



Intervention

Samer and Shera Farran

young couple living in the Holy Land, both working and with three small children

Hello,

My name is Shera, and my name is Samer, we were born in Nazareth, and today we live in Haifa, in the next 10 min we will talk about our life in the holy land as a young couple with 3 children...

Samer: 9 years ago, I was the responsible of the catholic youth in Nazareth, and we were doing exactly in this period of the year, pilgrimages to Jerusalem, the Via della rosa, that year,

Shera: 2012 I was a student in the medicine faculty in Hafia and has decided to join the pilgrimage with my mom and grand mom to do the via della rosa with the Catholic parish and the catholic youth of NAzareth...

Samer: From that day, a love story has started between us, as we say, love from first sight

Before telling the full story, let us describe how the young Christians in the holy land live and what are the main challenges:

Most of the Christians are arabs and live in north Israel, we grow up and study in private Christian's school, when the main language is Arabic, yet, the main language in Israel is Hebrew

As arab Christians, we are minority of minority, minority as arabs (20% Arabs; 80% Jewish), and minority as christian in the arab community (7% Christians & 93% Muslims)

We grow up in Nazareth, for catholic families, we were raised up living the Christians values, from home and from schools, that time, 30 years ago, Nazareth the biggest arab city, was 70% Christian and 30% Muslims, unfortunately today the christians in Nazareth are 30% and 70% Muslims.

Samer: After school, I went to Tel aviv University, which is far from Nazareth, about 2 hours, the first challenge was the languages, and to study biochemistry in class of 100 students, when you are the only christian and far from family and friends and the church.

Shera: I went to Haifa to study medicine, Haifa is in the north, there are large numbers of Christians and arabs in the north, so I wasn't alone we were 8 Christians from 100 students.

It is very challenging for the christian youth to find the right person to marry because you are out of your community when you go to study, and you meet very few christians around.

You can meet your next half in 3 major ways:

- From the community and work
- From families, 2 families know each other and have unmarried young...
- From the academic life

As we say in the beginning, we met by the first option, from the community when we went to the via della rosa.

Samer: I was working in Tel aviv, Shera was working and studying in Haifa, and it was very difficult to meet every day, and even not every week, and if we meet we must meet only in our parents house and rarely we were out to dinner or any other activity together, because if we are not marry then it is not acceptable to go to public places together without company from my family or Shera's family, specially when the family is religious like ours.

After 2 years knowing each other, we have decided to get married, and the main question was: were we will live?

Our parents in Nazareth, Shera In Haifa, and Samer in Tel aviv, the best place we have found is in Jerusalem , Haddasah Ein Karem, one of the biggest hospitals in Israel, where Shera can continue her specializing in Pediatric and it is not far from my work (near tel aviv).

Before getting marry, we had preparation from the church about marriage, 15 lectures about different topics, the meaning of family, God's love, Family economics, raising children, living as a christian in the holy land and etc..

We rent apartment in Jerusalem After marriage and the journey has begun, we are totally alone, far from our family, friends and the catholic community, we did this step because we want to grew up in our career, at least at the beginning, we used to visit Nazareth every 2 weeks, visiting the family for weekend and going to the mass on Saturday evening, because in Sunday we work, as we said from the beginning, we work in Jewish places, and they work on Sunday.

After 1 year, God blessed us with our biggest daughter, Theresa, she is 4.5 years old now, and 2 years later, came her brother, Samir, named as his grandfather, as it is the tradition in the arab community for the oldest son.

Having 2 babies, far from the christian community we were grew up, and private christian schools, Families and friends, were very challenging, and therefore, we have decided to move north, choosing to live in Haifa, where we could find work, Career, Christian community.

Unfortunately, moving back to Nazareth it wasn't an option, because of lack:

- Work opportunities

- No lands or houses for young couples, which is very important point! Unfortunately many couples are leaving and moving out of Nazareth because there is no place there, most of the lands are occupied for muslims, or the large amount are owned by the church! I will tell shortly that, the church is in financial problems in the holy land, many lands were sold to unchristians by the Greekorthodox church, specially in Nazareth, and lately the latin parich half year ago, sold a big land to unchristian to try to solve their financial issues, it is very sad for us to say that, and to know that, because many christians couples could buy it and live there so we can keep the existence in Nazareth and the holy land, for make it in numbers, we can say that atleast 500 families could live in this land for the next 100 year, and now we have to find other solution out of Nazareth.
- - third thing why we have chosen Haifa and not Nazareth, cultural debate when the most of Nazareth today are muslims, when is it far away from our Christian values and God's word.

1 month ago, God blessed us with our third Child, Philip, I would like to emphasize that as a young catholic couple, it is very rare to have 3 children, many families are surprised to know that we have 3 children, the average of christian birth in Israel is 1.6 child for family, the lowest in Israel, when Jewish are 4.4 and Muslims 4.6 child per family, and this is another reason why we are minority.

It is important to say that though the christian is minority, yet we are known as the successful community in Israel, high percentage go to university for academic and high academic studies, something that we would be proud about, on the other hand, when we finish the academy, our opportunity to find work is very limited, since priority is for Jewish people and the best workfields are rare in the north area, where are most of the christians, and need to move to the center, as I did, and today I continue to travel each day 4 hours on roads to reach my work place, something that take lot of energy and time from family and community, when Shera works in Haifa, near home, with 3 children, and in addition continue her specializing in Pediatric Neurology at Rambam Hospital, biggest hospital in the north.

To conclude, as a christian young couple, it is very challenging to live in the holy land, we are trying to keep the minimum duty to our community and God, going to mass once a week, with our children, hopefully when they grow up the situation will change and we can be very active in the community together with our children, same as we were when we were young before marriage.