

However the blame for this situation lies not only on the shoulders of Hamas, or the Israeli army, but also on the shoulders of the victims. For, as Burston wrote, “Collective punishment is abhorrent. It is morally reprehensible. It is functionally self-defeating. It destroys the moral fiber of those who order it, practice it, countenance it, turn a blind eye to it. This may explain why the victims of collective punishment may find themselves resorting to its use.”² Indeed, many on the Israeli side ask ‘Why should we provide food and electricity to the very people attacking us?’ On the Palestinian side many claim, ‘All Israelis are guilty, because they are all soldiers at one time or another.’ These sorts of statements, (in addition to being factually incorrect) justify collective punishment, and serve to dehumanize the ‘Other’ side. We forget that we are actually talking about real people just like us, because it is easier to group them all together, label them as ‘Israelis’ or ‘Palestinians’, and blame them all for our misfortune. When we adopt this attitude, we are guilty of collective punishment. “Crimes against humanity are crimes against humanity. The victims of crimes against humanity never “had it coming to them” as we might persuade ourselves to believe.”³

We are all capable of this, especially when we feel hurt or threatened. Even people who profess humanistic love for mankind can fall into this cycle of pain and reaction, where we are dehumanized, and then we dehumanize others. The reason for this is that we as humans are unable to love perfectly, incapable of demonstrating what Henri Nouwen calls ‘God’s first love.’ This love is “unconditional and unlimited” unlike our very conditional, and limited “broken and very fragile” second love. In spite of our protestations to the contrary, along with our human love, “there is always the chance of rejection, withdrawal, punishment, blackmail, violence, and even hatred.” This is because of the “darkness that never completely leaves the human heart.”⁴ Try as we may, we cannot love with God’s perfect, first love, because in order to do so means displaying *all* of the characteristics of love described in I Corinthians 13:4-7, *all* of the time. No one is *always* patient, kind, humble etc. Only God is able love this selflessly. This fact, however, does not excuse complacency. True, our love is “only a broken reflection of the first love”, but thankfully, “the first love is offered to us by a God in whom there are no shadows.”⁵ If we strive towards this perfect first love, we can see its influence on our lives. Only by tapping into God’s love are we able to reverse the trend of dehumanization, because it forces us to see each other as God sees us: as humans.

In the beginning of February this year, *Musalaha* took a group of about 30 Palestinian and Israeli youth leaders to the Dead Sea in Jordan, for a youth leader’s training, and reconciliation conference. The youth leadership training was taught by Yoel Goldberg, an Israeli, who used his extensive experience as a youth leader to make his message clear. The focus was on communication skills as a leader, the holistic nature of youth work (dealing with the spiritual, but also the physical, mental, and social issues that the youth face), and understanding the enormity of the task, and the responsibility that comes along with it. He also lectured on the structure of the church, and where the youth group and youth leader should fit within this structure. The discussion, networking, and idea-sharing that went on throughout the conference was very beneficial to all the youth leaders, and the fellowship made it fun.

The reconciliation training was led by George Filmon, a Palestinian Israeli with significant experience in both youth work, and reconciliation activities. His teaching was on the *Stages of Reconciliation*, and he sought to bring the group past the first stage where people are just getting to know each other and building trust, to the second stage where the discussion of real issues and the voicing of real grievances takes place. One of the activities was taken directly from the news headlines, and demonstrated well, the process of dehumanization that accompanies collective punishment.

Continued in the extra page..



(continued from Introduction) It is important to be attentive to where people are at in their personal journey towards reconciliation, and find a balance. Above all these issues must be eventually dealt with, because if not they will always reemerge. We must approach these important discussions on two levels. First, we must continually maintain and reinforce our relationships with each other. This is vitally important. Second, we must tackle the tough questions, which is only possible once we are secure in our friendship and love for each other in Christ.

The two reports featured in this newsletter both deal with this process of reconciliation, with the maintenance of friendship, but also with the challenging questions, discussions, and debates that have to happen in order for us to move forward, and make progress. “People experience deep pain, turmoil, and loss.” Because of this, they “build layers of protection and insulation.” To this could be added ‘mistrust’. “However, the work of reconciliation calls for relationships and a journey through those layers of isolation.”¹ This is the challenge, to understand the complexity of where people are in their own process of reconciliation, and to be sensitive to them, but also to equip them with the tools they need to advance forward. The time for stagnation is over, we must move, and by the grace of God, we will make a difference. ~ **Salim J. Munayer, Musalaha Director**

(Munayer Family Update continued)

Mornings are a bit more flexible, and that is when I can do my work. These days I find myself going to bed before Sam at 9 p.m.

There is a lot going on in 2008 with each family member, I look towards the year with a bit of fear and wonder, will it all “come together”? Will I be able to cope and make sure nobody will get pushed, or miss out. For prayer re-read the above and pray for everything. Next time I will not leave it so long before I write.

~With love Kay Munayer [for Salim & Boys x 4]

(footnotes)

¹ Lederach, John Paul, *The Journey Towards Reconciliation*, (Herald Press, 1999) pg. 63

² Shriver, D. W. Jr., *An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics*, (Oxford University Press, 1995) pg. 8

³ Burston, Bradley, *The Qassam Rocket as Collective Punishment*, (January 28, 2008) [Haaretz.com, http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/944986.html](http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/944986.html)

⁴ Burston, *The Qassam Rocket as Collective Punishment*

⁵ Nouwen, Henri J. M., *In the Name of Jesus, Reflections of Christian Leadership*, (Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989) pg. 39-40

⁶ Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, pg. 40

⁷ Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, pg. 41

Musalaha

Contact Information: PO Box 52110, Jerusalem, Israel 91521 Tel: 972-2-672-0376 Fax: 972-2-671-9616
www.musalaha.org musalaha@netvision.net.il

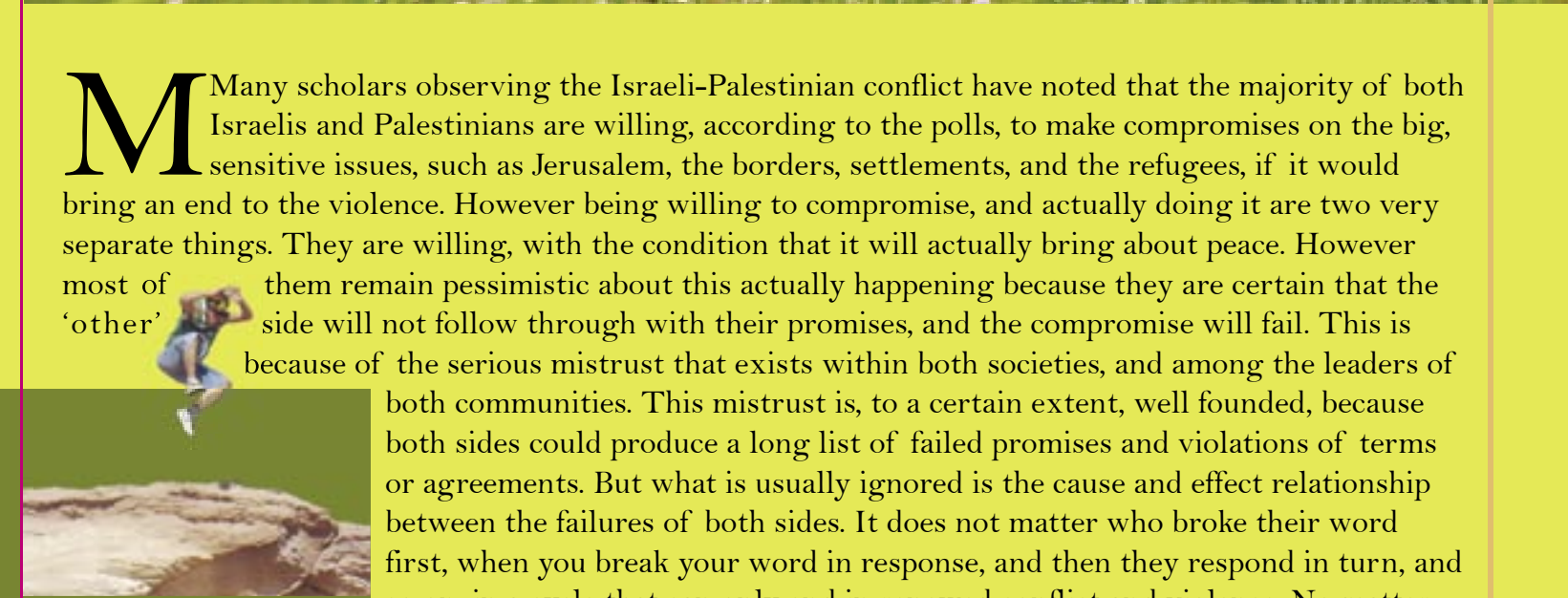
International Contact and Contribution Information

USA: Reconciliation Ministries, P.O. Box 238, Medina, WA 98039-0238

UK Correspondence: C/O John Greenhalgh, 27 Harpers Lane, Smithills, Bolton BL1 6HR

UK Contributions: The Andrew Christian Trust, Rockwood, Storth Road, Sandside, Milnthorpe, Cumbria, LA7 7PH

Please note: If sending checks to the addresses above, please write the check to that organization (e.g. Reconciliation Ministries or The Andrew Christian Trust) and in a letter designate the contribution to Musalaha or the Munayer family. Reconciliation Ministries can also receive donations by credit card. Contributions are tax deductible. Thank you very much.



In this newsletter
Introduction
“Jumping off the Wall,” Women’s Project Report
“The Limits of Love,” Youth Leaders Training Report
Munayer Family News

continued on last page...



Women are particularly good at accomplishing the first step of reconciliation – the relationship building. We love getting together for coffee and cake, to chat about our lives, families, our work, and not least of all cooking. We connect with each other easily, even when we are coming from two different, even conflicting, societies. We call each other on birthdays and sick days, and we can talk to each other on the phone for hours on end. Sometimes we even bring our families together, and we consider ourselves friends. This building of relationships is a good beginning to reconciliation and is an indispensable step for establishing trust and respect, but friendship is only the beginning of the process of reconciliation, the foundation. Just as it is important to start with step one, it is crucial not to stop there but to move forward to step two. If you only stay at that superficial, friendly level, you are really just ignoring your true feelings towards the ‘Other’ side. Of course friendship is not only a part of the first stage, but continues throughout all the stages, and actually as you work towards real reconciliation, the bonds of friendship are deepened.

While we are proficient at this initial step, we often encounter an obstacle when faced with moving forward. We do not like discussing the more controversial issues that the second step requires, such as identity, history, politics, and theology of the Land, because these discussions reveal the differences that lie beneath our friendships. Inevitably, we are confronted with a slew of uncomfortable feelings such as hatred, anger, un-forgiveness, bitterness, and jealousy. These feelings upset our beautiful and comforting, co-existential friendship, and scatter our illusion of having reconciled.



They also open up a veritable Pandora’s Box of questions and inner struggles that we would rather keep shut tight. We do not want to be reminded that we as believers can feel hatred, anger, or disappointment. This is a difficult realization, and no one wants to be the first to admit she is angry or bitter. However if we truly want to be reconciled to each other, we have no choice but to face these challenges head-on. It is a threatening and uncertain road to start down, but it is not impossible, and the end result is well worth the effort.

In January, all the *Musalaha* women’s groups, (around 50 women) met in Kibbutz Almog to begin work on this difficult second stage. The teaching was done by both Israeli and Palestinian women, and their courageous self analysis and vulnerability was truly inspirational. One Israeli leader spoke about the process she had to go through, in order to arrive at the point where she was able to begin with reconciliation. It began with the admission that the desire for *revenge* was deep within her, in spite of her knowledge that ‘vengeance is of the Lord’s’ Lev. 19:18, Rom. 12:19.

This vengeful attitude came from her *anger*, at seeing the injustice of terrorist attacks. Anger is understandable, and we are in fact commanded to be angered by evil, however we are not allowed to let our anger lead us to sin, Eph. 4:26-27, and seeking revenge, when it is not ours to seek is a sinful response to anger.

She spoke of how her anger came from the fact that she found *blame* in the Palestinian side, which blinded her from seeing any fault on the part of the Israeli side. This judgmental attitude is clearly wrong, as it is against the Messiah’s ‘Judge not’ command, Matt. 7:1-5. When we are judgmental, we are prevented from seeing our own faults and contributions to the conflict



by the plank in our eye, and are thus unable to acknowledge them and deal with them appropriately, one of the most vital stages of the reconciliation process.

Finally, judging or blaming the other side is always easier if we are unaware of the real situation. This is regrettably common, but understandable, since it is only natural that we would see things from the perspective of ‘our’ side alone. But when our eyes are opened, we have a choice: we can either testify against, or ignore and contribute to the *misinformation*. She stated that even after she heard about what was happening in the West Bank, and the difficult situation facing the Palestinians there during the first *Intifada*, her response was “I didn’t want to believe it. I found it very hard to believe it.” Even if it is uncomfortable for us, and even if it is ignored by our spiritual and political leaders, we as believers have a responsibility to seek after truth.

One of the Palestinian leaders mentioned the formidable obstacle of bitterness, and how it can be so destructive, and prevent reconciliation. When speaking about her experience learning history, (specifically the experience of the Palestinian people during the 1948 and 1967 wars) she recalled, “I wasn’t there...but what did I learn? I learned what Palestinians said about Jews and bitterness grew in my heart.” The only way to escape from this trap is forgiveness, since un-forgiveness is bondage, but it is important to remember that forgiveness is also a process, and cannot happen overnight.

We must also keep in mind that forgiveness will be different for each person and in each case, because we all have different life-stories and experiences. But as believers, we are all required to forgive as Jesus said, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” Matt. 6:12. Reconciliation is impossible without forgiveness, although forgiveness alone is not the same thing as reconciliation. You can choose to forgive, in fact you are commanded to, even without the other side asking for your forgiveness, but for true reconciliation to occur, both sides have to participate equally. It is also important to remember that forgiveness does not exclude dealing with the

real issues and with justice. . “Forgiveness does not require the abandonment of punishment, but does require the abandonment of vengeance.”¹

One participant realized that the first step to breaking down her hindrance to reconciliation is for her to jump down from the wall. For years she had been sitting on the wall, looking down on everyone else discussing, fighting, talking; and moving along the path of reconciliation, sometimes forward, sometimes backwards, but moving nonetheless. It was comfortable for her to sit up on the wall, where no one would demand anything of her, challenge, or hurt her.

When perched on the wall, you become something of a buffer, not forming any opinions. Sometimes she would stick her toe into the waters of conflict, but only until it got uncomfortable, then she would pull it back up. But when you sit on the wall, you are immobile, not moving anywhere, and forever stuck in exactly the same place. So she decided to jump down off the wall, cost her what it may, and start moving with everyone else. “I don’t know where I am going but God is telling me to get moving”. How many of us spend our time sitting up on the wall when God is challenging us to move?

Another Israeli woman realized after listening to all the women and their hindrances, that she had let herself be completely manipulated by her community and the media. She would need to go home to re-evaluate her entire mindset about the conflict and about her sisters on the other side.

Finally, another woman said: “We have come to a point of openness. We can tell the truth without fearing and get straight to the point. It is like a family. We can’t keep everything inside forever. Conflict is good



We are all guilty of collective punishment. This is a serious allegation, as collective punishment is condemned by the Fourth Geneva Convention, and classified as a war crime. Yet we are all complicit in it, either consciously or subconsciously, and all guilty of the dangerous consequences that it results in.

In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the term ‘collective punishment’ is used quite frequently, so it is important to define it clearly. Collective punishment means punishing a whole group of people, for the actions of some of the members of the group, regardless of whether or not they are responsible for the offense. In a recent *Haaretz* article, Bradley Burston noted how both Israelis and Palestinians make use of collective punishment, and how the innocent residents of Gaza, and of cities like Sderot, are the ones who suffer as a result of it. For the majority of Gazans, living confined in squalid conditions, often without food, water, heating, and ever fearful of Israeli military strikes, it is clear that they are suffering because of the actions of others, such as Hamas attacks against Israel that they had no part in. Their situation was recently made far worse by the Israeli closure, or siege, that even further limited their access to the bare essentials needed to survive.

For Israelis living in Sderot, and other cities that lie within firing range of Gaza, the situation is not much better. They are daily harassed by rockets launched at them indiscriminately, which causes untold physical, psychological and financial damage. They live paralyzed by fear, many of them are unable to work, children are kept from school, and the sound of the warning sirens (and the sprint to the bomb shelter that it entails) has become a part of their daily routine. Many have moved from Sderot, either because of the security risk, or because they can no longer find work and support their families, as many factories and businesses have left the city. All this they suffer from Palestinian attacks, not because they are directly responsible for what the people of Gaza suffer, but because they are the closest, most convenient target.



This process is clearly affecting these women, and they in turn are affecting their communities. We have made much progress with our women’s work this year, and we would like to give a special thanks to the Danish Mission Council for their help and support through the Danish Israel Mission. Without the vision and generosity of these two organizations, this progress would not have been possible.

~Written by Louise Thomsen,
Musalaha Women’s Project Coordinator
~Edited by Joshua Korn,
Musalaha Publishing Manager



(The Limits of Love continued) The activity was a mock hearing, before the United Nations, from the perspective of two families in shockingly similar circumstances. One was an Israeli family from Sderot, a husband, wife, and child, and the other a Palestinian family from Gaza, also consisting of a husband, wife, and child. These parts were acted out by 6 of the Israeli and Palestinian participants. The twist was that the rest of the Palestinian participants were given the task of representing the Israeli family before the U.N. Likewise the Israeli participants had to present the case of the Palestinian family. In order to do so, both groups had to talk with the family they were assigned to represent, and to ask probing questions, in order to really and truly understand their situation.

This led to some intense discussions, and some tense moments, as opposing political opinions rose to the surface, thinly covered up by the theatrical, fictional nature of the exercise. For instance, both groups began their questioning by, in essence, questioning the legitimacy of the families' connection with where they live. Both the family from Gaza and from Sderot had to 'prove' that they had lived in Gaza, and Sderot for a long time, and had not recently arrived. This mutual scrutiny, and the symmetry of the situation that both families faced, seemed a fitting summery of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a whole.

But it was remarkable to see that as much as they questioned each other, they also began to understand each other, and seemed instinctively to know what the solution to the problem would be. Hearing from the other side about their suffering had a big effect on everyone involved in this activity, because it gave them a face, a name, and a friend to identify with the faceless, nameless mass of 'Israelis' or 'Palestinians'. They began to see each other as humans, thus reversing the dehumanization process. When asked about the activity, a Palestinian participant simply stated "I was in their place, I understood." For one of the Israelis it was a very thought-provoking exercise, and she claimed, "I never thought about the closure (the Israeli closure of the Gaza strip), or the daily life of those living under it. Now I had a chance to think about it." The need to partake of God's love was clear for them. Another Palestinian participant said it was sad to see the "suffering on both sides" which was "far from God's will." Finally, an Israeli participant stated "We look for someone to blame, but this situation will continue until both sides turn to God." This is true, specifically, turning to God's love that alone enables us to see each other as people, and avoid physical and/or subconscious collective punishment, and the dehumanization that it entails.

This conference certainly did not solve the conflict, or even truly reflect the complexities of the situation. But it did bring together these participants, and gave them a glimpse of the reconciliation that is possible when we can see each other as people, rather than as enemies, and try to understand each other's situations. This is only possible with God's first love, for our human attempts at it will always fail. Luckily, we are offered this chance, for "Knowing the heart of Jesus and loving him are the same thing... And when we live in the world with that knowledge, we cannot do other than bring healing, reconciliation, new life, and hope wherever we go."⁶

~Joshua Korn, *Musalaha* Publishing Manager



MuNaYeT family update

Dear Everybody,

This is going to be a long one, I have much to write about. Are you sitting comfortably? Then I will begin !!

JACK 18 is busy with exams and will soon take his driving test. He had a party forced on him by us, his parents, as we wanted to celebrate the fact we had survived 18 years of raising him.

Jack is busy thinking about what to do next year in his "year off". No idea what to study at University after that.

We throw up our hands in despair, and put them together to pray.

DANIEL 16 is getting good grades on tests, and is swimming at the Nationals as I write this. I took him at 6.15 a.m. today, and it was 3 degs C. He wouldn't wear his warm padded coat with hood, and opted for the thin hoodless, yet "cooler" [literally] one, and then wouldn't get out of the car till the bus arrived as he was so cold?!* Why do teenagers hate coats ?

Jack and Daniel plan to go to Uganda on a short missions trip in August 2008 with their youth group, to help in an Orphanage. This is expensive and the youth group have been doing all sorts of fundraising events i.e. cakes, hot choc, auctions, talent show, sandwiches, clean ups etc. Daniel has offered to do a sponsored swim but beware anybody sponsoring him; he easily bats out 36km a week [approx 1,440 lengths]. If there is anybody out there that would like to help them please do, they told me they were too shy to ask.

JOHN 14 is almost my height, in fact by the time I finish writing this he may well have caught up. He was at 1cm away on the last measure 3 days ago! He began to hate coats a year ago on his 13th birthday. He lives, sleeps, and dreams football, and we wait to see if he continues in the team after May [looks like it]. This love of/for football is great for bribing him.

Daniel and John eat an incredibly large amount of food, last week at the Supermarket the checkout girl asked me if I was re-selling the food as I buy so much. "After all", she said "which kind of family can eat this amount of food in one week?" "Mine" I replied.

SAM 10 at last reached double digits. Even though too young, he is making qualifying swim times for the children's swimming Nationals. We are waiting to hear about his heats and then have to decide if we should let him join in. There is a lovely story connected with his swimming.

THE STORY

Last Friday Sam swam 200m back in the National heats making medal winning times even though he is a year younger than the other swimmers. Coaches were stunned, people gasped, and Sam got out of the water delighted...except he was disqualified on his turns. That evening saw crying, a stomach ache, and some pretty serious sulking. The next day he had 100m back and we didn't know what to do? Daniel, in what I think was a phenomenal act of brotherly love, volunteered to get up early on his only day to sleep in and take Sam to the pool to train with him. He got in the cold water and spent 30 mins in intensive turn training; he then did "warm up" with Sam, staying with him till the diving board. It worked and Sam once again did a stunning swim ...without being disqualified. I stood there all teary eyed and proud, and realized that petty fighting at home means nothing, when it really counts the Munayer boys stand with/for each other.

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