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The Voice of the Martyrs Canada

Proclaiming...

The “Prince of Peace”
in Ancient Bible Lands

“For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given....
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

~ Isaiah 9:6 NKJV

What Does It Mean To Be a Believer in the Palestinian Territories?



Article Photos: VOM Canada

“I am here today only because people like you found the truth of Jesus and then shared it with me.”
~ Tass Saada, Author of *Once an Arafat Man*

By Floyd A. Brobbel, CEO for The Voice of the Martyrs Canada

Christians living in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank make up an estimated 1.5 to 2 percent of the region’s population, totalling approximately 85,000 to 110,000 Christians.¹ According to an article in *Christianity Today*, titled *Why Many Christians Want to Leave Palestine and Why Many Won’t*, about half of the population’s Palestinian Christians are Greek Orthodox (48 percent), while 38 percent are Latin Catholic. Evangelicals and Lutherans represent only four percent of the overall Christian population. While most believers reside in various areas throughout the Palestinian Territories, a prominent cluster of them live in the greater Bethlehem vicinity.

The historical Christian community generally enjoys freedom of religion. For example, evangelical churches in Palestine have received legal recognition to issue marriage licences, open church bank accounts, and purchase land in the church’s name. Yet, despite these gains in achieving freedom, pockets of tension and contempt from Muslim activists still appear periodically. And though freedom of religion in Palestine means Christians are free to gather and worship, evangelism outside of the church remains prohibited. In reference to sharing the Christian faith with others, Palestinian Pastor Steven Khoury says, “Persecution and confrontation are all around us.”

Despite the risks of reaching out with the love of Christ to the spiritually lost in Palestine, churches are finding ways to share the Gospel. One Palestinian pastor held a week of meetings to encourage his church members to

continue growing in their faith, regardless of the political, societal and religious troubles they encounter daily. “In our fifth meeting,” the pastor reported, “I asked those [who were] 30 years old and under to take the seats in the front section of the auditorium because I believed that God was going to call many of them to His ministry. The worship was electrifying as our songs filled the meeting place [with] sacrifices of praise to the Lord Most High. My challenge that evening was, ‘If our Muslim neighbours are the majority, we need to see a breakthrough in the majority.’”



During the meeting, the pastor then asked those attending the following question: “What hinders the church from reaching out to its neighbours?” The response was encouraging: “Praise God that 33 young leaders who had gathered at the front dedicated themselves to God’s calling and prayed to be anointed by the Holy Spirit for that task. Now we are praying that God will use our church for the break-

through, which will bring a revival for which we have been longing.”

While the church prepares for revival, keep in mind that if Christians in Palestine are at risk of persecution for their commitment to the Lord’s Great Commission work, at even greater risk are converts from Islam. These new believers in Christ face harsh discrimination from their family, friends and members of their community. Pastor Khoury explains: “Born-again Palestinians are usually alienated by everyone. Many of the Jews don’t like us because we tell them their Messiah has

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Standard Version, unless otherwise indicated.

Calendar and "Table Talk" pages:
Vanessa Brobbel, Manager of Special Projects,
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already come, died, and rose again. Many Muslims don't like us because we teach that Jesus Christ is God and that He is the only way to heaven. And lastly, many Catholics don't like us because we tell their people that only Jesus' grace, not their works or their saints, can save them from their sins."²

A number of years ago, Greg Musselman, VOMC's Minister-at-Large, shared the story of a new convert named Mohammad. (This testimony was published in the March 2014 issue of *The Voice of the Martyrs Canada* magazine.) Mohammad faced significant pressure due to his conversion to Christianity, which almost caused him to walk away from his faith. One day, he opened the front door of his home, only to discover an envelope containing a letter and one bullet shell. The letter read: "This bullet was shot in the air; the next one will be shot in your heart."

This threat was the straw that almost broke the camel's back. First, Mohammad's Muslim wife did not support his Christian activities because of all the subsequent trouble. Then, having been fired from his job as an educator, he experienced further difficulties due to unemployment. After receiving this terrible death threat, Mohammad felt he had gone through enough hardship: "I decided that was it for me. I didn't want Christianity anymore. I didn't want Islam. I didn't want to be anything!"

This discouragement lasted several weeks until the Lord revealed His truth to Mohammad. "I was sitting on the sofa when I reached behind me and grabbed the Bible," he recalled. "I opened it to Psalm 23. I was almost in a rage because I was so frustrated with my life. I remembered that, when I was a child, the kids would throw stones at me or beat me up [because] I had no protection. But now that I'm with my Father, and He is holding my hand, I should be more protected than this."

Mohammad noticed that his anger began to slip away when reading and thinking about the Lord as his Shepherd. "That really began to encourage me," he explained. "To think that God was with me.... I decided that no matter how I was treated, it didn't matter. I'm going to become like a nail. The more they hammer me, the stronger I'm going to be in the wall."

Pastor Wurmbrand wisely stated, "Where there is love, it is Jesus that will surely triumph." While many Palestinian Christians have left to find employment, education, peace and religious tolerance in other countries, those who have chosen to stay desire to see their people transformed by the love of Christ. These dear brothers and sisters in Christ ask that we remember them and pray for their success in boldly sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

On behalf of these Palestinian believers, please join us in prayer for their following requests:

1. Ask that the fire of God will keep burning strongly within our hearts for His glory.
2. As a church, may we be faithful witnesses of the Lord in the lives of others by serving as "salt" and "light."
3. Pray for God's protection and boldness as we speak the truth of the Gospel.

Continued on page 5...

The goals of VOMC are expressed in our "Ministry Purposes" as follows:

1. To encourage and empower persecuted Christians to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).
2. To give practical relief and spiritual support to the families of Christian martyrs (Matthew 25:36).
3. To equip persecuted Christians to love and win to Christ those opposed to the Gospel (Romans 12:14).
4. To help believers rebuild their lives and Christian witness in countries where they have formerly suffered oppression (Nehemiah 1:3; 2:5).
5. To promote the fellowship of all believers by informing the world of the faith and courage of persecuted Christians, thereby inspiring believers to a deeper level of commitment to Christ and involvement in His Great Commission (Hebrews 13:3; Galatians 6:2).

Spending of funds is confined to board-approved programs and projects. Each restricted contribution designated towards a board-approved program or project will be used as designated with the understanding that when the need for such a program or project has been met, or cannot be completed for any reason determined by the board, the remaining restricted contributions designated for such program or project will be used where needed most. Gifts from individual donors of \$10 and more are acknowledged and receipted with an official receipt for income tax purposes.



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PALESTINE, THE “HOT POTATO”

Additional Message from Floyd A. Brobbel, CEO for The Voice of the Martyrs Canada

“THE GOD OF THE BIBLE IS CRYSTAL CLEAR TO ALL WHO WILL LISTEN: HE LOVES US ALL WITH AN UNFATHOMABLE LOVE, WITH AN EVERLASTING LOVE, WITH AN UNQUENCHABLE LOVE. HIS LOVE IS SO AMAZING, SO DIVINE, THAT HE ACTUALLY OFFERS ALL OF US – JEW AND GENTILE ALIKE – THE FREE GIFT OF SALVATION... AND THEN HE WANTS TO EMPOWER US TO BE A BLESSING TO OTHERS.”

~ Joel C. Rosenberg

Did you ever play the “Hot Potato” game as a kid? For this interactive game, all the participating players gather around to form a circle. Then a round object, referred to as the “hot potato,” is handed from one person to another. When the music starts to play, they pass the “hot potato” to the person beside them; and, when the music stops, whoever’s still holding the “hot potato” is eliminated from the game. Whenever I write about Israel and Palestine concerning persecution, I feel like I have a “hot potato” in my hands – except this is no game.

Please understand that it is not my intention to downplay the theological and political sensitivities of this matter. Within VOMC, there are differing views on various topics, like the one we are looking at now. However, those of us representing the ministry cannot afford to take one side on this issue. The work we are engaged in, which involves coming alongside persecuted followers of Jesus, reaches beyond political boundaries and theological frameworks.

While there are many vital issues of concern that we as believers can consider, it is important in our ministry work to remain mindful that the Lord has specifically called VOMC to raise a voice on behalf of persecuted Christians globally. Because of this mandate, the ministry utilizes the geopolitical map most commonly used by the news media and book publishers. Although there are controversies relating to that map (and it is beneficial to discuss these issues), in this case, our laser-like focus must solely be on the persecuted Christians who are suffering, not the map.

I know that this position may not satisfy those who hold to a specific stance on the Israel/Palestine conflict. However, VOMC must stay faithful to our God-ordained calling, which requires us to bypass particular views and opinions that are not essential to our work. VOMC, as an evangelical and non-denominational ministry, believes it is necessary to serve persecuted Christians regardless of denominational affiliation. We seek unity in the core beliefs of the historic Christian faith and the freedom to differ in the non-essentials. Further, VOMC works to promote the fellowship of *all* Christian believers. Therefore, we must tell the story of Palestinian Christians who are suffering persecution for their faithfulness, and compassionately serve them so that the church in Palestine can thrive and grow as an indispensable part of the body of Christ.

The leadership of VOMC recognizes that, though Palestine has no official country status, residents living in territories within the nation of Israel – most often referred to as the Palestinian Territories – are identified as Palestinians. Palestine, therefore, can be classified as a nation since it is home to a specific group of people who share a similar culture, even though that group does not have official political sovereignty. In Canada, for example, Quebec is often referred to as “a nation within a nation.”

From VOMC’s perspective, as discovered by members of our staff who have travelled to Israel and met with persecuted Palestinian believers, our Christian brothers and sisters in the Palestinian Territories

THE LEADERSHIP OF VOMC RECOGNIZES THAT, THOUGH PALESTINE HAS NO OFFICIAL COUNTRY STATUS, RESIDENTS LIVING IN TERRITORIES WITHIN THE NATION OF ISRAEL – MOST OFTEN REFERRED TO AS THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES – ARE IDENTIFIED AS PALESTINIANS.



Article Photos: VOMC Canada

feel rejected and neglected by much of the body of Christ because of their national/cultural identity. They also endure persecution within their own communities because of their Christian faith, resulting in them experiencing additional harassment by militant members of the Muslim community. The silence of Western Christians over their plight confuses and demoralizes them.

Pastor Richard Wurmbbrand, who was a Messianic Jew, founded the ministry of The Voice of the Martyrs (International) to assist the persecuted church wherever it was located. His mandate was to provide persecuted Christians with a piece of bread (practical physical assistance), as well as the “Bread of Life” (spiritual resources). Though there would be other occasions to discuss varying theological positions or

affiliations, Pastor Wurmbbrand felt that God’s mandate in Hebrews 13:3 was clear: To remember and support *all* persecuted Christians within the body of Christ. In doing so, we bring glory to God by seeking to do good to the household of faith (Galatians 6:10), as we are convinced that the church is God’s plan for impacting the world for Christ.

As you read through the following pages of this October issue, I pray you will thank God for our faithful Palestinian brothers and sisters in Christ. I hope their stories will encourage you to remember them often in your prayers, asking that they serve as the Lord’s agents of peace and reconciliation in a troubled land. 🌍

...continued from page 3

4. May all believers in these areas of persecution experience God’s power as they testify of His saving grace.
5. Pray that the challenging economic situations presently facing many believers will ease, and that our Lord will provide employment opportunities so their income will not be negatively affected. In fact, may they be abundantly blessed as children of our loving Heavenly Father.

Many Christians in the West are committed to praying for the peace of Jerusalem. A vibrant church in the Palestinian Territories is part of the answer to

such prayers. As Pastor Khoury shares: “The same truth that changed your life and mine must be heard in your city, and in Jerusalem, and in the West Bank [and Gaza]. After all, it is not *my* Jerusalem, it is *our* Jerusalem.”

May the Lord grant these Palestinian believers the desires of their hearts, which are clearly in keeping with His....

Lloyd



Endnotes:

¹ These statistics are a close estimate gleaned from various organizations documenting the population of Christians in the Palestinian area.
² Khoury, Steven N., *In the Backyard of Jesus*. Living Sacrifice Book Company, Bartlesville, OK, 2012, p. 36.



VOM AROUND THE WORLD

BETHLEHEM: The Glenn Penner Scholarship Award

“Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.” – Joshua 1:8 NIVUK

The late Glenn Penner, a former CEO of VOMC (who led the ministry from 2007 to 2010) recognized the great need for leaders within the church to be well trained Biblically and theologically, particularly in nations where believers are persecuted for their faith in Christ. Glenn understood that many of these potential Christian leaders rarely had access to higher levels of education because the funds required to pay for such schooling were beyond their capacity to attain.

In response to this challenge, VOMC established the Glenn Penner Scholarship Award (GPSA) to help emerging Christian leaders from hostile or restricted nations to pursue – with excellence – their Biblical and professional training. In collaboration with recognized Christian educational institutions, these scholarship awards enable selected student candidates from persecuted regions to unleash their gifts and make effective use of them in their service for the Kingdom of God.



Photo: Bethlehem Bible College

In partnership with Bethlehem Bible College (BBC), VOMC has granted one of these scholarship awards to “Majed,” a student who is currently pursuing a Master’s degree focusing on “Theology in the Public Square.” This student is expected to graduate with his MA in December of 2024. The scholarship funding has already helped “Majed” (who comes from a non-Christian background) to complete his initial terms of studies in Biblical Theology and Exegesis at the same Bible college. This program has allowed him to develop a deeper perspective of foundational concepts such as creation, the fall of humankind,

God’s provision of redemption, and the completion (fulfillment) of Bible prophecy.

“Majed” has also learned how to interpret Biblical texts in the context of the times in which they were originally written, enabling him to better comprehend how God’s Word applies to our lives today. The awarded student writes: “I see that learning is not limited to changing some behaviours, but rather it is a door to freedom (2 Corinthians 3:17); that is, through it we taste and enjoy the divine sweetness [of] uniting with the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:17). It is as if we are flying [with] Him – soaring to high spiritual heights – and then glorifying Him by diving into spiritual depths.”

While studying at BBC, “Majed” received training in spiritual discipline, which has helped him to connect more meaningfully to the heart of God by experiencing life in close relationship with Him. “As for my view of God, it really changed because I became aware that He is the closest Beloved One,” Majed reflects. “Although He is transcendent and sublime, He is the One who manages all [of] my life affairs, and so I depend on Him. As for my faith, which has certainly changed because of what I am learning, I’ve become confident... that *“all things work together for good...”* (Romans 8:28).

We, at VOMC, are looking forward to continuing our partnership with BBC by supporting “Majed” until he fully completes his theological studies. We joyfully celebrate this dear brother in Christ as he endeavours to further his education and draw nearer to the heart of God. Please join us in praying that the Lord will abundantly bless him in his studies, as well as other students who likewise hunger to learn more about God’s Living Word and pursue their studies for the furtherance of His Kingdom. 🌍

**Note: Majed’s name has been changed for security purposes, and his translated quotes were slightly revised, in keeping with Canadian Press Style, grammar and spelling.*



Table Talk *Palestine*

How to Play:

Using only the letters in “TEA,” complete the words in the olive tree. (Words read across only.) Every word must contain each letter of “TEA” at least once. As a bonus, match each word with the definitions below. Printable resources are available at:

vomcanada.com/TableTalkPalestine

Definitions:

Belonging to a very distant past: _____

A fast-running deerlike animal with upward pointed horns: _____

The garden in which Jesus was betrayed by Judas: _____

Small brown oval-shaped fruit: _____

The period/season for gathering crops: _____

A sustained fight between large organized armed forces: _____

A day or period of celebration: _____

A regular gathering place for people whose purpose is to buy/sell food or wares: _____

The largest living land animal in today’s world: _____

A territory in the Middle East that’s located on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea: _____



TEA

D _ _ S

M _ R K _ _

B _ _ L _

_ N C I _ N _

H _ R V _ S _

_ L _ P H _ N _

_ N _ _ L O P _

F _ S _ I V _ L

P _ L _ S _ I N _

G _ _ H S _ M _ N _

Colour the Hebrew words and learn their English meaning.



עץ זית בר

Wild Olive Tree



שורש

Root



מושתל

Grafted



Along the Way Into “Closed” Countries

Rami Ayyad was the director of the only Christian bookstore in Gaza City. This store happened to be situated within the building of a church that was frequently threatened and even bombed on two occasions. Although Rami himself had also been threatened several times, he was not flustered when a local sheikh came into the shop insisting that the Christian bookstore director convert to Islam. Calmly, yet firmly, Rami refused to forsake his faith.

While mentioning the confrontation he encountered to his wife that night, Rami’s attitude reflected peace and a willingness to risk his life for the Gospel. His wife Pauline struggled to understand how he could be so serene when facing life-threatening danger. “He was speaking like he was ready to die for his faith,” she recalls. God was preparing him for eternity, and Rami was clearly ready.

One evening in 2007, as he was closing shop for the day, Rami sensed trouble brewing from some bearded men who were lingering around the store. He called his family, warning them that he may be delayed. That was the last they heard from him. The next morning, Rami’s lifeless body was found in a field, with evidence revealing that he had been shot and stabbed numerous times. Pauline, who was four months pregnant with their third child at the time, was devastated. Ten years passed before any arrests were made of the attackers. A previously recorded interview that Greg Musselman had with Pauline is available at www.vomcanada.com/pauline.

Artist: Mariave Jaddou
Artwork Title: Holy Land Map
Medium: Glass, Glass Paint



October 2023

His Way “... some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree....” Romans 11:17 ESV

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 ERITREA Pray for the families of Christian prisoners who have fled to other countries.	2 KYRGYZSTAN Pray that churches will minister to those who are unable to find jobs.	3 TANZANIA Pray for Mama G., the widow of a martyred pastor, using Psalm 23 as a guide.	4 MALI Pray that believers will encourage and support one another amid pressure from militant Islamists.	5 ALGERIA Pray for Berber Christians who are sharing the Gospel with those of the Arab Muslim majority.	6 MYANMAR (BURMA) Pray for continued church growth despite persecution, and the effective discipling of new believers.	7 COLOMBIA Pray that God will provide for the needs of Christian workers serving in the country's dangerous “red zones.”
8 UGANDA Pray for effective print and audio Bible distributions to take place rurally and in areas of persecution.	9 COMOROS Pray that those receiving audio Bibles will be receptive to the Gospel and come to faith in Christ.	10 NEPAL Pray that Bibles will remain legal so believers can be strengthened and spiritual seekers may be reached.	11 LAOS Pray that the Holy Spirit will empower evangelists as they proclaim the Gospel of Christ.	12 QATAR Pray for Qatar's few Christians, who must exercise caution when gathering for worship.	13 MALAYSIA Pray that more ethnic Malays will be able to receive a translation of the Bible in their own language.	14 KAZAKHSTAN Pray that ethnic Kazakh Christians will become firmly established in their faith.
15 INDONESIA Pray that ministry workers will find ways to distribute Bibles to those in remote areas.	16 IRAQ Pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal the reality of Christ to Iraqis in need of salvation.	17 MOROCCO Pray for the body of Christ in this North African nation, using John 17:20-26 as a guide.	18 AFGHANISTAN Pray for displaced Afghan Christians who have fled to neighbouring restricted nations.	19 CUBA Pray that every Cuban believer in need of God's Word will have an opportunity to receive their own Bible.	20 BANGLADESH Pray for Christians who are learning how to reach their Muslim neighbours with the Gospel.	21 INDIA Pray that Christians will remain steadfast in their faith amid familial and governmental opposition.
22 DJIBOUTI Pray that God will call more labourers to the harvest field and then fully equip them for ministry.	23 TURKMENISTAN Pray for evangelists seeking creative ways to share the Gospel with those in need of salvation.	24 LIBYA Pray that government officials will no longer attempt to close and demolish churches.	25 YEMEN Pray for ministry workers who stayed in Yemen to maintain a Christian witness during the civil war.	26 JORDAN Pray that God will provide for Christians who have lost their jobs, reputations and/or properties due to their faith.	27 MOZAMBIQUE Pray for Christians who have lost everything in recent attacks by militant Islamists.	28 LEBANON Pray that new governing leaders will recognize churches as shining lights in their communities.
29 UZBEKISTAN Pray for the spread of the Gospel amid an increase in Islamic fundamentalism.	30 SOMALIA Pray for the protection of evangelists who are risking their lives to minister in the country.	31 SUDAN Pray that new believers will be effectively disciplined so they can become firmly grounded in their faith.				



Scan to access
Digital Calendar



Participate in Learning: *Palestine*



1 Weigh In

Agriculture is a large industry in Palestine. Close to 50 percent of all cultivated land consists of olive groves, making it the chief crop in the region. Some of these olive trees are hundreds, if not thousands, of years old.

2

The Palestinian Territories are within the country of Israel, just as Quebec is within the country of Canada. The ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Territories has made practising Christianity extremely difficult throughout the region. In comparison to Palestine's 85 percent Muslim-majority population, evangelical Christians represent less than two percent. In addition to experiencing the targeted hostility associated with being born in Palestine, followers of Jesus are also subjected to widespread persecution from those within their own communities who strongly oppose their faith.

3

As a result of the increasing conflict and persecution, many Palestinians feel they have no choice but to flee the region. It is estimated that 55 percent of the world's refugees come from three territories globally, and Palestine is one of them.

4

Palestinian culture is highly collectivist; meaning that, relationally, people's lives are largely interdependent and group centric. In collectivist societies, the well-being of the group tends to be more important than the well-being of an individual. Family ties are extremely strong and serve as the determining factor in most major decisions. Additionally, interpersonal relationships take precedence over personal goals. For example, it is common for people to alter their plans to host someone in their home, even when there is little to no advance notice.

1. While Canada's climate typically ranges between extremely cold winters and very warm summers, the temperature fluctuations in Palestine throughout the year are less severe, making it an ideal environment for growing olives and other tropical fruits. What role does the environment play in the types of agriculture a region can produce? Experiment: Plant an ornamental cabbage during this autumn season, as well as a tomato plant. Observe the effects that the cooler seasonal temperatures have on the plants.

2. The two most important commands Jesus gave were to: 1) love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and 2) love our neighbours as ourselves. All the other Biblical commandments centre around these two. Read 1 John 4:7-21 aloud. What is the role of the Israeli and Palestinian church in living out Jesus' commandments in the midst of the country's ongoing conflict? How has the conflict's divisiveness added to the isolation that many Palestinian Christians are experiencing? Please spend some time in prayer on behalf of these suffering believers.

3. Palestinian refugees are forced to leave behind their homes, properties, possessions, families, friends and sources of income. If you ever lost everything, and were forced to leave your residence, where would you go – especially if you didn't have the support of a caring church community?

4. Learn the differences between individualistic and collectivist societies. What are some of the challenges collectivist cultures may face when relating to those that are individualistic? What important values can we learn in our highly individualistic culture when examining collectivist cultures? What is one helpful attribute of collectivism that you would like to apply to your life here in Canada?

One Way

Denying being made in the image of God, Muslims instead find identity in serving their deity, Allah. They believe that their god breathed life into human beings during creation, but that there is no distinction between us and animals. According to their beliefs, Allah shares no attributes with anyone, including members of humanity. They state that the only way to know him is through the prophets and the authoritative teachings of the Quran. A Muslim's relationship with their god is strictly that of "slave" to "master." There is no assurance of heaven, no unconditional love, and no personal relationship, only service to Allah in hopes of being 'good enough' for heaven.

The Bible teaches that, in the beginning, God created humans in His image, distinguishing them from the rest of creation (Genesis 1:27). Being made in God's image, humanity then possesses the capacity to express His moral attributes – including holiness, love, righteousness and wisdom, to name a few. Christians are invited to enjoy a personal relationship with God, which was made possible through the sacrificial provision of His Son Jesus Christ. Through this personal relationship, believers find their identity in being God's sons and daughters; joint heirs with Christ in inheriting the Kingdom of heaven. When Christians serve God, as a desire from the overflow of their redeemed hearts, they are filled with hope, expectation and unconditional love (Romans 8:14-17).

Way Out

In regions where followers of Jesus are heavily persecuted, it can be difficult for Christian leaders to receive vitally needed Biblical training. The Palestinian Territories are no exception. To combat this need globally, VOMC has created the Glenn Penner Scholarship Award (GPSA), which is designed to help emerging Christian leaders from hostile or restricted nations pursue, with excellence, Biblical and professional training. In collaboration with established Christian educational institutions, this scholarship aims to equip potential leaders in the persecuted world theologically and Biblically within an academic setting. In Palestine, VOMC partners with Bethlehem Bible College by granting selected students Glenn Penner Scholarship Awards. This scholarship funding, in turn enables these students to better equip, lead and evangelize others within their Palestinian communities.

Sources:
Understanding the Times – A Survey of Competing Worldviews by Dr. Jeff Myers and Dr. David A. Noebel
<https://operationworld.org/locations/palestine/>
<https://www.everyculture.com/No-Sa/Palestine-West-Bank-and-Gaza-Strip.html>
<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook>
<https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/palestinian-culture/palestinian-culture-family>
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/20/infographic-world-refugee-day-journey>

Recommended Reads

Once an Arafat Man: The True Story of How a PLO Sniper Found a New Life by Tass Saada and Dean Merrill (adult); *Son of Hamas: A Gripping Account of Terror, Betrayal, Political Intrigue and Unthinkable Choices* by Mosab Hassan Yousef and Ron Brackin (adult); *In the Backyard of Jesus* by Steven N. Khoury (adult); *The Bronze Bow* by Elizabeth George Speare (teen).

ONCE AN ARAFAT MAN

By Tass Saada

The following testimony has been excerpted from Tass Saada's book of the same title and adapted with his permission. The accompanying introduction and conclusion, written by Joel C. Rosenberg, further testifies of God's transforming power and His sacrificial love for all humankind.

Introduction - Born in a world of radical Islam and violent Palestinian nationalism, by his teenage years Tass Saada was a cauldron of seething, roiling hatred. His family was close to the Saudi royal family. He [also] became personal friends with Yasser Arafat, a man he long regarded as a hero, and happily killed in his name. What follows is the unforgettable story of a jihadist who found Jesus... a violent revolutionary who was radically transformed one day by the power of the Holy Spirit and became a man of peace and compassion.

FORMER YOUNG WARRIOR (YEARS: 1968 TO 1973)

The morning sun felt warm on my back as I crouched behind a large pile of shrubbery I had scraped together, overlooking the Jordan River valley. Jericho, perhaps the world's oldest city, lay across the river in the distance. Here on the east side, my comrades and I had spent the night in a chilly cave along this range of hills. Now we were up early and excited about the surprise we would deliver to the advancing IDF (Israel Defense Forces) troops. My sleek, high-powered Simonov rifle with its telescopic sight lay beside me on the ground as I gazed down upon the quiet town of al-Karameh.

A trained sniper at 17 years old, I stood ready to do my job, waiting up on the hill for the opportune moment. I would pick off any IDF machine gunner who dared to stick his head up out of a tank or jeep. A soft breeze moved through the grass. I stared intently at the Allenby Bridge in the distance, the main crossing from the Israeli-controlled West Bank to the Jordanian territory where we sat.

The growling of the IDF engines grew louder. My heart began to pound. I positioned myself for steady action as I peered through my scope. The enemy convoy reached the edge of the town. I picked out my closest target, trained the weapon on his head, and ever so carefully squeezed the Simonov's trigger.... At nearly the same moment, my comrades below began firing from their hiding places. The firefight exploded all at once. The noise was deafening.

Somehow, after seven hours of gruesome combat, a ceasefire was called. I still do not know who arranged that or how it was done. The IDF withdrew and headed downriver to find another bridge they could use for returning to the West Bank. The smoke over al-Karameh began to clear. "We won! We won!" we shouted, slapping each other on the back.

As evening approached, we turned our attention to counting our losses. My unit of eight now num-

bered only three. Across the town, we went about the somber task of gathering and burying the dead. We mourned the fact that these friends were gone forever. It hurt deep within our souls.... The longer we worked, the more we realized we had paid a high price on that day. We eventually tallied 128 dead, several dozen wounded, and 150 missing. These numbers, we had to admit, were probably greater than the losses suffered by the IDF.

THE POINT OF SPIRITUAL SURRENDER (MARCH 14TH, 1993)

My friend Charlie talked non-stop as we drove to his house, telling me about the recent change in his life. I didn't understand half of what he was saying, probably because I wasn't paying full attention. He was still talking as we pulled into the driveway of his large, two-story home and headed inside. He opened the door for me so I could enter first. All of a sudden, I clued into his words as he said, "So the thing is this, Tass. If you want to have the peace I have, you must love a Jew."

I froze in my tracks. Why would he say an outrageous thing like that? Charlie knew me very well. He knew about my past with Fatah [Palestinian political party]. He knew I hated Jews with a passion. Was he Jewish, and I hadn't known it all these years? I swung around with a startled look on my face. "Why would you risk saying something like that? Stop it, please!" I sat down and took an extra breath.

"Well," Charlie said, "for starters, tell me what you know about Jesus Christ." I replied: "He was a prophet. We Muslims respect and honour Him for that. In fact, He was one of the most important prophets." My friend then announced, "Actually, he's more than a prophet. He is God's Son. He's the only God."

I bristled instantly. "That really makes me angry," I responded. "What you just said is blasphemy." (To Muslims, the idea of God having a Son implies that He had sex with Mary, which is a horrible thought.) I stood up to leave. "I don't know what's wrong with you," I continued. "First you told me I didn't have the fear of God in me, and now today you said I have to

love a Jew and that Jesus is supposed to be God's Son. This is nonsense. I'm out of here."

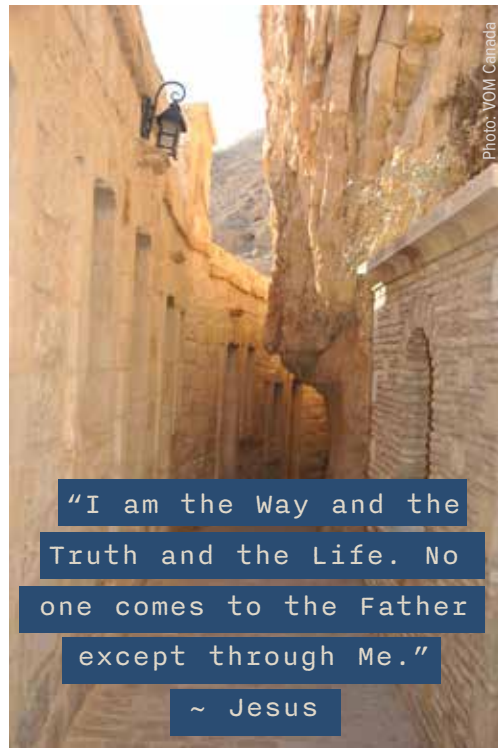
"Just a minute," [Charlie] countered, raising one hand. "Give me a chance to explain myself, all right? You haven't heard what I'm trying to say." Out of respect for our long friendship, I sat back down again. He picked up a book and placed it on the couch between us. I looked and saw that it was a Bible, a brand-new one with blue leather binding. Opening it

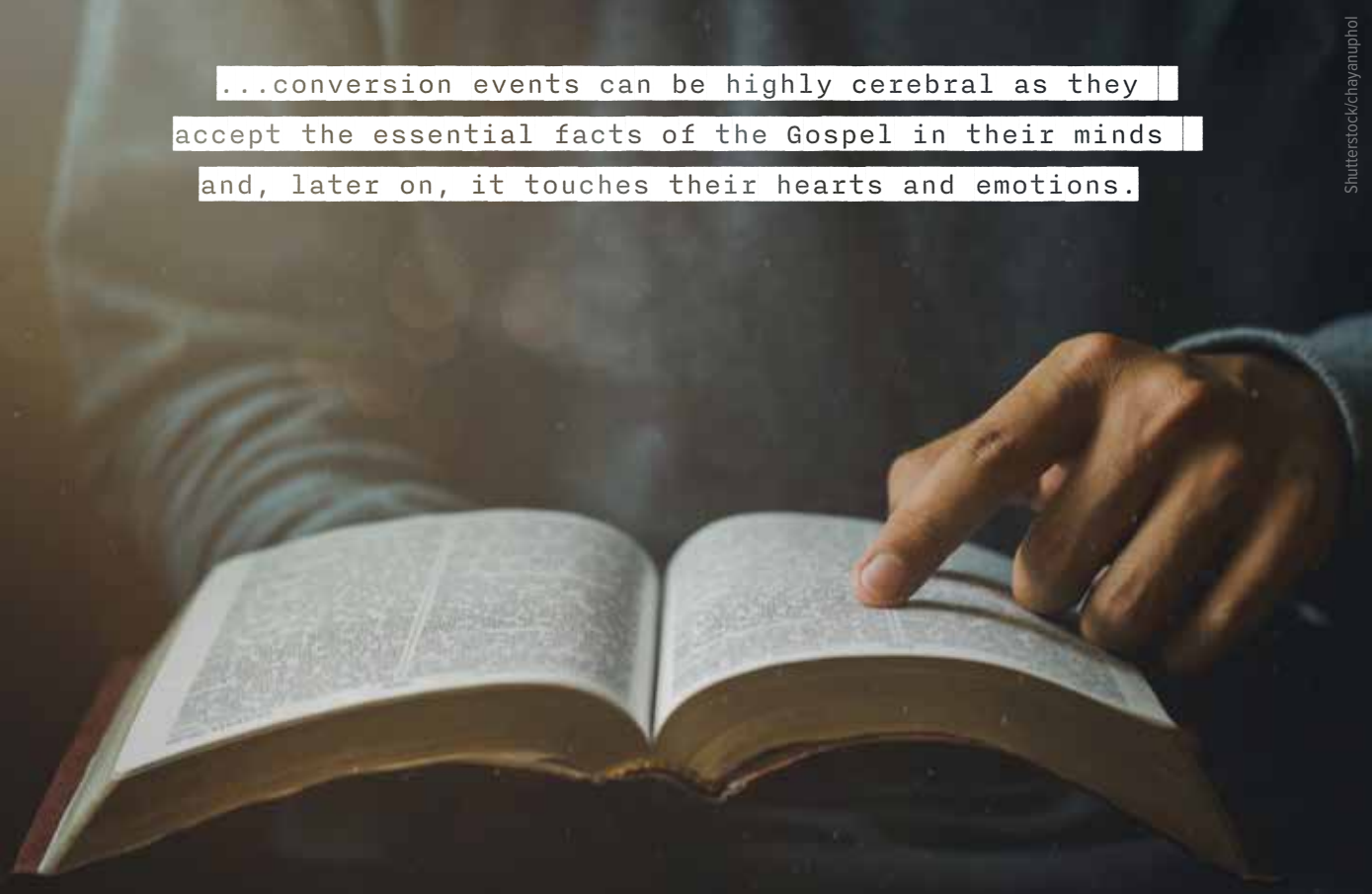
at random, he began to read: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*" (John 1:1).

The instant he said, "Word," I began to shake.... Before I knew it, I was on my knees. I didn't consciously decide to kneel; it just happened. I lost all awareness that Charlie was even in the room. A "Light" came into my field of vision.... The Light said in an audible tone, "*I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*" (John 14:6). I didn't know that these words were a repetition of what Jesus said during the Last Supper. As far as I was concerned, they were [conveying] a message from Jesus solely to me.

In this indescribable moment, I knew something else: the Triune God existed – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I knew this God loved me. "Oh, Jesus, come into my life!" I blurted out. "Forgive me and be my Lord and Saviour!" I felt as if a heavy load went flying off my shoulders. A sense of peace and joy rushed into my heart. The presence of God was so real, it seemed I could almost reach out and touch it. To affirm this unexpected and somewhat mystical experience of mine, [Charlie] quickly explained an essential fact: "The Bible says that *'there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved'*" (Acts 4:12).

I am well aware that not everyone's conversion to faith in Jesus Christ is quite so spectacular or dramatic. But a high percentage of Muslims who come to faith in Christ do so because of a vision, dream, or other supernatural experience. I believe that is not because we are something special but because we are stubborn. Others who convert simply because they





...conversion events can be highly cerebral as they accept the essential facts of the Gospel in their minds and, later on, it touches their hearts and emotions.

Shutterstock/chayanuphol

hear the Gospel and believe are perhaps the most blessed. Their conversion events can be highly cerebral as they accept the essential facts of the Gospel in their minds and, later on, it touches their hearts and emotions. For me, the phrase “born again” fit my reality perfectly. I felt as if I were starting my life all over again.

Charlie told me I would find peace if I learned to love a Jew. The Jew, Jesus Christ, had drained out of me my long-standing hatred for all other Jews. These people were no longer my foes; they were instead my cousins, going back to [the time of] Abraham. I began to see that the closer we all got to Jesus, the Messiah, the more reconciled we could become to one another.

Conclusion - At its core, this is a story of the greatness of our great God. It is the story of a man who fell in love with a Saviour who loves Arabs as well as Jews. The God of the Bible is crystal clear to all who will listen: He loves us all with an unfathomable love, with an everlasting love, with an unquenchable love. His love is so amazing, so divine, that He actually offers all of us – Jew and Gentile alike – the free gift of salvation through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. He wants to adopt each one of us into His own family. He wants to bless us. He wants to take care of us. He wants to heal us and change us and make us like Him. And then He wants to empower us to be a blessing to others. 🌍

**For information on Tass Saada's book, *Once an Arafat Man*, visit:
www.vomcanada.com/store**

HEART HEALTH

By Vanessa Brobbel
Manager of Special Projects
The Voice of the Martyrs Canada

“Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.”

Proverbs 4:23 AMP



Artwork: Vanessa Brobbel

Conflict. Who likes dealing with conflict? I doubt a single soul on the face of the earth would say, “Oh, yes, please let *me* deal with conflict; I love it!” In most cases, that is simply not going to happen. Yet, at the same time, there’s not a single person in this life who has been untouched by conflict.

What does *conflict* have to do with “heart health?” In fact, what does “heart health” have to do with persecution and those suffering for their faith? Good questions. Let’s begin to unpack this subject with the following story:

Our ministry team had travelled hours to an apartment in a country where the government is secular, but the nation is profoundly Muslim. We entered the building quietly, no more than two at a time. Those attending the small gathering sat on pillows around a low table decked out with food; so that, should we be discovered, we could claim to be having a dinner party. This was the local church, which consisted mostly of women. Speaking in hushed voices, the believers eagerly greeted us – warmly expressing their joy with big hugs, kisses to the cheeks, and a palpable anticipation that we foreigners had a Bible and would be teaching from it.

As we began to read the Scriptures together, each one of the house church members whipped out a pen and a scrap of paper so they could studiously take notes. The woman beside me (featured in the artwork) had been under house arrest for four years by her Muslim family, since the time they realized she became a Christian. Such was her desire to hear the Word of God and be with other believers that she risked escaping for the afternoon, knowing the consequences would be severe (and possibly even life-threatening) if her whereabouts were discovered. However, when asked how we could pray for her, through tears she requested that God bring her family to Christ. The same family – who had for four years beaten, spit on, verbally assaulted, shamed, and imprisoned her – were the ones most deeply on her heart to love and forgive.

Hold on to that story while we imagine a disposable cup filled with liquid. If the liquid were tea, we would say, “This is a cup of tea.” If, however, the liquid in the cup were coffee, we would say, “This is a cup of coffee.” Note that the vessel is *defined by what is in it*. If the cup happened to be knocked over, then whatever was inside it would spill out.¹ As John Ortberg said,

“It is in the act of facing the storm that you discover what lies inside you and decide what lies before you.... Storms have a way of teaching what nothing else can.”

“Blessed [anticipating God’s presence, spiritually mature] are the pure in heart [those with integrity, moral courage, and Godly character], for they will see God.”

Matthew 5:8 AMP

This dear sister didn’t have access to a Bible, but she spent four years praying. In the centre of serious conflict, our sister had a healthier heart response than most of us do when pressed in traffic. She learned to glorify God by letting Him fill her vessel. Glorifying the Lord does not only mean bringing attention *to Him*, but also focussing our attention *on Him*.

“If you don’t glorify God when you’re involved in a conflict, you inevitably show that someone or something else rules your heart.”

Ken Sande

The 2024 Art Gallery Showing is an opportunity to ponder on what makes a heart spiritually healthy. Consider Christians like this dear sister who – as was the case for The Voice of the Martyrs’ founder, Richard Wurmbrand – don’t often have access to Bibles, church buildings or fellowship with other believers. Yet, when they are knocked over in conflict, what spills out from them is the fruit of the Spirit. Such a reaction demonstrates a healthy heart! 🌍

Endnote: ¹ Illustration by Pastor Matt Tapley

ART GALLERY SHOWING

THEME: **HEART HEALTH** Matthew 5:8 & Proverbs 4:23

BEST IN SHOW: YOUTH (13-18 YRS) \$250

BEST IN SHOW: ADULTS (19+) \$250

Please send your original artwork submission depicting the theme **“HEART HEALTH”** by 5 PM (EST) on June 10th, 2024. Find more Art Gallery details at: www.vomcanada.com/ArtGalleryShowing.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

COURAGE TO
rise above
JOSHUA 1:9

IDOP

NOVEMBER 5, 2023

Each November, believers around the world unite their hearts together in prayer on behalf of our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ. In Canada, many churches even hold special services on the first Sunday of November to encourage congregants to remember those who are suffering severe hardships for their faith.

This year's International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP) presents us with another opportunity to compassionately intercede on behalf of the estimated 360 million believers around the world who are experiencing high-to-extreme forms of persecution.

Please join us for this international prayer initiative, so persecuted believers will be reminded of God's promise in Joshua 1:9: *"...Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."*

For more information, visit: www.idop.ca