

27th March 2022

Equals

**“You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days,
Ay, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God.
But let there be spaces in your togetherness,
And let the winds of your heavens dance between you.”**

Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet, on Marriage

The idea for today's piece came from some research I was doing when I was writing about Palestine, and that took me back to a quotation I've used before in a "Thought for the Day". John Stuart Mill wrote:

*The true virtue of human beings is fitness to live together as equals;
claiming nothing for themselves
but that they would freely concede to everyone else*

Would that this was the case everywhere ... But clearly, it isn't! Last month, *Palinfo*, an information website offering details of recent issues in Palestine, said this:

The *Khan Al-Ahmar* community in the West Bank has come under the spotlight once again after Israeli authorities decided to relocate the community 300 meters away, to the opposite side of Route 1 as an alternative to razing the Bedouin village. *Khan Al-Ahmar*, which has been demolished and rebuilt several times in recent years, is near the illegal Israeli settlement of *Kfar Adumim*, and close to Route 1, a highway that connects East Jerusalem to the Jordan Valley. The order to raze the village was first issued in 2009, over ten years ago. With their position in the so-called E1 area, where an Israeli settlement expansion project is planned along the Jerusalem-Jericho road, Palestinian communities in *Khan Al-Ahmar* have battled for their existence for decades.

Togetherness? Equals? Sadly not, when rights are not "freely conceded", and land is grabbed, possessed and settled on – illegally.

When Kahlil Gibran wrote so beautifully about marriage, he talked about togetherness with spaces, peaceful co-existence, respect and understanding in a shared relationship – a "fitness to live together as equals", in John Stuart Mill's words. Would that such an understanding could be seen as fundamental to, and actioned for, the people of *Khan Al-Ahmar* in the occupied West Bank ...

A prayer for today

*Lord, you have made me in your image, equal to everyone else.
Help me to live my life with true respect for others. Amen*