

**Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
Communications – Cissie Graham Lynch
Fearless – Ep 117 – War in Israel Continues (with Samuel Smadja)
Final Transcript**

MUSIC STARTS

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:00:02 Hi, I'm Cissie Graham Lynch. Welcome to *Fearless*, helping you have a fearless faith in a compromising culture.

MUSIC TRANSITION

Cissie:

00:00:21 Well, welcome to a special episode of *Fearless*, because today I'm recording here in Israel. I am in Jerusalem. I'm here at the TBN studio where we have had quite a special day with my dad and with Samaritan's Purse. But I've asked a very dear friend, Samuel Smadja, to join me on today's episode of *Fearless*. And Samuel is the president of Sar-El Tours. If one of the churches you attend goes on a tour to Israel, more than likely, they've gone through his tour company. He's also the director of TBN here in Israel, but he's also a Messianic believer, and he is a pastor of a Messianic congregation here in Jerusalem—and for those that don't know, who are listening in America, that means a Jew that believes that Jesus is the Messiah. I wanted to explain that because I know some people might be listening might not understand what that is. And so, I've asked him here to unpack—

You know my heart here on *Fearless*, even before Oct. 7, has always been a passion of mine to help you understand complicated issues here on *Fearless*, and to simplify it for you, and the Middle East and Israel can be very complicated. But even before Oct. 7, we have always done podcasts and episodes about Israel wanting people to understand more, so, I'm glad you're here. Thank you for joining me. I'm sorry it's under these circumstances.

Samuel Smadja:

00:01:34 Thank you Cissie. Thank you for coming to Israel, especially in this time where, as you saw on the streets, you walked yesterday in the street of Jerusalem, the city is empty; the Old City is empty. But the real friends of Israel are coming and are coming and are standing with Israel in this very, very hard time.

Cissie:

00:01:50 Today was a special day, and special might be a unique word to use. It was an emotional day for me. And I think for the last couple days that I've been here for Israel, you realize people's hearts are still so tender.—Mm-hmm [Samuel: affirmative]—

They're very emotional of what happened on Oct. 7. Many people's children, their neighbors. They're at war, they're fighting, they're soldiers, everybody—Israel is so small that every community has been impacted by something and they know someone and they haven't had time to process it. How are people here in Israel right now after Oct. 7?

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Samuel:

00:02:22 There's no doubt that Oct. 7 changed Israel. I think there is Israel before Oct. 7 and Israel after Oct. 7. There is no question that the attack, the *vicious* attack on Israel on Oct. 7, was probably the worst thing that Israel had since the Holocaust. We went through many, many wars; and yes, we lost people in the wars, but they were soldiers. Oct. 7, Hamas came in and murdered people in their home, in their bed—children, men, women, older people, younger people, kids. And those that they didn't murder, they kidnap into Gaza. Oct. 7 caught Israel by surprise. You know, people do a parallel between Oct. 7 and the Yom Kippur War—that Israel was caught by surprise, but Oct. 7, we can say that that was way bigger than anything we knew.

More than 3,000 people just came, crossed the border, and went around, from community to community and just slaughtered people and did terrible, terrible things that I don't want to even mention on camera.—Mm-hmm [Cissie: affirmative]—So, when you walk in the streets and when you talk to Israelis—just this morning—

Cissie:

00:03:37 Yeah.

Samuel:

00:03:38 —21 kids were murdered. Twenty-one soldiers were killed in Gaza. So, there is a cloud, a dark cloud, in this time above Israel. And people are looking for a solution, and the solution is not there to grab.

Cissie:

00:03:52 Today, Samaritan's Purse dedicated ambulances because there were many that were destroyed on Oct. 7, and each ambulance was dedicated to someone who was killed on that day.—Mm-hmm [Samuel: affirmative]—And we got to meet those families. And it's shocking, too, of how many they were young women—Mm-hmm [Samuel: affirmative]—young girls—

Samuel:

00:04:12 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:04:13 —19, 20 years old. You think, maybe a soldier would be killed, an act of war, but coming out and killing a medic that is helping somebody inside a medical clinic, she was shot herself, put a tourniquet on. And for me, it has been an emotional thing of just the young women and children. And I know those are stories we've been hearing, but to make it real today—Mm-hmm [Samuel: affirmative]—was pretty difficult.

Samuel:

00:04:36 It was very moving. I have to say that I was surprised. Three days after Oct. 7, a team of Samaritan's Purse came to Israel. Usually, when a war starts, people don't come, but Samaritan's came. And they came to our office, and they said, "How can we help? How can we help?" And we went to the south, and your

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father joined us, and we saw all those terrible things. And your father was standing there, and they told him the stories that 14 ambulances were shot, burned, blown up.

And your father said, “I want to buy new ambulances.” And he went and he met the families and he met the parents, the sisters. And it was so impactful to see that Christians from around the world at the worst time of Israel are coming here and asking, “How can we help?” Your father said it very clearly: We believe that the return of the Jewish people to the Land is a part of the plan of God for salvation. And we want to be a part of it.

Cissie:

00:05:41 You look behind us, we have the city of Jerusalem.—Mm-hmm [Samuel: affirmative]—Why is this small city such a conflict for the *entire* world? I mean, this is small. It’s not a big city. Why is it such a conflict?

Samuel:

00:05:54 You see, when we talk about Jerusalem, we talk about election. God elect people and He elected the place. He elected the nation. They were slaves in Egypt. He took them out. He elected a person, first of all, Abram. And then we know Abram, Isaac, and Jacob, and then the people, the kids of Jacob, went down to Egypt. We all know the story. He elected a nation who were slaves. He took them out of Egypt. He gave them the Law, the Torah. And in the Torah, He gave the whole plan of salvation. And in the plan of salvation, there is the whole issue of sacrifice. And then God elect a place, and God elects Jerusalem. Why Jerusalem? We don’t have a big river. We don’t have huge mountains. Actually, the Bible says that Jerusalem is a city that’s surrounded by mountains. When you look outside, Jerusalem is lower than anything else. It’s not a city on a hill. There’s nothing unique in Jerusalem.

But God decided to elect Jerusalem. He decided that His Temple will be in Jerusalem, in Mount Moriah, just behind us. He decided that in Mount Moriah, that the people of Israel will bring sacrifice for their sins, for their atonement to God. And He decided to build His Temple in Jerusalem. And then He decided to send His Messiah.

The whole sacrificial story that we see in the Old Testament is a picture of what Messiah had to do—like we know in Isaiah 53. And Messiah had to die and be crucified, hanged on a tree, here in Jerusalem. So, this city is unique, and this city will continue to be unique because Messiah promised that He’s going to come down just behind us on Mount of Olives. And He’s going to come to Jerusalem and He’s going to build His Temple in Jerusalem.

So, you have to understand, in this world there is two powers. There’s the powers of darkness, that we see that in the 7th of October, the devil unleashed all the demons against Israel, and there’s the power of light, the power of the Messiah. And the devil will do everything he can to destroy the plan of salvation which God has chose a nation and a place. So, he’ll do everything to hurt this nation and he’ll do everything to destroy this city.

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If you remember when Yeshua was sitting, Jesus was sitting in the Mount of Olives, and He was looking at this city, He Himself cried because He *knew* that this city will have to pay a huge price.

So, you know, Cissie, you say you love Israel. Your father says again and again how much he loves the Jewish people. Do you ever think how come there is such a love in your heart? I believe it's a supernatural love that God put in your father. God put in you. We didn't do anything to deserve that love, let's be honest. It's not that you met a Jew and he was so nice to you and he said, "Oh, those people are unique." It's a love. It's a supernatural love. But what you see now from the 7th of October and what we see in all the cities in Europe is a supernatural hate.

Antisemitism is not an intellectual conclusion that people get to. I believe it's a supernatural hate that people have. When you meet people who demonstrate in London, in Berlin, in Paris, and you say, "Why do you hate the Jews so much?" You'll be surprised. They don't have a good answer.

Cissie:

00:09:22 They don't know why.

Samuel:

00:09:23 They probably never met a Jew that did to them anything to deserve such a hatred. It's a supernatural hate. So, when you talk about Jerusalem, when you talk about the Jewish people, you have to understand it's a supernatural warfare. It's a fight between the power of darkness—Mm-hmm [Cissie: affirmative]—and the power of light.

Cissie:

00:09:40 And it's amazing going around the city and talking to different people over the last couple of days. There still doesn't seem to be hate in the Jewish heart. Now, they're hurting. They're broken, and they might be angry at God, asking Him why, but there doesn't seem to be a hatred. They're not born with a hatred to where the other side is born, like you said, with a supernatural hatred. So, how do we fight that?

Samuel:

00:10:05 When we talk about Israel, and when we talk about the Israeli army, I don't know if you know IDF, Israel Defense Force. The whole idea of the Israeli army is just to defend ourselves. We're not here to attack another country. We're here just to defend ourselves. 1948, the state of Israel was established.—Mm-hmm [Cissie: affirmative].

The next day, we were attacked. And we, since then, we are being attacked and attacked and attacked and attacked. And the people of Israel, on one hand, they have the weapon, and on the other hand, they have their hands out in order to try to make peace—and we try to make peace, but it's very hard to negotiate with the devil. Look, now there is a lot of pressure on Israel to negotiate with Hamas

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concerning the hostages. Think about it. It should be a very simple negotiation. You give us our hostages back, we stop the fight. Normal people can solve it in one hour.

Cissie:

00:11:09 So, is there a path to victory for Israel?

Samuel:

00:11:11 Oh, that's a very hard thing.

Cissie:

00:11:14 From my point of view, when I watch the news in the United States, it seems like it's a lose-lose for Israel.

Samuel:

00:11:21 It's a lose-lose if you don't really believe in the promises of God that the Bible tells us. You see, Cissie, my grandfather died in the Holocaust. He was taken to Auschwitz, never came back. He never believed that he'll see that his son, or his grandchildren, or great-grandchildren will be walking the streets of Jerusalem, speaking the Hebrew language, living here, and having a state, but God has promised.

The return of the Jewish people, yes, it's a result of a Zionistic movement, but it's a result of a promise that God gave to the people of Israel. Ezekiel is very, very clear. And it's even more interesting that Ezekiel says, "I'm not bringing you back to the land because you were such a great nation." God brought the people on Israel because that's His plan, and God will keep His covenant with the people of Israel, and as believers—Jewish believers—as believers around the world, we have to learn to hold to the promises of God.

The Bible is full of beautiful promises—personal promises, but also on a national level for Israel, there are promises. And you know, people say, "Oh, but the Jewish people, the people of Israel were never faithful, or they rejected the Messiah, maybe God has changed His mind, and He left them, and what we see now is a result of Zionistic movement," or a thing like that, but think about it: 2,000 years in exile. A nation that is coming out from the ashes of Holocaust. A nation that was scattered all over the world—Mm-hmm [Cissie: affirmative]—from 103 different nations. God puts a fire in their heart, and they start walking towards Jerusalem. People from Yemen. People from Iraq. People from Iran, Syria, North Africa, Spain, Europe, and the United States. None of them could explain, it's just the fire that they had that they want to go and immigrate to Israel. We're Jews and we need to move. I believe it's a supernatural act of God.

Cissie:

00:13:38 As a believer in Jesus living here in Israel—I've been to a lot of different mission fields.—Mm-hmm [Samuel: affirmative]—this one might be the hardest one that I've seen—how hard is it being a Messianic Jew here in Israel?

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Samuel:

00:13:52 Today, it is much easier than when I was a kid. When I was a kid, the whole idea of being a Jew and believing in Jesus is almost a contradiction for the Jewish mindset. When I was a kid, it was the generation that came out from the Holocaust, and under the Holocaust and whatever the Jewish people experienced in Europe, in their mind it was the “Christian,” quote unquote, that did the Holocaust. Therefore, if Jesus is really the Messiah, how come the people who proclaim that He is their Messiah are torturing His brothers and sister? So it built a huge wall between the Jewish people and Yeshua.

But today, after 70 years, in the state of Israel, the people of Israel, they know that there is a group of Jews that believe that Yeshua is the Messiah, that believe that the New Testament is the fulfillment of prophecy of the Old Testament. And most of the people do not agree with us, not everybody is happy with our message, but we have a total freedom. Israel is a democracy, and we have it. And, like you said, it’s a hard ground. I think Jewish evangelism and Muslim evangelism are probably the hardest fields in the world. And it’s very hard to convince or to present the New Testament and Yeshua to the Jewish people by saying then that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,” because a Jew will stop you and say, “Which Son are you talking about?” So, when you do Jewish evangelism, you have to show from the Old Testament all the prophecies about the Messiah.

You have to show the complex unity, what you call Trinity, in the Old Testament. You have to show that John chapter one, the first 13 verses is not just an idea that John was standing in the sun, in the heat somewhere here, and came up with a new idea, that this is an Old Testament idea. So we have to show that Yeshua, Jesus, is the Messiah. We have to show that wherever He was born, the time He was born, the family He was born, all that fits to the Old Testament prophecies. And we have to talk and bring testimonies of His resurrection. You need to know the Old Testament.

Cissie:

00:16:16 I think that’s probably something we all probably need to study more to be able to answer those questions.

Samuel:

00:16:18 I would encourage people if they really want to strengthen their faith to—

Cissie:

00:16:24 Try to evangelize to a Jew?

Samuel:

00:16:25 —no, try to learn the Old Testament a bit better and to really understand that the story of the Messiah doesn’t start with Joseph and Mary going to Bethlehem. It started way, way before.

Cissie:

00:16:40 The Messianic bloodline all the way through. I have had some friends like, “What do we do?” You know, we’re talking about earlier Samaritan’s Purse coming in

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and helping, but for an American that is sitting there, riding in their car on their way to work and just saying, “What can we do?” How can they? And the Bible says to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, but how do we pray for the peace? How do you pray for the peace?

Samuel:

00:17:00 That’s a very good question, and I believe that to pray for the peace of Jerusalem is something way bigger. Now we’re in the midst of a war, so yes, definitely to pray that the war will stop. But I believe that to pray for the peace of Jerusalem is to pray for the peace between the God of Israel and the people of Jerusalem—[Cissie: Mm.]—because peace is something way bigger than just a peace between the Palestinian and the Israeli. I don’t believe that when David wrote that Psalm, he foresaw Israel fighting the Palestinian. I think God inspired him to speak about a peace which is way bigger.

So, I believe to pray for the peace of Jerusalem is really to pray for the salvation of Israel. To pray that the Prince of Peace will come and will reveal Himself, that God will reveal Himself in dreams, in visions, in encounters, that God will reveal Himself, that He will remove—Paul is saying some very hard things. He said the Jewish people have a veil, we’re the only—you know, people talk about the election of the Jewish people, but we’re the only nation that has a veil that cannot see Messiah. Think about it. It’s almost, “Why, God?” I think that will be my first question when I’m entering Heaven: How come the Swiss, the German, the French didn’t have a veil? Why we have a veil? You have to understand that for the Jew to receive Yeshua, it’s way harder than anybody, any other nation. So, yes, in one side we were elected, but on the other side, God—and we don’t, we cannot explain it—put a veil on the Jewish people, so to pray for the peace of Jerusalem is to pray that this veil will be removed.

Cissie:

00:18:39 That’s good. I’ve never prayed that I need to—

Samuel:

00:18:42 And also, I believe that to pray for the Jewish people and to support the Jewish people, I believe that we’re going to enter into a time that antisemitism is going to just grow. And I think, take a stand.

Cissie:

00:18:56 I don’t even like to use the word “antisemitism.” It’s the hatreds of the Jews.

Samuel:

00:19:01 The hatred of the Jews.

Cissie:

00:19:02 And I think that’s such a sharper tone; antisemitism kinda has a—

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Samuel:

00:19:05 So I think, and we see it, let's be honest, we see it in different capital. You see when somebody is marching in the streets and you say, "From the river to the sea,"—Mm-hmm [Cissie: affirmative]—that means, 'Let's throw all the Jewish people into the sea, into the ocean.' Because, if we cannot live between the river and the sea, where do we go? We should go back to the exile and again to be burned in the gas chambers? You understand? So, I believe to stand with Israel is to be a voice in this dark time that we're going to enter when it comes to Israel. I think the church will be divided between those that stand with Israel and those who don't stand with Israel. I think countries are going to be divided. I think governments are going to be divided with, on the issue of Israel.

Cissie:

00:19:52 Well, speaking of the church, American evangelicals have been such a strong support of Israel. Do you fear the next generation of American evangelicals not being a support?

Samuel:

00:20:04 I think, yeah, I have concerns about the next generation. You see, Cissie, the generation of my father, your father, they saw the Six-Day War. They saw the miracle of the Six-Day War. They saw the return of the Jewish people. And let's be honest, the return of the Jewish people is the biggest miracle that we saw. And another thing I'll tell you, it's the only tangible proof that your Bible is real for everyone. You know, why you claim that the Bible is real? Maybe because the Quran is real? What makes your Bible so real and that you can lean on it so much? The only tangible proof is that in the Bible, God prophesied the return of the Jewish people and here, you see the fulfillment of what He prophesied. So, if you want one good proof that this Book, the Bible, is the real thing—

Cissie:

00:20:56 State of Israel.

Samuel:

00:20:57 —state of Israel. The Jewish people. There's no another nation who was in exile for so long that still exists. And it's not that we were warriors; we didn't do anything; we were slaughtered wherever we went—in Spain, in the Inquisitions, in the Holocaust, wherever we were, we were persecuted and God brought us back.

So, for your father, my father, the older leaders of the church, for them it's a known factor, but for the younger generation who want to be politically correct, who are a bit dipped into humanism, you know, helping the underdog and so on, they say, "Listen, but Israel does terrible things. Not everything that Israel does, we can support." My question to them is, Can you support everything that Joshua did when he entered into the Land? He did way, way worse things than Israel did. Supporting and standing with Israel is supporting and standing with the plan of God. God says that Israel is the apple of His eye. Do we really believe it? Or we just skip some verses every time it's not convenient? And when we want to be humanly OK or kosher, it's

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very hard for us to believe the Bible as the Bible is, because they're very tough issues.

Cissie:

00:22:20 Yeah. And I think just in general, as we talk often here on *Fearless*, is the church itself has become Biblically illiterate on most subjects.—Mm-hmm [Samuel: affirmative]—So of course, including Israel, but when Jesus, when you were talking about, He looked over the city and He wept over the city. He said, “If you had known the time of your visitation.” And I think of that in Scripture, “If we had known,” meaning if we had read His Word so that we would be able to understand it and recognize it. And that would be my encouragement to anybody listening, and including myself, to know it more.—Mm-hmm [Samuel: affirmative]—And all my listeners know that my life verse, and I say it almost on every episode, in Daniel chapter 11, “Those who know their God will be able to stand in strength and take action.” And, I think that's why people haven't been able to stand with Israel, or even take action towards Israel, because they don't even know their God.

Samuel:

00:23:13 Yeah. And they don't know the Old Testament. They know all the nice stories. They know the story of Noah and the ark. They know the story of Mount Sinai. They know some of David's stories, but they don't really know the Old Testament. And I really want to encourage people: If you really want to understand the New Testament, you need to really dive into the Old Testament. And let's be honest, 70% of the Word of God has to do with Israel.—Mm-hmm [Cissie: affirmative]—So, the moment you move Israel out of the picture, there's not much left.

Cissie:

00:23:43 Well, and when things get a little more peaceful around here, you *are* in the tourism business.

Samuel:

00:23:48 Yes.

Cissie:

00:23:49 And I know since COVID and now this, it's been a difficult three years. You were talking about the stories of the Bible. And when you come here, you realize they're not just stories.—Mm-hmm [Samuel: affirmative]—This was God's land. This is His land. This is His chosen land, but this is where it all took place, and it's Scripture—because we probably lose a lot of meaning in our translation than you have in Hebrew—but, that every part of geography has a purpose in the Scripture.—Mm-hmm [Samuel: affirmative]—And you just realize it just comes to life here. And so I encourage people to come visit.

For me and my family, and one of the reasons you said I love Israel, of course, it's supernatural because that's where God changed *my* dad's life was on the Mount of Olives, right behind us.

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Samuel:

00:24:32 Just behind us.

Cissie:

00:24:33 And that's where I get emotional. It was just a couple weeks after my dad's birthday; he had spent it with my grandfather. My grandfather took him to a birthday lunch and he confronted my dad and said, "Your mother and I are worried for your soul—[Samuel: Mm.]—and how you're living your life." And two weeks later, God dealt in a hotel room up on the Mount of Olives with my dad, and he got down and surrendered his life to Jesus, which changed the entire trajectory of *my* family. And so that, I'm thankful. That's why I love Israel. I wear a wedding ring that my dad bought here in Israel the day after he gave his life to Christ to go marry my mom—Mm-hmm [Samuel: affirmative]—and my mom wasn't a believer. My grandmother graciously loved on my mom and led her to her faith in Jesus. And this land changed *my*—Mm-hmm [Samuel: affirmative]—trajectory of my family, and that's the power, I think of. So I encourage people to come. If they come—before we close—tell me—I know you're from here, so you don't visit—but your favorite place, or a couple favorite places you take people to tour.

Samuel:

00:25:32 I think the streets of Jerusalem. When you walk in the Old City, and you walk in the streets of Jerusalem, and you think on all the prophets that walk in the street, and the Messiah, and the people of Israel, and the Temple, and you cannot not stop and say, "Wow." You see, I really believe that coming to Israel is not just going on a tour. You can go tours all over. You can take a cruise to Mexico. You'll have a better time probably because coming on a tour to Israel—

Cissie:

00:25:58 It's a lot of work.

Samuel:

00:25:59 It's a lot of work. A pastor said that a tour to Israel is like a year in a Bible school because you really study. You go from one place to another and every place the Word of God is being unveiled and the guides and the pastors are diving into the context of the Bible, the context of the New Testament. You see, you have four gospels in the New Testament. I believe the land is the fifth gospel. It helps you to grasp and to understand all the parables. If you live in a big city, how can you understand the parables? But when you come here and you see the dependence—it's raining outside, the dependence on rain, and seeing that rain is a blessing, you start understanding, you know. And you walk in the Galilee, you were walking—you go to Mount Beatitude and you go over the beatitude and you see a sermon that is a very Jewish sermon and you go verse by verse and you think and you meditate. I believe really that once you come to Israel, you'll never be the same.

Cissie:

00:27:01 I can be a testament to that and my husband, Corey, can. That is one of our dreams and our prayers, if Lord willing, that my husband and I can come for an extended time, not just a week or two, but an extended time with our family.

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Samuel, thank you—

Samuel:

00:27:14 Thank you, Cissie.

Cissie:

00:27:15 —for taking the time to explain more, to teach more, and this is a difficult time for Israel, and I know you've been a busy man. And you've been helping Samaritan's Purse along the way, making it possible for us to work here on the ground and we're just so grateful for you and for your team, praying.

One thing I forgot to mention: your son Avishai—most people if they follow me on social media—Mm-hmm [Samuel: affirmative]—they've seen pictures of the big, big man with lots of curly hair up in Alaska who I go fishing with and that my kids are always hanging on and that is your son and we love him dearly.

Samuel:

00:27:48 And thank you for what you do for him.

Cissie:

00:27:50 And so, we're so thankful for your family. We love your family.

Samuel:

00:27:53 Thank you very much.

Cissie:

00:27:54 Love Israel and praying. And I want to encourage people if you're listening right now, we put on social media and text it to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, but I want to encourage you right now to pause whatever you're doing and to pray. If you come across people who are still being held hostages on your social media and you see their names, pause. Don't scroll to the next thing. Take a few seconds to pray for them by name. And to pray, as Samuel said, that the veil would be lifted off the eyes of the people here in Israel, that that should be your prayer.

So I just encourage you, don't just say it, to do it. And once again, I want to thank you for taking the time to listen to another episode of *Fearless*. You are always an encouragement to me. Many of you send messages and I get them. I might not respond to all of them, but I'm so thankful for all your encouragement, especially for those who've enjoyed the episodes on Israel.

MUSIC TRANSITION

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:28:52 Thank you for joining me on another episode of *Fearless*. And if you would like to know more about what the work of Samaritan's Purse is doing here in Israel, I encourage you to check out the website samaritanspurse.org to read more. And once again, thank you for all who have listened.

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CLOSING MUSIC

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