Floral Splendor in Palestine

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 NABLUS, February 1, 2010 (WAFA) - The GPS device connected to the satellite (407 m) records mountain elevation from sea level. Here, in the north of the West Bank as in all historic Palestine, roses grow and blossom according to the climate.

The wind is blowing without any specific direction. Low morning clouds seem to be touching the mountain tops northeast of the city of Jenin. As the wind blows, the dozens of different wild flowers move in all directions.

 Here, one can count the numbers of wild Middle Eastern (Mediterranean) flowers and can identify the strength of each flower by the intensity of the wind in the region that is part of a Mediterranean climate.

 In Palestine, 3,000 types of wild flowers and others not yet discovered, blossom these days. It seems the mountain near the mountainous village of Raba surrounded by carpet-like trees have at its bottom bright yellow Qandoul, which is a tree from the Old Testament period associated with the heritage of the Palestinians.

 People here raise livestock and work in the fields and in other occupations. Some worship the land, but they do not care much for the flowers that have grown in most parts of the West Bank. For them it is just a flower. They do not care what the legend says about it that it grew from the blood of the brother of Al-Nu'man Ibn Al-Munthir.

 A recently published book by the Wildlife Society on biological diversity said that the organic and natural Palestinian plants are classified into 128 groups, including 14 from the botanical family of ferns and 124 flowering plants.

 Most of the plants in the Palestinian territories bloom in the spring, which began early this year. But the effect of high temperature, as said in the book prepared by the researcher in botanical diversity Imad Atrash, is evident on the time for flowering, which comes one month earlier in the Jordan Valley.

But there is a time where natural flowers blossom throughout the year. According to the book, 9% of the flowers bloom in January and 21% in February.

Mountains of the northern West Bank appear as natural farms for those flowers. No one can claim ownership of this farm. So it is possible to see many of these families that benefit from the warmth of the winter and the calm of the wilderness wherever it wants without having to look into the origin of the family of these flowers.

 But what about the most beautiful and controversial flowers in historical Palestine?

Some of them are associated with names of countries such as dates of the Egyptian desert (Zaqqum), and Egyptian haloloo, which is a flower next to the Alhamham that attracts insects producing sweet nectar honey taste.

These flowers used to attract children in the past who would drink their juice. Among the thousands of these kinds, there is the Halouk, which does not follow the photosynthesis process. It is a leafless flower that comes out of the ground and includes five million seeds that remain in the soil for 20 years, according to al-Atrash.

In the mountains and plains of the northern West Bank, it was not possible to see this flower in such an early time of the year.

However, it is possible to see a plant that came from Argentina some 3,000 years ago, as some accounts say. It is Alkhatmieh (cow eye), which could rise up to three meters and is characterized by its variety of colors.

In almost every mountain site, the Aftreet (devil) flower grew, which is from the family of tulips.

In the plains of Raba, there is al-Majn apple, which is a plant that goes back to the old historical periods and is linked to the religious history of the region. But it blooms only in the month of March.

In contrast to old beliefs held by some about it that it brings madness to those who eat its fruit, leaves of this plant look green, delicate and pretty.

 On the eastern slopes of the northern West Bank, a large number of flowers that blossomed appear, and some of them have leaves due to early growth and mild temperatures

The new book mentions many examples about flowers of Palestine, but it does not talk about their link to the prevailing culture.

But one of the most famous plants closely remembered by Palestinians is the Apple of the Dead Sea, which is a shrub growing in the wild land of Jerusalem and has a characteristic of being toxic and can cause blindness.

The Dead Sea Apple rises about two meters above the ground.

 In the West Bank, when the green starts to fade gradually as the earth drops in height from the ground level and the transition of the climate from one to another, the flowers appear more solid and stronger than other mountain flowers.

In the colorful mountains of Raba, it was possible to see some flowers that have lost their leaves leaving visible round heads covered with delicate plant layer. But near Jericho, it is possible to see tough bulbs with light colors.

The flowers in Palestine are dazzling. But they are not far from politics at all, like most of the components of life. Al-Atrash says that the Israelis have repeatedly tried to register some of the Palestinian flowers with Israeli names, as they did with the Anemone flower.

A trip in the Palestinian territories with its small geographical area in the first three months of the year reveals the nature of the botanical diversity in it, which is more distinctive than many of the world's continents.

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