



# SAT-7 PIONEERS NEW PERSIAN WORSHIP

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As English speakers, we can take worship songs and community singing for granted. But in Persian-speaking countries these opportunities are rare. Now, SAT-7 PARS is helping to provide Persian-speaking believers with new worship music in their own language.

For most Christians, worshipping through music is a natural expression of their Christian identity and is an outworking of their relationship with God. Psalm 96 urges the whole earth:

*“Sing a new song to the LORD  
sing to the LORD, all the earth.  
Sing to Yahweh, praise His name;  
proclaim His salvation from day to day.”*

However, worship through song is not common within the prevailing beliefs in the Middle East. As such, there is a shortage of Persian worship material. This is a gap that SAT-7 PARS is helping to fill through *Heavenly Worship* – a new series of live worship programs to support Persian-speaking believers everywhere to engage with praise and worship in their own language.

## MUSIC AND RESOURCES

Persian-speakers have sometimes had an ambivalent relationship with music. There is often little or no music education provision at Iranian schools. While many parents in the West encourage their children to learn a musical instrument, this has not been the case in countries such as Iran. Although this is beginning to change among younger Iranian parents, there are still relatively few musicians and songwriters in the Persian-speaking Church.

Believers in Persian-speaking countries are coming together and connecting with praise and worship through programs such as *Heavenly Worship*

The church in many areas of the world has had the benefit of worship music going back centuries. In most cases, even the smallest local church has a number of good musicians able to lead the congregation in praise. We have a huge repertoire of worship songs available to us in a wide range of musical styles. By contrast, the Persian-speaking church lacks this rich musical heritage.

## A NEW SONG

The Lord is doing a great work among Persian speakers and there are now emerging songwriters creating original Persian worship material. Believers in Persian-speaking countries are coming together and connecting with praise and worship through programs such as *Heavenly Worship*.

“We get feedback from our viewers who meet together at home,” says Producer Mostafa Keshavarz. “Some of them don’t know how to sing. We make sure the song words are on the screen and invite the viewers to join in with the singing and worship. Viewers get in touch and tell us how happy they are that they had the opportunity to join us in praise and worship, and this is really encouraging for us.”

“

**Glory be to the Name  
of the Lord!**

- Viewer in Iran

# FAITH SHINES THROUGH PAIN IN VIEWERS' MESSAGES

Many SAT-7 viewers in Iran live with fears of arrest and betrayal. Yet their testimonies to God's grace and goodness are an inspiration.

"Their messages are both heart-breaking and inspiring," says Hephzibah, a US-based Iranian who has translated thousands of these messages into English for the benefit of non-Persian-speaking colleagues.

"I don't think we understand the scale of the emotional pressures they face. But at the same time, there are wonderful testimonies that inspire and very much challenge my own life."

Some reports suggest that Iranians are turning to Christ at a faster rate than at any time since the 7<sup>th</sup> century and are estimated to number up to a million believers. But they live with the constant risks of arrest and imprisonment, severe fines, and surveillance.

Behzad\* wrote recently: "Please pray for my brother and my sister. They have been summoned by the Ministry of Intelligence and Security. I don't know what to do. I'm also being watched."

"There are a lot of security issues and fear," Hephzibah says. "Trust is a huge issue, including whether to trust others who seem to be believers, so people feel lonely."

But the act of restricting Christianity is actually having a reverse effect:

"People are curious and want to understand this faith that they are not allowed to know."

Many SAT-7 PARS viewers get in touch with our Audience Relations team via the popular messaging app *Telegram*.

## CONNECTING TO CHRIST

Yahya\* told us how he called by a friend's house and when he put on his satellite TV, by chance, a Christian programme came on. His friend was suspicious of the channel but Yahya was engrossed and persuaded his friend not to switch over. Yahya said he had been "in turmoil and weary of life" but that broadcast set him on a journey to Christ. Now a regular SAT-7 viewer, he thanks God that "ever since then my life has greatly changed".

The message of a gracious God who loves us and longs to know us intimately contrasts starkly with what most people in the Persian world have been taught, Hephzibah says.

This is why SAT-7 PARS teaching shows, and the support provided by the audience response team, is so vital. "They don't have mentors, people to call or speak to helping them to grow," she explains.

A recent flood of requests tells of deep

financial hardship. "There is no water, no electricity, no money to pay the rent. People are very tired; they feel despair," one viewer wrote.

For many, the struggle to survive and loss of hope drives them to drug addiction. "We get a lot of requests from those who are addicted themselves," Hephzibah says. "The pressure also increases cases of domestic violence, especially where one partner is not a believer."

## COURAGEOUS BELIEVERS

But there are many courageous, faithful believers. "I've been unemployed for six months," wrote Mehrad\*, adding, "In the last year I've shared the good news with hundreds of people who have repented and given their hearts to Christ. Please pray for this ministry."

Despite all the struggles and dangers that SAT-7 PARS viewers face, the faith of a true child of God shines through their requests. "At the end of two prayer requests I read today the writers added 'But I know that God will take care of me.'"

"You can see the Holy Spirit present in their lives," she says, "You can see this is someone who has tasted the goodness of God."

*\*Names changed for security purposes.*

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