

# What's new at Musalaha?



1. The monthly Musalaha Young Adults Reconciliation Leadership Training Course is set for March 8th. Israeli Pastor Evan Thomas will be presenting on Stages, Biblical Principles, and Obstacles to Reconciliation.

2. At the end of this month Musalaha's women's department will be forming a new reconciliation group for Israeli and Palestinian women. March 27-31 these women will journey together to Holland. Please pray that the neutral ground will be effective in breaking down walls and building bridges between these women and their communities.

3. Hear what Israeli and Palestinian believing youth have to say about reconciliation at Musalaha's youth blog at musalahayouth.blogspot.co.il. Musalaha is also developing a youth curriculum for reconciliation. For more information, please contact us at musalaha@netvision.net.il.



4. Our newest volunteer, Phoenicia, just arrived from the USA. She hopes to gain new understanding about the conflict and reconciliation and to serve the Israeli and Palestinian communities. Contact musalaha@netvision.net.il for information on volunteering.



# Taking the Message to Heart

I would like to briefly share a project that some of our women initiated and carried out on their own. At our last Cyprus/Petra group follow up, we spoke about power and the power of working together to change our communities and societies. We brainstormed ways to do this, from various ways to outreach, raise money, and invest in the lives of children. When we thought about practical implementation of our ideas, these women decided to invest in children who would participate in a Musalaha summer camp. Since they would know exactly where the money goes, they could trust that it would actually support those for whom it was intended.

The women something in return. Some women volunteered to bake cookies to sell, and others brought olive wood products from Bethlehem. The evening's cultural exchange revolved around learning each other's wedding traditions. One Jewish woman shared about the Jewish wedding tradition of the ketuba contract, and another Palestinian woman shared about the henna party ritual before a Palestinian wedding.

We had time to interact with some others on the kibbutz where we were staying, so we invited them to come and participate in our Cultural Exchange and Bazaar. We had singing, dancing, drums, costumes, and explanations of the Jewish and Palestinian wedding customs. We were able to raise a sizeable sum for our children's camp, while encouraging the women to learn more about one another and their customs. The other Israeli groups on the kibbutz that participated in this event enjoyed the evening and the director even expressed interest in having Musalaha train his volunteers.

I am so proud of our women who took the message of power and empowerment to heart. The effort and initiative of these women resulted in a beautiful evening that was a blessing to our conference participants, and those around us. Over 200 people will be affected through the efforts of seven women, from those who attended and enjoyed the evening, the parents who could not otherwise afford to send their children to the camp, to the children attending the camp. Don't tell me that one person can't change the world; we can all make a difference in our contexts, and the resulting ripple effect can change countless lives.

-Hedva Haymov



Musalaha  
Spring 2013

## PENETRATING THE WALLS OF FEAR

When involved in a conflict situation, we face many pressures and challenges. In the Israeli/Palestinian context, we face confusion, lack of clarity, and interest groups lobbying for our support and attention. There is betrayal, and pressure to retreat from relationship with those from the opposing side, and to identify with your people group alone. At times there is a financial cost, or a psychological cost – the self-doubt that emerges when we think, "Maybe the majority that opposes us is correct."

When faced with confusing situations, we are challenged to choose the right path and pay the price of that choice. Making the right choice is difficult. Discerning God's call for us in times of conflict and crisis is challenging; at times we know what the right choice is, but we are hesitant because of the immediate consequences that will result. But that is our test all the same. Oftentimes, we only see the rewards of our faithfulness after we have made our choices, sometimes long after our choices are made.

When we are in a conflict situation, we face many pressures and challenges. In the Israeli/Palestinian context, we face confusion, lack of clarity, and interest groups lobbying for our support and attention. There is betrayal, and pressure to retreat from relationship with those from the opposing side, and to identify with your people group alone. At times there is a financial cost, or a psychological cost – the self-doubt that emerges when we think, "Maybe the majority that opposes us is correct."

When we are in the middle of a conflict, as are Israelis and Palestinians, it can be difficult to seek peace and reconciliation when the situation still seems so grim. Yet, the Biblical narrative of Pesach and Pascha teaches us to persevere, to hold to our God-given vision, and to expect his deliverance in new and unexpected ways. We hold this message of encouragement in our hearts, and we wish all of you a wonderful Pesach and Pascha celebrating redemption and restoration in your spiritual life and personal endeavors.

Blessings,  
Salim J. Munayer and the Musalaha Staff

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# Munayer family update

To be honest not much has happened since the last time I wrote...saying that, when I think about it quite a bit has happened.

1. Jack and Daniel came for a visit for several weeks. Daniel was delayed in coming and getting Jack to the airport with 25cm of snow on the ground was to say the least, challenging.
2. Both have returned to UNI work happily and although it was LOVELY to see them it was also lovely to see them go back to something they both enjoy.
3. John is in the middle of his outreach working with orphan children in India with YWAM and seems to be enjoying himself and the challenges he faces.

4. Sam is alone again after four weeks of wrestling with his brothers, and having company all the time. Salim and I are here, but we don't count, being over 50 years.
5. Salim is taking a sabbatical from the Bethlehem Bible College. I was hoping this included helping me with the weekly shop and other exciting chores...so far no dice!
6. I have just made 350 jars of marmalade and am sick and bored of it...only another 150 to go. Taking a break from this as my arm hurts from squeezing the pipe bag.
7. Susu the budgie died of cold, old age or a sore, does not really matter as he is dead and gone. Sam gets to choose a new pet, ALL of his brothers want a snake. No dice!

8. It did snow in Jerusalem and everything looked pretty and was quiet, a respite from the usual. Now it melted and we are back to normal. Snow in Jerusalem is unusual and celebrated, this year it fell on the day Jack left for the airport so it was annoying.
  9. I am looking forward to John's return 17/3. I want to hear all about his fun and travels and growth and experiences except the shark dive and bungee jumping.
- In one short month much has happened, till the next time...bye for now. -Kay

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*Musalaha has also received recognition from [www.excellenceingiving.com](http://www.excellenceingiving.com)*

# Committing to Stewardship



This past December 28-30 we held our annual winter women's conference on the theme of Intergenerational Trauma. Three months prior to the conference, we had full registration. We had a record number of 90 women attend, including 50 new women who joined us. Since we had so many first-time Musalaha participants, we spent some time getting to know one another and integrating the two groups. Together we all received an introduction on trauma, and afterwards our veteran participants had a workshop on intergenerational trauma and traumatization, while the new participants learned about the Biblical principles of reconciliation. The two groups joined together for meals, prayer and worship.

Our initial prayer and devotion session was helpful in setting the mood for the conference. Women were open, interested and excited. The first time participants reminded us why we do what we do, and what a blessing it is that we can meet and fellowship together. We had many new women join us from the West Bank, and they were from a mixture of traditional and evangelical backgrounds. Many were amazed to learn that there are Jewish people who believe in Jesus, and they wanted to come and meet these believing

Israelis and see for themselves. Some of our new Israeli women were unaware that Palestinians must apply for permission to leave the West Bank and enter Israel. This was an opportunity for both new groups to hear a little bit about each other's day to day experiences. Learning about one another, correcting misinformation, and building relationships is such an important part of what we do. On the other hand, our veteran participants were excited to see their friends, and we heard many conversations ranging from family issues, to current political problems throughout the weekend.

Addressing trauma as the main theme of the conference was timely, as many of our women experienced some sort of trauma in the last three months. We paid special attention to media and its role in promoting or attacking a certain side during hostilities, and its effect on those who watch or read the subsequent reports. We discussed what sort of trauma our side has caused the other side, and the trauma we have suffered at the hands of the other. Both the Israeli and Palestinian women noted similar expressions and reactions to trauma, and they were eager to find ways to break the cycle of violence and move our communities toward peace. Committing to be better stewards of what we say and how we

communicate, we resolved to work towards positive methods of communication.

After this conference, the Israeli women expressed interest in getting governmental permission to take a trip to Bethlehem. The Palestinian women, likewise, were a bit less timid about spending time in Israel. Many of us decided to visit the beautiful, scenic Rosh HaNikra together, and before I even arrived home from the conference, Palestinian and Israeli women had posted pictures on Facebook. I recently spoke with one of our Israeli participants who stayed in touch with her Palestinian roommate from the conference. When the Palestinian woman had permission to leave Bethlehem, the two of them met on Ben Yehuda Street in downtown Jerusalem and spent an afternoon together in the old and new city.

The togetherness we experienced through worship, prayer, study, and fellowship was amazing. Our staff was encouraged to see the strengthening relationships between these women and their commitment to reconciliation. We are anticipating great things this year, and we are excited to see what God has in store for us.

*-Hedva Haymov  
Musalaha Womens's Department*

# United by the King of Angels

Once upon a holiday night, we entered into the 2013 New Year with anticipation to see what God has for us. On January 5th, I had the opportunity to participate in the third annual worship night which was hosted by Musalaha and Shemen Sasson.

I didn't know what to expect or what the evening would be like considering that there would be Israelis and Palestinians from Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Bethlehem. Just two days leading up to the event, my Palestinian friends and I discussed the worship night. They were trying to understand how a group of people can pray to Jesus who is love, and at the same time go to the military and be part of a system that inflicts injustice and pain. While I have my own concerns and I don't understand some of these things as well, I wanted to be a part of this and explore something new.

I went anyway, but was nervous as to what sort of arguments or disagreements may arise throughout the evening. Yet, I knew and had faith that it would be an amazing night participating in worship. My faith was affirmed; the music, the lyrics and the common love of Jesus spread so much love in

our hearts. At this particular time we had the chance to be in touch with each other, filled with hope.

That evening I had the unique opportunity to see unity! Looking around the hall, I saw people sitting side by side, worshipping together in Arabic and Hebrew. Each side expected the other to join in; even if they didn't know the language, they could follow along with the transliteration on the screen. So Israelis worshipped with us in Arabic, and we worshipped with Israelis in Hebrew. United by the Lord, regardless of anyone's background, political view, or ideology, people were worshipping, singing, holding hands, and dancing together to the sound of music. It was quite an experience!

As it was my first time in this sort of worship experience, it was a bit overwhelming. But I didn't want to simply remain an observer of my surroundings, so I decided to join in as well. Being there in that remarkable atmosphere, one cannot simply stand on the sidelines. Even if I wanted to simply watch, I couldn't! The vibes in that room, surrounded by nearly 300 people worshipping together, were unified and intensely moving.

There was a part of that evening where we were given some time to get to know the person next to us by shaking hands and introducing ourselves. It reminded me of the ritual in Orthodox/Catholic churches during mass called "Peace of Christ," where there is the chance to exchange names and meet one another. Brief moments like this, which were strangely familiar, and the unity of our national groups raising voices in worship, which I am unaccustomed to, made for a beautiful and memorable evening.

Many thoughts went through my head that night, and I thought about my earlier argument with my friends. This worship evening made me feel strongly that Jesus is for everyone, despite one's background and choices. I am grateful for this experience, and I hope you are encouraged, as I was, by this event. Even with our differences, moments of unity are attainable, and we can worship together in spite of it all. This experience made me realize that with God, anything is possible.

*-Nanor Arakelian  
Office Manager*



Here at Musalaha, we often find ourselves in a classroom setting. We sit in front of a presenter, learning about principles of faith and concepts of society before discussing them together with a decided civility. Though this exchange of ideas is of the utmost importance to reconciliation, the classroom setting is not usually where the heart of our mission is most deeply expressed. The way our minds and hearts are subtly changed as we converse over the post-teaching lunch-table not only has the potential to be just as powerful as the teaching itself, but also gives us an opportunity to implement its content. In reconciliation, the intellectual and the relational go hand in hand: we are encouraged to listen and open our minds when we hear words spoken in friendship, and are encouraged to build friendships when we understand the issues and have a forum in which to interact.

The intellect and the relationship need each other to advance on the journey of reconciliation, but it is the latter that keeps us from veering off the path in difficult times, such as the most recent conflict between Gaza and Israel. When rushing to the bomb shelter for the fifth time in a day, reciting "love your enemy" may help us keep negative feelings under control because we understand that this is the right way to act. But receiving that love in the form of a concerned message from a friend on the "enemy" side has greater power. It can challenge these feelings by proving that there is love across the border, rendering them unable to become those of hateful generalization. After seeing the one too many graphic pictures of your people's innocent victims flooding social media, recalling a lesson learned about the other side's perspective may help us calm our hostile emotions because we understand the human nature from which they are coming. But a display of that mutual-understanding, in the form of a friend from the other side denouncing insensitive, stereotyped social media posts attacking yours, has greater power.

# The Importance of Relationships

It can challenge these emotions by proving that we have advocates who are unafraid of their society's standards, keeping them from amounting to bitter revenge.

Having genuine and active relationships does not change the pressures of the world around us, but it gives us hope because it proves that defying the trends of that world is possible. The relational examples above are taken from discussions that occurred in two meetings among veteran young adult groups this winter: one of the Sand and Sound group of 2010 and one with the Bridge Builders group of 2012. Many expressed that some of the most meaningful and encouraging conversations they had during the fighting were shared with the friends they had met on their Musalaha program. Inversely, having these friends and learning about their side is what allowed them to stand up to the spiteful generalizations among their peers. These two veteran groups have yielded some of the most active individuals in our programs in the last decade. They are bold and caring, going to great lengths to meet on a regular basis and become part of each other's lives. It is our earnest hope that this continues to be the trend in Musalaha, because in this space created by relationships - listening to each other's pain, blessing each other with genuine love, and seeking the welfare of each other's side - the heart of reconciliation beats triumphantly.

*-Ronit Kory  
Musalaha Young Adults Department*

