Lilias Trotter of Algeria 1853-1928



Her full name was Isabella Lilias Trotter. She was born into a wealthy Victorian family in London's fashionable West End on July 14, 1853. Her mother, Isabella, was the second wife of Alexander Trotter. She was the much loved mother to his six children from his first marriage and three of her own children of whom Lilias was the eldest. Alexander encouraged his children in both scientific and artistic pursuits. They had lessons at home from French and German governesses and in the summers they travelled on the continent.

Lilias was known for her spirit and her sometimes fiery temper. Her brothers nicknamed her 'Tiger Lily'. The death of her father in 1866 after two years of illness had a profound effect on Lilias. All her life she had been taught about God, but now the reality of eternity came to her with a new intensity. She began to know for herself the God she had always known about.

In 1874 a convention was held in Romsey, England for deepening the spiritual life. This was one of the forerunners of the Keswick Convention. At this gathering Lilias had a fresh understanding of the loveliness of Jesus and His right to control her redeemed life. She wrote, "*Let us give ourselves away to Him, ... to bear His name with all that is wrapped up in it of fragrance and healing and power – to enter into His life and share His eternal purpose is a calling for which it is well worth counting all things but loss.*"

The next year D. L. Moody came to London for the second of his four missions. It lasted from March to July. Lilias went to hear him in the Royal Opera House in the West End. Soon she got involved in the work of the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association). Their aim was, **"To unite young women in prayer and evangelism, to promote Christian friendship and mutual help and to promote the moral, social and cultural well-being of its members."** She organised special prayer meetings to wait on God and challenge the powers of darkness that opposed His will.

Lilias was very artistic and in 1876, while on a family holiday in Venice, her mother took the initiative to show a collection of Lilias' paintings to Professor John Ruskin for his evaluation. He was very impressed with them and with her talent. This was the beginning of a friendship that continued throughout Ruskin's life. However she couldn't pursue her art as he would have wished. Lilias put God's call to Algeria before her pursuit of excellence in art. In 1879, as she made her choice, she wrote:

"*I see as clear as daylight now, I cannot give myself to painting in the way he means and still continue to 'Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness' ".*

Her mother watched her make this choice with a mixture of pain and pride. As she turned her back on fame, marriage and pleasure, many in their social circle despised her. Women's emancipation had hardly begun. Women from 'good' families stuck to the conventions of the day. It was at this time that Lilias wrote:

"*A path lies within our reach making the ordinary Christian life look cold and colourless by contrast; a path leading even beyond consecration in its lower sense. For this latter may be very subjective in tone, may hold the way of obedience chiefly as a means of rest and victory. It is to many of us a distinctly fresh life when God's Spirit leads us to the objective side, lifting our gaze from the road beneath our feet to the form of Him who goes before, riveting it there by His radiant beauty.*"

"*To have His presence as a mere accompaniment of our lives will not now satisfy us. We must go His way with Him. It is the only path worth treading when our hearts have once come under His irresistible sway. And going with Him does not simply mean a fresh stage of obedience. It means a yielding up of our Spirit to catch His Spirit – a yielding up of our hearts to glow with His triumphs and joys and to ache with whatever pains Him – to enter eagerly into fellowship with any phase of His life that He may, in His love, ask us to share. And so the measure of sunshine and shadow in our days will be simply in the shining or the veiling of His face.*"

Lilias had two great friends who worked with her in the YWCA – Lelie Duff and Adelaine Braithwaite. She was aware that they "**had a fellowship with Christ over His work in the dark places of the earth**" that she knew nothing of. She began to pray, "**Lord give me the fellowship with Thee that these two have.**"

Soon after this she was aware that whenever she came across the words North Africa they seemed to stand out to her although she was happy in her work in London and didn't consider any personal involvement. This was partly because she was committed to care for her invalid sister Jacqueline for six months of the year. In 1887, together with her two friends, she organised a 3-day mission conference for the YWCA. The third evening Edward Glenny began his address by saying that the Sunday before he was in the Kabyle Mountains **where Christ was unknown**. These four words stood out to Lilias. Later she wrote: "**In that first sentence God's call has sounded. If Algeria was as near as that, I could spend half the year there and the other half at home … before morning there remained no shadow of a doubt that it was His plan.**"

Just a month before her 'call', Lilias had written an article for the monthly YMCA newsletter. She pictured an eaglet on the outer edge of a disassembled nest while the mother bird called to the baby to take its first plunge into the air:

"**The face of the cliff goes sheer down. How can it venture into that great gulf with untried wings? But it gathers up its courage at last and dashes out. There is the giddy depth below. Its strength is failing already – one or two feeble flaps and it drops down – down – a moment more and, all unseen, it knows not whence, strong warm wings are beneath and it is being borne up into a place of safety. The mother bird has swooped underneath it. There was no risk after all! Now see Our Father's explanation written, as it were, below the picture:**

"As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, spreads abroad her wings, takes them and bears them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him." (Deut. 32:11-12)

We don't know much about her preparations. She applied to the North Africa Mission and was turned down by the medical board because of her weak heart. She was so certain of her call that she decided to go independently. She came to an understanding with NAM that she would "work in harmony with the mission but not connected with it." She did a few months training at Mildmay Mission Hospital and on March 5, 1988 with her friend Katie Stuart she left London bound for Algeria. Blanche Haworth joined them in Southampton. As they pulled out of Waterloo Station a crowd of well-wishers sang "Crown Him Lord of all". They had a carriage to themselves and so they knelt down and committed those they had left behind and their own futures into the hands of God. They crossed the channel from Southampton, went by train to Marseilles and then by ship to Algiers. As they started their journey Lilias records: "**a strange glad feeling of utter loosing and being cast on God.**"

As they pulled into Algiers harbour on March 9 the sun was just setting. Lilias wrote, "**The evening was all a-sparkle with stars above and light on shore.**" They were beside themselves with joy. Once again they sang "Crown Him Lord of all".

The friends were elated to have arrived in Algeria. However they were totally unprepared in every way. No one had advised them. They were wholly ignorant of the culture. They began a 3-fold prayer that **doors** might be opened, **hearts** might be opened and **the heavens** might be opened. Lilias wrote: "**The whole place gives the impression of being 'white unto harvest'. May God Himself put in the sickle and gather souls to His garner to be made in their turn seed for future sowing.**"

At first they stayed in the Pension Anglo Suisse. On the first evening they met Mrs. Kemp and her three daughters who lived nearby and ate at the Pension. They became firm friends often meeting for Bible Study. Alice, one of the daughters, gave a generous annual gift that formed the backbone of their mission fund. After two months they found a nice little flat in the French part of town. At about the same time Lilias' sister Jacqueline died unexpectedly freeing Lilias to stay in Algeria. So the **Algiers Mission Band** was formed.

They discovered a small group of Christians holding Sunday services and Bible studies in English. They were warmly welcomed into this group.

Under the leadership of Mr. Glenny the NAM had been working in Algeria since 1881. Their original mission was to the Berbers and so their headquarters was in the Kabyle Mountains, but by 1888 they had also established work in Algiers, Tlemcen, Constantine and Oran.

If Lilias and her friends were lacking experience and training, they abounded in determination and dedication to the task God had called them to. Obviously Arabic proficiency was the key to opening doors. They established a routine. Mornings were spent in Arabic study punctuated by breakfast and tea. From 2.30 – 6.00 pm they visited first in the French neighbourhood and later in the Arab quarter. Dinner was at 6.30 pm followed by more Arabic study until about 8.00 pm.

As soon as they had even a few phrases of Arabic they began to go into the labyrinth of streets that formed the Arab quarter of town. The men stared at them in disbelief and the children welcomed them. They discovered that the way to reach the women in their homes was through the children with small gifts, sweets and simple medical remedies. One of these visits is described by a visitor who was with them on one occasion:

'Oh Long One come and see me' calls a veiled woman through a crack in the door. They step inside. Each family lives in a room that opens onto a central courtyard. They sit on cushions and everyone swarms around to listen to Bible stories told in faltering Arabic. The children fight to sit on their laps. Then they are taken to different rooms to see a sick baby, a woman with an abscess on her head and a child with a diseased foot needing daily dressings. All is activity unless a man comes in. He clears his throat violently and life disappears behind closed doors. What have they understood? Not much, but one woman who speaks a little French murmurs wonderingly, 'No one ever loved us like this before!' "

In April 1893 they were able to move into a house in the Arab quarter of town. After visiting them Lilias' first biographer, Blanche Piggott, wrote:

"I shall never forget my first impression of that street where the trio lived. A dust storm was blowing and we were nearly blinded as we entered Rue Croissant. There was dust, dirty paper and rubbish flying all around and it looked utterly squalid. But when the door of number two opened and we saw Lilias standing there, tall and white, but with such a glow of love and welcome all else was forgotten and the house with its graceful white pillars and open central courtyard seemed a fitting place for her to work and pray, for it was lit up with love and faith."

Lilias' heart was not only for Algiers but also for the 'southlands'. In March 1893 Lilias and Blanche set off for Biskra – an oasis about 30 miles into the desert. They went 288 miles eastward to Constantine by train and then 150 miles by horse cart across the barren tableland that separates the desert from the sea. Two hours short of their destination they stopped at El Kantara – the great gateway to the desert. After exploring the villages for a couple of weeks they continued the remaining 30 miles to Biskra on camels.

Here, as in Algiers, Lilias again prayed for open hearts. These usually came through the children. She walked from village to village in the whole area and when asked, "What do you want?" She responded directly. "**I love the Arabs and I have come to have a talk with you.**" With the help of the Wordless Book as a visual aid, she explained the human condition and God's plan of salvation. Sometimes she was invited into homes and sometimes she was given gifts of eggs of dates. She wrote: "**It came so strongly that our present work was just to sow – broadcast – as far and wide as we could in preparation for the coming harvest. The sowing beside all waters must mean such unselfish sowing – not calculating what will take root on our little plot; but letting that just take its chance of sharing in the future harvest and scattering meanwhile far and wide.**"

This they continued to do trusting God for daily strength. In March 1895 she wrote: "**How the angels must watch the first day when the light reaches a new spot on earth that God so loves and the great wall**

of darkness is pushed back one tiny bit and oh the joy of being allowed to go with His message that first day! How can His people hold back from that joy while one corner remains unvisited by the Dayspring?"

In 1894 Lilias and Helen Freemen set out again for Biskra. Heavy rain made camping impossible so they decided to make for Toggourt 120 miles south. There they found one woman who seemed to drink in their every word. They felt the journey was worth it just for her. After 5 days they travelled on to their farthest point Oed-el Souf – a cluster of oases with a population of about 25,000. Lilias wrote: **"It is utterly out of the way and the dear wild-looking women and children were intensely excited over us. The men everywhere in the desert were eager for books. One man said, 'We are all reading. We have never had those books before.' "**

In their frequent trips to outlying places they found great openness. Many were eager to understand the Gospel. It was hard for them to explain why they couldn't stay and teach in one place.

Back in Algiers, Lilias was almost overwhelmed by the struggles of the new believers. Many of the young men were willing to bear persecution and rejection themselves, but they could hardly bear the pain inflicted on their fathers and families because of their faith.

At the end of 1897 there was a gathering of workers to wait on God. Lilias wrote:

"Four days with God was what we had given out, but it was soon evident that He meant more than that and that the whole thing was just watching Him and seeing His plans unfold. There were some who had come longing for blessing and yet had not known that God must break down before He can build up – a thawing and a melting began. There is no describing the meetings. We were just brought into God's presence. The keynote all through was life – Christ our life for spirit, soul and body and everything else to be delivered into the place of death."

The workers returned to their locations and from place after place came testimonies of triumph over old circumstances that had previously brought defeat. So 1898 began with great promise. By February Lilias was beginning to sense a loss of the impetus of blessing. She pondered as to why this might be. She wrote:

"I am coming to see that our own 'experience' as a conscious, emotional thing matters nothing so long as He is free in His working all round. If it be dry upon the fleece, no matter if upon all there is dew. But if a dryness is creeping in on us that quenches our power to bless others then heaven help us!"

Perhaps it was a special blessing from God to sustain them while they concentrated on building up the believers in Algiers for the dark days that were to come.

During the year Lilias worked on a second parable book **Parables of the Christ-life**.

In April 1900 Lilias and Helen went south to Tolga. The highlight of this time was a visit to a Zaouria – a fraternity house of the Sufi brotherhood. This was a rare honour for women! Lilias writes:

"Up a winding stair we went into a big book-lined room, the floor was spread with great camel skins – round the skirting boards were solemn white-robed figures sitting or squatting around. We had coffee and talk and promised them a Bible for their library. And though we could not say much because of the time limit, it was a joy to witness to Christ in this very stronghold."

The new century began with the firing of the Ramadan cannon. Lilias wrote: **"The year opens in the thick of battle. We are well into Ramadan and the powers of light and darkness are alive all around."** She noted the prevalence of dreams. She asked herself what the situation would be for God's Kingdom here by the end of this century.

In December 1901 Lilias was again in Tolga with Blanche. There was a feast drawing 'Sufi Brotherhood' from many outlying places – 1400 in all. Lilias was thrilled that this meant literature could be taken back to these places.

By the end of January the authorities forced them to leave and to return to Algiers. They were told that it was against the law to distribute propaganda as they were doing. They later discovered that the real reason for this order had nothing to do with their work.

Lilias realised that the work was expanding and the need for suitable literature was acute. She spent hours writing tracts with Arab backgrounds and subject matter. These were produced on a primitive duplicating machine and distributed once a month in the cafes around town. It was a huge help when the Nile Mission Press in Cairo took over the publishing. This also meant that the tracts were available to workers all over the Arab World.

Another great step forward came with the translation of the Bible from classical to colloquial Arabic. Martin Nystrom took on this task. He had worked in Palestine before moving to Algeria. He was one of Lilias' first friends in Algeria and was very gifted in languages. His goal was a translation that mothers could read to their children. He spent hours going round cafes and listening to people talking among themselves so he could verify the best colloquial expressions. He was meticulous, but this did make the process very slow. As his physical strength failed he struggled to complete the translation. A week after competing Revelation he died.

Lilias and others worked on revisions that were needed before publication. There were many unimagined difficulties! Finally Lilias writes in her diary on December 24, 1908:

"God's Christmas present has come to this land. Today brought us the first package of Luke's Gospel – the first Gospel that will be understood from cover to cover by the Arabs of Algeria. It goes out on a flood-tide of prayer."

This first printing of 7000 copies was distributed within 2 years. They had a great sense that the 'fields were white' but where were the workers? In 1907 Lilias had begun sending out bi-monthly prayer circulars to friends in England and France. The following year she attended the Keswick Convention where Samuel Zwemer gave a rallying call to the church to awake from her apathy over Islam. By 1909 new workers had begun to come.

Another cause for concern was the work at 2 Rue du Croissant in Algiers. In 1903 the local government opposition had bought the house directly opposite. They planned to offer rival classes and a number of 'perks'. Attendance at Lilias' 'school' went from 100 to 5! People were forced to give false testimony against her and her colleagues. To their great distress some believers seemed to be living double lives. What did all this mean? Did God want them to move on to new countries?

As usual, prayer was Lilias' way to find out. Something that had happened a few years earlier in Rue du Croissant was an object lesson to her about the power of persistent prayer. One of the pillars that supported the gallery had fallen into the courtyard carrying with it a block of masonry and a shower of bricks. An architect came to check the building and offered a probable explanation. Six or seven years earlier a baker had taken premises in the house next door to them. Every night two men swung on a seesaw for hours as they kneaded the bread. Every blow vibrated through the house and finally the result was the collapse of the pillar! Lilias remembered that she had read of structures collapsing in similar incidents such as men marching over a bridge and the constant beating of looms. She wrote: **"The words came with a flood of heavenly light. If that is the power of unison in nature, what must be within its reach when it is translated into the Kingdom of Grace? If we can hold together – hold on long enough in the name that is the keynote of heaven, a vibration of power will be set up that will end in shaking to pieces the seemingly immoveable mass of opposition round us."**

Lilias was determined to hold on in prayer. She was convinced they were engaged in a fierce spiritual battle. She sent off a prayer circular to supporters in England. She asked them, **"Will you help us pray through the crisis that we feel has come upon us. Pray for wisdom how to act and for a faith that will not fail."**

The work continued and Lilias took precious spiritual lessons from everyday scenes:

"There were fishing boats in the sunrise this morning. They were tacking before the wind and at each fresh tack came a pause when the sail took an expression of helpless uncertainty and standstill and under which the boat nearly reeled – then it would catch the breeze from the other side and bound off under it in a new direction. I think we are tacking right now!"

Severe health problems caused Lilias to take an extended rest in England and Switzerland. Back in Algeria she began to write parable tracts in colloquial Arabic. These were checked by Sherifa who had been abandoned by her husband and returned from Blida to her friendship with the ladies at Rue du Croissant. Lilias' goal was, **"Wrapping as much truth as possible in a form in which it will not awaken opposition before its time."** She said of Sherifa's input, **"She gave the sentences that delightfully native flavour that none of us can ever arrive at."**

1905 had been a dark year physically and spiritually. Lilias wrote, **"I am full of hope that when God delays in fulfilling our little thoughts it is to have Himself room to work out His great ones!"** The heat in their home in Algiers was hard to bear and new blessings came through Blanche suddenly collapsing. She was sent off by train to the cooler hills. As they began the journey she was overcome with the conviction that they were going in the wrong direction. She left the train and boarded one heading for the higher hills of El Biar. In a couple of days she was refreshed and returned to Algiers. She suggested they look for a rest place up in the cooler hills. Lilias was enthusiastic. They found a house that they believed would be ideal for their growing band of workers. They applied for it and were successful. Lilias records in her diary in July 1905. **"The El Biar house is ours and there is a quiet certainty that this thing is of God."**

The house needed a lot of work and it was finally ready to furnish by February 1906. They called it **Dar Naama** (House of Grace). The first event was a gathering of 50 workers. Charles Inwood dedicated the whole place to God.

Lilias saw many possibilities:

- A shelter for the sick
- A safe place for new believers
- A training base for workers
- A centre for conferences
- A half-way house for enquirers (inspired by Deut. 22:1-4)

All these came true over the years.



Lilias was troubled because she was struck down with 'flu from which she took a long time to recover. She noted that periods of extreme physical weakness seemed to come on her at the times of greatest spiritual conflict. She was beginning to realise that these times of sickness and weariness were often times when God's power to expand and provide was revealed to her in special ways.

1906 had been a year of expansion as their prayers had been answered with the arrival of five new workers. Now there were three permanent stations and they needed a more formal organisation. The Algiers Mission Band was formed. Lilias was the inevitable leader although she did not seek this. She has both vision and the ability to inspire and mobilise others. Up to this point Lilias and Blanche had borne the whole financial responsibility for salaries and programmes from their own resources as well as from unsolicited gifts.

A dairy entry in July 1907 gives a glimpse of how Lilias saw the little band, **"A bee comforted me very much this morning .... There seems so much to be done that nothing gets done thoroughly. If work were more concentrated as it is in educational or medical missions there would be less of this. But we seem only to touch souls and leave them. And that is what the bee was doing. He was hovering among some blackberry sprays just touching the flowers here and there in a very tentative way. Yet all unconsciously life was left**



behind at every touch as the miracle-working pollen grains were transferred to the place where they could set the unseen spring working. We have only to see to it that we are surcharged like the bees with potential life. It is God and His eternity that will do the work. Yet <u>He needs His wandering desultory bees</u>!"

Around this time Lilias began to think wider than Algeria to the rest of North Africa and the wider Arab World. She began to send out a bi-monthly prayer letter. She attended a workers' conference where others were considering this same issue. From that conference two issues stood out as concerns in every place:

1. Poisons and sorcery being used against new believers
2. The need to have a national worker in each station they established to help them understand the character and thought of the people

Kef in Tunisia had a curious attraction for both Lilias and Blanche. This was strengthened by her friendship with a young man, Habib, who lived in Kef and had been brought up by men who were said to be devil worshippers. In 1908 she made a trip to Kef together with Blanche and Miss Ericsson – a worker from Egypt.

In the summer of 1908 opportunities were opening for Lilias to present the challenge of the Muslim World to a wider audience. Through her friendship with Miss Ericsson she received an invitation from the Swedish YMCA to speak at meetings in Sweden and Denmark. She went in September in time for the last meeting of the Swedish Keswick. For two months she spoke in churches, schools and training centres. To prepare for this time she wrote a paper that was later published as a booklet, **A Thirsty Land and God's Channels**. Her speaking and sharing continued in Germany and Switzerland. By the end of the tour she had 60 individually prepared talks for each opportunity. She returned to Algiers after an absence of four months.

Nine new workers joined the Algiers Mission Band in 1909, bringing their total to 20. Their encouragement was quite short lived. By the end of 1910 they were experiencing hard blows as a number of workers left – some to join other groups that had come into being inspired by Lilias' sharing in various conferences.

1909 had begun with the opening of a station in Relizane in the western province of Oran. Helen was to live there and Lilias went with her to locate a house and help her settle in.

As the work grew Lilias became more and more convinced that they should work to retain local customs and ways instead of introducing European ones. Some of her thoughts on this were outlined in a conference in Zurich in 1913.

The first conference for national workers was held in 1912. It was a joyful time, but tinged with sadness because of those who had died or fallen away. At this time a door opened to establish a work in Tozeur just over the Tunisian border. They acquired an old inn. They called it **Dar Ennour** (House of Light). Alma Krebs and a friend who was a nurse went to live there.

Lilias had a growing vision to recruit girls to come and help them short-term. This needed a Home Council in England and a Field Council consisting of Lilias, Blanche and Helen. An Algiers Mission Band quarterly magazine was started with Blanche as editor. It was called **El Couffa**. A 'couffa' was a palm leaf basket. They never went out without one to carry the 'precious seed' and so this became their logo. This publication continued for over 6 years.

As war broke out in 1914 Lilias was in England. She had no problem returning to Algeria, but once there she found many limitations. She saw this as an opportunity to concentrate on literature production. Samuel Zwemer invited Lilias and Blanche to Cairo for 3 months two consecutive years to prepare literature for Muslim women. Their first collection was called

Water Lilies. After much research they discovered that the correct translation of these in Arabic was 'Brides of the Nile'. On her return to Algiers the writing passion continued. She called it 'tractitus'.

By the dawn of 1918 Blanche was very weak and struggling to regain strength. On March 8, the 30th anniversary of their arrival in Algiers, with Lilias beside her, Blanche slipped peacefully into the presence of her Lord.

As the First World War ended Lilias was exhausted. She went with a colleague for three weeks rest in the hills. Together they read the Life of Hudson Taylor. Lilias wrote: "**In those quiet days came a fresh vision of the fallow ground stretching around us and far out of sight; a realisation that for two million Arabic-speaking men there were just four European men with any fluent language qualification for reaching them (although there were a number of others working among the Kabyles).**"

They received a burden from the Lord to pray for 20 Arabic-speaking men – 10 for AMB and 10 for others. In the next few months 4 joined AMB and 3 joined other groups. Lilias wrote:

"**May we let go our 'all' utterly to Him as utterly as did the lad with his poor store of loaves and fishes. 'All' may mean the last ounce of strength, the last sum of our balance, the last available hour for prayer, but that is the kind of giving we shall long to have laid in those pierced hands when we see Him over there. It will be too late then for earthly possibilities. It is not too late now and we do not know what bit of inadequate offering He may use still, as He did then, for the fulcrum of His power.**"

In the spring of 1923 Lilias was reflecting on the 3-fold prayer with which their work had begun. She wrote:

"**The 3-fold prayer of the early days comes back to memory. First, that doors might be opened and that has been granted in a marvellous way; next that hearts might be opened and that is coming all around. Next and last that the heavens might be opened and when that follows in the same measure, the harvest will come.**"

Down through the years Lilias had been burdened to get God's truth to the Sufis – the age-old fraternities of mystics. She was again able to visit Tolga. She wrote:

"**We have touched them here and there and I feel more and more that we ought to make a special study for them. The approach we use for ordinary Muslims slips off their souls without touching them in the least. Whereas, read them a few pages of John's Gospel or one of the epistles and there is a response at once. It seems strange that hardly a thing has been written for them.**"

She began to work on **The Sevenfold Secret** a commentary on the 7 'I ams' in John's Gospel. Her determination was that it should be suitable to the thought and vocabulary of the Sufis. She was often so weak that she had to rest. She wrote to a friend that after a few sentences she had to lie back and pray about it. She completed the rough draft in April 1925. Within two years there had been 3 editions in Arabic, 3 in English and 1 in Persian. A French edition followed soon after.

By now Lilias was very weak physically. She had served for three and a half decades with all her powers. Now she would learn how to serve in weakness and helplessness. She was very sad to have to leave 2 Rue de Croissant after a tenancy of 33 years. The owners put it up for sale and she thought it best not to burden her successors with such a purchase.

In the summer of 1925 Lilias worked with some brothers from the Tozeur region to put **The Sevenfold Secret** into the dialect of their region. She was thrilled even in her weakness to have this opportunity to strengthen their faith.

Once **The Sevenfold Secret** was completed, Lilias devoted herself to a book for Arab girls with 8 pages of illustrations in yellow, green and aqua – **The voice of the bird among the flowers**. It told of God's loving ways as seen in His creation. She also continued to work on **Between the Desert and the Sea**. She had completed all the paintings before being confined to bed.

April 3, 1926 marked the end of Lilias' first year confined to bed. She wrote, "**I think it has been quite the happiest year of my life**". It was clear to her that she would remain on this earth until her work was done.

As soon as her writing projects were finished Lilias turned her attention to consolidating the affairs of the AMB as well as her personal affairs.

She agreed that a new quarterly was needed to inform prayer partners. They decided to call it, **A Thirsty Land**. She sketched a cover and oversaw the content till an editor could be found. She continued involved in every aspect of AMB. Her room was the control centre.

By the end of 1927 there was a cloud on the horizon that concerned Lilias greatly because of its potential to split AMB. It concerned two matters:

1. Whether the men's work should come under the Home Council or the Field Council
2. Whether stations in outlying unreached places were ends in themselves or whether they were places from which to itinerate to yet further unreached places

March 1928 was significant. It was the 40th anniversary of Lilias' arrival in Algeria. A conference was held and time and time again God brought them to one mind on the difficult decisions. AMB was re-affirmed in its special calling to evangelise the great unreached stretches of the interior. The men stepped up who knew they were called to that goal and several substantial gifts were received to underwrite their expenses. With this God-given unity, Lilias experienced a sense of 'confident abandonment'. She became more and more of an observer following developments with great interest.

At the end of May 1928 Lilias began Sunday afternoon Bible readings in her room "**the other chaplains having vanished**" for their summer break. She took over where they had left off in studying the life 'over the Jordan' as prefigured in the carvings of Solomon's temple. Week by week they gathered. Lilias was propped up in her bed with a map of Algeria above her head and Arabic texts and local art around the walls. To this venture she brought her lifelong insight into Scripture. Her diaries contain her notes from these sessions. Her listeners were forcibly struck by the embodiment of these characteristics in Lilias' life:

- Service of the ox
- Fearlessness of the lion
- Fruitfulness of the pomegranate
- Victory of the palm tree
- Joyfulness of open flowers
- Pure worship of the cherubim

Week by week her writing became fainter. She wrote for the last time on June 27, 1928. One of those listening to the session recorded her words, "**We find the cherubim echoing the song that the seraphs had been singing so long, bringing God's glory from earth to heaven! Thy will be done! Holy, holy, holy! It is made up of all the tiny bits of victory in which each one of us has our share.**"

As summer progressed, she became increasingly weak, but her mind was always clear. On August 27, as friends gathered round her bed to sing her favourite hymn, "Jesus Lover of my soul", she looked out of the window and said, "**A chariot and six horses**". Helen Freemen asked her, "Are you seeing beautiful things?" She looked up and her last words were, "**Yes, many, many beautiful things!**" She reached up as if to grasp them, raised her hands in prayer as she breathed her last and quietly went home.

She left the AMB with 30 members in 15 stations/outposts. A few years before she had written:

"**I feel it is tremendously important that the younger members of the Band should learn to think strategically instead of just plodding away in ruts. I think that, as a community, it is given to us to see visions and to reach out. It may be this reaching for the skies even when we seem to be standing in a low, misty place that makes glad the**

Captain we serve. The clouds are the dust of His feet. We see the dust now; but when the clouds have passed we will see His footprints."

As Lilias spent many hours in her latter years praying for people and situations she wrote, **"If we can listen in the stillness till our hearts begin to vibrate to what He is feeling about the matter in question, whether it concerns ourselves or others, we can, from that moment, begin to pray down from His throne."**

In these last years three burdens from God pressed on her soul:

- The need for a shelter for young divorced women who were often abused
- The growing need for different types of Christian literature
- A house for men trainees where new believers could shelter, work and learn

After many setbacks along the way, the last of these burdens was fulfilled two weeks after the 40th anniversary of Lilias' arrival in Algeria as the **House of Dawn** was dedicated to the Lord on the grounds of Dar Naama with the Theobalds overseeing the new candidates, the new believers and the language teachers.

Meditating on Lamentations 3:26 Lilias wrote:

"It is good that a man should <u>both</u> hope and quietly wait." **I never saw until recently how the word 'both' exactly strikes the balance so needed in Muslim work. Some of us rush ahead with our hopes and are downhearted when they crumble having never learned to quietly wait. Others go on quietly waiting for a lifetime without much of the spring of hope anywhere. Both <u>hope</u> and <u>wait</u> in <u>quietness and confidence</u> – that is the answer."**

For further reading:

Lilias Trotter, founder of the Algiers Mission Band by Blanche Piggott (1930)

The Master of Impossible Sayings – from the letters and journals of Lilias Trotter by Constance Padwick (1938)

The Love that was Stronger by Isabel Rosie Govan Stuart (1958)

Till the Day Breaks by Patricia St. John (1990)

A Passion for the Impossible by Miriam Huffman Rockness (2003)



Lilias with a class at Rue du Croissant 1899