



## Deserving the honor of belonging to Lebanon

### Five Lessons

#### Lesson 1: On Nation and Identity

We must first believe in our Lebanese nationhood, i.e. that the Lebanese people living for thousands of years on this patch of land called Lebanon has, over the millennia, come to constitute a single nation, complete with its attributes, characters and distinct traits, one that cannot be segregated, partitioned or melded into other nations.

Faith in our Lebanese nationhood leads us to recognize a Lebanese identity that rejects any outside qualifiers that are foreign to its historic authenticity. This by no means is a call to seclusion and isolation as some believe; it rather underscores a positive openness onto all neighboring and distant peoples, in accordance with Lebanon's historic mission, yet within the norms of protecting and preserving Lebanon's highest interest, our own nationhood and our distinct identity.

#### Lesson 2: On Geography and History

The Western and Eastern mountain ranges that run parallel – and uninterrupted – from Lebanon's northernmost boundary to its southernmost boundary, have geographically separated the Lebanese mountains from the desert beyond, and protected its back from the successive desert invasions to which Lebanon was subjected to throughout history (Cf. Jawad Boulos).

A look at Lebanon's demographic map shows that the vast majority of Lebanese villages and towns have spread from antiquity on the Western slopes and flanks of the Western mountain range overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. This indicates that Lebanon's natural orientation and outlook have always been this ocean that historically made up the vital realm of our people. The sea was always the lung with which the Lebanese body breathed. Moreover, the proximity of the seashore to the mountain created an alliance that came to be the central foundation upon which the Lebanese entity rested (Cf. Jawad Boulos). Indeed, while the seacoast gave the Lebanese their spirit of adventure and openness, the love of travel, and a mastery of business and trade skills, the mountain gave them a spirit of toughness, indomitability, and resistance. On the other hand, those Lebanese who settled in villages and towns scattered in the Bekaa between the two mountain chains derived from the vast and fertile plain a sense of generosity, giving, and an attachment to the land as they perfected the skills of agriculture, so much so that the Bekaa Valley was once known as the wheat granary of Rome.

Along the shores of the Mediterranean, our ancestors built a great empire that lasted about 500 years, founded on spreading peace, science, democracy, and the exchange of trade, and not on the sword like other empires. This shows that the Lebanese people were, and are still, custodians of a mission of

civilization that rejects violence and spurns wars, waging them only when compelled by survival and self-defense.

The ships of the Lebanese-Phoenician empire reached the shores of North and South America, through Africa and Europe (Antoine El-Khoury Harb, *Lebanon: A Name Through 4000 Years: Entity and Identity*), and carried its civilization to the peoples of the world, including the peoples of the Mediterranean, particularly to the Greek people, who later transmitted it to Rome and from there to the Western world.

With respect to Rome, historians assert that Beirut was the seat of the oldest and most prestigious law school in the world, attended by nobles of the Roman Empire. That school produced some of the greatest lawmakers who drafted the famous ROMAN CODE that contributed greatly later on to the rise of modern Europe. Among those lawmakers were the two Phoenicians PAPINIANUS and ULPIANUS, and on that basis Rome granted Beirut the title of *BERYTUS NUTRIX LEGUM*", or Beirut the Mother of Laws.

Two truths ought to be stated: First, the ultimate merit behind the flourishing of Greek civilization goes to the cultural inoculation received by the Greek people from the Phoenicians. And second, the majority of the greats of that era, the like of Pythagoras, Porphyrius, Mochos, Euclid, Thales, Xenon and others had Phoenician origins, as some were born in Lebanon, while others lived there or learned in its institutions. The mistaken notion that they were Greek and that Western civilization had Greek foundations ought to be rectified, and we must act to reconstitute our heritage, forsaken and stolen for hundreds of years, as we have irrefutable evidence to prove those truths.

With the decline of the Phoenician Empire, there rose the Carthaginian Empire founded by Elissa or Elissar, the daughter of the King of Tyre. Carthage grew and developed, and became important in the days of Hamilcar Barca and his son Hanibaal the Great. The Carthaginian Empire extended from the shores of today's Tunisia to Cartagena – New Carthage or CARTAGO NOVA (in today's Spain). From there, Hanibaal advanced to the lands of the Gauls (France) to besiege Rome after crossing the Alps. The Carthaginian Empire continued the mission that was started by the mother Empire, particularly in the field of trade, marine travel, the agricultural sciences, and the arts of war that are still taught today in the most renowned military institutions (George Masroua). And if Carthage (Tunisia) was the daughter of Tyre, Cartagena was its granddaughter. Just ask the people of Spanish Valencia, located along the shores of the Mediterranean just across the Mediterranean from the Lebanese coast, about their origins, and those among them who know will answer you: We are Phoenicians. Let us not forget that present day CARTAGENA is located on the same coast. The French city of MARSEILLE, which gets its name from Marsa-El, or God's Harbor in Phoenician, was one of the major Phoenician ports of that era.

### **Lesson 3: On the Genesis of the Lebanese Nation**

We begin by stating that man is the child of the land, i.e. the product of the geographic environment in which he lives, and before him lived his forefathers and ancestors. The nature of the land has the greatest impact on man's nature and temperament. The Lebanese individual is not like the African or the Chinese or the Scandinavian or the Sahrawi man; he differs from them in his appearance, his traditions and customs.

Every people that lives in a specific geographic environment develops with time a unique nation and a unique history, with all that this history contains in terms of heritage, traditions, customs, and characteristics that distinguish it from the other peoples. As a corollary to this fact, Jawad Boulos says: History is the product of geography.

Yet this fact does not mean that there is a nation on earth that is ethnically pure. Wars, conquests, invasions and human migrations from one country to another did not leave pure races. Rather, they added to the original peoples other groups that intermarried with time, blended and fused with each other within the confines of the same geography, thus forming in the end a unique nation and a unique common history. One glaring evidence of this is the American nation which developed in modern times in the United States of America through the blending between various peoples and races that fused together and constituted within less than 300 years a great nation representing the modern prototype for the rise of nations. This prototype proves as well that the inoculation between foreign peoples is a source of cultural richness, contrary to what some believe.

Without having to go too far, we cite the example of Prince Fakhreddine II the Great who founded the modern State of Lebanon and extended his suzerainty from Aleppo to beyond Acco. He is the descendant of the Arab tribe of Bani Maan who came to the Lebanese mountains during the Fatimid era where they eventually became a pillar of the Lebanese nation – the Maan princes.

What some historians say, namely that the Lebanese people came from the Arabian peninsula or from Mesopotamia or some other place, is not true, as if our country was empty of people and that this vacuum was filled by migrant people. The fact is that the Lebanese people have existed on this patch of land for a long time and are deeply rooted in it from antiquity. Archaeological research has shown that the early Homo sapiens lived along these shores between the Zahrani and Antelias going back to about 700,000 years (May Murr).

It is also true that Lebanon, on account of its strategic geographic location as a meeting point between three continents, was the subject more than other places of mixing and crossing between its inhabitants and foreign human groups who came to it as a result of military conquests and whose residues remained on our soil long after they withdrew. Many stayed seeking the shelter of its impregnable mountains in their escape from persecution, as is the case with the Druze under the Fatimids and the Shiites under the Abbasids, or because they loved its excellent climate and the beautiful nature of its land. With time, these transient groups interacted with the original inhabitants and fused with them, generating one nation and one nationality which is the Lebanese nationality.

As for the Maronites, the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon were, until the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century still practicing the ancient Phoenician religion with the veneration of deities like El, Ashatrut, and Baal, and the celebration each year of the resurrection of Adonis from the dead three days after he was killed by a wild boar as the legend says. The Adonis River was the center of these celebrations. The inhabitants of the Lebanese coast, on the other hand, quickly adopted the Christian religion from its beginning. Then came the monks of Saint Maroun from Quroch Mountain, escaping the Jacobites, and they settled in the Bsharreh township and the area of Muneitra-Aaqura. They preached Christianity and spread its teachings among the people, and one of their monks, Ibrahim Al-Qurochi, became famous for his wisdom and piety and he rallied around him the people of the hinterland in the hills of Byblos. By the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the Christian religion dominated across the mountain, and the people became known as the Maronites after the name of Saint Maroun. The Adonis River saw its name change to the Ibrahim River after the name of the monk Ibrahim Al-Qurochi.

#### **Footnote: The Diseased Head**

We said that a nation is a group of individuals who were fused together in one geographic environment and who, through time, constituted one nation. Thus, whatever applies to the individual, also applies to

the group, and since the individual is made up of a head and limbs, so is the nation (according to Manuel Younis). The head of the nation, or its brain, is essentially the central atom that directs the limbs and activates them into motion. If the head is sound, the limbs move in a sound and harmonious manner; but if the head is diseased, the entire body becomes diseased.

In this context, Dr. Younis says that the brain of the French nation is located in the Ile de France district, in Paris and its suburbs that comprise France's heritage and history. The brain of Spain is in the province of Castille, and the brain of the United States of America is in the state of Massachusetts (Boston), etc. In the case of Lebanon, the brain of the nation is in Mount Lebanon which stretches from Jezzine to the Cedars, which is why it was said, perhaps unconsciously: The unity and strength of Lebanon are in the unity and strength of Mount Lebanon. As for the motto "The Glory of Lebanon was granted to him", it is attributed to the pioneering historic role played by the Maronite Patriarchs in preserving the sovereignty and independence of Lebanon, and to the huge sacrifices made by the Maronites on the altar of this country for over 1,500 years. If the Maronites and the Druze, who together make up the brain of this nation, knew the import of their positions, they would not conduct themselves in this irresponsible manner we witness today and for over at least the past 60 years.

The four painful, if not lethal, blows that struck the Lebanese brain during the last war and led to the decline of the Lebanese resistance and the diminishing role of the Christians, were all caused by the Maronite leaders, particularly those among them who have an amnesia of history and are greedy for power and money, and not by their enemies. Those deadly milestones are the Ehden massacre, which we described at the time as the "fissure in the head", the Safra massacre, the war of Mount Lebanon, and the War of Elimination which eliminated everything and completed the annihilation of whatever was left of the Lebanese head. More disastrous than all of this is the fact that those who were responsible for these calamities have returned to power and the decision-making, and the Lebanese people have gone back to applauding them as if nothing had happened!!!

In sum, there is no solution to the problems of Lebanon unless the diseases of the head are cured, and so the question remains: How and when?

#### **Lesson 4: On Language and the Alphabet**

The Lebanese people today speak the Lebanese language – we deliberately do not call it "dialect" – which is the child of the Syriac language and the grandchild of the Aramaic language, and they use the Arabic language in writing and formal speech. The time has come to free ourselves from this confounding duality that hinders development and progress, and to adopt our own Lebanese language as an official spoken and written language like all civilized peoples do. We would spare our children the complications of the Arabic language and its exhausting rules, particularly since the Arabic language has grown old and archaic and, no matter how hard the Arabs keep trying to develop it, Arabic is no longer able to meet the needs of the scientific and technological revolution that is leaping forward in giant strides.

Everyone knows that the letters of the modern alphabet was a Lebanese invention, and the majority of the world's peoples have adopted it while we, its own inventors, have abandoned it. We ought to return to our roots and use the Lebanese alphabet that has falsely become known as the Latin alphabet, albeit with some modifications in some of the letters to accommodate the Semitic sounds such as the 'Ayn, the Haa', the Hamza, the DaaD, the Taah and others, according to the prototype designed by Saiid Aqel.

The people of Mount Lebanon were still speakers of the Syriac language through the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century before the spoken Lebanese language evolved as we know it today. In their vast majority, Lebanese villages and towns have Aramaic-Syriac names to this day.

### **Lesson 5: On Building the Third Republic.**

With the failure of the Independence Republic and the Taef Republic in building a viable state, Lebanon has now become a burden on itself, its people and its friends. The Lebanese state has reached the climax of its bankruptcy, corruption and deterioration in all domains – the political, the economic, the social, and the administrative, etc. All attempts at cosmetic repairs, patching up, and anesthesia are no longer useful to address the state's chronic problems that have been accumulating since the era of independence to this day. The Lebanese people are at the depth of their despair, disgust and frustration. Taking stock of where the country stands today, it is one's duty to call, before it is too late, for the establishment of a new state, in a new attire and a new mindset; a state that is up to par with the times, one that matches the aspirations of its people and the ambitions of its young generation, and one that secures the future of the nation.

In order to achieve this dream – a dream being the reality of the future – an extraordinary program must be adopted whose implementation is carried out by statesmen, and not by the politicians on the stage today. Statesmen believe that politics is the art of the impossible and their objective is to take their country to fame and glory, whereas politicians believe that politics is the art of the possible and their objective is to take themselves to fame and glory.

Such a program would accomplish the following:

- 1 – Remove the current politicians, or a majority of them, from the political stage after they have gone too deep into corruption and the mismanagement and destruction of the country. This is the first and most important condition for the rise of the much desired state, otherwise any effort will remain futile and sterile. To accomplish this condition requires either a sweeping popular uprising or revolution, similar to the Cedars Revolution of 2005, calling for their removal or toppling them at the next electoral opportunity.
- 2 – Declare Lebanon's neutrality along the Swiss model and disengage the country from all regional axes, now that all regional conflicts have intersected one another over Lebanon's soil. The United Nations should be called upon to consolidate this neutrality and defend it within the international community.
- 3 – Separate religion from state, and declare a comprehensive secularization of the country's institutions. This paves the way for eliminating the abhorrent sectarian and religious fanaticism that is growing by the day, and which was never part of the Lebanese people's traditions and principles.
- 4 – Implement all international resolutions pertaining to Lebanon, eliminate the unlawful mini-states and parallel armies, and delineate the borders with Syria while reserving Lebanon's right to recover those territories along the Eastern anti-Lebanon mountain range that were torn from it.
- 5 – Return to the 1926 Constitution now that the Taef Constitution has miserably failed by transforming the state into a three-headed monster and inciting to further sectarian and religious rigidity, with one amendment allowing any individual from any of the religious communities to run for the office of President.

6 – Disarm the Palestinian organizations, both inside and outside the camps, and eliminate all terrorist organizations from these camps. A deliberate and serious effort must be undertaken through active Lebanese diplomacy to deport the Palestinian refugees back to their country or to any other country willing and able to absorb them.

7 – Purge the state's institutions and administrations from all surplus public employees who were appointed by means of political clientelism, cronyism and nepotism. Keep a small elite of competent public servants, and modernize public administrations by cleansing them of corruption and a culture of bribery and kickbacks. Privatize all service utilities such as electricity, water, telephone, public works and others.

8 – Stop all collective naturalizations and strip all non-qualified citizenship from those who do not deserve it or who acquired it unlawfully. Lebanese citizenship should be granted only to individuals who offered Lebanon significant services.

9 – Stop the sale of land to foreigners and re-evaluate all suspicious sales, particularly those that took place between 1990 and the present time via fictitious companies.

10 – Revoke the licenses of all political parties whose loyalties lie outside Lebanon, dismantle their active and sleeper cells, and hunt down their members.

11 – Empower the provinces in order to reduce the unhealthy growth of the urban centers along the coast by: a) Transfer factories, plants, Lebanese and foreign university branches from Beirut and the cities to the villages and towns in the rural areas, from the north to the south of the country; b) Adopt an expanded administrative decentralization; c) Implement the Green Plan within a short period of time. These are the only measures that are capable of resolving the choking traffic crisis in the capital and the cities, and of addressing the housing crisis and other mounting social problems.

12 – Empower the legitimate armed forces with all the capabilities they require in order to impose the rule of law on everyone and in every corner of the country; build a mighty national army that can stand against anyone who dares harm the sovereignty of Lebanon and the dignity of the Lebanese people.

This program constitutes in our opinion the essential foundations for the establishment of a modern state that is befitting of our nation, our history and our martyrs, and that is capable of lifting Lebanon out of its deep slumber, pumping life back in its veins, giving hope to its future generations, and restoring the prestige of its great people. Let Lebanon return to fulfilling its universal mission of spreading peace, knowledge and freedom to the world.

Lebanon, at your service  
Etienne Sacre (Abu Arz)  
Cyprus, November 14, 2009