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## Mourning and the Morning After

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Transitions that accompany separation have a built in mourning process. Experts say that the period of mourning depends on the nature of separation, personal and group characteristics, attachments and values.

On August 15, I visited with a group of Fateh legislators in the Palestinian Legislative Council the towns of Qalqilya, Jayyus, Azzun and smaller villages in the vicinity. These beautiful towns, close to the Green Line of 1948 that separates the West Bank from Israel, are experiencing a variety of mourning processes.

One separation that stands out and that recalls the mourning process is the forceful detachment of the people of these towns, mostly farmers, from their lands. Standing on the roof of the local municipal council at Jayyus one can see how the Israeli built separation wall, a fence in this case, forcibly stops Palestinian farmers from attending to their land. Yes, the Israeli military authorities have introduced a permit system but it is highly selective and does not allow able bodied farmers to access their fields. Besides, the opening hours of the two gates in the separation fence are so restricted; 7 to 8 in the morning; 12:00 to 1:00 pm and 6:00 to 7:00 pm that if one farmer misses one day, his agricultural produce would irreparably be damaged.

One old man in Jayyus told me that all is finished. The Israelis have taken our land away and restricted us from working on it. He was speaking so despondently that I was reminded of the mourning people experience on the passing of a dear one. One of the foreign accompaniers in a World Council of Churches accompaniment program, stationed in Jayyus, told me that the accompaniers go to the two fences every morning at 6:00 am before they open. They monitor what is happening and they do reports that they share with the outside world. According to this accompanier, one of the biggest problems for the Jayyus farmers is the very limited number of permits issued by the Israeli authorities to enable them to access their lands. The presence of the accompaniers is recognized and praised by the people of Jayyus, the mayor and other community leaders.

Qalqilya is experiencing its own mourning process. Entry to the town is only possible through one Israeli military checkpoint. The town itself, with a population of over 35,000 is encircled by the Separation Wall. The best description of the Wall surrounding Qalqilya is that of a bulgy bottle with the bottleneck controlled by the Israeli checkpoint. Mingling in the local market one can see that business is at a standstill. Shop owners complain that the Israeli military does not allow for Arab Israelis, with yellow Israeli car plates, to access the town as they used to in the past. Accordingly, business is suffering and the once thriving town is now experiencing an economic depression. The fact that many of the town's agricultural lands are also beyond the Separation Wall makes it difficult to compete in the marketing of produce as accessing these lands render costs too prohibitive for export.

One Qalqilya elder told me as he pointed out with his hand the route of the Separation Wall and a number of Israeli illegal settlements in the surroundings that the Israelis have taken away most of Qalqilya's agricultural lands and they plan to take what is left. He too, like the farmer from Jayyus, had tears in his eyes. His whole essence of living, personal and collective narrative with the land of Qalqilya is being taken away from him.

There were other sad stories heard of smaller communities threatened to be totally displaced by the Israeli authorities in order for their prized land to become part of Israel and specifically part of expanding Israeli illegal settlements.

I left Qalqilya around nine in the evening with a heavy heart. The visit has confirmed that the problems of occupation are not simply political issues of how Palestinians and Israelis can overcome their historic enmity but concrete problems that result from a power relationship that is heartless and oblivious to individual and collective histories and narratives and to attachments of Palestinians to land and to its meaning. Some would argue that lifting of the checkpoints in the West Bank would give a boost to peace efforts and would make Palestinians more comfortable with accommodationist policies with Israel. But the lifting of these Israeli military checkpoints if done without willingness to change the structure of domination and land grabbing and annexation would mean nothing in the long run.

The morning after, in the Palestinian Territories, will not come as long as Israel fails to take up its ethical and moral responsibility of ending its occupation of Palestinian Lands and redressing the wounds that Palestinians have suffered as a result. All of us look for the morning after but for some its dawning can be difficult. From what I saw and heard in Qalqilya and Jayyus and their surrounding village and rural communities I doubt that the morning after will be with us in the near future.

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