit and one day to return to Lebanon as a small flame to ignite revival in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and other nations."

Joseph comments that it has been amazing that Jewish people started to come, invited by Lebanese. Thus here, Gentiles are "provoking" Jews to accept Jesus as their Messiah. It is also interesting that David Davis' congregation, Carmel Assembly, is mainly Messianic Jewish, but they are reaching out and helping Joseph's Arab congregation.

Joseph has suffered persecution: "[T]heir fellow Arabs in Israel regard them as traitors because of their support for Israel, and most Jews misunderstood them because of their Arabic language and culture." Joseph shows cruciformity in His self-sacrificing love for the Lebanese and in his forgiveness and love for those Arabs and Jews who treat him as an enemy.