

A ROSE IN THE DESERT

By Keith G. Balsler

A joyless prospect, it would seem, being a pastor or evangelist in one of the Islamic strongholds of the Middle East.

Especially if you're a foreign worker far from home who – often at great personal risk – preaches the Gospel and teaches the Truth in a religious climate as hostile as the Arabian desert.

Harassment and persecution are ever-present threats for the ACTS and *Shepherd's Staff* readers who are laboring in the Lord's harvest in these Muslim lands.

Yet the "*joy of the Lord*" is truly their strength (Neh 8:10) – and World MAP training resources play a major role in strengthening them for the work the Lord has called them to do.

One such ACTS reader writes:

"Greeting in Jesus' name and thanksgiving for your ACTS Magazine that I received today.

"Once again another blessing from God who continues to provide such materials.

"Truly it is a big help for me and also to my fellow Christians to be blessed and enlightened [by] the very Word of God.

"It's amazing what you have done in me because I did not expect such materials and yet you provide me with such hand-outs that can help me a lot for biblical reference for the purpose of teaching and preaching the Word of God.

"I pray the Lord to continue to bless your Christlike works and Heavenward vision in spreading the Good News of eternal salvation.

"TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!"

Fellow Pilgrims

The joyful tone of his letter – the very act of writing it quite possibly put this church leader at risk – calls to mind the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 1:6:

"And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit."

And of the Apostle Peter:

"...that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1Pet 1:7,8).

What a joy – and challenge – to see a courageous Kingdom ambassador overflowing with joy in what is still, spiritually speaking, a "*dry and thirsty land*" (Ps 63:1).

This ACTS reader and dozens like him, half a world away from home, know full well what it means to be "*strangers and pilgrims*". Hebrews 11:13 reminds us that all believers are strangers and pilgrims in the wilderness of this fallen world.

We rejoice that ACTS Magazine and *The Shepherd's Staff* are helping to strengthen

our fellow pilgrims in their walk with the Lord and their work in carrying out His Great Commission.

And we look forward with them to the day when “*the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing*” (Isa 35:1,2).