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MISSION PATHWAY

PRAY FOR THE UNREACHED

THE GULF STATES PART II



CROSSROADS
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The Pathway of Peace in Isaiah

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“In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt, and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day, Israel will be a blessing alongside Egypt and Assyria. The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying, ‘Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance.’” (Isaiah 19:23-25, NIV)



The New Middle East Corridor

On September 22, 2023, at the 78th United Nations General Assembly, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu used a red marker to draw a line across a map of the “New Middle East.” He explained that this line represented a pathway for peace and prosperity, connecting Israel, Saudi Arabia, and other neighboring countries. This corridor, he said, would dismantle old barriers and create a passage linking Asia to Europe—traversing the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel.

On the map, countries like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan, Egypt, and Sudan are marked in green. However, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza are notably absent. Once the map was made public, it drew sharp criticism, with opponents accusing Israel of sidelining Palestinian territories and naively believing it could secure support from the Arab world.

In 2020, Israel initiated the Abraham Accords, securing peace agreements with four Arab nations in just three years. By September 2023, Saudi Arabia appeared on the verge of joining, with only final details left to negotiate. If Saudi Arabia, a leading power in the Arab world, were to recognize Israel, it would signal that the Arab League might largely abandon the Palestinian cause. Even if some countries continued to voice their support for Palestine, their influence would be minimal.

Less than a month later, on October 7, Hamas launched a surprise attack that shattered this vision. At an electronic music festival in the town of Re'im, located in southern Israel, Hamas militants struck unexpectedly, killing and injuring hundreds and taking dozens hostage. This sudden assault disrupted Israel's momentum, casting doubt on the dream of a “New Middle East” built on peace and prosperity. As the conflict between Israel and Palestine intensifies, the possibility of restoring that vision seems increasingly unlikely.

The “Highway” in the Book of Isaiah

Isaiah 19 speaks of a “highway” (Hebrew: Mesilah, meaning elevated route) connecting Egypt and Assyria, where Egyptians and Assyrians can travel freely and even worship together. However, the historical context of Isaiah's time tells a different story. During the reign of King Isaiah, both Israel and Judah were divided and in conflict. Assyria was constantly invading, and Israel sought alliances with Aram in the north, while Judah attempted to make a pact with Egypt to resist Assyria. These strategies ultimately failed. In 722 BCE, Israel was conquered and destroyed by Assyria, and the ten tribes of Israel disappeared.

In light of this history, the “highway” mentioned in Isaiah 19, where “Israel will be a blessing along with Egypt and Assyria,” seemed like an impossible dream. At the time, Assyria, Egypt, and Israel were bitter enemies. Even though Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has worked tirelessly to establish new connections in the “New Middle East” corridor, those efforts were quickly undone by a surprise attack from Hamas. The conflict between Israel and Palestine has continued to make waves globally, with Israel's efforts to ensure its survival through military means facing immense challenges from all sides.

Yet, we believe that God sees these conflicts differently. Isaiah 19 prophesies that the plans of human powers will ultimately fail, and that God will punish Egypt. However, when the Egyptians turn to the Lord and cry out, He will heal and save them: “The Lord will be known to the Egyptians, and they will acknowledge the Lord. On that day, they will make sacrifices and offerings; they will make vows to the Lord and keep them” (Isaiah 19:21). This suggests that even the most resistant nations or peoples will eventually turn to God, albeit in small numbers. When that “day” comes, Egyptians—who once knew not God—will join Assyrians in worshipping Him. Israel will, in turn, be a blessing to Egypt, Assyria, and the nations of the earth.

While we do not know when this “day” will come, Isaiah 19:24 gives us hope. It encourages us to look at the Middle East conflict, as well as the possibility of Jewish and Arab Muslims coming to faith, with new eyes and renewed hope.

The “Highway” from the Perspective of Missionaries

Missionaries G and J, who serve in the Middle East, view the “highway” in Isaiah 19 as both a literal and spiritual pathway. Recently, during their prayer walks in the Gulf countries, they observed that the highways connecting major cities in the Middle East are well-developed and expansive, facilitating easy travel across the region. The doors of the Arab world are also wide open.

“The Middle Eastern countries are actively building and opening their doors to welcome foreigners for work, investment, and tourism. For example, two major projects in Saudi Arabia—the NEOM and Red Sea Project—are creating opportunities for professionals in various fields. In terms of education, Saudi Arabia requires both public and private primary and secondary school students to learn Chinese, offering Chinese teachers a chance to apply and teach there. Furthermore, the second holiest site in Islam, Medina, is now open to non-Muslims and foreigners for visits, allowing us to learn more about the region.”

G and J believe that believers with a heart for the Middle East should take advantage of this opportunity to pray and seek God's guidance. “The situation in the Middle East is changing rapidly, and we don't know when these doors may close.”

In recent years, the spiritual winds have been blowing across the Middle East, and many Muslims are coming to faith. G added, “When a large number of Muslims come to Christ, it sparks jealousy among the Jews, and in the end, all of Israel will be saved.” This echoes the prophecy of the highway in Isaiah 19.

Michael Kerem, who has served in Israel for many years, is the director of Derech Avraham Ministry and a member of the Isaiah 19 Highway movement. In a past interview, he offered a concise analysis of the Middle Eastern situation and the urgent need for the gospel. He explained that the “highway” symbolizes hope, reflecting God's promises, will, and blessings for Israel, the Gentiles, and all nations. “To understand the Middle East, we need to start with World War I,” Kerem explained. “Before the war, the region was part of the Ottoman Empire, which viewed itself as a caliphate. When World War I ended, the Ottoman Empire collapsed, and the region was divided under the Sykes-Picot Agreement, creating the modern Middle Eastern countries. However, these new borders often ignored ethnic and tribal divisions.”

The Sykes-Picot Agreement remains a painful memory for many Arabs. During World War I, two diplomats—Mark Sykes from Britain and François Georges-Picot from France—drew arbitrary borders with a pencil, splitting the Middle East into countries without regard for the ethnic or religious communities that lived there. A century later, the Middle East still suffers from the consequences of this agreement, which many blame for the violence and turmoil in the region, including the Palestinian land issue and the rise of ISIS in Iraq.

Kerem specifically pointed out that the ancient Assyrian empire covered several present-day Middle Eastern countries, and one forgotten people group without a nation are the Kurds, numbering over 35 million, spread across multiple countries. “The Kurds are descendants of the Medes, mentioned many times in the Bible. They play a role in God's redemptive plan, helping to restore Israel,” he noted, referring to the prophecy of the Jews' return to their land under the Persian king Cyrus, as foretold in Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1.

“Even though there are many discussions in history, archaeology, and science, the Kurds believe they are descendants of the Medes. The regions they occupy today—northern Iraq, southeastern Turkey, northwestern Iran, and northeastern Syria—are the lands of ancient Assyria.”

Reconciliation of Abraham's Descendants

“Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah, and all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the Lord. All Kedar's flocks will be gathered to you, the rams of Nebaioth will serve you; they will be accepted as offerings on my altar, and I will adorn my glorious temple.” (Isaiah 60:6-7, NIV)

Isaiah is filled with profound prophecies, including this one in chapter 60, where he mentions the peoples of Midian, Ephah, Sheba, Kedar, and Nebaioth. Midian, Ephah, and Sheba were descendants of Keturah, Abraham's second wife (Genesis 25:2-4), and their descendants formed several Arab tribes. The camels mentioned here are specifically the dromedaries of Arabia and the Near East, known for their unique single hump. Kedar and Nebaioth, on the other hand, were descendants of Abraham's son Ishmael, born to Hagar (Genesis 25:13). These peoples, too, will come with gifts, worshiping God and joining His people in reverence.

Looking back at the Middle East today, some regions are plagued by violence and conflict, creating a massive refugee crisis, while others have grown incredibly wealthy due to oil, and people live lives of extreme luxury. In Israel, there are numerous factions. The secular Jewish community, many of whom do not believe in God or follow traditional faith, often embrace atheism, secularism, humanism, or even other religions (such as Buddhism, Hinduism, New Age movements, or mysticism). Some believe Israel's establishment was due to Jewish effort rather than divine intervention.

However, when we read Isaiah's prophecies and see God's promises, let us approach them from God's perspective. We should actively pray for the Middle East and Israel, trusting in the Holy Spirit to move powerfully in the region, that many may come to share in God's grace and become one family in Christ. Amen!

Prayers That Cross Over Mountains

Missionary Story: Reema Goode (Part I)



Reema Goode, the author of *Which None Can Shut*, shares her reflections from the early years of her mission in the Middle East. She observed that the history of missions to Muslims has been discouraging. Early missionary pioneers sacrificed greatly, spending many years working in the Arab world and even dedicating their entire lives, yet seeing little fruit. The global Church knew very little about Muslims, and missionaries lacked partners, with few even praying for this effort.

However, by the 1990s, the concept of the “10/40 Window”* and the media attention sparked by the Persian Gulf War turned the Church’s focus to the vast unreached peoples in the Arab world. Christians began praying for Muslims, and the Lord’s servants started finding creative ways to become legal residents in Muslim countries where missionary activities were strictly prohibited.

Reema said, “We firmly believe that the dramatic changes occurring in the Arab world are the result of the global church interceding for Muslims and missionaries.”

*Note: The 10/40 Window is a region between 10 and 40 degrees north latitude, where most of the world’s unreached peoples live. The majority of people in this area are Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist, and few have had the chance to hear the gospel.

This story is adapted from *Which None Can Shut* by Reema Goode.

Heavenly Father, Your love for every people group is immeasurable, for all nations are Your children. Though the Arab people have not yet come to know You, You have never forgotten them. Throughout the generations, You have moved countless Christians to pray and serve for their salvation. May Your unending love inspire us to continue in praise and prayer, sending our petitions across mountains and barriers. Soften the hearts of the Arab people and send workers to plant seeds of hope. Pour out Your Spirit on the thirsty and prepare the ground, that all may hear Your call and follow You. We ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

From Closed Doors to Open Ones

Missionary Story: Reema Goode (Part II)



Photo by Peter Dowley on Flickr

Reema Goode believes that prayers from Christians worldwide have led to remarkable gospel breakthroughs in the Middle East. When she and her family first arrived in a small Middle Eastern town, locals, cautious after warnings from religious authorities, kept their distance. One day, a small incident—helping a neighbor jumpstart his car—opened the door for connection. After her husband Michael successfully got the car started, appreciative onlookers invited him over for coffee, signaling that Reema’s family was accepted into the community.

Though Reema worried about cultural missteps, her family’s earnest attempts to learn local ways softened their neighbors’ hearts. They showed her how to brew Arabic coffee, cook traditional dishes, wear a headscarf securely, and navigate social interactions, while Michael became the go-to car advisor. Through these everyday moments, God worked, and within 18 months, Reema had shared the gospel with each neighbor and started a women’s group to discuss the Bible and the Quran.

Reflecting on this, Reema said, “Who would have thought this could happen in such a closed country?”

This story is adapted from *Which None Can Shut* by Reema Goode.

Heavenly Father, who can grasp the depth of Your wonders and wisdom? We ask that each day You continue to open doors and build friendships for missionaries and believers throughout the Arab world. No one can close the doors You open, and Your power is beyond measure. May every gift, talent, and word from Your people bring blessing, showing the Arab people Your kindness through the lives of Christians. Lord of the harvest, send more workers with faith and courage to reach the unreached. May the global Church stand with them in prayer and support. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Who Comes to Mind in Life's Final Moments?

The Story of an Arab Muslim's Journey to Christ



Photo by Omar Chatriwala on Flickr

From a young age, Yusuf tried his best to walk the “right path,” regularly attending mosque and reciting Quranic prayers. But by 17, after facing many disappointments, he felt a void that drugs and gangs couldn’t fill. On the verge of ending his life, memories of his late grandfather in America flashed before him.

He recalled sitting on his grandfather’s knee, watching footage of salmon fighting upstream against the current. His grandfather said, “See, Christians are like these salmon—always swimming upstream, facing difficulties yet full of life.” Deeply moved, Yusuf thought, “If I’m ready to give up, maybe I’ll try praying to the God my grandfather believed in.” He gave God an ultimatum: “If Jesus can help me, I won’t end my life. You have until tomorrow.”

The next morning, Yusuf’s uncle—a Christian because of his grandfather’s influence—visited. After talking, Yusuf decided to follow Jesus. Despite family opposition, he chose, like his grandfather and uncle, to swim against the tide. Now, he serves other Muslims, discreetly distributes Bibles, and shares the gospel online with young Arabs.

Adapted from *Followers Without Fear* (published by Frontiers Taiwan)

Heavenly Father, every story of someone encountering You is precious. We ask that You place Christians in the lives of Arab Muslims, even briefly, to leave a lasting, warm impression. Use each person and encounter to draw them closer to Jesus. Strengthen Arab Christians who courageously go against the flow, enduring social pressure; may their perseverance produce character and hope that will not disappoint, as Your Spirit fills their hearts with Your love. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Shared Worship Centers

The Religious Complex in Qatar



Photo by SonoCat on Wikimedia

In Qatar, sharing the Christian faith with Muslims is a criminal offense that can result in a prison sentence of 1 to 7 years. However, to meet the spiritual needs of the large foreign workforce, the Qatari government has approved the construction of worship spaces for Christians, including the Mesaimed Religious Complex and the Anglican Centre. These facilities provide worship, baptism, wedding, and memorial services in various church traditions and languages.

Currently, eight denominations hold government registration, allowing them to legally operate: Catholic, Anglican, Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Coptic, Lebanese Maronite, Filipino Evangelical, and Indian Christian. Smaller denominations not officially recognized can still worship under the guidance of these registered churches. Foreign nationals can worship freely within the complex, but Qatari citizens are not permitted to attend. At the entrance to Mesaimed, security checks IDs to ensure compliance with this policy. Local converts generally refrain from attending these gatherings, choosing instead to keep their faith private.

Some Christian leaders, within the boundaries of the law, reach out to the unchurched in industrial areas, particularly foreign laborers. During events like the World Cup, groups like the Gulf Bible Society have also distributed Bibles to both workers and tourists.

Qatar's laws, based on Islamic principles, recognize only three monotheistic faiths linked to Abraham: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Faiths like Hinduism and Buddhism lack legal status or the right to construct worship spaces.

Heavenly Father, we praise You for providing foreign Christians in Qatar with fellowship and worship spaces at the Mesaimed Religious Complex. May their worship rise like a fragrant offering in the desert, unceasing, day and night. May these Spirit-filled believers, wherever they live and work, become living sanctuaries, embodying Your presence. As they go, may they reflect Your glory, drawing others to You and showing that the light of Your glory has come, restoring people's relationship with You. Move Gulf leaders' hearts to honor Your name and extend kindness to Your people. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Eight-Month Inferno of Kuwait's Oil Wells

The Scars of the Gulf War in Kuwait



Piqsels photos

During the Iran-Iraq War, Iraq and Kuwait were allies, with Kuwait even lending Iraq \$14 billion to support its military needs. However, after the war, Iraq, burdened with enormous debt, requested Kuwait to forgive the loan. Kuwait refused, angering then-President Saddam Hussein.

Kuwait, though only half the size of Taiwan, is the world's fifth-largest oil producer. In desperate need of funds, Iraq shifted its strategy, abandoning the debt forgiveness request and deciding to annex Kuwait. On August 2, 1990, Saddam Hussein invaded and captured Kuwait in just six days.

The United Nations, led by the United States, formed a coalition of 42 countries to force Iraq to withdraw. However, as Iraq retreated, it set fire to over 700 oil wells in Kuwait, plunging the country into darkness for months.

Thirty years later, while Kuwait has regained its former prosperity, the war destroyed regional peace. Some Kuwaitis still remember the pain of losing their country and harbor resentment towards the U.S. bombings and those who fled during the war.

Heavenly Father, You are faithful and unchanging, in Whom there is no shadow of turning. No matter how powerful forces may seem, they are but grass that will eventually wither, while You remain our eternal refuge. We pray for healing between Iraq and Kuwait, asking You to mend the wounds of the people and restore the land ravaged by anger. Lord, may Your peace come, and may Your Spirit rain down upon the dry land, replacing past animosities with Your love. May the people of both nations find comfort and peace in Your embrace. Father, we also pray for Iraq, worn by war, asking You to help them transform and recover in love, so they no longer become breeding grounds for extremists. We pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Equality Emerging from Tradition

Kuwaiti Women Break Their Silence



Women's rights in Islamic societies continue to progress. Kuwait's constitution guarantees equality between men and women. In 2005, women won the right to vote, and in 2009, the first female parliament member was elected. However, conflicts persist between legal regulations and Islamic law, such as the opposition from religious figures to women serving as judges. This opposition is not based on questioning women's abilities, but rather on the fact that the Hadith does not grant women the authority to make legal rulings over others. It wasn't until 2020 that female judges were permitted.

In the conservative landscape of the Middle East, women still face harassment. A Kuwaiti fashion blogger highlighted the need for a safe, legal platform for complaints, inspiring Dr. Shema, a young female doctor, to launch 'Lan Asket' — an Instagram page for anonymous expression that became Kuwait's version of the #MeToo movement. Women are also often victims of honor killings, with perpetrators facing light sentences, leading many Kuwaiti women to advocate for legal reforms.

However, it's important not to view the women's movement in the Middle East through a Western feminist lens. These Kuwaiti women, who wear headscarves and follow the Qur'an, seek "equal rights" within their religious framework, not by rejecting Islamic culture or adopting Western values.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for guiding Kuwait towards greater attention to women's rights. We pray that You will protect the government and grant its leaders ears willing to listen, acknowledging the social challenges and needs women face. We ask for Your comfort for women living in violence and pain, that Your presence may be their strength and healing. We pray that Christians in Kuwait will be agents of peace, comfort, and action for their Muslim friends in times of conflict. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Worshiping in Safety and Freedom

Kuwaiti Christians



Photo by Christian World on Flickr

The Gulf nations are at the heart of the Islamic world, but Bahrain and Kuwait are exceptions, allowing local Christians equal citizenship rights. There are about 250,000 Christians in Kuwait, nearly all of whom are expatriates; the number of native Christians is fewer than 300.

Kuwait is home to nine churches from various denominations. The largest, the National Evangelical Church, founded by the American Reformed Church, hosts up to 88 congregations in different languages each week. These churches were established by early missionaries, and the government allows them to operate without interference. Muslims in Kuwait also do not harass Christians. Both Christians and Muslims have the right to education, from primary school to university, and enjoy equal rights under the Kuwaiti constitution.

However, the 1981 nationality law prohibits non-Muslims from becoming Kuwaiti citizens. As a result, native Christians often leave Kuwait if they marry foreign Christians, which has led to stagnation in the local Christian population. While Christians are free to worship, proselytizing to Muslims remains forbidden.

Father, thank You for allowing Christians in Kuwait to worship You freely and openly in this Islamic nation. We especially praise You for the 300 native Kuwaiti Christians, Your seeds of the gospel that You've planted and nurtured. You have faithfully kept them safe, allowing their faith to take root in this country. We pray for the pastors and believers who serve in Kuwait, that they may continue to be witnesses of Your love. May Your Spirit move across this land, drawing more to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. We ask for harmony between Christians and Muslims, as a powerful witness to the nations of the Middle East. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Bloodstained Gateway of Gold

Dubai's Gold Market



Photo by Ashwin Kumar on Flickr

More than half of Africa's gold comes from small-scale mines or artisanal miners, who work in unsafe conditions and must pay a portion of their earnings to leave the mines. Armed groups frequently attack these areas and ambush gold trading routes, considering any loss of life as "necessary costs" for their operations.

Smuggled gold is often sent to Dubai, a major destination. According to a 2022 report by Swissaid, 435 tons of gold were smuggled out of Africa, with 405 tons entering the UAE. The UAE's lax regulations allow this blood gold to be legally certified and resold, turning it into a symbol of wealth and status. The profits from these illegal transactions feed into armed conflicts and violence in Africa.

Although the UAE does not produce gold, it is the country's second-largest export after oil. Dubai, known as the "City of Gold," hides the suffering of countless individuals beneath its gleaming facade.

Father, You bring justice to the oppressed and share in the suffering of the afflicted. The UAE's free trade has become a cover for blood gold, fueling countless criminal organizations. We ask for swift reform of their gold trade laws, so this market can no longer be a haven for money laundering. Lord, comfort the many families in Africa suffering unjustly. Lift them from poverty and loss, and shine Your light upon them, guiding their feet to the path of peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Bunk Bed Class

Dubai's Impoverished Foreign Laborers



Photo by [\[User\]](#) on Flickr

People often say Dubai is so rich it seems to be flowing with oil, or perhaps it's more fitting to say that oil flows and fuels Dubai's wealth. The towering skyscrapers, the dazzling city, Palm Island where the wealthiest fight for space—all of these evoke "luxury" as the only fitting descriptor for Dubai.

To sustain this lavish city, Dubai constantly launches large construction projects. The labor for these is primarily provided by foreign migrant workers. According to the Dubai Statistics Center, more than 80% of the UAE's population consists of migrant workers, mostly from South Asia, Africa, and other developing regions. Poverty and political instability at home are major reasons they come, yet issues like wage theft, high living costs, confiscated passports, and exploitation leave workers struggling.

To keep them out of view, workers are placed in areas far from the city's tourist spots. Many can only afford bed space, with some even forced to sleep on the floor due to overcrowding. Workers earn between \$300 and \$800 USD a month, while rent for a one-bedroom apartment starts at \$800 USD. One worker from Ghana remarked, "I come from a small town in eastern Ghana. Although it's not as developed as the capital, life there is still better than here."

Heavenly Father, those who leave their homes to come to Dubai are simply trying to provide a better life for their distant families, but they find themselves in a cycle of hardship. We pray for the migrant workers in Dubai, whose wages barely cover the high cost of living in the Gulf. We ask that You move the UAE government's heart with compassion, improving the conditions they live in so they have space to rest after their hard work. We pray for a shift in the attitude of employment agencies, seeing these workers not as cash cows but as partners, working together in unity. May the communication between workers and employers be restored, building a bridge of mutual understanding. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Saying Farewell to Oil

UAE's Push for Renewable Energy



With climate change a reality, carbon reduction has become unavoidable. The UAE, ranked seventh in global oil reserves, is preparing for a post-oil future, investing heavily in green and clean energy. The country now hosts two of the largest solar power plants in the Gulf and in 2023, Abu Dhabi relied on solar and nuclear energy to meet over 80% of its electricity needs. The UAE is also the first Gulf nation to operate a nuclear power plant, which contributes to 25% of the country's energy supply.

Green hydrogen is another focus for the UAE and its Gulf neighbors, seen as the best alternative to fossil fuels. Produced using wind, solar, or hydroelectric power, green hydrogen generates only water vapor, making it ideal for industrial use.

In November 2023, the UAE hosted the 28th UN Climate Change Conference, where 150 nations agreed that this was the beginning of the end for fossil fuels.

Father, we thank You for the consensus reached at the climate change conference. We desperately need real changes to reduce the damage to our planet! Climate change is significantly impacting lives worldwide, creating challenges for future generations and putting unreached peoples in fragile nations at greater risk. We ask for Your help to accelerate carbon reduction efforts worldwide. Lord, help us return to our role as stewards of the earth, granting us wisdom to contribute to its restoration in our daily lives. May Your creation once again reflect Your glory! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Inequity: The Root Cause of Social Conflict

Sectarian Divisions in Bahrain



Photo by Al Jazeera English on Flickr

In Bahrain, 60% of the population identifies as Shia, but the Sunni minority holds the reins of power. Since the 18th century, the Sunni Al Khalifa family has ruled the nation, maintaining control through systemic discrimination. Shia Bahrainis face disadvantages in employment, housing, and social standing, and they are explicitly excluded from holding significant political or military roles. Vacancies in the police and security forces are often filled by Sunni immigrants from Pakistan, Jordan, and Yemen.

At first glance, Bahrain's social conflicts may appear to be rooted in sectarian differences, but the underlying causes are inequality and human rights violations. In 2011, economic stagnation and the wave of the Arab Spring ignited a long-repressed resentment. Over 100,000 people assembled at the Pearl Roundabout in the capital, calling for political reform and equal rights for the Shia population. The government responded with force, resulting in over 300 injuries and four deaths. The unrest escalated until Saudi Arabia and the UAE intervened, dispatching 1,500 military and police personnel under the Gulf Cooperation Council to restore order.

Heavenly Father, we lift up the people and leaders of Bahrain to You. We ask for Your comfort for those injured or imprisoned during past demonstrations, particularly for the Shia community, who have long endured unjust treatment. Lord, may Your hand guide the government to listen to its people, fostering understanding and unity. Instill humility in Bahrain's leaders so they may enact meaningful reforms to address the needs and rights of all citizens. May Your love heal broken hearts and inspire hope. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Prisoners Protest with Hunger Strike: A New Wave of Unrest?

Social Unrest in Bahrain?



It's been more than a decade since the Pearl Roundabout protests in Bahrain that ended abruptly under the government's heavy-handed suppression. The iconic site, once a symbol of national unity, was demolished after becoming a gathering spot for demonstrators. But as the protesters' demands went unfulfilled, have societal wounds ever truly healed?

Since the 2011 protests, the Bahraini government has intensified its crackdown on Shiites and dissenters. In August 2023, more than 800 inmates at Jau Prison launched a hunger strike to protest inhumane conditions, including 23-hour daily lockdowns and denial of medical care. Notably, around 40% of the inmates are political prisoners detained for participating in the 2011 demonstrations.

The hunger strike spilled over into public protests as people took to the streets, demanding the release of political prisoners and equal rights for Bahrain's oppressed Shia population. These protests, marking the first significant demonstrations since the Arab Spring, revealed unresolved discontent that had merely been silenced through repression.

The hunger strike ended after the government promised to improve prison conditions. However, many fear this could be a familiar tactic of temporary appeasement before renewed crackdowns. Is this merely a pause before the next eruption of conflict?

Heavenly Father, You are a God of justice who delights in righteousness. We pray for the people of Bahrain, especially those injured or imprisoned in their pursuit of justice. Comfort the Shia community and all who face despair and oppression. Grant the government humility and wisdom to listen to the people's needs and pursue meaningful reforms. May Bahrain become a nation that reflects Your peace and justice. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Sisters Stepping Up

Bahrain's Youth Embrace
Entrepreneurship



Bahrain, the first Persian Gulf nation to develop oil and gas resources, was also the first to exhaust them, prompting an early pivot to a post-oil economy. The government has worked to build its financial and tourism sectors, attracting numerous financial institutions to Manama, the capital. Bahrain also stands out by permitting alcohol sales and establishing red-light districts. The causeway linking Bahrain to Saudi Arabia has become a haven for some Arabs seeking a brief escape from conservative norms. Walking through Bahrain's streets, one might forget it's part of the Islamic world.

Though Bahrain's territory is only one-fifth the size of Taiwan, it boasts an equally vibrant economic and cultural life. Unlike its Gulf neighbors, which depend on foreign labor to run state enterprises, Bahrain welcomes foreign investment, giving locals exposure to global business practices. The government has also established support organizations to help citizens, particularly youth, with entrepreneurial endeavors by providing information and financial assistance.

Bahrain's open economy is fostering shifts in social attitudes, particularly among women. More and more Bahraini women are transforming their interests into careers, choosing independence and entrepreneurship over dependence on men. Research shows that 70% of Bahraini youth express interest in starting businesses—a figure more than twice that of other Gulf nations. Most Bahraini women enjoy significant autonomy and continue to value family and tradition, but these values reflect personal choices rather than societal pressure.

Heavenly Father, this land and its resources belong to You. We ask for Your continued guidance and protection as the Bahraini people strive for sustainable development. Bless the women and youth boldly charting their entrepreneurial paths. May they find Your guidance in their efforts, discovering not only ventures that benefit their nation but also the truth of Your love through global interactions. Lord, grant wisdom to Bahrain's people to pursue industries pleasing to You and see You as the ultimate treasure. May its leaders govern with justice and wisdom. In Jesus' name, Amen.

A Tranquil Oasis in a Turbulent Middle East

Oman: A Model of Neutrality



Photo by Rubel Vai on Pexels

The name “Oman” in Arabic signifies “peace.” Although the Middle East often conjures images of conflict, Oman lives up to its name. From the Gulf War to the Syrian civil war, from the rise of ISIS to the Arab Spring, and even the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Oman has remained an oasis of calm and neutrality amidst turmoil. Since the 1970s, Oman has avoided regional disputes, including sectarian conflicts among Muslims. Whether in counterterrorism efforts or ensuring religious freedom, Oman is a model Gulf state.

This stability can partly be attributed to Omanis’ adherence to Ibadism, a moderate and tolerant branch of Islam distinct from both Sunni and Shia traditions. This doctrine fosters a mindset that rises above the region’s complexities. (See January 20)

The late Sultan Qaboos (1940–2020), who ruled for 50 years, established a constitutional monarchy, granting citizens many freedoms and benefits. His foreign policy emphasized moderation, neutrality, and nonalignment, avoiding entanglement in any regional alliances. As a result, despite the turbulence surrounding it, Oman has enjoyed peaceful and harmonious development.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your guidance, making Oman a peaceful oasis in a conflict-ridden region. Continue to protect Oman, keeping it free from war and violence. May the world witness its harmony and be inspired to follow its example. We praise You for granting Omanis wisdom and moderation, enabling them to transcend sectarian strife. May they recognize You, the Prince of Peace, as the source of true and surpassing peace. Lord, let Oman be a peacemaker in the Middle East, resolving disputes and bringing tranquility to the region. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Honoring Tolerance

Religious Inclusivity in Oman



Before stepping into a “church” in Muscat, the vibrancy of the parking lot hints at the activity inside. The worship center is shared by Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox congregations, with services held in various languages and styles. The attendees are mainly migrant workers, predominantly from India and the Philippines, with a growing number from Ethiopia’s Orthodox community.

Oman and the UAE are Gulf leaders in religious tolerance, fostering openness due to economic globalization and an influx of foreign labor. However, Oman’s distinctiveness lies in its Ibadism roots—a moderate Islamic sect with a longstanding ethos of coexistence. This inclusivity extends back to the 19th century when Oman’s renowned scholar, Nur al-Din, advocated for peaceful relations and legal protections for non-Muslims. Christians, Jews, and others were granted freedom to practice their faith, equal judicial rights, and the ability to live alongside Ibadis without exclusion. Nevertheless, this tolerance hinges on mutual respect, particularly in avoiding proselytizing Omani Muslims.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the freedom Christians in Oman have to worship and serve You. May these migrant believers act as Your emissaries, shining Your light like Naaman’s servant girl or Daniel in Babylon. Guide and empower them to demonstrate Your love, joy, and peace to those around them. Protect the atmosphere of tolerance in Oman, and may the Omani people encounter the Prince of Peace and discover the profound hope found in You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

An Unspoken Love

Medical Missions in Oman



Photo by Achilli Family Journeys on Flickr

The history of Christianity in the Gulf is like ancient monasteries buried under the desert sands—forgotten and overlooked. Modern Omanis, having witnessed European powers like the Portuguese and British vying for control, harbored little goodwill toward Christianity. Unlike other regions, the Gulf did not see the establishment of churches by colonial powers.

This changed with the arrival of the Arabian Mission, where two Reformed Seminary students, inspired by their teacher, ventured into the Arabian Peninsula. Unable to openly preach the gospel, they established hospitals in Iraq, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Oman, mobilizing medical services to reach Arabs. Their letters and writings became vital for Western churches, offering insights into the Islamic world and resources for prayer and study. Churches established within the mission hospitals created spaces where Arab visitors traveling on camelback from distant regions could hear hymns of praise to God. These sanctuaries became instrumental in spreading the gospel. Today, Evangelical churches in Kuwait and Bahrain stand on land once occupied by these missionary hospitals, a testament to the enduring legacy of those early Christian efforts.

In 2014, a student affiliated with the Arabian Mission was injured while traversing Oman's interior. Nearby villagers rushed to visit, many moved to tears as they recalled family members healed through mission hospitals. The kindness of Christians still resonates with some Omanis.

Heavenly Father, thank You for guiding missionaries to labor faithfully in the Arabian Peninsula. Through simple daily interactions, You have planted seeds of goodwill and acceptance among some Arabs. This groundwork needs continual nurturing, and we trust You to send workers for the harvest. As You called Paul to Macedonia and moved these seminary students to serve the Arab world, stir the hearts of Your global Church to respond to Your call. Equip them with skills to serve Omanis and inspire spiritual awakening. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Shaping the Gulf's Growth

Gulf Arabs



Photo by unsplash

The eastern Arabian Peninsula, renowned for its exceptional seafaring skills, has fostered vibrant cities and civilizations for centuries. Unlike other desert-dwelling nomadic tribes, Gulf Arabs have been profoundly influenced by maritime traditions, forming a distinctive Khaleeji cultural identity.

Gulf Arabs speak Khaleeji, a regional Arabic dialect, and are known for their distinctive music, cuisine, and clothing. Their culinary traditions reflect a rich use of spices, combining rice with meats and yogurt-based sauces. The region's proximity to the sea provides abundant seafood, though Islamic dietary practices generally avoid shellfish. Additionally, Gulf Arabs have a deep appreciation for coffee, dates, and a variety of sweet treats, which are integral to their culture and hospitality.

The discovery of oil transformed the lives of those in the Gulf. Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, collectively known as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), have emerged as the Middle East's most stable and dynamic regional alliance. With vast wealth fueling urban growth, the Gulf has become a hub for culture, commerce, design, and education, positioning its people as influential leaders in the Arab world.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for transforming barren lands into places of abundance, and blessing generations of Gulf Arabs. Open the eyes of the global church to their spiritual needs, inspiring fervent prayers for their salvation. Raise up and equip missionaries to serve the Gulf with professional skills and compassionate hearts. May the seeds of Your gospel take root and flourish here, and through the Gulf's influence, spread Your glory to all nations. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Pride in Hospitality

Gulf Bedouins

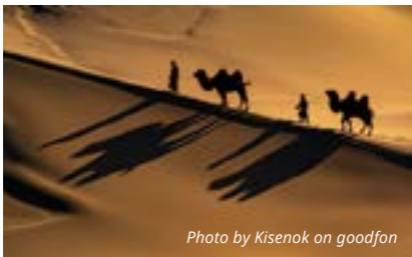


Photo by Kisenok on goodfon

The term “Bedouin” literally means “desert dwellers” (Badawiyin), but today it refers to the descendants of desert peoples who continue to uphold their ancestral traditions and values. Their ancestors domesticated camels around 4,000 years ago, making the camel central to desert life. Because much of the UAE’s land is relatively fertile, many Bedouins there have traditionally relied on agriculture for their livelihood. With the rise of the oil economy, many have moved to urban areas, yet they continue to hold dear their cultural values.

Bedouins are known for a code of honor: “Muruwah” refers to the qualities of masculinity, such as enduring suffering with patience, showing courage in battle, and seeking revenge against enemies. “Saraf” speaks to a man’s duty to protect his family and tribe. “Ird” represents female chastity. “Diyafa” emphasizes generosity, where hospitality is an honor, offering food, tea, and shelter to travelers, regardless of one’s wealth. “Hamasa” celebrates courage, including the ability to endure pain.

Even today, the Bedouin legal system is based on these honor codes, and scholars in Arab countries often refer to Bedouin customs as precedents in their judgments.

Father, we admire the Bedouins’ courage, generosity, and care for the vulnerable, and pray these values bless them and those around them. Yet their commitment to traditional culture and beliefs can pose a challenge to accepting the Gospel. We ask that You bless the ministry among the Bedouins, guiding missionaries with wisdom to engage them and help them understand the Gospel. Protect the few Bedouin Christians, giving them strength to grow spiritually, and may they become powerful witnesses of Your love and truth in their families and communities. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Seeking to Return to the Roots

Wahhabi in Saudi Arabia



Photo by Ali Mansuri Wikimedia

From the Taliban in Afghanistan to al-Qaeda led by bin Laden, all have ties to Wahhabism, with some even arguing that Wahhabism has fueled radical extremism in certain religious movements. Wahhabism views itself as the sole legitimate interpretation of Islam, leaving no room for debate and demanding that other sects follow its teachings or be considered heretical.

Wahhabism is a form of Islamic revivalism founded by Mohammed bin Abd al-Wahhab in the 18th century. Under Ottoman rule, the Arabian Peninsula was heavily influenced by various cultural practices, which Wahhab saw as corruptions of true faith. For instance, he criticized the indulgence in tobacco and cannabis by Egyptian and Ottoman elites, the widespread pilgrimages to tombs for blessings, and even the celebration of Muhammad's birthday as a public festival. Wahhab sought to return Islam to its original state, modeled after the era of Prophet Muhammad in Medina.

Exiled and unpopular, Wahhab found an important ally in Mohammed bin Saud, in Diriyah. Saud elevated Wahhab's teachings to the state religion, and Wahhab, in turn, legitimized Saud's political and military authority.

Heavenly Father, Wahhab sought to purify the faith, launching a reform movement against what he saw as deviations. We pray that many who pursue a similar path will deeply reflect on their own beliefs, discerning truth and finding the Lord of Truth. Open our eyes to desire the truth and empower us to act, discarding ways that stray from Your path. Lord, help those who have gone to extremes to repent, realizing that violence cannot change hearts, but only love can melt all barriers. May the love of Jesus Christ penetrate the hearts of every Wahhabi, breaking the chains of extremism and making peace a precious value for all. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Representative of the Moderate Islam

The Ibadis of Oman



Photo by Mostafameraji on Wikimedia

The Ibadī sect is the third largest Islamic denomination, with its followers mostly concentrated in Oman. Known for its moderate and inclusive religious traditions, the Ibadī sect is also sometimes difficult for other sects and non-Muslims to understand due to its reluctance to engage in debates about its beliefs.

The main difference between the Ibadī, Sunni, and Shia sects lies in the question of who is qualified to succeed Muhammad:

Sunni: Believes that the caliph (meaning “successor”) must come from Muhammad’s tribe, the Quraysh, thus the first four caliphs are legitimate successors.

Shia: Holds that only members of Muhammad’s family can be leaders of the Muslim community, meaning the fourth caliph, Ali, is the true successor. The first three caliphs are viewed as usurpers.

Ibadī: Argues that neither birth nor lineage is a requirement; leadership is determined by the selection of Muslim leaders. The first four caliphs all meet this qualification.

The Ibadī sect opposes armed rebellion and political assassination, seeking peaceful coexistence with other Muslims. In terms of theology, the Ibadī sect rejects literal interpretations of anthropomorphic descriptions of God and denies the possibility of seeing God in this life or the afterlife.

Heavenly Father, the Ibadī sect is known for its tolerance and inclusivity, yet they remain steadfast in their faith. Lord, help them to focus their conviction on Your truth. The Ibadī have a gift of peace; use them to sow seeds of peace in the Islamic world, fostering mutual respect and harmonious coexistence among sects. Teach them, O Lord, to see that true peace comes only through the cross, and that the cross is the way to eternal life. May they truly encounter Jesus Christ, and may the Holy Spirit touch their hearts! We pray that the Gospel will open a path of peace, free from strife, in the Middle East and the Islamic world. In Jesus Christ’s name, Amen.

The Homeland of Frankincense

Shahari People



Photo by Rita Willaert on flickr

Oman's Frankincense Market

When the summer monsoon winds blow over the Indian Ocean, the warm moisture nourishes the southeast of the Arabian Peninsula. Clouds linger on the southern slopes of the plains and mountains, making the coastline lush with coconut and banana trees. The beauty of the white sandy beaches and verdant plains makes Dhofar in Oman a unique paradise on the Arabian Peninsula. While the southern region is lush, the northern mountains are arid, providing the perfect environment for the finest wild frankincense. Dhofar has been an international trade hub for centuries and is home to the Shihri people.

The Shehri language, also known as Jibbali, belongs to the Afro-Asiatic family. British traveler Paul Arland, who frequently visited Oman, described it as "sounding like music," as "when people speak, it feels like they are reciting poetry."

In 1970, Sultan Qaboos bin Said's reforms ended the era of strict limits on education and modernization. With the spread of national education, Arabic gradually replaced the unique tribal languages, and today, young Shahari people can no longer speak their native tongue fluently. This beautiful, ancient dialect is disappearing along with the elders of the Shahari people.

Father, we see the unique blessings bestowed upon Dhofar's fertile lands and its mountains rich with frankincense. We pray that one day, the Shahari people will give thanks and worship You, the Creator of heaven and earth. When frankincense is burned, its rich fragrance rises, symbolizing the offerings of sacrifice in the Bible. We hope that those committed to Christ's mission will bring a sweet aroma to the Shahari people, drawing them to You. May the Shahari people become a royal priesthood, offering prayers that never cease in Dhofar. We pray that Your children leave many beautiful footprints in this land, bringing the good news of Christ's gospel and salvation. In Jesus' name, Amen.

A Nation of **Battle Cries**

Shihuh People



Photo by Hamed Saber on Wikimedia

A YouTube video from the Arabian Peninsula quickly gained hundreds of thousands of views, featuring a group of Arabs dressed in traditional white robes, brandishing swords and rifles while letting out loud, intense cries. Their spirited and fierce demeanor evokes the image of warriors ready for battle, powerfully symbolizing the bravery and valor traditionally associated with the Arab people.

The Nadba, a well-known cultural dance of the Shihuh people from the UAE and Oman, was originally a war cry meant to rally warriors and intimidate enemies. Today, however, its use extends beyond the battlefield. Whether at weddings, banquets, or when hosting guests, the Shihuh perform the Nadba to convey a heartfelt and vibrant welcome.

The Shihuh people exhibit a blend of Iranian heritage, with some studies suggesting Portuguese lineage. Their language is distinct from Arabic, and their traditional culture diverges significantly from that of the Emirati Bedouins. Known for their independent spirit, they have historically resisted external domination, often clashing with neighboring communities and authorities. They live in mountainous areas, utilizing mountain springs to irrigate farmland during winter. In the summer, they adopt a nomadic lifestyle, herding goats and exchanging them for goods. Some also engage in pearl diving along the coast.

Heavenly Father, we often fear or overlook peoples and nations that are different from us, including those far away on the Arabian Peninsula. Yet, You are the Lord of all, and all things are from You and to You. We ask that You help us to have more understanding and love for the world and its people. We pray for the Shihuh to return to the Father and enter into Your family. We ask that You work in the hearts of the Shihuh, selecting the right messengers to bring them the love, truth, and warmth of Christ. Please raise local disciples and leaders to shepherd them. May the brave Shihuh become soldiers of the Lord Almighty. May their war cries and prayers cause the enemy to flee. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Hoofbeats of the Camel Nation

Mahra People (Mehri)



Photo by D7031tg on Wikimedia

The Mahra people, living in southern Arabia along the Yemen-Oman border, are most famous for the camels they tend. These agile and resilient camels are the most prized among Arab nomadic tribes. French colonial cavalry in North Africa once used them to patrol the Sahara Desert. Today, the Mahri camel is celebrated in North African songs, literature, festivals, and even by French automaker Citroën, who named a versatile jeep “Méhari” after them.

The Mahra people, who live along the coast, are also skilled in fishing, exporting squid, lobster, and sardines. The remaining fish are dried to feed their camels or pressed into fish oil. Occasionally, they venture to collect ambergris washed ashore. This solid, flammable substance is expelled by sperm whales and is highly valued as an ingredient in medicine or perfumes due to its pleasant scent.

In matters of faith, the Mahra people are devout Muslims, holding firmly to the teachings of Islam, as Muhammad once left a letter for their ancestors, declaring: “The Mahra people will be untouched and will uphold the Islamic faith; those who do not believe will be attacked, but those who remain faithful will be protected by Allah.”

Heavenly Father, when the Mahra people pray to Allah, You see them; when they reap the rewards of their incense and camel trade, You see them. We pray that the Mahra people will come to know that it is Your grace that protects and provides for them. You not only nourish them with the richness of the sea but also desire a unique relationship with them. We ask that You send Your servants to bring Your gospel to the Mahra people. They do not yet have a Mahri Bible, but Your salvation is not bound by language, and You will lead the Mahra people to offer their praises to You in the desert, finding true peace in You, free from the fear of enemy attacks. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Stateless by Oversight

Bidoon People



Photo by Nauman Abdul Hafeez on unsplash

In Arabic, “Bidoon” means “without,” referring to stateless individuals in Kuwait. Citizenship registration began in 1961 after Kuwait’s independence but focused mainly on central areas like Kuwait City. Peripheral tribal communities were not automatically included for citizenship registration, nor were they informed about the importance of citizenship. Also up until 1990, the Bidoon enjoyed equal rights despite lacking formal status. Because of this, they lacked the incentive to register for citizenship.

The Bidoon once roamed freely across the Arabian Peninsula, but those days are now a distant memory. After the Gulf War, Kuwait tightened its borders and conducted a thorough census. Citizens were required to provide proof of three generations of residency in Kuwait to obtain identification cards.

The Bidoon, who were originally part of Kuwaiti society, found themselves stateless due to a lack of documentation, suddenly labeled as “illegal residents.” Statistics show that there are approximately 100,000 Bidoon in Kuwait. Since the Gulf War, the government has adopted an increasingly harsh stance toward the Bidoon, even accusing them of treason. Without legal status, the Bidoon struggle to find legitimate work. Employers exploit this vulnerability, paying them wages as low as one-third of what other foreign workers earn, often below minimum wage.

Heavenly Father, the Bidoon have no homes, no nationality, and are denied the fair treatment they deserve. We ask for Your care for these people who are “without.” Lord, everything belongs to You—even Kuwait’s wealth is your gift. You see the suffering of the Bidoon. When they face injustice, may Your mighty hand intervene to aid and sustain them. Without citizenship, they’ve lost access to healthcare, education, and basic rights, becoming the poor in a wealthy land. Yet, Father, may they know You as their God, for even when we have nothing, having You makes us truly rich. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

The Workforce Behind Gulf Prosperity

Kerala Gulf Diaspora



In the 1970s, a wave of mass migration from Kerala, India, became the driving force behind the prosperity of the Persian Gulf. According to 2014 census data, 90% of Kerala's 2.36 million overseas residents worked in the Middle East. They not only provided much-needed labor for the Gulf states but also brought significant income to their hometowns and families.

Looking back at Kerala's high unemployment rates, migrant workers explain that it was not due to a lack of education. In fact, a high proportion of educated individuals in Kerala were unable to find jobs matching their qualifications. As a result, many families were forced to sell off assets to sponsor their relatives' visas to work in Gulf countries. Once these workers established themselves abroad, they sent their earnings back home to support their families.

Professor Irudaya Rajan of the Center for Development Studies in Kerala stated, "The Gulf states provide employment opportunities for nearly 10% of Kerala's labor force. Without these opportunities, the high unemployment and poverty rates would make Kerala a breeding ground for terrorism and social tensions." Beyond offering wages significantly higher than those in Kerala, the Gulf states have helped ease social unrest in the region. These young migrant workers, due to their better earnings, have risen in social status, becoming highly sought-after "golden grooms" in the eyes of their communities.

Heavenly Father, we ask for Your care over these young migrant workers. While their hard work brings them incomes higher than they could earn at home, their lives often lack a sense of belonging, leaving their hearts troubled and unsettled. They need more than just financial stability; they need spiritual care. We pray that Kerala's migrant workers will have the opportunity to hear the Gospel of Christ and discover Your way, truth, and new life. We also ask for Your protection over Gospel workers in the Arab world. May they safely and effectively share the Gospel with both locals and migrants. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The UAE: A Gleaming Choice for Earning a Living

Nepalese Migrant Workers



They've reshaped deserts into dazzling cities, with workers' sweat carving skylines that echo Manhattan. At Nepal's Kathmandu Airport, long queues of workers form daily, waiting for flights to the Gulf for jobs. Their faces reflect confusion and uncertainty. Prem wonders, "No one tells you what it's like there—how hot is it? What job will I do?"

For over 30 years, low-wage workers from Nepal and India have driven Gulf construction. Scorching heat, frequently over 40°C, often leads to death by heat exhaustion. In air conditioned break rooms grimly called "killing rooms," some workers nap but never wake. Every day, Nepal receives 3–4 coffins of workers, with 55% of deaths attributed to cardiac arrest.

In 2015, a devastating earthquake struck Nepal. Many men wanted to stay and rebuild their homes, but without the income from working abroad, they couldn't afford to provide new houses for their families. Holding onto \$300–\$500 monthly, these workers remitted \$11 billion in 2023—27% of Nepal's GDP—propping up their homeland's economy.

Frequent climate disasters increasingly drive them to leave. Prem reflects, "I'd rather farm and stay with my family, but worsening harvests force me to leave. What else can I do?"

What choice would you make?

Heavenly Father, Nepalese workers are employed in at least 150 countries, but their homeland has signed bilateral labor agreements with fewer than 10% of these nations. We pray that You help Nepal and these hiring nations establish proper management systems and monitoring mechanisms to protect the rights of migrant workers as they seek employment abroad. Loving Father, we ask You to watch over each worker and their families, meeting their physical and spiritual needs that only You can fulfill. Though migrant workers are often absent from their homes, Your love is never absent. May Your salvation and protection be evident among them. We pray that workers in the Gulf encounter Christians who bring the hope of the gospel and are drawn to follow Jesus. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen."

Shine and Shadows

Sierra Leonean Migrant Workers



The allure of shining cities, like Oman's capital, Muscat, often conceals harsh truths. Aisha, a young woman from Sierra Leone, dreamed of restaurant work, but her agent seized her passport and placed her as a domestic worker, earning \$300 USD less than promised. Dia, a nurse, believed she was heading to a European hospital but ended up in Muscat, sleeping in a corridor at her employer's home. How did these women become shadows in a bright land?

Civil war and corruption have depleted this diamond-rich nation into poverty, leaving its people vulnerable to traffickers. Loose regulations and widespread illiteracy provide fertile ground for exploitation. Traffickers disguise themselves as representatives of embassies or aid organizations, offering scholarships and opportunities abroad. Beatrice believed she had won a scholarship to study in Oman, but she was met with endless labor instead.

Today, many Sierra Leoneans are still trafficked to Mali, Mauritania, and the Gulf, lost in a cycle of exploitation. Who will show them the true light of the world?

Heavenly Father, You recognize every face and know every person's story, no matter how small they seem. Send Your people to bring these broken lives back to Your family. Reveal to them that You are the true light of the world, where no darkness can dwell. Let Your tender mercy, like the morning light, guide them to peace and freedom. We pray for the trafficked people of Sierra Leone to gain liberty and for their lives, damaged by exploitation, to be restored by Your hand. Heal Sierra Leone, Lord, and lead its people to humbly seek You, repairing their nation's brokenness. Grant them discernment to see through lies and escape the snares of traffickers. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Gulf Migration Dreams

Egyptian Diaspora in the Gulf States



Photo by Alex Sergeev on Wikimedia

"I've just received my salary for the month, I'm a rich man!" Saeed may feel rich with his 300 USD monthly salary. But what he doesn't know is that the hotel he's helping build charges \$625 per night.

"We finish work at 5 PM, but the bus to the dorm doesn't leave until 7 PM." Migrant workers endure exhaustion, often returning to their distant dorms by 9 PM, waiting their turn for a bathroom, and rising at 4:30 AM for another grueling day. They keep their hardships hidden from their families, clinging to dreams of building a big house back home, getting married, and eventually moving to Cairo or the Gulf. "One more year," they think, and the road home grows ever more distant. Saeed laughs, "I think I'll keep working until the oil runs out."

Egypt's population has exploded at an astounding rate, growing from 19 million in 1947 to 38 million by 1967, and reaching 76 million by 2006. About 95% of Egyptians live in the narrow Nile River region, occupying only 5% of the land. Limited land and jobs, coupled with the political turmoil after the Egyptian revolution push many young people to leave. By 2011, nearly 6.5 million Egyptians were living abroad, with one-third in the Gulf. Among them, 60% were in Saudi Arabia, followed by 22% in Kuwait.

Heavenly Father, we ask you to watch over the Egyptians living in the Gulf, so they may find a secure and unshakable refuge in Your eternal kingdom. May they see a better homeland and be drawn to the Kingdom of Your Son. After their daily labor, these workers need rest and sleep. We pray that the Gulf nations treat them with love, improving their living conditions, transportation, and establishing preventative measures. We bless the Egyptian workers and their families, praying that they encounter You and follow You with all their hearts. We also bless the ancient Egyptian Coptic Church, that in these turbulent times, people may see Your light shining through them. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

A photograph of a wall covered in graffiti and posters. The wall is divided into vertical panels. On the left, there is a poster with a silhouette of a person walking, a tree, and a landscape, with the text 'VISIT PALESTINE' below it. In the center, there is a poster with an orange background and a silhouette of a person on a horse. On the right, there is a poster with the text 'FU PAYNEY FLEM?KE QABO?EL' and a peace symbol. At the bottom, there is a large, bold, white graffiti slogan that reads 'MAKE HUMMUS NOT WALLS'.

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

HOW TO BREAK
THE CYCLE OF HATRED

Written & Edited by Joan



Photo by Hussein Owda, Mohammad Ajjour, Ashraf Amra on UNRWA

Throughout history, conflict has been a constant, often serving as a central theme in human societies. Many conflicts are not born of the present but are inherited over long periods of time, deeply rooted in the collective memory of peoples. This generational cycle turns yesterday's victims into today's oppressors and today's oppressors into tomorrow's victims. This paradox reveals evil's subtlety: not merely inflicting harm but creating a world where no one is blameless. When we delve into this phenomenon, the line between guilt and innocence becomes increasingly blurred. It feels as though we are navigating a labyrinth of intertwined and ever-growing hatred, deceit, manipulation, and cruelty. Apostle Paul aptly described this universal human condition, asserting that all are under sin, no one is exempt.

In God's original perfect creation, each person was uniquely made and existed in a harmonious relationship with others. Human differences were meant to complement rather than divide, enriching one another rather than posing threats. However, sin entered the world, taking dominion and eroding our sense of identity. It led us to build walls to safeguard our own group interests while rejecting those unlike us.

This rejection takes many forms: political discourse descending into unbridgeable ideological divides, hostile and intolerant rhetoric replacing meaningful dialogue, and conflicts such as the Croatian War of Independence or the century-long Israeli-Palestinian struggle embodying an entrenched "us versus them" mindset.

Theologian Miroslav Volf* asserts that breaking cycles of hatred demands repentance from both perpetrators and victims. Perpetrators must acknowledge and repent for the violence and humiliation they have inflicted. Victims, on the other hand, must turn from the temptation to emulate their oppressors, risking becoming what they once abhorred. Volf warns that without confronting their own bitterness, victims may justify future wrongdoing by citing their past suffering. While asking victims to repent may seem unjust, repentance, Volf insists, shields them from perpetuating harm, enabling the creation of a redeemed, God-centered order that transforms the world's broken systems.

Jesus Christ made space to embrace humanity, even those opposed to God. The self-sacrificial love He displayed on the cross serves as our model for overcoming hatred. God not only identifies with the pain of victims but also offers salvation to all perpetrators. When we connect with Christ, who embraces the other, we gain the strength to extend that embrace, transcending the binary divisions of us versus them, victims versus perpetrators, and justice versus evil.

Christ's love reshapes our identity and our relationships with others. Through it, we are able to embrace—even forgive—our enemies, breaking the cycle of hatred between victims and perpetrators. God's intervention broadens our perspective, allowing us to understand others from their viewpoint, leading to a renewed understanding of both ourselves and those around us.

It is precisely because of the ultimate judgment that we can reject the idea of using violence to counter violence in our earthly lives and trust that one day redemption will heal our painful memories. In the end, forgetting our suffering will be better than remembering it, for wholeness is greater than brokenness, love's connection is stronger than exclusion and distance, and peace is better than discord—just as Joseph who named his son Manasseh, meaning "God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household" (Genesis 41:51 NIV).

*Volf, Miroslav. *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.

Read Luke 23:1-48

1. Take a moment to reflect again on the redemptive love of Jesus Christ for you.
2. Has the redemptive love of Jesus Christ continued to reshape your identity, enabling you to embrace others? Spend some time thinking about this, write it down, and offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God.

From Nationalism to Genocide

Praying for the Psychological Trauma of the Jewish People



Photo by Toa Heftiba on Unsplash

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Europe thrived in prosperity, yet beneath the surface, seeds of destruction were sown. While technological and economic advances grew, the tensions between the bourgeoisie and working class escalated, and the rural-urban divide deepened. Political elites promoted nationalism through mass media, stirring negative emotions and creating a fervent nationalist atmosphere. Extreme ideologies like social Darwinism, eugenics, and racial purity rapidly spread, eventually leading to the chaos of World War II.

The rise of the Nazis encapsulated the era. The senseless sacrifices of war led to widespread disillusionment with traditional political elites. The working class sought a socialist revolution, while the middle class feared class cleansing. This contradiction provided fertile ground for far-right populism, enabling the Nazis to gain a strong foothold in Germany. Fueled by racism and social Darwinism, anti-Semitism reached new heights, setting the stage for the Holocaust.

Even today, the trauma of persecution continues to haunt the Jewish people. In response to this painful history, Israel has adopted a policy of universal military service, firmly believing that only through strength can they ensure their security.

Heavenly Father, "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5 NIV). We fervently pray for Your healing power to touch the Jewish people worldwide, releasing them from the bondage of their persecuted history. We also pray that the Holy Spirit will open the eyes of every Jewish person, revealing that Jesus is the Messiah, and that they would find reconciliation with You and experience transformation in their lives. May Your grace perform wonders among the Jewish people, allowing them to experience the joy of Your embrace, and, through that joy, find the ability to love others, welcoming their neighbors and responding to past trauma with forgiveness. We pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

The Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Praying for Reconciliation Between Israel and Palestine



Photo by Alisdare Hickson on Flickr

The Holocaust became a heavy burden on humanity's moral conscience. After World War II, Western societies supported the establishment of a Jewish homeland. In 1948, Israel was born from the ashes and took root in the land of Palestine. The newly established Israel went through several wars with its Arab neighbors, not only surviving but rapidly growing stronger. Within a few decades, it transformed into a world military power, no longer the small, defenseless nation it once was.

However, Israel's internal wounds were not healed by its newfound military strength. It resorted to harsh measures to alleviate its survival anxiety—building walls in Gaza, blocking borders, responding to Hamas's attacks, and limiting the flow of military supplies and funding, which trapped Gaza's residents in dire conditions. Israel invoked historical claims to justify its presence on the West Bank, enacting controversial settlement policies internationally.

The seeds of hatred have taken root between the two peoples, and a century-long cycle of vengeance has made it nearly impossible to tell who is the aggressor and who is the defender, leaving a tangled deadlock.

Heavenly Father, we come before You with heavy hearts, burdened by the turmoil between Israel and Palestine. We ask for Your mercy to watch over the fractured relationships torn apart by hate after a century of violent conflict. May Your loving hand touch all those suffering from the conflict, especially the civilians caught in the violence. Strengthen the moderate political leaders working to stabilize the nation and rebuild peace. Lord, be with those who have lost loved ones, heal their wounds, and help them find the courage to move forward. Lord, help us to better understand the people of this troubled region, to empathize with them, and to support them in their greatest need. Grant us wisdom, insight, and courage to act with kindness and love, caring for both our Israeli and Palestinian neighbors. We pray in Jesus Christ's name. Amen.

No Chance to Return Home

Praying for Palestinian Refugees and Exiles

Narrow alleys flooded with dirty rainwater—that's where the Balata Refugee Camp is located, in the West Bank. Over 15,000 Palestinians live within this dense cluster of concrete buildings. Many families live in overcrowded conditions, with three generations under one roof. Harima and her children live behind a door, and she has resided in the refugee camp for over fifty years.

In November 1947, the United Nations passed a resolution to partition Palestine, then under British mandate, into Israel and Palestine, which was strongly opposed by neighboring Arab countries and the native Palestinian residents. At the same time, Jewish armed groups began attacking Arab villages designated for Israel.

Harima recalls: "In 1948, when I was only 15 years old, soldiers came to our village and ordered us to raise a white flag. We heard that a massacre had happened in the nearby village of Deir Yassin, and everyone fled in fear."

Between 1947 and 1949, numerous incidents of Palestinians being expelled occurred, but the massacre in Deir Yassin was rare and had a far-reaching impact. At the time, although the Jewish Agency* did not support the attack, it failed to prevent the situation from worsening. Fear spread like wildfire, and many Palestinians fled their homes. Today, they are scattered around the world. The Deir Yassin massacre remains a part of the Palestinian collective trauma.

*Note: The Jewish Agency is the largest Jewish non-profit organization in the world. It was founded in 1929 and has played an active role in the "Return of the Jews to Israel."

1947-1949 Key Historical Timeline of Israel-Palestine

- November 29, 1947
UN Partition Plan for Palestine
- April 9, 1948
Deir Yassin Massacre
- May 14, 1948
Establishment of the State of Israel
- May 15, 1948
First Arab-Israeli War (Seven Arab countries joined the war)

Heavenly Father, we acknowledge that human knowledge and capability are limited, and the complexities of events cannot be blamed on a single party. Western support for the establishment of a Jewish state also led to the displacement of 750,000 Palestinians. Yet, Lord, we turn to You, for You are the God who turns the impossible into the possible and accomplishes Your good and perfect will on the cross. You are the God who lifts the poor from the dust and raises the needy from the ash heap. May You be the refuge for Palestinian refugees worldwide, supplying their material needs and comforting their broken hearts. Grant the Palestinians a new identity as Your children, that they may find their belonging in Christ's love and view their persecuted history with renewed perspective. We pray for wisdom for international organizations and diplomats to find ways to resolve the Palestinian refugee crisis. In Jesus Christ's name, Amen.

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