

## Shomron and Beyond

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Every trip to Israel to visit our daughter, Kaila Pauline, has more than enough highlights to compensate for the long plane ride, the jetlag, and getting used to different foods. This time, we took a ride through Central Shomron, which some call Samaria, on Route 60 North. The road runs through the Judean mountains, which are just west of the Jordan Valley and the nation of Jordan and east of the plains of Israel that slope gently to the Mediterranean Sea. It is this area that Jews call Samaria and Arabs would like to call Palestine.

The entire question of names can be confusing in the Middle East. Palestine is, of course, the name that the Romans gave to their conquered territory of Israel. Palestine is also the name used for this land through the modern era and right up until modern times. The term "Palestine" always meant those occupants of the small geography from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean, and from the artificially created Syria in the north to Egypt and Saudi Arabia, as well as the bottom corner of Jordan in the south.

Samaria is the region where much of the Bible occurred. Part of it is referred to, thanks to the Oslo Accords, as Area A, in which the Palestinian Authority has full control. The Palestinian Authority has completely squandered that opportunity, creating a corrupt totalitarian regime which denies many of the basic civil rights that Americans, Western Europeans and Israelis take for granted. It has not yet turned into the terrorist state that Hamas-controlled Gaza has, but all the earmarks are there.

Perhaps most telling about the philosophy of the Palestinian Authority in Samaria is its remarkable program of paying "cash for killing." A teacher is paid between one-fourth and one-third by the Palestinian Authority what a murderer of Jews, Druse or Christian in Israel is paid. Yet, the West continues to fund the Palestinian Authority, thus freeing up its funds for the killing for cash program. It is remarkable and unbelievable, and yet it goes on daily.

Amidst the incompetent, bizarre and brutal rule of the Palestinian Authority in Samaria, exists remarkable instances of coexistence. We visited, for example, a factory that employs a majority of Palestinian Muslim-Arabs, including the plant manager. By Israeli law, they are paid the same as Israelis. The company is a subcontractor to manufacturing enterprises around the world. For that reason, international efforts to boycott Israeli companies doing business in Samaria has not affected this company. The factory is able to live, work with and support Jews and Palestinians without the slightest bit of trouble. The man we spoke to who ran the company referred to himself as something of a "leftist." However, he extolled the virtues of working with the Arabs and the high degree of cooperation. He pointed out that because the Palestinian Arabs have large families, the support of one worker can raise the entire community. While the unemployment rate among Israel Jews is extremely low, it is 17% among those living under the terror reign of the Palestinian Authority.

We also visited a winery run by a husband and wife team. Kim and I could certainly relate to that. The woman told us that she was originally from the Netherlands of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother. The entire family converted to Judaism and moved to Israel. She then

revealed that her grandmother cooperated with the Nazis. Here, we have a woman who has gone from supporting the most brutal regime the face of Earth has ever seen, to running a kosher winery in Samaria. She explained the grapes are picked by Evangelical Christians, who like to come to the area for a religious experience. The wine is made by religious Jews. Everybody gets along well, and the wine has become one of the most highly celebrated among connoisseurs. It was the only winery I have ever been to where the owner hands you the bottles, and you take as much as you want during the period that one spends at the winery. Thank goodness, my sober son, Joshua, was the designated driver. There is nothing like being in the 90+ degree heat under the baking Mid-Eastern sun and being totally crocked at 11 o'clock in the morning.

We traveled to the town of Itamar, high in the Samaritan Hills, where it is easy to see the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea, the Galilee, and west almost to the Mediterranean. Israel, without the Palestinian Authority areas, would only be 8 miles wide along the valley floor from the 1949 Armistice Line to the Mediterranean. Such an untenable state cannot exist overlooked by a regime that respects neither Christian nor Jew nor dissenting Muslim. Itamar has a small dairy farm which produces organic cheeses. We sat down for a small post-wine drinking lunch of typical Israeli salads, cheeses and unbelievably good hummus, probably ruining me for any store-bought hummus again. We met the founder of the farm, who is the very image of an American-Western settler. The term "settler" has almost become a pejorative around the world. It is literally a translation of the Hebrew designation for a community or village.

Driving back to Jerusalem, we could not help but notice the fine quality of homes and cars in the Palestinian-Arab towns that we passed. No poverty here. The area looked far different when I first traveled through in 1969. Only two years after Israel rested the West Bank from the illegal occupation by Jordan, the Israeli State began to install sewer systems and encourage quality development. The towns and villages occupied by Arab and Jew are anything but third world. In fact, if the rest of the world looked like this, we would not be a planet engulfed by strife, suffering and hunger. The rest of the world, including the United States' inner cities which have become burned-out shells and drug-ridden sears of influence, could learn a lot by the coexistence between Jew and Arab in places like Samaria.

What is the future of Israel, Arab endeavors through the Palestinian Authority, and the Middle East? Iran, funding terrorist organizations and with benign help of Russia, seeks to control the Middle East and drive the few remaining Christians out of the area. They thirst for the blood of Jews and seek to destroy the State of Israel. Thankfully, Israel continues to be an oasis of peace and security, and it is in fact Israel that has made possible the quality of life enjoyed by the Palestinian Authority and those under their dominion and rule. The worst thing that could happen in the Middle East would be to create another terrorist Arab state called Palestine. The best that could happen is for economic and social cooperation to continue so that Muslim-Arabs in the West Bank, Judea and Samaria can enjoy an enhanced standard of living.

One of the canards that is popular in this region is Israeli roadblocks to prevent terrorism throughout the West Bank. That is no longer true either. Thanks to the progressive outreach program of the Israeli defense and intelligence structure, it is not necessary to have many

roadblocks anymore. It is certainly easier to get around the areas administered by the Palestinian Authority than to cross from Mexico to the United States, or Canada to our nation; much easier.

The rhetorical question I have is that if the Palestinian Arabs living on the West Bank of the Jordan River want their own state which is something more than the Palestinian Authority provides, why do they not just declare it? Israel did that in 1948, only to face invasion from a number of Arab countries, and many other countries have done that over the years. The reason is that the Palestinian Arabs do not want their own state, but rather want Israel as their state. That is the quintessential problem.

It is time for us to adopt a new paradigm to the Middle East. Concentration of the world ought to be on the aggressive occupation practices of Russia, China, and other nations. We should be looking to Israel as an example of attempts at peaceful coexistence with its neighbors. Racist and anti-Semitic stereotypes aside, it is time for the United States to push back even more aggressively than it has against outlandish bias practiced by the majority of the UN which is controlled by third world and Muslim regimes that care really only about keeping their totalitarian leaders in power.

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