

TO LET THE DIFFERENT AUTHORITIES TO HEAR WHAT IS PLEASING THEN IS THE WORST POLITICS THAT WILL EFFECT THE SAMARITAN COMMUNITY IN THE LONG RUN

Despite the fact that we are trying our best to walk between the political raindrops in our region, it is impossible not to get wet. We insist upon a neutral position in the Middle East Conflict despite the fact that that we are the smallest ethnic group in the world, and due to being divided in our places of living in regions that are under the authority of different entities. Over one half of the community is under the administration of Israel and the rest under the administration of the Palestinian Authority.

More than once we heard testimonies from some members of the community about their understanding of the Palestinian statements that consider Jerusalem as the Capital of their future state.

This is already in the process of being established, under the agreement of Israel the Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, Dr. Salam Fayaad, is building the first Palestinian City called Rawabi. On the other hand the government of Israel demands from the Palestinians to recognize the State of Israel and the borders of the Green Line as a Jewish State, before discussing the official establishment of the Palestinian State. In addition, Israel has asked for general International recognition for its Capital, Jerusalem. Now that almost half of us are recognized by the Palestinians and the Israelis together, which is a very special phenomenon in the sensitive political spectre of the Middle East, we have to ask ourselves if this is the right step in state support or to join the desires of either of the two sides in regard to their political desires.

If we were counted at a million and a half, as we were 1500 years ago, maybe we would permit ourselves more than what we have today, maybe fulfilling desires for a separate political body, or at least declaring our own autonomy. However, instead of that we have to live with the reality of a community that totals only 750 individuals, and even this number is divided between the administrative areas of Israel and the Palestinians. It is correct that we can translate our weakness to a potency by being a bridge between the two sides of the regional conflict, because it is not in regard to a mass of people but a very small public that is trying to survive between two forces that are provoking one another, when they are not busy making peace between them...

We must speak the truth that neither Israel nor the Palestinians have demanded that we express identification with their political ambitions. There is a clear difference between Palestinian seniors who see the Mount Gerizim Samaritans as an integral part of the Palestinian entity, to the Samaritan seniors who state the same thing although they were never asked to do that. When we make political statements without having any cover of

any kind or ability to fulfill them, only in order to satisfy one of the sides of the conflict we look pathetic if not less than that. Also in the time periods of our numerical strength, when we had an army of our own to protect us, during the Hellenistic period, and during the reign of the Pagan Romans and Christian Romans, there were those who blamed us for switching sides by declaring at various times different identifications. Most of these accusations were baseless insults, because under political and military hard pressures our forefathers knew how to save the national pride and went out in order to rebel against the enemies that persecuted them. Nevertheless, today because of the smallness of our number, our activity is considered only as a statement. We have to recognize the fact that for the last three generations we are so busy with just surviving. Currently we multiplied our number over five times, and the excommunication from us is minor in regard to any other society. Our survival did not derive from our statements for or against one of the sides of the conflict, but from keeping our national pride about what we are - An Ancient Israelite people who preserve a special tradition and trying to be a model of living together in divided political regions under a condition of peace.

The former mayor of Nablus, Mr. Ghassan ElShaqah, once told us after we told him about the establishment of an International Peace Centre on Mount Gerizim and also about our activity of awarding the first Samaritan Medal to Peace Makers in the region and in the world: "Who is more suitable than you the Samaritans to be a bridge of peace between us, the Palestinians to Israel? You are accepted by us the Palestinians, as you are accepted by Israel, and that is why you are the most suitable to make peace." It seems that there is no people who want peace more than the Israelite Samaritan people, because under the condition of peace we are insuring our physical existence but also flourishing in all directions, the educational, the social, and the economical. It is clear enough if one goes around for a moment in Kiriath Luza neighborhood and our neighborhood in Holon, in order to be exposed to the giant step that the community made in an economical regard. We don't have welfare cases because we are doing well economically. Almost every family has more than one car and our houses are comfortable.

There are even those who compete as to who is more extravagant in building a new house, or like the Vice High Priest said: "Our fathers fed hungry people and today we are feeding satisfied people..." We never would have achieved that if the political situation had not improved for the better, and influenced for the better the last two generations in regard to economic and cultural growth.

We do not have political stress or pressure, and nobody is asking us to identify with the two sides of the conflict, and due to that we don't understand this irresponsible attitude from among a minority of us, but their voice is heard to say to every sigh of the conflict what is thought by each side in wanting to be heard. Those days are past with no return when our activists led the VIPs that came to the sacrifice between the barriers of boiling waters of the sacrifice, humiliating by this act the honor of the community, in the eyes of the guests.

Today we are living in a region in which the word "democracy" is always the chorus of

the people. When senior Israeli officers say to us, "we heard what you have said in Palestinian conferences, but we understand you that your statements are only from the mouth and not the depths:" and as we hear this kind of understanding we are close to exploding only from our recognition that this statement is in fact an expression of disrespect of the community. Instead of emphasizing our uniqueness and our need to keep and preserve our ancient tradition there are persons among us that are trying to toy with representatives of Israel and Palestine together by statements that they want to hear.

This is politics of the worst kind. This is effecting those who stay by themselves and are considered by the two sides as cheaters. And this is also effecting us in the long run of our existence as a proud community chasing peace.

A.B. Services

From A.B. - **The Samaritan News** - 17.4.2011