

**(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."<sup>6</sup>

~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 13<sup>th</sup> 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.

SUSU [this is Susu 2] is a girl, I can't believe we were fooled again and after 3 years of singing/talking to 2 female birds thinking they were boys we accept the fact we are meant to have a female bird that does NOT talk!!

SALIM never stops working, and even when he sits down his brain carries on dreaming up new projects, writing articles, and thinking of new ideas. We have 8 piles of books currently "on the go" dotted around the house. Maybe this is what makes him so interesting?

KAY this year will start another 3<sup>rd</sup> side group in Musalaha. Charity work in all its forms is expanding with an overseas branch in Bolton !!

Most of my time, actually all of my time in the afternoons is devoted to driving children, feeding children, nagging children [about coats], watching children, and cleaning up after children etc etc etc ...you get the picture ?

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