



Cana of Galilee

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CANA CALLS !



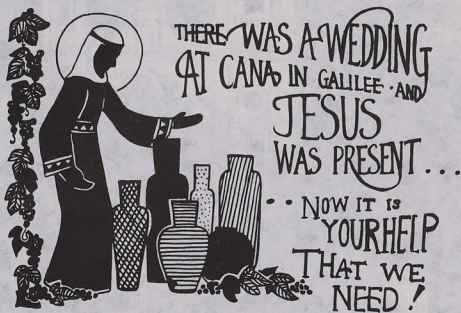
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✧ *Cana and Christianity* ✧

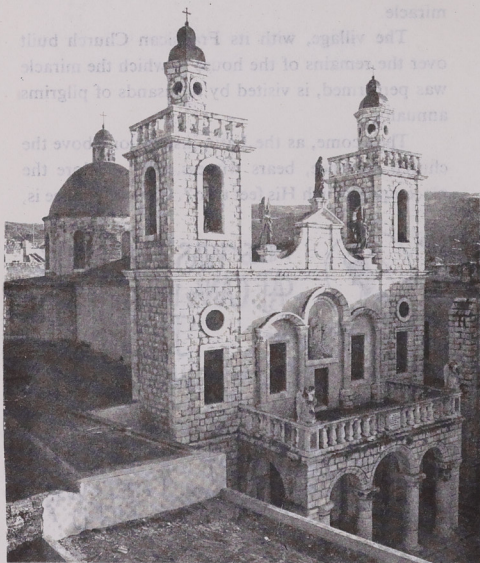
Cana of Galilee, a mixed Christian and Muslim village of 10,000 people, is the site of Christ's first miracle.

The village, with its Franciscan Church built over the remains of the house in which the miracle was performed, is visited by thousands of pilgrims annually.

They come, as the Latin inscription above the church entrance, bears witness, to "... adore the place upon which His feet trod". Cana of Galilee is,



indeed, a Holy place, sacred to Christians and respected by Muslims. But Cana of Galilee, today more usually called by its Arabic name, "Kufr Kana", is a village with problems.



Cana of Galilee, the Latin Church

Cana Through the Centuries.

The forefathers of Kufr Kana's Arab residents, both Christian and Muslim, have lived in the village and farmed its fertile lands for countless generations.

Turkish rule under the Ottoman Empire, and the British Mandate notwithstanding, the land has been faithfully passed down through the families for hundreds of years. In 1948, after the ending of the British Mandate in Palestine and with the establishment of the State of Israel, Kufr Kana, along with the whole of the overwhelmingly Arab Galilee area, became incorporated into the new Israeli State.

As a result of the fierce fighting that accompanied Israel's establishment, 1,124,000 of Palestine's 1,300,000 Arabs, were forced to flee the country.

Only 156,000 Arabs remained, together with 650,000 Jews. Thus the Palestinian Arabs, including those of Kufr Kana, became an instant minority in their own country. The plight of the 2 million Palestinian refugees, living inside and outside camps throughout the Arab World, has been well documented and drawn the world's sympathy. Less is known, however, of what became of those Palestinians who remained, trapped inside a newly emergent, often hostile, Jewish State.

The People ... And Their Land.

The Arab people of Kufr Kana have traditionally been farmers, living largely self-sufficient from their land. Nowadays, however, in the face of a rapid increase in population, land holdings have been drastically reduced, to the extent that only an estimated 1% of the working population are employed exclusively on their own land.



Until comparatively recently, the village of Kufr Kana included 2,000 dunums of land (2 million

square metres or 500 acres), owned and farmed by various families. Over the last ten years, 1,500 of these dunums have been lost, leaving only 500 - a quarter of the original land holdings.

Much of the land was seized by the Israeli Authorities, as elsewhere in the Galilee, in 1976.

Spontaneous demonstrations erupted in many Arab villages, with tragic results. In Kufr Kana, a 15 year old boy, Mehsin Hassan Taha, was killed by soldiers. "The Day of the Land" is now commemorated annually. The owners of the land expropriated in 1976 "for public purposes" were sent letters offering compensation at far below the commercial value of the land. They refused to accept this, demanding instead that their land be returned. Although now enclosed by barbed wire, this land still remains unused. A Military Training College is planned for this site, to the south of the village and dominating it.

To the North of Kufr Kana is the National Religious Party settlement of Bet Rimon, built in 1979 on land seized from Kufr Kana in 1978. The settlement occupies a hill overlooking the village. The fertile valley floor separating Bet Rimon and

Kufr Kana is still owned by the latter, but there are fears amongst the villagers that this land, too, is under threat.

For the lucky few in Kufr Kana whose land has, as yet, been spared, farming is no easy task. For many years the farmers have been asking the Ministry of Agriculture for a proper water supply to irrigate the land. Kufr Kana's crop yield could be increased substantially with modern irrigation methods, but no help has been provided.

All Jewish agricultural settlements must rely on irrigated, but in Kufr Kana the farmers must rely on the sporadic winter rains.



Making A Living

Now that the traditional occupation of farming is closed to Kufr Kana's breadwinners, the majority of them work as wage labourers. No longer independent small farmers, they are workers at the very bottom of the heap in the Israeli labour market. The agricultural land that was lost to the village has not been replaced by the kind of industrial development necessary to maintain a thriving village economy. This is no accident but a deliberate policy on the part of the Israeli Authorities. Priority areas for the encouragement of industrial investment and economic growth have been designated in Israel. They are not, however, the areas where such stimulation is most lacking, but are located without exception in exclusively or overwhelmingly Jewish communities - such as "Nazareth Elite", one of Kufr Kana's "neighbours". The authorities aim, in fact, to discourage autonomous economic development in Arab towns and villages in order to keep the substantial, and growing, Arab work force directly dependant on Jewish Israeli enterprises and, hence, on the mainstream Israeli economy.

The results of this policy can be seen clearly in Kufr Kana. Very few men work in the village, where, since families lost their land, virtually no

employment possibilities exist for women, either.

Women's work on the land was an integral part of the family and, hence, village economy. A limited number of villagers work in nearby Nazareth, but most travel distance of up to 100 kilometres or more each day to reach their workplaces, returning to their villages each evening.

Men from Kufr Kana work in the Galilee's many kibbutzim, in Haifa's factories and in the hotels of Tiberius, Tel Aviv and even Elat. They are heavily concentrated in construction, catering, services and unskilled manual work, all of which are poorly paid, regardless of education or qualifications.

Life in Kufr Kana.

Kufr Kana is totally lacking in the kinds of general amenities one would normally expect to find in a rapidly - expanding community of 10,000 people.

There is no shopping or commercial centre, no cinema, no social centre and no facilities for the thousands of annual pilgrims. Moreover, there are

no recreational amenities for children: no parks, no playgrounds, no play groups, no youth clubs.

Consequently, children are forced on to the streets. This is not only undesirable but also dangerous.

Dangerous, in view of the traffic - including heavy lorries - using the steep, narrow, twisting roads, as well their insanitary condition. In Kufr Kana, where land is in short supply, difficult to obtain and expensive when available, houses are built, out of necessity, very close to one another, and often rising to several stories. There are precious few open spaces in the village. In the absence of a proper sewerage system and a regular refuse disposal service, villagers are obliged to deposit their household rubbish and drain their dirty water into the streets. In winter, after the rain, the streets are awash with muck and debris, while, in the hot, dry summer months, flies and the stench of decay pervade and pollute the village. These streets serve as the childrens' playgrounds.

Schools in Kufr Kana.

Kufr Kana has a secondary school and three elementary schools. This is clearly insufficient to serve the needs of a village of over 10,000 people, a large percentage of whom are of school age. (This area has one of the world's highest birthrates). The elementary schools suffer from severe overcrowding, resulting in 40 children to a class, as compared with 20 in an equivalent school in a Jewish area. These schools have no sports facilities and the classrooms are not heated in winter. Kufr Kana's Secondary School is now housed in a new building, constructed in 1983, thanks to Reparations Payments made to Israel by the German Government. However, as yet the school is lacking a technical section, science laboratories and computer access and instruction, all of which are to be routinely found in Jewish secondary schools.

There is no government kindergarten in Kufr Kana, although any Jewish town of the same size would undoubtedly boast several. The only pre-school education available in the village is provided by the Franciscan Convent. Competition for places is strong as the Convent can come nowhere near to satisfying the very large demand and essential need for nursery education. Despite repeated election promises, no government funded kindergarten looks forthcoming in the near future.

None of Kufr Kana's schools is in a position to offer after school activities either to its pupils or to other members of the community. Thus, the educational and cultural life of the village is extremely limited, with extra-mural activities being provided only by small independent groups, in unsatisfactory premises with few resources and facilities.

Discrimination and Underdevelopment.

It comes as a surprise to many people to learn of conditions in Kufr Kana, and villages like it. "But, surely," they say, "Israel is a developed country, with a standard of living similar to that of Europe and North America, and receiving substantial amounts of aid from abroad. How come a village like Kufr Kana is in such a poor state?"

The answer is simple: Because of blatant discrimination. Kufr Kana is an Arab village. Israeli citizens, Arab and Jewish alike, pay taxes to central government. Local councils, along with other beneficiaries, then receive their money directly

from the Government. A village council's budget, has to pay the salaries of the Mayor, council officers and employees, as well as covering the cost of street maintenance, the upkeep of schools and public buildings, and the like. Kufr Kana's Council budget for the year 1984/85 was 75 million shekels. That is one tenth - (10%) - of the amount that would be paid to a Jewish community of the same size! Small wonder there are no parks, swimming pools, sports centres and adult education courses in Kufr Kana! - this derisory budget is insufficient even to keep the streets in a reasonable condition.

The council cannot afford to carry out necessary routine cleaning and maintenance. It is certainly in no position to finance projects entailing major capital investment.



From Sickness To Health.

A major problem in Kufr Kana is that of refuse disposal. There is no sewerage system in the village, and no refuse collection service. Consequently, people are obliged to dispose of their household debris wherever they can : on open spaces or in the streets.



Parts of the centre of the village, within feet of houses and in places where children play, function as communal rubbish tips. Not only are the streets and polluted open spaces an inconvenience and an eyesore, but they constitute a serious health hazard.

Children are constantly injured as a result of playing amongst rusty tins and broken glass, and the prevalence of such illnesses as diarrhaea and "worms" is high.

The Council in Kufr Kana is anxious to eliminate this serious nuisance. A group represented on the Village Council has proposed, and been entrusted with, the implementation of a project to provide proper sewerage and refuse disposal facilities for all the village community. The proposed project is twofold. Firstly, it aims to build, and connect every house to a sewerage system, complete with sewage plant, at an estimated cost of 500,000 U.S. dollars.

Over one thousand households would benefit from this. Secondly, the project seeks to provide an efficient and hygienic method of refuse disposal, by means of rubbish collection "skips" placed at convenient points around the village and emptied daily. A van would collect the refuse from the skips and remove it to a designated tip outside of the village. This would cost approximately 100,000 U. S. dollars to set up. The total cost of the plan to "Clean up Cana" is in the region of \$600,000. With this amount the village can embark on the long overdue and much needed sewerage and refuse disposal systems which will make Cana a more beautiful place to visit and a healthier and more hygienic

village in which to live.

It is now many years since Cana witnessed the first miracle. Today, we are not asking for a miracle, just for a little practical help, from our friends.

A single donation covering the entire cost would, of course, be most welcome. However, contributions in whatever amount your particular organisation can currently afford would be most gratefully received. It is our belief that, knowing how crucial our need is, you will not fail to respond affirmatively to our appeal.

Contributions should be sent, by cheque or bank draft, directly to the Kufr Kana Local Council, Kufr Kana, Israel.





CANA OF GALILEE:

Site of Jesus's first miracle, that of the "Marriage feast".

The Church of the Franciscans was built in 1880 and stands on the ruins of former buildings dating from the fourth to sixth centuries.

Kufr Kana Local Council

Phone : 065/55741

30/7/1985

Dear Friends,

We enclose a copy of our new brochure, "Cana Calls!" in the belief that you will be interested in the situation which now exists in Kufr Kana and will want to help us in solving our problem.

The material is self-explanatory. Suffice it to say that the need is urgent, with the present economic situation in this country and under a government policy which, even in the best of times, systematically discriminates against this all other Arab communities, we are compelled to appeal to friends like you for aid.

Please give our plea your most careful and sympathetic consideration and then contribute the very maximum amount your present financial situation permits. Should you have questions, of course feel free to contact us, either by letter or by telephone.

We look forward to hearing from you very soon.

your sincerely,

Saleh Taha,
chairman.

מועצה מקומית כנרת
Saleh Taha