

Dr. Hormoz Shariat is "The Billy Graham of Iran" – Joel C. Rosenberg

IRAN'S GREAT AWAKENING

How God Is Using a Muslim Convert to Spark Revival



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DR. HORMOZ SHARIAT



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www.IranAliveMinistries.org

Published by Iran Alive Ministries
P.O. Box 518
Melissa, TX 75454

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Cover Design: © The Voice of the Martyrs
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Paperback ISBN-13: 978-1-7337490-4-6
ISBN-10: 1-7337490-4-7

eBook ISBN-13: 978-1-7337490-5-3
ISBN-10: 1-7337490-5-5

Library of Congress Control Number: 2019919013

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Iran's Great Awakening

HOW GOD IS USING A MUSLIM
CONVERT TO SPARK REVIVAL

DR. HORMOZ SHARIAT

TO MY NIECE, HALEH
A GENERAL IN THE LORD'S ARMY

ENDORSEMENTS

(IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

Iran's political struggles and social unrest are newsworthy, but the real battle for freedom is being waged in the heavenlies. Dr. Hormoz Shariat shares his remarkable journey from Iran to the United States, and from Islam to Christianity. Out of brokenness, Hormoz found his freedom in Christ, a freedom that resulted in a powerful ministry to Persians at home and abroad. Dr. Shariat's scientific mind and understanding of both the political and the spiritual realms make him uniquely qualified to be an ambassador for Christ in the Middle East. I highly recommend this inspiring story of courage and conviction.

Dr. Neil T. Anderson

Founder and President Emeritus of
Freedom in Christ Ministries

A historical and ordained awakening of a nation coincides with God's incredible plan to use a Muslim-background believer to influence a wave of transformation in Iran. This book is a delightful, compelling, and inspiring story of commitment, perseverance and faith. A must read.

Dr. Mike Ansari

President, Heart4Iran/Mohabat TV

With a pen of fire, Hormoz Shariat describes Jesus Christ's power to change lives. In these pages, you will learn about the world's fastest-growing church, located in the world's most powerful Muslim nation. What is happening in Iran today is unprecedented in its 5,000-year history. This is Iran's Great Awakening! God is on the move.

It's time for you to learn about it, and step into the story of what He is doing!

Ray Bentley

Author, and Pastor of Maranatha Chapel

It has been my privilege to know Dr. Shariat for many years, and to serve on Iran Alive Ministries' board of directors for nearly 10 years. He is one of the few men I have known who is both an evangelist and a pastor. Hormoz has two great burdens that drive him every day: to finish his ministry well and to pass on to Iran's next generation what God has given him. You will be shocked and thrilled by what is happening in Iran. Today is the day of harvest in Iran. Will you join us in training the emerging young leaders of this massive movement of the Spirit?

We in the West have much to learn from Iran's underground church movement. Read, pray, and then act decisively.

Dr. Monroe "Monnie" Brewer

Former Missions Pastor for 36 years

East-West Ministries, Plano, Texas

Voice of the Martyrs, Bartlesville, OK

Adjunct Professor, Dallas Theological Seminary

Hormoz Shariat peels away so many misconceptions about Iran and its citizens, providing a fresh perspective on God's heart for this extraordinary nation. Iran is not a country Christians should fear, but rather, be ready to invest, if need be, their lives to see the Gospel transform all Iranians and strengthen His church. Hormoz is a dear friend and ministry partner whose life exemplifies

a deep passion for making disciples of all nations and bringing glory to the Great I Am.

Floyd Brobbel

President, The Voice of the Martyrs, Canada

Few nations are of greater consequence to God's end-time plan for the earth than Iran. Within this fascinating nation, there is nothing as potent as today's awakening church. And within the Iranian church, there is no one who has made a greater impact than Dr. Hormoz Shariat. His influence is breathtaking, his story is enthralling, and his insights are crucial for us all. *Iran's Great Awakening* is a gift of pure gold for those who love the Lord and understand the remarkable times we live in.

Dr. David Cannistraci

Gateway City Church, San Jose, California

This is absolutely a must read. Dr. Hormoz has poured out his heart, but more importantly he has opened our eyes to the incredible harvest that is about to come to Iran. This harvest will change the course of the Middle East! This book will awaken your heart.

Dr. Robert W. Carman D.D.

President of Victory World Missions

We live in a world filled with chaos and devoid of spiritual courage. Into the maelstrom and swirling storms of cultural dissonance comes the powerful voice of Hormoz Shariat. Speaking with clarity and candor, Shariat stirs the heart and compels our hands. It is one thing to be inspired, quite another to be empowered. Hormoz speaks with the integrity of a man seasoned by cultural battles but with the

compassion of a man infused with God's presence. This is the voice of a statesman for the Kingdom of Heaven, a man of deep conviction in a season of desperate need.

Rev. Paul Louis Cole, D.Th.
ChristianMensNetwork.com

Inside these pages, you will discover a true story of a radical conversion, of the effect of amazing grace on a human heart. From an unlikely background, Dr. Hormoz Shariat has become a modern-day Apostle Paul. This is a brilliant tale of the author's personal journey to Jesus Christ in a Muslim-dominated world. You will witness Hormoz's unstoppable passion to reach the seemingly unreachable, and you will be encouraged in your own walk with Christ to do the same. Get your copy of *Iran's Great Awakening* and spark a revival in your community today!

Billy Crone

Author, Pastor, and Media Leader

When you think of Iran, *terrorism* probably comes to your mind first. But did you know that Iran has the fastest-growing church in the world right now? Hormoz Shariat is right in the middle of this historic movement of God! God took a Muslim from Tehran and brought him to faith in Christ. Hormoz's life was changed radically, but God was just getting started.

Today, Hormoz Shariat is president of Iran Alive, and the Spirit of God is all over this man. He is a winsome, warm, and humble powerhouse for Christ who is bringing the Gospel to thousands of Iranians every day through television. I've been to Iran, and the people are truly loving, gracious, and welcoming. I believe Iranians are

more open to Jesus than any other people on the planet. Hormoz and his wonderful wife, Donnell, have been selected and raised up for this special moment in time. He truly is the Billy Graham of Iran. I love Hormoz and have been privileged to be his ministry partner for more than a decade.

Iran's Great Awakening is a thrilling book! I highly recommend it to you. And be sure and grab a copy for your pastor. Read it and you'll understand the real story in Iran. You'll also see how God can take one man and use him to be His voice to a nation on the brink of disaster. Iran needs Jesus! Hormoz Shariat has dedicated his life to making that happen.

Thank you, Hormoz, for giving us a bird's-eye view of the miracle that is Jesus's church in Iran. Nobody knows this miracle better than you!

Tom Doyle

Author of *Dreams and Visions*,
Killing Christians, and *Standing in the Fire*

President of Uncharted Ministries

Seldom does a nation experience a radical spiritual transformation like the one we have seen in Iran over the past fifty years. And no one has been more instrumental in that awakening and transformation than Dr. Shariat, whose ministry has impacted hundreds of thousands of Iranian lives. His story and insight are invaluable to understanding what God is doing in these last days to radically change the Muslim world.

Mani Erfan

President & Founder

Mani Erfan Ministries

Dr. Hormoz Shariat is not only one of the most humble, caring, and generous people I have ever known, he is on a very short list of those whom the Lord is using to transform an entire population with the hope of Christ. It is not an overstatement to call Hormoz “The Pastor of a Nation,” because Iran’s people have been deeply impacted by the Lord’s work through Iran Alive Ministries, in every corner of the country and throughout the Persian world.

Ken Fifer, D.Min.

Missions Pastor, Bent Tree Bible Fellowship

It is impossible to consider the miracle of salvation pouring out among Iranian people without mentioning the visionary and pioneering work of Brother Hormoz Shariat. I commend this book to all who have a heart for what God is doing in Iran and among the Iranian diaspora!

David Garrison

Missionary and Author of *A Wind in the House of Islam*

Wow, what a fantastic book! It is engaging with every turn of the page. The author shares his early years as a Muslim, his involvement in the protests that helped overthrow the Shah of Iran, the execution of his brother in an Iranian prison, and his becoming a Christian. And he warns about what is coming in the near future for Iran. Every chapter is challenging, yet encouraging. Read this book. You will be glad that you did.

Tom Hughes

Lead Pastor, 412 Church

Founder, Hope For Our Times

Through Hormoz's life story, you'll come to experience the fascinating grace of God's faithfulness and how God, in His mercy, directs a man's steps. God calls us and chooses to manifest His life through us by the Holy Spirit's power when we yield to Him. In dying to ourselves we find true, eternal life in Jesus and His resurrection power. May millions in Iran be saved through the power of the Cross and the cleansing blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Kevin Jessip

President, Global Strategic Alliance

Iran's Great Awakening will give you hope and confidence about the country's future. This is not a book that artificially makes you feel good. It is a book about the powerful demonstration of a move of God that is transforming the lives of thousands of Iranians every day. As God leads the movement through Dr. Shariat, Iran is now the fastest-growing Christian nation in the world.

Shariat's journey from Islam in Iran to Jesus is moving. He came to America to earn his doctorate in technology at USC. Upon graduation, he moved to Silicon Valley and a high-paying technology job. Little did he know how God would ultimately use him.

I have watched God's call on his life for more than twenty-five years. God called Dr. Shariat to disciple His people and plant the largest Iranian churches in America. Now, through a TV satellite ministry to Iran, God has moved mightily to empower the fastest-growing Jesus movement in the world. Reading *Iran's Great Awakening* will inspire and give you hope!

Bryce Jessup

President Emeritus,

William Jessup University

For many years I have been a friend and admirer of Hormoz Shariat, and a partner to his work in Iran. I will tell you plainly that no one else in the world can match his heart, passion, and knowledge when it comes to reaching the lost of Iran. What Hormoz shares in this book will absolutely astound you and reveal the unfolding of God's secret plan for Iran in the last days.

Jeff King

President, International Christian Concern
Persecution.org

This is a powerful testament to God's calling on our lives and His faithfulness in leading us to fulfill the promises that He has placed in our lives for His glory. Challenging and thoughtful applications in each chapter make this a great study tool for personal development or for group application.

Pastor Tong Liu

Founder and Senior Pastor of River of
Life Christian Church

The Gospel is victorious inside Iran despite the Islamist regime's intense opposition to God's Word and His people. No amount of imprisonment, torture, or killing has slowed the Gospel's advance. *Iran's Great Awakening* is a critical part of the story of history's greatest move of God among Muslims. It should be read by everyone so that all may know that John 1:5 is true in Iran: The light of Christ shines in Islam's deepest darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Cole Richards

President, The Voice of the Martyrs (vom.org)

Behind the iron curtain of the Islamic Republic of Iran, a movement is spreading—one that has the ayatollahs terrified. Though they work to extinguish it, it continues to spread like wildfire. I'm speaking of Iran's underground church, the fastest-growing revival in the world. For decades, Pastor Hormoz Shariat has been one of this movement's shining lights. Hearing his story, and the story of the Iranian Christians, will ignite the flames of revival in your heart. The Western church needs to read this book.

Joel Richardson

New York Times best-selling author,
filmmaker, and speaker

Dr. Shariat has written an honest and powerful testimony of his life's journey. This book is more than the author's personal testimony; it explores deep truths that are vital to the body of Christ today. Each chapter carries biblical principles of the cost and rewards of true discipleship. These truths penetrate the very heart and nature of what it means to be a Christian today. This book is a must read for Christians today.

Drs. Frederic and Susan Rowe

Founders, The Global Watch

Dr. Hormoz Shariat is a humble servant with a heart of gold. The Lord has given him a mighty voice to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Great things, such as miracles, healings, and visions have been accomplished through his steadfast efforts to evangelize the lost throughout the world, especially Iran. Countless lives have been inspired,

and souls have been saved through his television shows and related teachings. Iran has truly come alive because of his ministerial efforts through Iran Alive Ministries! *Iran's Great Awakening* is a must read, guaranteed to motivate many readers to greatness.

Bill Salus

Founder of Prophecy Depot Ministries

This book is the most informative and inspirational book I have ever read on what God is doing in Iran. Pastor Hormoz Shariat masterfully shares startling testimonies and spiritual insights that he gained from the Scriptures and his work on the ground in Iran. Equally riveting is Hormoz's pilgrimage from influential Silicon Valley scientist to church planter to international apostolic worker. Once you pick up this book, you won't be able to put it down. Get ready to be inspired and empowered.

Dr. Ed Silvano

Founder and CEO of Transform Our World/Harvest Evangelism and author of *Ekklesia* and *Anointed for Business*

Wow! What an incredible and powerful testimony of God's amazing and abounding grace! This book is a living testament of what God did through one man's radical obedience to His calling. Dr. Hormoz's life story is truly a message for our generation. And, like the early apostles, he reminds us that no matter how difficult it seems at times to complete God's callings and assignments, He is always faithful. I've had the privilege of knowing and being friends with Dr. Hormoz for two

decades, and have had the pleasure of serving alongside him. I have been deeply moved by the depth and substance of his life, reflected so honestly in this book.

Truly, his life exemplifies simple obedience to God (which is the highest form of worship), persistence, personal consecration, courage, and personal sacrifice. For the humble Dr. Hormoz, of course, it's an honor, not a sacrifice, to serve the Lord and love His people. His story reminds me of a quote by the great missionary David Livingstone: "Why is it when an earthly king commissions us, we consider it an honor, but when the Heavenly King commissions us, we call it a sacrifice?"

Yes, in many ways, Dr. Hormoz, his family, and those who have stood with him, have made sacrifices along the way, yet they recognize the privilege of God's calling them. This is a must-read book! May you be deeply moved and provoked in your own life and journey in the Lord as you read and digest this real-life testament to God's love, grace, and mercy.

Doug Stringer

Founder, Somebody Cares America

Jesus promised, "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." From an early 21st-century American perspective, one could be tempted to doubt these words. But for those who lift up their eyes to see what God is doing across the earth, all doubt fades. He is moving with power to fulfill this promise. Perhaps the hottest spot on the map of the Spirit's moving is Iran. Dr. Shariat is not only uniquely positioned to describe the work of the Spirit there, he is one of its chief catalysts.

I pray every reader will be inspired to live more boldly for the King and His kingdom as a result of this book.

Clyde Taber

Executive Director, Visual Story Network

I have thanked God often for pastor Hormoz Shariat, for his heart for God, his passion for Iran, his zeal for the Gospel, and his unique gift in evangelism. Hormoz has been at the forefront of a great movement of God in Iran. If you would like a front row seat for this spiritual revolution in the Persian-speaking world, read this book!

Rev. Sasan Tavassoli, Ph.D.

Pars Theological Center

What's happening in Iran today is unprecedented. It is just like the Lord to move so powerfully through a people governed by such an ill-inspired regime. Most incredibly, the testimony of the blood-won Iranian church is already impacting the nations and pressing us into a beautiful expression of God's eternal purposes in our day and time. Dr. Shariat's testimony will encourage you. His clarity will edify you. This book will empower you. Something incredible is taking place; let it not be said of us that we did not use every opportunity to be part of it.

Dalton Thomas

Founder/President, FAI

You will be inspired by the story of Dr. Hormoz Shariat! You will weep as he shares his struggles and shout for joy when you see God's victory in his life. What an amazing story of an ardent researcher who was a Muslim and

came to faith in Christ! His walk with Christ and his ministry will challenge you to dig deep and find the true source of success. Your life will be enriched and your vision expanded as you read what God has done in Dr. Shariat's life.

Dr. Sammy Tippit

Author and International Evangelist

Dr. Hormoz Shariat heard the words of God: *"Iran is ready."* Be prepared to experience a startling testimony, a big vision, and the enormous personal obstacles that did not stop this brother in Christ from bringing the Gospel to a spiritually starving Iran. I highly recommend you take the journey to discover how a million Iranians will embrace Jesus as Messiah through Dr. Shariat's steadfast faith and media outreach.

Walt Wilson

Founder and Chairman

Global Media Outreach

Iran's House Church Movement has created the fastest-growing church in the world. In the forty years since the Islamic Revolution, the number of Iranian followers of Christ (from Muslim backgrounds) has jumped from fewer than 500 to over one million! This is a mighty move of the Holy Spirit, in cooperation with dedicated men and women of God. Dr. Hormoz Shariat is one of them. He could have been a millionaire, but he left his lucrative career and dedicated himself to serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Through his 24-hour TV ministry, he has shared the saving message of the Gospel with millions of Iranians.

I wish Brother Hormoz many more victories in presenting the Savior of the world and the King of Kings to many more millions of Farsi-speaking people.

Brother Luke Yeghnazar

Eternal Life Agape Ministries, Inc.

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FOREWORD

I CONSIDER HORMOZ SHARIAT to be the Billy Graham of Iran.

He is far and away the most watched and most influential Iranian evangelist in the world, and his story is well worth reading.

In his day, Billy Graham preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ clearly and unequivocally in stadiums all over the world. Sometimes 40,000 or 50,000 or even 100,000 people or more would come each night to hear Dr. Graham speak the truths of God's Word. Yet the most widely listened-to and fruitful evangelist in the history of the world was never able to travel into Iran to preach the message of eternal salvation, because to do so was (and is) utterly illegal.

But now God has opened an extraordinary door. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year, Hormoz Shariat and his Iran Alive Ministries colleagues broadcast satellite television programs in Farsi (the language of the Iranian people), sharing the Gospel, teaching in-depth Bible studies, and taking live phone calls from Muslims, who call at great personal risk. These Muslims are so desperate to know if Jesus is God, and so hungry to have their souls and bodies healed by Him, that they are willing to make the call even though they know they could be discovered by the secret police, arrested, tortured, and even killed for showing interest in Christianity.

Because Hormoz and his team are broadcasting programs unlike anything on Iranian state-run television, millions of Iranians are watching every day. They watch in the privacy of their homes, hungry for the truth and grateful for men and women willing to speak the truth in love.

Hormoz's satellite network also broadcasts Christian worship services into Iran, right over the heads of the ayatollahs and the

mullahs and the Iranian intelligence services. Many secret believers in Iran are too scared to go to a church, fearing that the secret police might catch them. Many Muslim converts are too scared to play Christian music in their homes or sing too loudly, fearing that their neighbors might hear them. For some of them, the church services that Hormoz's network broadcasts are the only times of worship and fellowship they have. And for Muslims who are curious about Christianity, such services give them a safe window into a spiritual world of hope to which they feel increasingly drawn.

I had the joy of meeting Hormoz nearly fifteen years ago. He had become interested in my novels and in my first non-fiction book, *Epicenter*, in which I explained a number of Bible prophecies and shared my conviction that the Lord will, one day, draw millions upon millions of Jews and Muslims into the Kingdom of Christ by the power of His Holy Spirit. For some reason, Hormoz graciously invited me to visit him in a secure, undisclosed location. I gratefully accepted his offer, and am so glad I did.

For me, a Jewish follower of Jesus, it was incredibly moving to meet such a remarkable Iranian follower of Christ and his family and his staff. It was amazing to see how God was using them to reach the nation of Iran, the people they love so dearly, with the life-changing message of the Gospel.

Most remarkable to me was to learn that Hormoz did not grow up in a Christian home, hoping to be an evangelist. To the contrary, he was an Iranian-born Shia Muslim. His wife was an American-born convert to Islam who had come to Iran for work. The two met in Tehran. That's where they were married. In 1979, they were members of the Iranian Revolution, marching with millions of other Iranians in Tehran's streets, shouting, "Death to America! Death to the Shah!" And then, as you'll read, they thought, *Well, maybe not Death to America quite yet. We'd like to go to graduate school over there.*

What follows is an extraordinary and truly miraculous journey. This is the story of how God led Hormoz and Donnell Shariat from Iran to America, from Shia Islam to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, from students of the Quran to teachers of the Bible, from people with no background in media production to pioneers in Gospel satellite television. What's more, this is the story of two lost and broken people (a couple whose marriage was in the process of blowing up), whom God not only saved and healed but called to become leaders of a worldwide movement of Muslims turning to Christ.

I am humbled to call Hormoz and Donnell my friends. They have welcomed me into their home. They have introduced me to their family and friends and staff and board members. We have prayed together. We have studied the Scriptures together. We have spoken at conferences together. I've appeared on their network several times, teaching the Bible and answering questions on live broadcasts. My wife, Lynn, and I have even had the honor of hosting Hormoz in Jerusalem, Israel, on his first foray into the Holy Land, where he shared his story at an Epicenter Conference organized by The Joshua Fund, a ministry we established several years ago.

For years, I have been urging Hormoz to write a book that would share his story in detail, and to explain the vision that the Lord has given him for the salvation of the Muslim world—particularly the transformation of Iran from the world's most dangerous terrorist state to a nation in love with Jesus. Finally, Hormoz has come to his senses and done what I've been asking for so long!

The book you hold in your hands is not only worth reading; it's worth sharing with others. Don't simply read it. Write about it. Talk about it. Discuss it on social media. Absorb its message and pass it on to others.

More people need to understand how much God loves the world's 1.6 billion Muslims. More people need to learn about the work of Iran Alive Ministries and the power of Gospel satellite television. And far more people need to be involved in praying for

(and financially investing in) the effort to reach every Iranian and all Muslims with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I sincerely hope that this book, *Iran's Great Awakening*, will be used by God to educate and mobilize a far larger movement of Christians to love the Muslim people, and to more deeply appreciate God's great power to seek and save the lost.

I must confess that Hormoz is driving me to jealousy me because (so far) so many more Muslims than Jews are coming to faith in Christ. Indeed, more Muslims have come to Christ in the past fifty years than during the previous fourteen centuries. As a Jewish follower of Jesus, and citizen of the State of Israel, I certainly believe the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 11:26. I have no doubt that one day, "All Israel will be saved." Right now, I see a great awakening underway in Iran, and not yet in Israel. But that's another reason I love Hormoz and the book he has written. Because God has taught him lessons that my colleagues and I need to learn as we work to reach our people and seek God for an Israeli awakening.

There is one other reason I believe this book is important: its emphasis on biblical prophecy. Sadly, most Christians don't study prophecy. Yet 27 percent of the Bible, more than one in four verses, is prophetic. Most Christians ignore these Scriptures because they feel they are too complicated or controversial. That's a profound mistake. Every verse of Scripture is inspired by God and useful to us. There are important things about the future of specific nations that God urgently wants us to know. That's why He gave us these prophecies. And woe to us if we ignore them and thus are unprepared when dramatic events eventually come to pass. We will all give an account to the Lord one day. Knowing this, do we really want to have paid scant attention to one-quarter of what God is telling us in His Word? To have failed to live in light of the critical truths contained in these passages?

In this book, Hormoz explains the biblical prophecies about Iran. He explores the passage in Jeremiah 49 that explains how God will judge the leaders of Elam (Iran) and then move His throne there. He also addresses the prophecies found in Ezekiel, chapters 38 and 39, in which God (in the “last days”) vows to judge an alliance of nations seeking to attack Israel, an alliance partly led by a nation known as Persia.

What exactly do these passages say? What do they mean? And how should they motivate us to live differently for Christ? Some authors and Bible teachers might shy away from such matters. Not my friend Hormoz. To the contrary, he deals with them head-on, with courage and candor. For this I love him all the more.

May the Lord bless you for picking up this book and reading it thoroughly and digesting it carefully. May the Lord bless you even more for letting the Holy Spirit ignite a passion inside you to reach every Iranian, indeed every Muslim, with the message of Jesus.

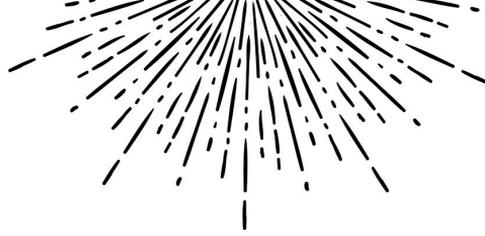
Today, the mere mention of Iran too often conjures up thoughts of war, rumors of war, terror, and tragedy. But Hormoz and I believe that a new day is coming. Soon, possibly very soon, the Lord Jesus will move His throne into the heart of Iran. He will transform that country for His glory. He will send many Persian people into the world as His servants and His witnesses. The Islamic Republic will become the Christian Republic. The Islamic Revolution will become a Gospel Revolution.

In the pages ahead, Hormoz testifies first-hand that this prophetic, supernatural transformation has already begun in Iran. But it is far from complete. More is coming. Much more. He wants you to be of it, and so do I. So read on, dear friend, and discover Iran’s Great Awakening for yourself.

Joel C. Rosenberg

Jerusalem, Israel

January 10, 2020



CHAPTER 12

IRAN HAS THE FASTEST GROWING CHRISTIAN POPULATION

D **ID YOU KNOW** that Iran has the fastest-growing evangelical population in the world¹⁰ despite having no church buildings? And this population is led mostly by women.¹¹ In the film *Sheep Among Wolves Volume II*, Dalton Thomas and Joel Richardson document how the Iranian regime is losing control of this church growth and the revival among its people.

In Part II of this book, we saw that the Lord promises to set His throne in Elam (Iran). This will not happen suddenly, but over a period of time.

IRAN: A FORTY-YEAR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Over the past forty years, I have witnessed how Iranian Muslims have gradually walked away from Islam and the religious leaders who represent God and Islam to them. Here is what I have observed about Iranians' spiritual journey over the past 40 years:

1. Pre 1979. Before the Islamic revolution (and during the Shah's 38 years of rule), following Islam was a personal choice. Most Iranians lived a secular life outwardly, but had faith in Islam inwardly. They were neither spiritually open nor hungry to consider Christianity. The number of Muslim-background believers was in the hundreds. Christian missionaries worked hard to evangelize Muslims, with little success. Those working for the Bible Society in Iran told me, "When we were distributing Bibles, only one or two people out of one hundred would accept one—reluctantly."
2. 1980s. In the first years after the revolution, Iranians were excited that they were the only country in the world ruled by Islamic laws and led by clergy. They were sure that Islam would soon take over the world. They were ready to die for Islam. Many did die in the eight years of war with Iraq. Only a few intellectuals like me, who dared to think objectively and question Islam, came to Christ early in that decade. Eventually, hundreds of Muslims became Christians, and by the end of the decade, there were several thousand Muslim-background Christians.
3. 1990s. Iranians saw that Islamic government did not bring the promised utopia that they were dreaming about. From the beginning, the government killed its opponents. The people remembered that during the Shah's rule, they had all kinds of freedoms, except political freedom. However, they realized they had not gained political freedom—and had lost their other freedoms as well. They felt disillusioned, but still thought, *Nothing is wrong with Islam. The problem is that our Islamic government did not implement Islam correctly.* They started questioning the government but not Islam. However, a growing number of university students and intellectuals *did* start questioning Islam and looking at it

open-mindedly. During those years, we saw a surge in the number of Muslims coming to Christ. Thousands came to Christ, as the number of Muslim-background Christians grew to tens of thousands. In 1999, there were public protests (the first since 1979), but only among students. The government responded brutally, attacking dorms and killing students in their bedrooms. Some students were killed when they were thrown out of their windows.

4. 2000s. A growing number of Iranians—not just intellectuals—started questioning Islam. After observing Islam critically, they concluded, “The problem is not that the government failed to implement Islam correctly; there is something fundamentally wrong with Islam itself.” Books criticizing Islam, written decades previously, became underground best-sellers, even though they were banned by the government. In 2009, people from the middle class joined students and intellectuals in the streets, protesting during the “green movement.” Tehran was the focal point of the protests; most other Iranian cities did not participate.

Hundreds were killed. Thousands more were arrested. Many were tortured, raped, and killed while in custody. Several Christian satellite channels were launched during this decade, and they played an important role in helping people compare Christ and Christianity with Islam. We had the honor of broadcasting the first Christian program into Iran on December 1, 2001. During this decade, tens of thousands of Iranians became Christians, bringing the total to several hundred thousand.

5. 2010s. The spirit of Islam, which is the spirit of violence, fear, and deception, started losing its grip on the souls of Iranians. It was as if a veil was lifted from the minds of Iranian Muslims. In private conversations and on the internet, they dared to discuss politics, Islam’s flaws, and

the life of Muhammad. Criticizing Islam became a trend, a sign of progressive thinking. The opinions formerly held only by intellectuals now spread to the middle class. Eyes were opened to see the deception, corruption, and injustices perpetrated by the Iranian government and by Islam itself. In 2018 (in response to economic pressures), people in hundreds of cities took their protests to the streets. The crowds included low-income citizens who, for decades, had supported the Islamic government. In 2019, when oil prices tripled overnight, the protests intensified. Once again, the government used violence to control the situation. More than 1,500 people were killed in the streets, and more than 12,000 were arrested. This was a wake-up call to all Iranians, even the most devout Muslims: Don't blindly follow the government or Islam. During this decade, hundreds of thousands of Iranian Muslims came to Christ, bringing the total into the millions. (Estimates ranged from 1 million to 5 million.)

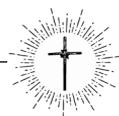
6. 2020s. The disconnect between the people and the government representing Islam is growing wide and deep. Currently, most people use "we" to refer to the general population and "they" to refer those in power. Now, even the common, low-income religious people see that those in power have no heart for people. When the people protest their financial misery, the government responds by killing and arresting them.

This and other events in early 2020 (such as shooting down a passenger plane and coldheartedly lying about it, and mishandling the COVID-19 virus) has disgusted masses of Iranians. They aren't merely criticizing and rejecting Islam; they are determined to eradicate it.

Evidence indicates that the 2020s should see millions more Iranians come to Christ. We at Iran Alive are seeing a surge

in the number of Iranians who are coming to Christ. Many of them confess that only six months previously, they were committed Muslims who supported the government.

Iran's Islamic Government has lost the heart of the people. Iran is ripe for transformation, and it shall be transformed if we act wisely and strategically—if we partner with God to make Iran the first Islamic nation that turns to Christ. If we work together, we could see tens of millions of Iranians turn to Christ before the end of 2020's.



*Iran is ripe for
transformation*

Earlier in this book, I warned readers not to believe everything the media—especially Iran's government-controlled media—tells you about Iran. Do not believe the videos of the government-orchestrated rallies. Instead, believe God and His promise in Jeremiah 49:38 to save Iran.

THE CURRENT STATE OF THE CHURCH IN IRAN

After a spiritual journey that spanned four decades, Iran is experiencing a great spiritual awakening.

We need to realize that most church buildings are closed in Iran. The few churches that are open serve the Armenian and Assyrian minorities, who are forced to conduct their services in their own language, a language that Iranian Muslims do not understand.

Further, these churches are forbidden to admit any Muslim-background believers or to reach out to them in any way. The underground house churches are few, and dangerous to be a part of. It is estimated that only 5 percent of Iran's Christians attend a house church. Those who attend risk imprisonment, torture, persecution, and even death.

As noted earlier, the internet and phones are controlled and monitored by the government. To learn about God or spiritual things beyond Islam, Iranians—Muslims and Christians—must rely on satellite TV (like our channel). It is illegal to own a satellite dish and receiver in Iran, but everyone has them.

When Donnell and I first prayed, “Lord, use us to save Iran,” I had no idea how this would happen. We weren’t aware of the technology that would enable us to go over the heads of the mullahs (Islamic clergymen) and into people’s living rooms. Technology allowed us to look Iranians in the eye and tell them about a God who, unlike Allah, is loving and gentle. He wants to have a personal relationship with each Iranian—and they can experience Him immediately.

Every week, Iranians watch Iran Alive Ministries via satellite TV. They contact us via phone, email, and social media with prayer requests and questions like, “How can I become a Christian?” They know they’re putting themselves at risk by contacting us, but their spiritual hunger overcomes their fear.

They are tired of being fed lies. They are desperate for truth, love, joy, peace, salvation, and the new life that only Jesus offers. They know that we don’t offer empty promises and nice Christian slogans. They see Jesus’s transforming power in the lives of their friends and relatives who have become Christians.

I saw this pattern in the churches I pastored in California. When, as a church, we faced chaos, conflict, in-fighting, and division, a revival broke out. Have you ever hit rock-bottom and become disgusted with your situation, or even with yourself? If so, perhaps you, too, discovered that change doesn’t happen until we reach the point of “I’m sick and tired of myself. I need to change.” That takes us from “I wish to change” to “I want to change,” and then to “I *must* change.”

Iran has languished at rock-bottom for a long time. It is desperate for change. Iranians are crying out, “We must change.”

I see this happening on a large scale. Iranians are sick and tired of the government, and of themselves.

They are disgusted that there is no love and trust in the society. Even family members deceive, betray, and defraud each other. But God is using turmoil to bring a great spiritual awakening. He is turning people's hearts toward Him. Jesus is capturing their hearts. Jesus is becoming the King of Iranian hearts. Before He rules the nation, He must rule in the heart of each individual. And when God rules a person's heart, it's evident in his or her lifestyle.

FROM IRANIAN REVOLUTION TO REVIVAL

Today, a perfect storm brews in Iran. Iran is run by Islamic clergy. It is the only country in the world that has been enforcing Islam for over forty years in all areas of society: the laws, media, education, and the arts. However, much to the clergy's dismay, Iran's post-revolution generation has rejected Islam, despite all the efforts to brainwash and control them.

A revival is sweeping Iran. When you picture revival, do you see large evangelistic meetings in stadiums? Or a large number of Christians recommitting their lives to Christ and filling up churches?



*A revival is
sweeping Iran.*

Yes, this is the picture of revival in the West's free countries. But in a closed country like Iran, where Christian gatherings are illegal (in churches and private homes), revival looks different.

Nonetheless, I proclaim, "The revival in Iran has already started. God's Kingdom is progressively and rapidly being established in the hearts of Iranians."

From a human perspective, a gloomy storm has plagued Iran since the 1979 revolution. That storm has been destroying the



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desperation is the
seedbed of revival.*

good in Iran, and in many ways things are getting worse. However, from a spiritual viewpoint, there is no storm. It is not even cloudy. Heaven is open, and the Son is shining brightly.

It is said that desperation is the seedbed of revival. The Lord has allowed this perfect storm to linger over Iran so that the people will become so hopeless that they will call upon Him and He will save them (Psalm 50:15). Today Iranians *are* desperate. They *are* crying out, and He *is* saving them.

Yes, for more than forty years, the Islamic government has exercised total control of Iran's people, dictating every aspect of their lives according to Islamic laws. This is why people are crying out to God for salvation and are desperate for a revival. They are tired of being controlled, lied to, manipulated, abused, and treated like slaves.

The way the Iranian government treats its people is similar to how Pharaoh treated the captive Israelites in Egypt. Iranians are crying out to God for salvation, just as the Israelites did. And what God is doing now is similar to what He did then. He sent Moses to save the Israelites long ago. Today, He is sending His own Son to save the Iranians.

Iranians' desperation is so wide and deep that it engulfs every area of personal and social life. The people are ready for personal transformation, and they are desperate for social, political, and economic transformation as well.

The First Great Awakening happened in the mid-1700s in Great Britain when Jonathan Edwards, a minister and Yale graduate, refused to convert his church to the Church of England.¹² He wanted the freedom to build new churches and schools that were not subject to government control.

The United States was founded mainly by Christians who fled the persecution, rule, and control of government-led churches in Europe. As a result, they separated church and state, and created the best democracy in the history of the world. Experiencing the evil of religious dictatorship always opens people to new and dramatically different ideas.

In Jeremiah 49:38, we see that God promises to make Iran a Christian nation. Let's look at what "Christian nation" means. This will help us see Iran's future, and how quickly its people are moving into that future.

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN NATION?

"There is no such a thing as a Christian nation!" a rather disturbed and angry conference participant told me last year. He stared at me intensely, as if he wanted me to back down from my statement about Iran becoming a Christian nation. I sensed that he was also testing me to see how strongly I believed in my assertion. (Was it, perhaps, just an eye-catching, ear-tingling, attention-getting empty motto fabricated for public presentations?)

I hear this statement from well-meaning brothers and sisters in Christ when they hear me boldly declare: "Iran will be a Christian nation."

Often, I know what they are thinking before they speak: *This can never happen, and I hope it never does.*

But I am not offended.

I understand them. For them, a "Christian nation" looks different from what I envision. They are looking to the past and remembering the horrible era when the Church was in power, but I am looking forward to what the Bible promises will happen in the future. When I hear what they mean by "Christian nation," I agree with them. I respond, "No way. I don't want to live in that kind of Christian nation.

Nobody wants that! Such a nation would disgrace the name of Christ. I hope we will never see such a thing on earth.”

So, before we explore what a Christian nation is, let's make sure we understand what it is *not*.

WHAT IS NOT A CHRISTIAN NATION?

From a historical perspective, we don't have a clear picture of a Christian nation.

But I say we must not look back, because there has never been a Christian nation. Instead, let's look forward, because this is an end-time future event.

First, let's remember how the Roman Empire transformed from the number-one persecutor of Christians into a Christian nation. This transformation weakened Christianity rather than strengthen it. It caused Christianity to become an official state religion. All Roman citizens were automatically considered “Christians,” and the clergy was supported by the state. This led to a strong organization called the “Church,” but it produced a weak Christianity. We don't want that to happen again.

Then, in the Middle Ages, the Church essentially ruled Europe. History books are filled with tales of control, corruption, and the ungodly character of certain popes. There was brutality, the selling of indulgences, and the dirty politics of religious leaders. To this, we say “No, thank you! We don't want *that* again!”

Christianity reached its weakest point in history during the Middle Ages. It has taken centuries to bring back biblical Christianity—the kind that early Christians experienced in the first century—and we are not done yet.

Today, many people consider the United States a Christian nation. However, according to its constitution, the United States has never been a Christian nation, even though it was founded, largely, on Christian principles. And the country has been blessed by this.

Those who enjoy America's freedom (including some atheists, secularists, and humanists who seem to want to eradicate Christianity) benefit from the Christian principles this nation was built upon. America was founded on the principle of freedom of choice, which is a Christian value.

Even in the Garden of Eden, God gave humanity the freedom to choose. And Jesus never forced nor threatened anybody. He always offered an invitation and the freedom to accept or reject it. True faith must spring from the hearts of people; it's not mandated from above. This is another Christian virtue.

Muslims in today's United States enjoy the freedom to follow their faith and build mosques, which they shrewdly call "Islamic Cultural Centers." They do not realize that this freedom comes from a constitution that is based on Christian values, even though words like God and Christianity don't appear in the document.

Even atheists and others who are actively anti-Christians do not realize that the freedom to oppose Christianity was given to them by Christians. We all enjoy our freedom because Christians crafted a constitution that does not force Christian faith on anyone. Instead, it gives people freedom to choose. Providing freedom of religion is a Christian concept.

A nation is not Christian because it legislates Christianity. A true Christian nation gives freedom of choice to its citizens. If Christianity is true and it transforms lives, then you do not need to force it, just show it. The light does not need government support to pierce the darkness.

Jesus is the light. "The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (John 1:5). Unfortunately, the Islamic world today considers the United States to be a Christian



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nation, a nation of light. That is not a correct observation. There are many great and dedicated Christian in America, but Christ does not rule this nation. So even though the United States is a great country, founded on some Christian principles, it's never been a Christian nation.

On our satellite TV broadcast, when I proclaim that Iran will become a Christian nation, most people (including the government officials) don't understand what I mean. They think that a Christian nation is something like today's Iran. But instead of being ruled by mullahs, it will be ruled by pastors. Instead of Islamic laws being forced upon them, it will be Christian laws. Instead of an Islamic dictatorship, it will be a Christian dictatorship. Some even think I secretly dream of becoming a Christian version of Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini!

So, *no*. Iran's becoming a Christian nation doesn't mean it will become the United States, or a Christian version of Iran's Islamic government.

WHAT WILL IRAN AS A CHRISTIAN NATION LOOK LIKE?

Please remember that the notion of Iran's becoming a Christian nation is not mine. It comes directly from Jeremiah 49:38, where the Lord says, "I will set My Throne in Elam (Iran)."

So, here is what I believe Iran will look like in the near future:

I see a nation ruled by the Lord Jesus. A throne is for a king, a ruler. But what does that mean? Jesus is not another dictator who declares, "Obey me or else." He is not another tyrant who doesn't care about your heart, someone demanding conformity to His commandments. No! Jesus cares about your heart first and foremost. He says, "My Kingdom is not of this realm" (John 18:36).

The first thing He does when you believe in Him is to give you a new heart. He rules over the hearts that are transformed by Him.

The hearts that respond to His extreme and overflowing love by joyfully loving Him back and willingly obeying Him (John 14:21).

He first rules hearts, and that authority springs from an intimate heart-to-heart love relationship with Him.

It is a nation where not all are Christians. The decision to believe and follow God has always been a matter of free choice. When God created humanity, He gave us free will. From the moment of creation, humanity could choose to believe God or not. During His millennial rule, we'll see the same thing. Some, not all, will choose to believe, even when Jesus is ruling the earth!

However, for Jesus to be the King of Iran, there must be a significant number of people who will follow Him. But His Kingdom is more than numbers.

The majority of people in a nation can be labeled Christians, but that doesn't necessarily make the nation *Christian*. In my city, Dallas, you can find a church on most street corners. However, the Lord cannot say, "I rule in Dallas."

It is a nation ruled by love. It is not the quantity of Christians that matters. It's more about the quality of their commitment. Jesus condenses all the laws into two commandments:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27).

Iran will be ruled by these two laws. Of course, commanding people to love is not enough. You can have the best commandments, but if people cannot keep them—even if they want to—then those commandments look good, but that's all they do.

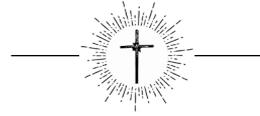
To be able to obey these love commandments, we need to have a new heart and new power. Jesus does more than give us commandments. He gives us a new heart so that we *want to* obey. And He gives us the Holy Spirit so that we will *be able to* obey

His commandments. (See Ezekiel 36:26.) His grace saves us and enables us to love, and to live an exemplary life.

You will see an exuberant love for God expressed in worship and in total obedience to His Word and His Spirit. Jesus declared, "If anyone loves Me, He will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him" (John 14:23).

There are 613 laws in the Bible, and Jesus boiled them down to two. Iran will be a country with a very brief constitution and code of law. It might contain only two items.

You can pass laws to control people's behavior, but not to change their hearts. The US Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) comprises more than 200 volumes, which describe our country's laws. Each year, more than 40,000 new laws go into effect. But there is no US law that can make us love one another.



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A country transformed by the power of the Gospel, ruled by love, with Jesus as its loving King, does not need a complicated code of law. The jails will be empty, and most law enforcement personnel and judges will need to find a new line of work. Following the law of love in the home will resolve the rampant divorce problem, those bitter divorce court battles that affect Christians and non-Christians.

It is a nation transformed by the Gospel. When Jesus rules, things do more than get better; they get transformed. When we put our faith in Jesus and make Him the Lord of our lives, we are

transformed. We do not just become better people; we become a new person. By transforming individual lives, Jesus will change the whole society of Iran.

ARE YOU DESPERATE FOR TRANSFORMATION?

Proverbs 26:20 says, “For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down.” Some areas of your life might be soaked from the storms of life. Wood must become dry before the fire can consume it. Iran is ready for Christ because it has hit the bottom.

It seems that the whole human race has to hit bottom before we start looking up. We must be broken before we are ready for transformation in our lives. Some of us have to suffer at our enemies’ hands before we cry out for God’s salvation.

Are you ready for change in your life? Are you crying out to Him to save you, to give you a new heart, and put you on the path toward a new future? Jesus is the King, but are you ready to make Him the King of your heart so that He can rule your life?





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Because of Iran Alive Ministries' effective satellite television broadcasts to the Middle East and Europe, Joel C. Rosenberg has called Dr. Hormoz Shariat "the Billy Graham of Iran." Iran Alive's ministry reaches millions of people and has brought hundreds of thousands of Muslims to Jesus Christ since its inception.

Dr. Hormoz Shariat was born into a Muslim family in Iran. He came to the United States after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Dr. Shariat came to Christ while a graduate student in 1980. He holds a PhD in Artificial Intelligence from USC, and a bachelor's degree in Bible and Theology from Jessup University. In 1987, he planted a church in San Jose, California. With hundreds of Muslim converts, it remains one of the largest churches of its kind in the United States.

His passion for Muslims stems, in part, from the murder of his brother Hamraz, who was arrested in Iran at the age of sixteen on a minor political charge. After two years in jail, Hamraz was executed by firing squad. God showed Hormoz that the best way to respond to this tragedy was to dedicate his life to loving Muslims and sharing the Gospel with as many of them as possible.

Christianity Today, *Charisma* and other publications have featured Iran Alive Ministries and Dr. Shariat. He has been a guest on numerous national and international radio and TV programs, including *The 700 Club*. Connect at IranAliveMinistries.org.

GET INVOLVED

If you would like to pray for Iran or learn how to support Iran Alive Ministries, please contact us.

Also, if you prayed the prayer of salvation in this book, please contact me and let me know. I would like to send you a testimony DVD as a gift.

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