"I can still hear the sound of thundering guns telling me that somewhere nearby people are dying.

"Ever since we left the village I feel as though something has been shattered inside me. We have lost everything. Our house was burned. My books were torn to pieces. Our furniture was stolen. But what is more important is that the soft nights and the fresh mornings in the village are gone, and with them I have lost my roots and have become "like grass blown by the wind," as the psalmist put it.

"For me, time used to be the time of sleeping and of waking up and of working in the fields -- the time of life. But now time has left me. It belongs to the one who stands behind the thundering gun. It is the time of death.

One night early in September our village was shelled and we fled. We hid in a cave near our small brook waiting for the mad night to subside. But the guns did not stop so we fled again through the valley until we reached Beirut.

We thought we had escaped. But the dark night caught up with us in all its madness. Am I living through a nightmare? Has time really stood still ever since the big clock was broken on the wall of my grandfather's house in the village?

One day someone came and told us that our house in the village, my grandfather's house, was looted and burned. The young men burned it after emptying it together. My anguish grew into hatred. Hatred is strange for it takes many forms. For me, it is like a boil. It took root within me and sowed the seeds of death in my heart. It grew and spread like a boil with nothing but pus inside.

"I woke up at the sound of the big guns in Beirut. I asked myself, "how can a young man stand behind a gun and fire all those rockets around us?" I thought of that young man and to me he acquired the face of that other young man who looted and burned my grandfather's house.

"And in the midst of the sound of thundering guns, from the depths of my despair and pain, I finally understood. "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love, I am but sounding brass," like the empty shell cases of the big guns. Love alone can bear the burden of the living for it bears all things. It bears this young man who is standing behind the gun, and that other young man who burned my grandfather's house.

"We carry our dead with us like open wounds. All of us have such wounds. Love is different. Life is the realm of love which overcomes death. I pray that the living God may reign in our lives, and not our dead." Sincerely, Hannah Haddad