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## **"The Peace on The Horizon - 70 Years after The World War 2 in the Middle East"(26)**

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### **Chapter 3: The grace of Allah – Oil boom**

#### **3-4(26) Searching for wealth – Migrants rushing into Gulf countries**



In the 1960s oil consumption was rapidly increased, resulting in oil development rush in oil-producing countries in the Middle East. According to the OPEC data, oil production in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq during 1960 and 1970 increased as follows: In Saudi Arabia its production was increased 2.9times from 1.3 million B/D in 1960 to 3.8 million B/D in 1970, in Kuwait it was increased 1.8 times from 1.7 million B/D to 3 million B/D, and in Iraq, increased 1.8 times from 950,000 B/D in 1960 to 1.55 million B/D in 1970 respectively.

Increase of the production volume meant the increase of state revenues. The coffers of each country became abruptly enriched. The rulers of the countries put the money in their wallet and poured it into their families, but oil money was too much abundant to consume by themselves. The money has been used for the modernization of their countries including infrastructure development, education and medical improvement. Before the discovery of oil, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were extremely poor. It was a pre-modern society where education and medical care were not existed at all. But both countries began to be modernized.

By money, it was not difficult to construct infrastructure such as buildings, roads, bridges, harbors and the like. They asked the European consultant to design the building, ordered the construction works to the companies in Turkey and Egypt, and brought the cheap labor from India and Pakistan. The same was for schools and hospitals. The necessary teaching materials or medical equipment also imported from foreign countries paying by oil dollars.

Social capital was able to be prepared by money. The problem was human resources. Human resources such as school teachers or hospital doctors were inevitable. In Saudi Arabia and Kuwait

there were too few teachers and doctors to operate schools and hospitals. Even in Iraq the absolute numbers of teachers and doctors were insufficient due to the rapid increase of needs.

It was essential that teachers and doctors, who are important to communicate with students or patients, could speak Arabic. Arabic speaking talents were required not only in the fields like education and healthcare, but also in business field where the boom also began along with economic development. Saudis and Kuwaitis, however, could not keep the books nor handle cash register. Supply source of manpower were from Egyptians, Palestinians, Lebanese and Jordanians. Oil producing countries had the huge demand on manpower. On the other hand, there were many job-seekers in non-oil producing countries. The demand and supply of both parties matched each other. The job-seekers rushed to the Gulf oil-producing countries like Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

As mentioned before, Palestinian refugee teacher Shatila moved to Kuwait in 1956 with his son Amin. The family of Zahra was escaped from Elat in Israel to the Jordanian town Aqaba in the same year. In 1963, Zahra was sent to Kuwait when he was only 15 years old because the life in Jordan was not easy at all. He became a clerk of a microscopic shop.

Kuwait accepted large numbers of Palestinians under the humanitarian principle to support refugees. However, the Kuwaiti people did not sympathize with refugees at all, They abused Palestinians as a labor force working with cheap wages. It was like a modern slavery. Kuwaiti people who moved to flourishing urban area from shabby tent life in desert was illiterate and barbarous. They treated the migrant Palestinians who came to Kuwait in search for wealth with cruel and tyrannical behavior. Zahra stood still and remitted most of his cheap salary to his family in Jordan. In the same year, Khatib, the son of merchant in Amman, came to work in Iraq when he was 24 years old with the knowledge of accounting learned in his family business. He had similar experience as that of Zahra.

At that time, Japanese companies which started developing oil in the neutral zone of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia also needed manpower. The company advertised for recruitment several times. Amin Shatila was adopted in the first recruitment in 1961, and then Zahra in 1968. Both were Palestinian refugees, but the Amin Shatila's nationality in the application documents remained as Palestine, and the nationality of Zahra was changed to Jordan. As Amin's father was proud of being a Palestinian, he did not change the nationality. He dreamed one day to return to his home town Tulkarm and work as teacher again. Meanwhile, the Zahra's family realized that it was no longer possible to regain farmland in hometown. They changed their nationality to Jordan to make it even more advantageous to get a job. They were called Palestinian Jordanian since then.

Khatib, Jordanian national, also applied to Arabian Oil Company. Petroleum companies in the Middle East had good reputation. Its salaries and social status was better than any other companies. When Khatib sent a letter to the parents in Amman that he changed jobs to oil companies, they were very much appreciated. In the meantime, his father had felt uncomfortable a little bit because the said

company was unfamiliar. But his father took into consideration that both Arab and Japan had been trampled on by the Western countries after the World War II, and then Japan revived from the ruins like a phoenix. The parents felt sympathy to Japan, its company and its people.

Led by destiny three Arabs settled in a small town on the Persian Gulf Coast. They were one Palestinian who believed in the reconstruction of homeland, one Palestinian Jordanian who changed the nationality for new life, and one Jordanian who had dream of a prosperous future. They worked together as employees in the same office of a Japanese oil company.

(To be continued ----)