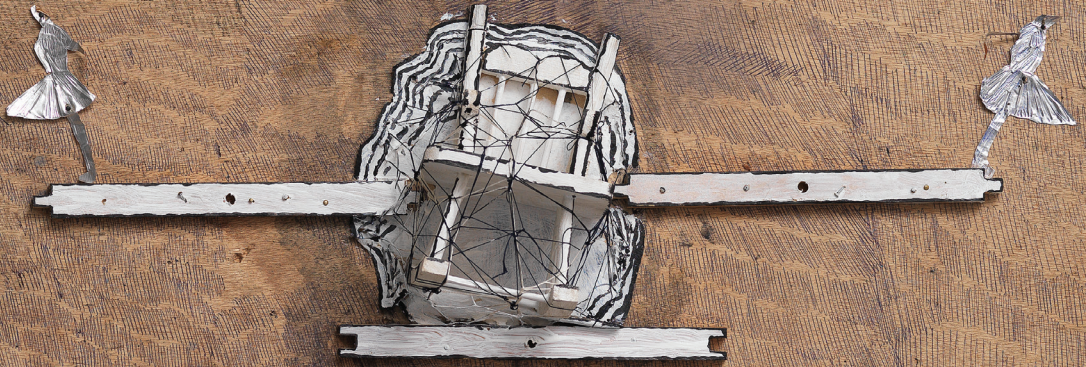


Göttinger Studien zur Kulturanthropologie / Europäischen Ethnologie  
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**June 1967 in Personal Stories  
of Palestinians and Israelis**

Regina F. Bendix,  
Aziz Haidar,  
Hagar Salamon (Eds.)



Göttingen University Press

**KAE**



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“Göttingen Studies in Cultural Anthropology/European Ethnology”  
edited by

Prof. Dr. Regina Bendix	E-Mail: <a href="mailto:rbendix@gwdg.de">rbendix@gwdg.de</a>
Prof. Dr. Moritz Ege	E-Mail: <a href="mailto:mege@uni-goettingen.de">mege@uni-goettingen.de</a>
Prof. Dr. Sabine Hess	E-Mail: <a href="mailto:shess@uni-goettingen.de">shess@uni-goettingen.de</a>
Prof. Dr. Carola Lipp	E-Mail: <a href="mailto:Carola.Lipp@phil.uni-goettingen.de">Carola.Lipp@phil.uni-goettingen.de</a>
Dr. Torsten Näser	E-Mail: <a href="mailto:tnaaser1@gwdg.de">tnaaser1@gwdg.de</a>

Georg-August-Universität Göttingen  
Institut für Kulturanthropologie/Europäische Ethnologie  
Heinrich-Düker-Weg 14  
37073 Göttingen

### *Address of the Editors*

Institut für Kulturanthropologie/Europäische Ethnologie  
Heinrich-Düker-Weg 14  
D-37073 Göttingen

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Far more interviews were conducted than were ultimately analyzed for this volume. An additional set of papers building on the 1967 materials will appear in Hebrew as a special issue of *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore*. We are grateful to the Folklore Research Center at Hebrew University for archiving digital recordings and transcriptions of all the Hebrew interviews, as well as translations into English for many interviews in Hebrew and Arabic, and, for some, also from Arabic into Hebrew. The interviews conducted by Near East Consulting are also archived with that organization in Ramallah. The rich corpus will consequently remain available for further research.

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The art work is inspired by Edgar Degas' 'The Little Dancer.' Perched upon the wings of a plane, the two dancers embody the balancing force of the aircraft. Together, they remain suspended against all odds, though all the while suspended by a thread, hovering just beyond the abyss. Thus, it is possible to perceive the glass as half full or half empty, depending on the eyes of the beholder.



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## 1967 and After: An Introduction

*Regina F. Bendix, Aziz Haidar and Hagar Salamon*

On June 5, 1967, a brief but consequential war began between Israel and the countries of the Arab League led by Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser. By June 10, the war had ended, but the territorial and social configuration of the region remains deeply impacted by this war. This book is the result of an interdisciplinary project on the personal narratives about 1967 – the Six-Day War or *al-Naksa* – as experienced in the complex terrain of the Middle East. Scholars of folklore, cultural anthropology and sociology working in Israel, Palestine and Germany brought their efforts together to elicit stories and document personal voices from many different groups and political and religious positionalities within Israel and the Palestinian territories. A large corpus of interviews has come together: More than three hundred conversations were conducted with Israelis and Palestinian-Israelis living mainly in Jerusalem and its environs, and Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, Ramallah and other West Bank locations, the Gaza Strip, Jordan, as well as in Germany. We present case studies of some of this rich material in this volume. We offer analyses of exemplary individual stories, thematic narrative clusters and sets of stories that are marked by gender, class, religion, age and political orientation. In addition, we include a number of interview transcriptions in slightly curated form to show how individuals recall and interpret the events of 1967 and embed them in their biographical recollections.

Of course, 1967 has been written about extensively within international relations, Middle Eastern studies, history, various fields of cultural studies and the social sciences. There are literary works, poetry and music that continue to make the

enormous and lasting impact of this very brief war manifest.<sup>1</sup> However, personal stories of individuals who have lived through this conflict, indeed, whose lives have been shaped and thoroughly changed by it, have rarely reached a broad audience.

After the founding of the state of Israel and the war of independence, 1967 represents a caesura in the unfolding history of tension and violence. It left a mark in lives full of memories that is worthy of attention and analysis to, perhaps, gain insights that might increase mutual understanding.

Exemplarily, A.Y., born in 1941, recalls:

There was an opportunity that was missed by the governments then, they needed to do something. [...] The Arab, the Palestinian people who were here, wanted to live. Quietly. And they thought that quiet would come now after the war. [...] All in all that's what created this sense of euphoria. Because, once I see him and he accepts me and says to me 'Hello, welcome!' I feel good, and I'm not afraid of him and he's not afraid of me, it's fun.<sup>2</sup>

A.Y. also recalls that before the war of independence,

We would go regularly to the Old City and buy things cheaply. And Arabs would come to us and sell oil, cheese, olives, and it was okay. All in all. Now, what's okay? I tell you, as kids we started to like them, we walked around with *Keffiyehs* like the Palestinians walk around with today!<sup>3</sup>

For some interviewees, perhaps the more liberal Jews, the sense of possibility and shared humanity brought on in the first weeks and months after June 1967, stands out starkly: "I thought it was good for us, great, I was in such a euphoria, what could I tell you. Everybody felt amazing. We were in a state of, what could I tell you, we were on such a high!"<sup>4</sup>

The Palestinian I.B. was six in 1967, and in his memory, a rather different reality unfolded. He was hiding in a cave with female adults and other children of his extended family during the first days of the war, and subsequently heeded his mother's words not to accept any chocolates from Israeli soldiers – a caution recalled by many Palestinians. After the war, the family divided, with but a few staying in Bethlehem and the rest moving to Jordan: "Because the life was terrible here at that time. Everywhere you went you could see the soldiers, soldiers, Israeli soldiers, you know? They were coming to your house and checking and asking and so on. Even my grandmother and my grandfather left."<sup>5</sup> F. who was a nine-year-old Palestinian girl

<sup>1</sup> A selection pertinent to this project: Aly, Feldman and Shikaki (2013), Bein and Stein (2006), Benvenisti (1995), Buber (2005[1983]), Oren (2002), Finkelstein (2003), Said (1985), Saunders (2011, 2015), Scham, Salem and Pogrud (2005) and Segev (2006).

<sup>2</sup> A.Y., male, Israeli Jew, interviewed in February 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> L.M., female, Israeli Jew, interviewed in May 2017.

<sup>5</sup> I.B., male, Palestinian, interviewed in February 2017.

in 1967, recalls how the West Bank city of Jenin began to flourish and hope was in the air:

Many Israelis came from Haifa, from Nazareth, and went shopping in Jenin. [...] Then you learn about relatives in Nazareth and so on, then the families visited each other again, and that was [...] a time when people had hope again. Many said that this is only temporary, the Israelis will soon leave and then we will have our country again.<sup>6</sup>

While I.B. also recalls a brief period of time with no checkpoints and opportunities to go to Tel Aviv or to Haifa, the weight of fifty years of occupation colors the memories of this short period of freedom:

People of the two nations, they can live together. Because we had the experience, you know? People there [...] if you are a human being, you are a human being. So what if you are Israeli, you are a Jew, you are a Muslim, and you are a Christian, and so on. Ok? We can live together. But we can't live together, they have their own state, and we're living under occupation. This is not fair.<sup>7</sup>

While politically, there was no attention paid to the deep impact of “1967 and after” experiences on personal and familial levels, peace-making initiatives on the social level have time and again called for witnessing and listening to one another in cases requiring an overcoming of deep conflict and atrocities in Israel/Palestine as well as elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> There was, however, little by way of archival record of personal narratives.

When Hagar Salamon, Aziz Haidar and Regina F. Bendix came together in 2014-15 to begin drafting a joint grant, 1967 was hardly talked about regarding its everyday ramifications in Israeli and Palestinian society. Too many other wars layered themselves over those few days in June 1967 and the brief time period after it that initially seemed to hold the potential for transformations. Making audible and graspable moments within these dramatic days and their repercussions in individual biographies became the focus of our joint project, and some facets of the rich material collected are presented here. Behind more than fifty years of political discussion about one or two state solutions, punctuated by continued violent altercations and peace efforts, there are individuals of all walks of life, practicing diverse beliefs, and adhering to divergent political orientations, who have been deeply affected by this brief war. The motivation of our project, with interviews carried out between 2016 and 2020, was to make these vernacular experiences visible to a broader public within and beyond the conflict zone. In a time when ‘fake news’ is the byline of populist leaders who make use of it on a daily basis, the role of the media in shaping political presents and futures is understood. Yet, where in the assessments of the Six-Day War does the

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<sup>6</sup> F., female, Palestinian emigrated to Germany, interviewed in September 2019.

<sup>7</sup> I.B., male, Palestinian, interviewed in February 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Bar-On (2006, 2007), Bar-On and Adwan (2006), Bozizevic (2007), Rill, Šmidling and Bitoljanu (2007), Rill and Franovic (2005).

Egyptian newscaster Ahmed Sa'ïd figure, whose broadcasts were mentioned in interviews with Palestinians and Israelis alike, as an immensely powerful radio voice instilling fear in Israelis and hope of an impending Palestinian state among Arabs? The recollections of days spent in caves far from their villages, nurtured by mothers, aunts and grandmothers, offer trenchant images of Palestinian children and youths' experiences of impending uncertain futures. The role of the Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum's voice and her endorsement of Abdel Nasser's plans for an end to the Israeli state is another significant vernacular recollection, as is the image of Israelis driven into the sea as fodder for the fish – a picture of hope for Palestinians yearning to recover land and homes they had lost in 1948, and an image from childhood still lingering in some Israeli adults' nightmares. Atrocities live powerfully and dreadfully in narrative and memory and reemerge when war threatens to erupt, be this of massacres against Jews in the 1929 Palestine riots in Hebron, against Palestinians during the Israeli war of independence or in the Holocaust during World War II. It is often narrative and the specters that it upholds that guide the actions of those who are caught as civilians between warring powers.

Wars are likely to become life-changing events, no matter where they happen. Yet, the terrain considered here is paradigmatic in its long history of religious and colonial struggles, and its production of large streams of refugees and diasporas. The 1967 war, with the anger and anxiety leading up to it and the failure to achieve a lasting peaceful solution after the war concluded, affected countless individuals personally. There are those who lost houses and land, there are others who gained property and land,<sup>9</sup> while the illegitimate Israeli settlements on occupied territory remain a steadily growing source of aggression and frustration.<sup>10</sup> There are Palestinians who have improved themselves economically, yet, who desire nothing more than to return to the land of their family. There are Israelis who keep yearning for a religious miracle settling things once and for all, and those who hold by a secular, humanly just solution that would facilitate coexistence no matter what creed and origin. Biographies unfolded in decades of political uncertainty, with everyday life striving for an orderly reality, despite the fact that this frail if vibrant order has been shaken time and again by small and big altercations. We focus on regular people's ways of making sense of 1967 by dwelling on their remembrance. The global players, aligning

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<sup>9</sup> The loss of homes and land was far more pronounced in 1948, but it also occurred in 1967, and is a topos, sometimes interwoven with the preceding history, in a number of our interviews. The chapters by Salamon and Shaked and the narrative collected by Haidar in this volume contain such cases.

<sup>10</sup> The settlements were rarely touched on by interviewees in this project and, hence, are discussed but rarely in this volume (but see the contribution by Ronit Hemyan). However, they illustrate the complex intermeshing of political oppositionality and economic interdependence. Palestinians find work in road and house construction, and in needing to labor to support their families, they simultaneously assist in the destruction of Palestinian farmland, access to property and wells, and so forth. Israelis, in turn, are deeply divided amongst each other, with many recognizing the settlements as a continued breach of international law. The Palestinian trauma of 1948, reverberating for many Palestinians in 1967, finds a parallel in many young Israelis' psychological turmoil when during their long mandatory military service they find themselves stationed to protect settlements whose existence they do not politically support.



between what appears on the political stage as two sides, recede in the narratives collected in this project. We confront, instead, the expertise of individuals who have experienced the few days of the 1967 war and who have endured 'the situation' since, with the researchers themselves bringing their own experience and historical-political awareness to the project.

This introduction briefly outlines the broader context of the 1967 war, before turning to scholarship on narration and how individuals, in crafting stories, seek to give voice to their experiences. Narration is a fundamental human skill for looking back and moving forward, and it holds particular relevance in overcoming great, even catastrophic events. Stories need to be told as well as heard to have a cathartic or healing effect (Lindahl 2012; Rosenthal 2003), however, not all such experiences find narrative contours, and not all narrators seek to heal. While many projects of scholarly and applied nature have been and continue to be launched to achieve peace and understanding in Israel and Palestine, we cannot expect that our endeavor is more than any other contribution toward that goal. Our project was motivated not least by the realization that 1967 held experiences that many people rarely if ever talked about. To be sure, the broad stroke of events is present in the public sphere, but the personal experiences were sometimes not even told within the family.<sup>11</sup> For some interlocutors, the interviews in the framework of this project turned out to be the first context to formulate personal memories in the shape of a (told) story.

## 1967

Considering the arrival of June 5, 1967, the first day of the war, includes, naturally, both historical and immediate issues. These are recalled and brought to the fore differently, depending on one's position. There is a deep historico-political history background to this short war, including the aftermath of colonial powers' poor judgment of local histories and cultural-religious diversities. The Middle East has primary status for poorly formulated decrees and all too quickly made decisions: it combines problematic and short-sighted actions with all potential forms of physical and mental violence and lasting desolation. The region is also the cradle of three of the world's major religions, comprising sites of enormous religious significance to each, some of them shared, many of them not. But this volume's focus is on 1967, and in the following, we describe the different perspectives on the lead-up to the war and the events unfolding within it, first from an Israeli and a Palestinian perspective. It is these generalized perspectives which already point to the different trajectories of retrospection, of relevant dates, sites and nomenclature that inform horizons of remembering.

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<sup>11</sup> A dynamic of building silences around conflict, from the familial to the societal, seemed to set in over the first years, as has been researched for other conflicts (e.g. Hrobat Virloget and Škrbić Alemi-jević 2021; Kidron 2009; Robben 1996; Savolainen 2017; Seljama and Siim 2016).

*For Israelis*, the sequence of events that led to the war commenced on May 15, 1967, Israel's 19th Independence Day, with news received by Israel Intelligence regarding the influx of Egyptian forces crossing the Suez Canal into the Sinai Peninsula. This was considered a threatening breach of the silent consent reached between the two countries following ceasefire agreements after the Sinai war of 1956 regarding the demilitarization of this region. During the months prior to this influx, tension between Israel and Syria over the control of the Jordan River's water sources increased. The president of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser, considered to be the leader of the Pan-Arabian Arab League, claimed that the League was preparing for a confrontation of all Arab people with Israel. Egypt seems to have understood that its moves would induce Israel to prepare to war.

As a result, on May 19, 1967, Israel announced a general mobilization of its reserve forces, thus, increasing the already strained atmosphere. Tensions escalated when on May 23, Gamal Abdel Nasser expelled the UN Peace Corps from the Sinai and announced the closure of the Straits of Tiran, thus, blocking Israel's access through its southern and sole Red Sea harbor. With this move, Nasser stated that his country was ready for a confrontation with Israel. In the following days, a secret military cooperation agreement was also signed between Syria, Jordan and Egypt.

Israelis call the three weeks from mid-May to June 5, 1967, the "waiting period." It was a tense time, loaded with a sense of existential threat, anxiety regarding the fate of the State of Israel, including the fear of its total destruction.<sup>12</sup> As a result, the war was understood by most Israelis as a "war of no choice" (Segev 2006).

On June 5, about ten days after the conscription was completed, the Israeli Air Force launched a surprise air strike on the Egyptian, Syrian, Jordanian and Iraqi Air Forces and Armored Forces, and then the Israeli Defense Forces conquered the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip. As soon as the Kingdom of Jordan joined the war, all territory west of the Jordan River was captured, including east Jerusalem, and the Old City, including the 'Temple Mount' and the 'Western Wall,' as these sites are called by Israelis. In the last days of the war, Israel also conquered the 'Syrian heights,' to gain security for the Israeli settlements that were under continuous shooting and shell bombing by Syrian forces. Thus, within only six days, Israel had tripled its territory, inflicted utmost damage on its enemies' immediate military capability, while suffering a relatively low number of casualties and losses. This decisive and fast victory positioned Israel as a significant force in the region.

The sharp transition from fear of extermination to a phenomenal military victory engendered in the Israeli public mood what is often described as extreme euphoria. The transition of Israel from its limited 1949 ceasefire borders to the control of the territories gained during the war was perceived by many Israelis and beyond as a

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<sup>12</sup> This is the commonly accepted narrative, and indeed also appeared in many of the personal stories we heard. For a recent study on the morale of the Israeli public during this period as reflected in real time polls, see Heilbronner (2019).

‘return’ to the Biblical ‘Promised Land.’ More than 50 years later, it is obvious that the lives of all inhabitants – Israelis and Palestinian alike – have altered dramatically.

For Palestinians, June 1967 is the beginning of the third Arab-Israeli war, at the end of which Israel occupied the Sinai, the Syrian Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.<sup>13</sup> What Israelis call the Six-Day War became known in the Arab world as *Naksa*, the “setback”; for many Arabs, especially Palestinians, it is *Hazima* (“defeat”). Many Palestinians, following the PLO Chairman Ahmad al-Shuqairi, called it “the Arab states’ betrayal” of the Palestinian cause.

In 1963, Israel decided to divert the path of the Jordan River. Little in the regional political climate pointed to another war on the horizon. Water is a crucial resource and a reaction was to be expected. The Arab Summit in Cairo in January 1964 announced plans to divert the headwaters of the Jordan, establish a unified Arab military command, and establish a Palestinian political entity. In the spring of 1967, tensions escalated. Syria had continued to offer support to Palestinian militants and had signed a mutual defense pact with Egypt in November 1966. Israel now threatened to launch a wide-scale attack on Syria. On April 7, 1967, Israel made good on its threats, launching attacks on Syrian border areas while Israeli aircraft clashed with Syria’s over Damascus, destroying several jet fighters.

Faced with the growing possibility of a full-scale Israeli assault on Syria, and especially after having received information from the Soviet Union on May 13, 1967, that Israel had amassed significant forces along the Syrian border, the Egyptian government announced on May 15 that it was placing its armed forces on alert. On the same day, Egypt requested that the UN Emergency Force – established following the 1956 war – withdraw from Sharm al-Shaykh (a city located on the southern tip of the Sinai) and Gaza. On May 22, Egypt’s government announced that the Straits of Tiran (at the Gulf of Aqaba’s entrance to the Red Sea) would be closed to Israeli shipping. The Palestinian populations were appraised of this escalation through newspaper and radio coverage. Particularly the broadcasts of Egypt’s president Gamal Abdel Nasser created an atmosphere of hope, even euphoria: soon the lands lost in 1948 would be recovered thanks to the support of the Arab League. Jordan joined the mutual defense treaty between Egypt and Syria on May 30. On the morning of June 5, 1967, Israel launched a surprise attack on Egyptian airfields that lasted more than two hours, during which it nearly completely destroyed Egypt’s air force and damaged Egyptian runways. Battles in the West Bank led to a widespread displacement of the population there, especially from Palestinian refugee camps in the Jordan Valley. Palestinians in the Gaza Strip attempted to flee toward the West

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<sup>13</sup> Co-PI Aziz Haidar has selected the following excerpt from the webpage “Palestinian Journeys” <https://www.paljourneys.org/en/timeline/highlight/163/june-1967-war> (accessed January 11, 2022) with a few changes in the wording and a few deletions and additions. The segment offers the Palestinian perspective on the years and months leading up to 1967. The homepage overall contains detailed information on the history of Palestinians, put together by the Institute for Palestinian Studies as part of a joint project with the Palestinian Museum.

Bank and from there to Jordan, while in the Golan Heights, Israeli forces expelled the majority of the Syrian residents.

The Arab summit issued the famous “Khartoum Statement,” which affirmed the determination of the Arab states to act collectively to secure the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Arab territories occupied after June 5, 1967, “within the framework of the main principles by which the Arab States abide, namely, no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it, and insistence on the rights of the Palestinian people in their own country.”<sup>14</sup>

On November 22, 1967, after five months of deliberations, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 242. Proposed by Britain’s representative, it stressed the necessity of Israeli withdrawal from the Arab territories it had occupied during the war in exchange for an end to the state of hostility; recognition of the right of all countries in the region to live in peace within secure borders; freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aqaba; and a just resolution to the refugee problem.

The June 1967 war had provided Israel with an opportunity to realize its goals of regional expansion. The Zionist leadership had never regarded the borders that emerged after the 1948 as permanent and hoped to reassert its claims over what had slipped away in 1956. Moving quickly to reap the fruits of victory, Israel annexed East Jerusalem and began, in the early days of its occupation, to establish Jewish settlements there and in the Golan Heights. This setback/defeat came on both a Palestinian level, as the remainder of the lands of historic Palestine came under Israeli military rule, and on a regional level, as territories of three Arab states were now occupied and the lofty aspirations of Arab unity seemed more distant than ever.

The failure to resolve and end the occupation of Palestinian lands, coupled with the relentless building of ever more settlements weighs heavily not only on the public sphere; it weighs heavily on the interviewees within our project – those who ‘lost’ as much as those who ‘won.’ Israelis had been both anxious and emboldened in 1967 by Egyptian broadcasts that announced Israelis would be driven into the sea and turned into food for the fish. Conversely, Palestinians had been filled with hope by the vigor and charisma of Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser and his promise of an alliance of Arab states coming to rectify their territorial losses of ’48. Many Palestinians, within Israel, the West Bank, Gaza and the Palestinian global diaspora, remain hurt and incensed, trying to understand how the promise of Nasserism could have dissipated so quickly. They struggle against the enduring occupation, its associated acts of dispossession, loss of land and violence, and the seemingly eternal impasse to reach a two-state solution, or to reach any solution.

1967 was a small window where human rapprochement seemed, to some, possible, and where that possibility could have been built on to make it feasible for

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<sup>14</sup> Cited after the text of the Khartoum Resolution, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khartoum\\_Resolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khartoum_Resolution) (accessed January 18, 2022); Meital (2000) offers a reassessment regarding the “three nos” for which the resolution was famous.

many. It was a time of uncertainty, with Israel not just winning the war but climbing out of a pressing economic recession that had led many Israelis to abandon the 'Promised Land.' During its short existence as a state, Israel had up until 1967 only begun to address its diverse cultural identities and personal tragedies that were struggling to build a new life. Palestinians emerged from the Jordanian protectorate that had lasted from 1948 onward. Not everyone had savored it, particularly as it also left Palestinians largely as unarmed witnesses to military confrontation, unable to act for themselves. With Israel taking over the occupation of the Palestinian terrain in 1967, Palestinians witnessed the amenities and opportunities of the highly modern Israel, within which many found opportunities to work, while others faced increased obstacles to pursue their way of life. Palestinians who had remained in Israel after 1948, Arab-Israelis, experienced and possibly also expressed the deepening ambiguity vis-à-vis their West Bank and Gaza neighbors in ethnicity, loyalty and/or faith. This split is an enduring issue of Palestinian cohesion and it hardened throughout the occupation, as has been explored by anthropologist Amal Bishara (2013, 2015, 2016). Arab Christians, finally, in- and outside of Israel proper and dwindling in numbers, had to readjust their comportment and hold a position ranging from mediator to extreme outsider.

The Israeli–Palestinian conflict, therefore, did not start in 1967. However, the 1967 war constituted a major 'game changer' and a focal concern in any future resolution. Although they do not parallel the UN partition lines of 1947, the '67 lines' – those that preceded the 1967 war – became a basic point of departure for the discussion of the future partition of the area west of the Jordan River. Their centrality is a concrete manifestation of the status of the 1967 war in the interactive discourses projecting the future of relationships between Israelis and Palestinians (and their other neighbors), evident in research on subsequent accommodations and altercations along these lines (Bowman 2004; Segev 2006). Like many other concepts formed by political realities in this area, the diversity of the historical experience takes form even in the names given to events by different groups: the War of 67, *Al-Naksah* or the *Naksa* (the setback), and the Six-Day War.

The residents of the region were thrown into an immediate neighboring relationship without any respite to process the events, and the ensuing years of interaction were tragically marked by the rawness of the confrontation in the context of the Israeli control – or occupation – of Palestinian lands and their inhabitants. It is the accumulated memory work of more than five decades performed by both societies, separately as well as in mutual communication, that we sought to study. There has been research done on the impact of experiences of violence and suffering in the region.<sup>15</sup> Our project built primarily on the potentials of narrative research, augmented by memory scholarship.

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<sup>15</sup> E.g. Brunner (2014), Kanaana (1976), Peteet (1994, 1996), Pitcher (1998).

## Narrative in Times and Zones of Conflict

Humans endow their lived reality with meaning and establish their world view by constructing narratives; hence, such narratives are at the heart of the project. Fields of research that specialize in everyday life experiences, practices and related perceptions contribute alternative and additional perspectives on this conflict (e.g. Becker 2017; Hercbergs 2018). While too often ignored, they are capable of differentiating what appears like two hardened fronts into variegated realms of complex and, at times, interwoven experiences and memories. The project reflected in this volume focused, therefore, on stories: the tales told by both Palestinians and Israelis relating to the separate experiences, encounters and interactions between the two peoples – made up in actuality of multiple, intersecting groups.<sup>16</sup> With the 1967 war as the focal point in our project, we investigated how personal stories are interlaced with accounts of events defined by ‘big politics,’ such as the months before that war, the war itself and its immediate impact, as well as the unfolding of joint and separate lives in the ensuing decades.<sup>17</sup>

The pivotal role of narration in human existence and social relationships has long been established and repeatedly summarized.<sup>18</sup> Stories do not only come in the complex generic forms privileged by the majority of narrative research; everyday narratives often structure inchoate experience and serve multiple needs in familial and neighborly relationships as well as in conceptualizing personal biography and communal history.<sup>19</sup> Our work was inspired particularly by studies from the extensive body on narrative research that have focused on the intertwining of narrative and conflict. As a background, extant collections and analysis of Israeli and Palestinian folk narratives provide an insight into salient motifs and storytelling characteristics.<sup>20</sup> Literary and documentary works also add compelling framing to the work presented here.<sup>21</sup> But the everyday stories central to this project needed to be elicited predominantly in narrative interviews with strong biographical components; many had never been fully voiced.

The capacity of narrative to firm up and support individual and sociocultural identity has been a repeated focus of scholarly congresses (e.g., ISFNR 1995; Jacobson-Widding 1983; Voigt 1995), a factor crucial for identity discussion in lives and places studied in our project (cf. Robert, Schlicht and Saleem 2010). Yet, such identity work is easily instrumentalized for goals exceeding individual life and agency. Narrative contributes to conflict through its capacity to gather salient, traditional tropes, rhetorically sharpening positions and inciting aggression, as has been shown

<sup>16</sup> Clarke (2000), Haidar (1988), Kailani (2007), Qleibo (1992), Slyomovics (1998).

<sup>17</sup> Flug and Schäuble (2007), Gur (2002), Harms and Ferry (2012), Stein (2008a, 2008b).

<sup>18</sup> E.g. Bendix (1996), Dundes (1971), Hymes (1975b), Niles (2010), Scheub (1998).

<sup>19</sup> Bausinger (1958), Byng-Hall (1990), Lehmann (1983), Stahl (1989), White (1998).

<sup>20</sup> E.g. Bar-Yitzhak (2005), Ben-Amos (2006, 2007, 2011), Kanaana and Muhawi (1989), Noy and Ben-Amos (1963), Yassif (1999).

<sup>21</sup> E.g. Amiry (2014), Barzilai (2002), Briggs (1988), Lousky (2015), Makdisi (2008), Roberts (2013), Shapira (1970).

in work on the confluence of folklore and nation building, as well as ethnonationalism.<sup>22</sup> Narrative, however, is also essential for coping with conflict and trauma in personal and professional lives (Ancelet, Gaudet and Lindahl 2013; Norkunas 2004; Tangherlini 1998) as well as trauma inflicted by conflict and its aftermath, such as rains of terror (Robben 2005, 2018), and refugee and asylum situations.<sup>23</sup> In this capacity, as Didier Fassin has shown, trauma testimony, including who is permitted to testify and where, is also subject to instrumentalizing turns (2008; cf. also Briggs 2005).

It is, therefore, not surprising that anthropologist Michael Jackson endeavored to theorize a politics of storytelling that is built particularly on stories of broken life journeys, victims of violence and war, and refugees whose need to “be part of some kindred community” is “violently sundered” (2006: 33–34). He asked, “what power storytelling has [...] to help mend broken lives” (ibid.). In a time when traditional cultural expressions, such as bodies of narrative, have become potential elements of intangible heritage – a regime of cultural politics that emphasizes (national and/or ethnic) difference over shared humanity (cf. Herzfeld 2005) – it is particularly relevant to document and examine stories in the dynamic flow of lives lived, as once called for by Dell Hymes (1975b), and rearticulated and adjusted to a time that is keen on the vernacular yet inept to handle it with care (Goldstein 2015).

Narrative, furthermore, is a favored medium for transporting or even learning how to verbalize memory. With our project, we hoped to facilitate what Dell Hymes called a breakthrough into performance (1975a). Drawing on the analytic repertoire of narrative performance studies (Bauman 1984, 2004; Kapchan 1995), bringing together the politics of storytelling with the work of memory requires attention to the dangers inherent to speech and to the act of evoking it (Brenneis and Meyers 1984). Memory is an individual, private experience, while also being part of a collective domain. Two schools of thought have emerged regarding the role of memory: one articulates that the present shapes our understanding of the past,<sup>24</sup> and the other assumes that the past has an influence on our present behavior.<sup>25</sup> Gadi Algazi in his introduction to a special issue of *History and Memory* dedicated to the Palestinian memory, powerfully expresses the need to “move discussions of memory from monumental and official representations of the past to the manifold ways it intrudes into everyday life, to its lay users, humble bearers, and their ways of coming to terms with history and its scars” (2006). Such a turn away from the official to the everyday remembrance for the millions of individuals of all walks of life living in the embattled territory of Israel/Palestine, might, at the very least, contribute to the visibility of individual and familial experience next to the monumental.

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<sup>22</sup> E.g. Bhabha (1990), Bausinger (1965), Bowman (2003), Gingrich and Banks (2007), Hosking (1996), Kaschuba (2012), Stagl (1999), Wilson (1976).

<sup>23</sup> E.g. Blommaert (2010), Shemak (2013), Shuman and Bohner (2012), Westerman (1998).

<sup>24</sup> Assmann (1992), Hercbergs (2018), Kansteiner (2002), Swedenburg (2003).

<sup>25</sup> Schudson (1989), Schwartz (1991); cf. Collins (2004), Erl (2011).

The project was devoted to very different ‘memory cultures,’ all the while aspiring to find moments of opening and intertwining. Jewish culture, shaped in a long-term diaspora, has incorporated ‘memory’ in its daily routine,<sup>26</sup> while Palestinian society has had its own traditional ways of memorizing. Today, mainly as a result of recent displacements, it is finding new ways to work with memory.<sup>27</sup> However, we can also detect that the two memory cultures are influencing each other, so that the patterns of processing memory and commemoration become increasingly intertwined.<sup>28</sup> This body of research formed a backdrop to understand the materials collected in each community better, but our cooperative endeavor aimed to reach a stage where hitherto unacknowledged threads of mutual influence and memory-building might be identified. Some previous studies in comparable situations provided guidance and direction for our project, though each situation and each location have their own unique contextualization.

## Researching and Interviewing across Different Dispositions

The project’s trilateral configuration owes its existence to the German Research Foundation’s initiative to award funds to projects crossing the political and historical divide between Israeli and Palestinian scholars, with scholars working in Germany as participants, mediators and go-betweens. Bridging the political and social rifts between participants is not always easy, even for projects in the natural sciences and medicine.<sup>29</sup> Regarding a project addressing one of the major points of origin for the lasting tensions between Palestinians and Israelis, recruiting junior scholars to participate in the research on 1967 and after made for a variety of foreseeable and unforeseeable hurdles and occasional unsurmountable walls. A Palestinian scholar participating in such an arrangement already constitutes a major problem, eased in our case due to Aziz Haidar’s affiliation not only with the Palestinian Al-Quds University but also with the Truman Institute at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which is specifically dedicated to the advancement of peace. Hagar Salamon is also affiliated with this institute, thus, a good and somewhat neutral site for anchoring the project was found. Recruiting Palestinian students to engage with the research was far more difficult than waking the interest of young Israelis, though among them, too, there were occasional reservations. Bendix, though specialized in narrative research and familiar with the complexities of interdisciplinary arrangements, was herself new to the intricacies of this Middle Eastern conflict. Tasked, in part, to accompany the

<sup>26</sup> Azaryahu (1995), Myers and Funkenstein (1992), Yerushalmi (1982), Zerubavel (1994, 1995).

<sup>27</sup> Ben-Ze’ev (2011), Feldman (2006), Furani and Rabinowitz (2011), Jean-Klein (2000), Litvak (1994), Swedenburg (1991).

<sup>28</sup> Allen (2006, 2009), Hasan-Rokem (2003), Katriel (1994), Salamon (2016), Stein (2008b).

<sup>29</sup> Regina F. Bendix’s part project in the present venture was specifically designed to investigate the workings of such endeavors geared both toward basic scholarship and peacemaking. Interviews she conducted with participants in this project as well as with principle investigators and participants in other projects funded through this scheme were analyzed in Herhaus’ master thesis of 2020.



research process, she stumbled into numerous unexamined dispositions that, due to her questioning, led to discomfort.<sup>30</sup> There was the young Israeli who was incensed when Bendix argued that Irgun, a Zionist paramilitary organization active until 1948, appeared to have used the same methods as the PLO and other Palestinian paramilitary groups. The young woman's great-grandfather, whom she admired, had been active in Irgun, and being encouraged to see parallels in terrorist aggression seeking the establishment of a state seemed to be at least one reason for her to exit the project. There were some Israeli students who saw themselves as activists on behalf of Palestinian villagers or, at the very least, as strong supporters for Palestinian rights, but who acknowledged their everyday fears of becoming potential victims of Palestinian suicide bombers. Numerous Palestinian students contemplated joining the team but withdrew again because they could not fathom how to explain both to their relations and potential interviewees that they were working in a joint project with Israelis. An Israeli student was invited to interview two older relations of one of his Palestinian friends; he was bombarded during the first part of the interview with sharp questions on what he had ever done for Palestinians and why they should share their remembrances with him. But another young Israeli woman found the project to be a most welcome opportunity to overcome the burden of her past military service. Herself a gifted sniper, she had trained others in this deadly skill, until she broke with this part of her biography and joined Neve Shalom – Wahat Al-Salam (lit. Oasis of Peace), a village practicing Jewish-Muslim coexistence. In the project, she hoped to deepen her sensibility for differential experiences of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A young Palestinian woman, in turn, stayed with the project for nearly a year, as she regarded it as an intellectual opportunity to broaden her sociopolitical engagement in Palestinian women's groups and an organization for the protection of depopulated Palestinian villages.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The following examples are drawn from Bendix's field diary, kept between 2016 and 2021, and interviews with project participants.

<sup>31</sup> Peace studies have generated a considerable body of both theoretical and applied scholarship for joint work between members of conflict parties (among others Galtung 1989, 1996; Webel and Galtung 2009) and sharing opposing stories is an intrinsic component of peace education (Bekerman 2012). Hence, narrating "1967 and after" is accompanied by stories of separate and joint research experiences. In situations of conflict, international relations opt for observation and diplomacy, and especially the latter emphasizes deceleration (Bendix 2013). The trilateral grant arrangement brought with it the task of cooperating in research, exchanging insights and working toward joint results. The project design took this into consideration from the beginning and developed a meta-research angle that would accompany the team from the beginning, with Bendix, as the 'foreign' participant within the team, chronicling conversations with changing team members over the course of the project and keeping fieldnotes of both productive moments and long stretches of stagnation. Regarding research on interdisciplinarity, see Strathern (2004); furthermore, Etienne Wenger's concept "community of practice" (1998) is often applied for such research settings. Wenger's concept denotes how actors representing different spheres of training find ways of working with one another. In our case, with its precarious sociopolitical location and limited possibilities to work in close proximity, the opportunities of thinking and writing together were sparse.

Similarly, requests to engage in conversations about the War of 1967 engendered different reactions among potential interviewees. For many Palestinians, it meant overcoming considerable hesitations. Ronni Shaked, in this volume, summarizes his Palestinian interlocutor's initial resistance to the undertaking as follows: "His fear was twofold: Israelis might retaliate for the things he would say, and members of Palestinian society might perceive the interview as an act of treason and cooperation with the Jews." Nonetheless, this Palestinian eventually relayed his family's 1967 (and 1948) experiences, against the advice of his wife and extended family. There were some Palestinians both within Israel and the Palestinian territories who agreed to speak to Salamon, Shaked or even Bendix, though reaching across class and territorial borders was hard. Haidar, himself trained more in theoretical and quantitative sociology, ultimately felt it better to task a Palestinian NGO with carrying out the interviews. Given the all too understandable concerns and fears among Palestinians and the difficulty to reach out also to women, this approach avoided the overt connection with university researchers and embedded these interviews with general Palestinian interests to collect oral history. Given the lack of qualitative interview training on the part of the NGO staff, the interviews were generally shorter.

The enormous shadow of 1948, the *Nakba*, the catastrophe, appears in almost the entire Palestinian interview corpus; this event casts an insurmountable shadow on subsequent individual and collective remembrance even among interviewees born after 1948. Many Palestinians have lived at this point for several generations in refugee camps in surrounding states. Many who have made a new home for themselves outside Israeli territory in the West Bank, or who migrated abroad all over the world continue to yearn for their lost land and house. The keys to houses that no longer exist or that were taken over by Israeli settlers is the central symbol of this loss, mentioned in many Palestinian interviews, and prominently present in Palestinian museums and public art, for example, in Ramallah. On the background of this experience of loss, 1967 pales in the collective memory, it was, as *Naksa* translates, a setback in comparison to the *Nakba* that the founding of Israel entailed. There had been a nearly euphoric hope that the Arab League would destroy Israel in 1967, and this hope turned, initially, into overwhelming fear that Palestinians would suffer as they did in 1948. The suffering was, however, but limited, and for a number of Palestinian interviewees, 1967 initially held some, however restrained, hope that their lives might improve with the end of the Jordanian rule. However, at the time of the interviews, the Israeli occupation of Palestinian terrain had lasted five decades, with more and more Israeli settlements encroaching on the land. Though many Palestinian livelihoods have improved economically, there is a nostalgia for simple agrarian lives with close-by familial networks running through these interviews. While there were Palestinian interviewees in positions of authority who held up a flame for a better political future, and assessed the economic achievements of their village or even their people, there were others without hope, such as a shoemaker in Jerusalem's Old City. He showed the interviewers the different kinds of identity cards and a few bills of currency he still had from the Jordanian mandate time and then the

Israeli occupation, regarding the collection as traces of what kind of fate he had clearly been meant to endure. A tailor, interviewed in his small shop in the Old City, pointed to a fading photograph on the wall showing his family's land. He broke out in tears as he described his son's plans to leave for a better future away from Palestine; his family, more precious still than land, would be dispersed.<sup>32</sup>

Many Israelis, by contrast, reacted enthusiastically to the proposition to talk about 1967. Even before the funding was granted, Hagar Salamon undertook initial interviews and she continued with vigor throughout the project. Starting with individuals suggested by acquaintances, the range of interviewees grew quickly. Advanced students participated, with some of them choosing to select aspects of the materials as focal points for their MA or PhD dissertations. Some Israeli interviewees had come to Israel before 1948, many had arrived after the founding of the state in that year. While the specter of the Holocaust and subsequent experiences of anti-semitic persecution in many parts of the world remain present in many of the interviewees' biographies, they spoke from within the framework of the founding of Israel as a state for Jews, believing and secular alike. The will to uphold the certainty of a home state – in contrast to the loss of precisely that certainty for Palestinians – also contributed to the way in which the Six-Day War was remembered in many interviews. At the end of 1966, Israel's population was 2,629,000,<sup>33</sup> the country was in a deep recession and, as some interviewees remember, there were sizable numbers of Israelis who had left the young state. Without exception, Jewish Israelis recalled the enormous turning point that this brief war constituted for the state. Fear and euphoria would seem to always have been coupled in war, but while the brief Palestinian prewar euphoria made way for fear and lasting uncertainty, Israeli fear, coupled with the determination to hold on to this land wrested for the Jewish people, made way for exuberance and euphoria. Through the many subsequent wars and confrontations, 1967 confirmed the viability of the young state and boosted confidence. In hindsight, a good number of interviewees felt that the chances for peaceful coexistence with Palestinians had been wasted, that the occupied territory should have been returned and made way for a two-state or even a one-state solution. But it is the initial joy of victory and the sudden opening of sites – many of them holy to the Jewish faith – and lands that had been inaccessible that is dominant in the recollections of the post Six-Day War weeks and months. If Palestinian interviewees invariably invoked the double trauma of *Nakba* and *Naksa*, Israeli interviews show that great individuality in 1967 was recalled, with differing social, political and religious emphases being foregrounded.

The project sought to invite interviewees to narrate their personal truth about 1967 and after. Different interview settings much as different personal dispositions of interviewees and interviewers alike may not have made it equally possible to

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<sup>32</sup> The shoemaker was interviewed by Salamon, Shaked and Bendix in February 2017 in Jerusalem; the tailor by Salamon and Bendix, also in Jerusalem, in February 2019.

<sup>33</sup> At the time of this writing, the population is 9,450,000.

verbalize such a truth in all the shades that individual memory acquires in the course of five decades. Yet, the conversations recorded have yielded rich material. They may not – and cannot – form a pleasing, uniform tapestry, as there are differences, divides and in some cases, deep chasms between individuals and groups in the terrain as it has unfolded since 1967.

## **The Chapters and Interviews Assembled in this Volume**

The authors coming together in this volume in presenting and analyzing personal narratives of 1967 bring with them their disciplinary specializations, stages in professional development, and, unavoidably, their own relationship to the complexity of the terrain and its peoples. Correspondingly, we have allowed for the personal voice and particularities of approach to shine through the writing. Numerous individuals who participated in aspects of the project did not write, others joined specifically to elaborate sets of interviews into a contribution. Each contributor's point of departure is, thus, different and readers will indulge in this doubling of voices – those of chapter authors working with the voices recalling and bearing witness to 1967 and after. In the following, the contributions are briefly outlined and the logic of their sequence explained. There is no uniformity of remembrance within the Israeli and the Palestinian stories respectively, but the chapters illustrate the weight inherent in these contrasting experiences in individual lives and in shaping the everyday atmosphere among populations living adjacent to one another.

Interspersed among the analytic chapters are a total of eight interviews, with four drawn from the Palestinian sample and four from the Israeli one. It is not factuality that we strive for by including these transcriptions which stay close to the spoken word. Next to blow-by-blow accounts and key anecdotes, the voices represented here also make claims and report hearsay that have firmed up as truths within memory. It is the personal veracity of the 1967 and after experience that interviewers sought to elicit, and that captures some of the atmosphere of those six (or fewer) days and the ensuing weeks and months. Together with the chapters offering perspectives on different aspects of 1967 as represented in the empirical materials, the interviews are meant to strengthen the recognition of the manifold personal experiences and biographical impact of this crucial war for Israel and Palestine, and with them, for the entire region.

The sequence of contributions will now be briefly outlined.

The volume opens with Hagar Salamon's analysis of Israelis recalling the 'liberation' of the Western Wall (known also as the Wailing Wall). This holiest site of Judaism had been inaccessible to believers for nineteen years because the Old City of Jerusalem was part of the territory controlled by Jordan after the 1948 war's ceasefire. Salamon analyzes Jewish interviewees' recollections of their first visit to this site in the days and weeks after the Six-Day War. Their stories are accompanied by historical photographs illustrating the changing access and appearance of the Western

Wall. Individuals remember these moments differently, and the visit and the site are not exclusively positive for all of them, but the centrality of this monumental wall, considered a remnant of the destroyed Second Temple, in the Jewish faith is unmistakable. Israel did not just open passages for Israelis to enter into Jerusalem's Old City, it also bulldozed a complex of houses so as to enlarge the access to the Western Wall. Salamon's article is followed by an interview with A.M., a Palestinian, born in Jerusalem's Old City, whose family had to leave their house in what is today the Jewish Quarter. His memories of the war of 1967, prominently including what he experienced as a desecration of *Haram esh-Sharif* and the *Al-Aqsa* Compound (the Muslim names for what is the Temple Mount to Jews), wistfully span events and rumors as he has recalled and shared them in his lifelong work serving all religious communities in the city.

Ronni Shaked concentrates on the narrative of one Palestinian interviewee who, over several hours, generously and even humorously laid open his family's losses and dispersal since 1948. In presenting Muhammad Naji's experiences, Shaked brings to the fore what is present in almost all the papers concentrating on Palestinian narratives in the volume: the drama unfolding for Muhammad Naji in losing the family home in Imwas in 1967 was overshadowed by the expulsion from their home in Abu Ghosh in 1948. Although family members were, after long separation, reunited in Abu Ghosh, the destruction of Imwas and its transformation into a park turned into a further source of trauma and anger. This singular case exemplifies what many Palestinians born before 1948 bring to their perception of 1967: Less than two decades after the catastrophic experience of 1948, the renewed loss of homes, land and familial proximity showed most of all continuity in the plight of one's people. The shadow of the Nakba is, as the later chapters by Abed, Abumaizar and Awad show, omnipresent in Palestinian accounts of the 1967 War, though it gives rise to different kinds of agency and interpretation.

The interview of C.A., an Israeli born to Yemeni-Jewish parents, presents another view of the 1967 experience. C.A.'s mother spoke little Hebrew but fluent Arabic and blossomed personally and linguistically with the suddenly open exchange with Palestinians after the war. C.A. and her sisters embraced Palestinian clothes and dresses, wearing them not simply for their oriental and colorful beauty – as did many other Israeli women after 1967 – but also embracing their mother's origins.

Aziz Haidar interprets a Palestinian woman's story of a house on the border, built by her family and threatened with destruction by the Israeli army during the 1967 War. A deal was struck to leave the house standing, with the Israeli commander and his family seizing it for themselves. Haidar shows the ways in which the Palestinian family eventually takes possession again of their house in a painstaking struggle stretching out over decades and involving official, neighborly and familial twists and turns.

S.E. was interviewed as a representative of a national-religious group of Israelis. In her narrative, the Six-Day War turns into an event preceded by prophetic events and bringing forth opportunities to strengthen the faithful's hold on ancient Biblical

sites and pave the way toward the advent of the fabled Third Temple. She refers to a number of equally faithful Jewish men who served in the Israeli army during the Six-Day War who are at the center of Yiftah Levin's chapter. His interviewees recall how the keys to holy Jewish sites were "returned" to them at the height of the war. These narratives are all the more astounding as they feature Palestinians returning keys to Jews, thus, grabbing the iconic power of keys – so central to Palestinians who lost their homes in 1948 – and featuring Palestinians relieved to be able to return those massive keys to shrines and gates to their rightful Jewish owners. Levin interprets the interviewees' recollections in terms of the genre of the fantastic, as well as the structure of hero tales. Witnessed in this vein, the events fulfilled the ancient desire that was embodied within the representative sites. The Palestinian provided the Jewish narrators with the key, and by this, for them, the control of the site, opening a new era for both sides involved in the key's encounter.

The corpus of Palestinian interviews assembled during the project contains a sizable number of recollections by women. Salwa Alinat Abed's analysis pays particular attention to what elements women foreground in their narrations, and urges for greater recognition of women's strength and circumspection in holding together their family's needs during the long stretches of uncertainty not only in 1967 but also in the flight after 1948 and, for many, the decades of refugee life in between and since. She rightly points out how particularly the memories of uneducated, rural women has not entered official Palestinian memory construction, and while their recollections may not represent a strong deviation, the gender and class-based experiential difference enriches the emerging Palestinian national narrative. Abed's chapter is followed by the interview with B.L., an Israeli woman who immigrated newly married to Israel from the USA in 1947 and lived through the war of Independence and the Six-Day War. University educated and with strong ties to the Israeli Defense Forces, her recollections of June 1967 are, nonetheless, also dominated by a family event: She managed to arrange for guests and catering for her son's *bar mitzvah*, even though it took place during the two days leading up to the war's beginning. A.M., in turn, is a quite well-to-do Palestinian who lived through the war as a boy and returned to Ramallah after the family had initially fled to Jordan. Rather than women and children's flight to caves featuring prominently in many rural Palestinian recollections, A.M. recalls the flight by car, and waiting for an opportune time to return to make sure that his family's home and business would remain intact.

For Israelis, the short Six-Day War resulted correspondingly in relatively few casualties. But for those who did lose a loved one, grief in Israel's general atmosphere of victory was, as Bosmat Iby Hardy's chapter illustrates, debilitating precisely due to its muted expression. In contrast to the majority of the Israeli population, these women mourned a husband, son or brother, and found themselves alone and deeply alienated by their grief. The surrounding society celebrated the unexpectedly quick resolution and sweeping victory, while these bereaved were confronted by a huge loss, compounded by the fact that the bodies of these soldiers, given the war circumstances, had been buried without their presence. The difficulty to reach ritual

closure is evident in the ways in which these women's mourning continues, both in memory and in – sometimes hidden – private shrines for their lost ones.

The memory of 1948 leads to different decision-making in Sreen Abumeizer's analysis of eight Palestinian interviews from East Jerusalem and Jordan. The specter of massacres suffered in villages such as Deir Yassin in 1948 generated so much fear for some Palestinians confronted with the imminent loss of the Arab forces to Israel in 1967 that flight appeared to be the best course of action. For others, the post 1948 refugee experience was so alienating that staying in one's home was of paramount importance, no matter the cost. Ward Awad, in his literary analysis of interview passages, deepens this decision-making process among 1948 Palestinians. Awad recognized a constant recollection and intertwining of land and loss, and the deep imprint left by 1948, the *Nakba*, in Palestinian narrators in the interviews he analyzed. Homes, villages and lands lost and the transformation of land-bound identities into those of refugees dictated for many how they experienced and acted in 1967. He draws on the psychology of identity formation, the importance of land and home ownership, the role that the Jewish other plays for Palestinians, and the ways in which this constitutive other differs for Palestinians who experienced neither 1948 nor a state of being refugees. The interview with the Palestinian Z.Z., between the chapters of Abumaizar and Awad, recounts the change that 1967 and the Israeli occupation had on the life plans of a young man. Z.Z., for various reasons and right after the war, decides to learn Hebrew along with a sizable group of other young Palestinians. One of these Palestinian classmates, whose mother was Jewish, became a terrorist. Z.Z. mentions this in passing; we opted to include an Israeli newspaper report on this individual, Kamal Al Nimri, especially as an illustration of the (interpretation of the) impact of mixed Palestinian-Jewish parentage on a young person. The following interview features A.C. who grew up in a Palestinian village directly adjacent to Mount Scopus – today the main campus of Hebrew University and at the time, an outpost of the Israeli Defense Forces within Jordanian mandate territory. A.C.'s detailed recollections of the Jordanian soldiers fight and withdrawal, the entry of the Israelis and how their lack of knowledge about village leadership structures led to the arrest and disappearance of one of his friends remains chilling.

Ronit Hemyan focuses her attention on Jewish father-daughter relationships in Hebron, the largest city in the West Bank. As Hebron is home to the Cave of the Patriarchs, a site holy to all three Abrahamic religion, it is also a site to which many Israelis flocked immediately after the end of the Six-Day War, and Jewish settlers had already forced their way into Hebron by 1968. Since 1997, the Hebron Protocol has placed one sector of the city under Israeli military administration. Hamyan portrays Jewish women of Hebron fathers and their very different filial and ideological stance toward their parentage. She features five individuals who position themselves quite differently vis-à-vis the ways in which Hebron and the grave of the Patriarchs became an immediate place of asserting Israel's victory in the Six-Day War. Her portraits bear witness to the deep divisions within Israeli society, also running

through families, regarding Jewish settlements within Palestinian terrain in general and in Hebron in particular

Her chapter is followed by the interview with the retired Israeli sound engineer A.Y., whose work for the radio also brought him into close proximity to the Israeli leadership during the 1967 war. His memories illustrate the changing thought processes of a passionate individual, growing up before 1948, deeply invested in Israel, yet also deeply regretting that the opportunities for lasting, peaceful arrangements afforded by 1967 were thrown aside.

Rumors are an intrinsic part both of the time leading up to war and the ways in which a war's outcome is contextualized and analyzed in the vernacular. Yuval Plotkin forges together scholarship on rumor and conspiracy with the rumors rampant in the whole corpus of interviews. The media, in this case radio, spurred on misconceptions leading up to and during the war. In hindsight, as Plotkin states, conspiracies and rumors were narrated by interviewees, irrespective of ethnicity or national affiliation, but more profusely so by the losing side as they provide "explanations for the current reality and afford a sense of control through narrative logic." Thus, the conspiracy stories allow Nasser's esteem to be maintained intact and blame his advisor for the kind of treason that could not but derail the Arab League's victory. Regina F. Bendix's paper asks to what extent personal narrative is able to attain a sense of closure after a war that remains so deeply consequential in multiply divided populations. While Israeli interviewees have fashioned stories from brief excerpts of this war's experiences, embedding them within ongoing biographical paths, many Palestinian narrators recall fragments of experiences, but circle from 1967 back to 1948, finding themselves to be in an epic that is still unfolding, on the backdrop of an often nostalgically painted rural past and in the midst of a presence that fails to provide safety and certainty.

## A Note on Spellings

Most of the primary materials were recorded in Arabic and Hebrew. Transliterations have also differed depending on who was translating into English.

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# Spatial Metamorphoses: Viewing the Western Wall in Personal Stories

*Hagar Salamon*

## 1 Introduction

Personal stories relating to the past are often rooted in the present and may sustain visions of the future. In the following essay, the concept of vision will be elaborated in both senses: as the concrete praxis of seeing and the conceptual process of creating a wider perception of its cultural and ideological role. More than half a century after the June 1967 war, our research project, focusing on memory and narration, seeks to capture the intermeshing of major political events with highly personal experiences of individuals whose lives were dramatically influenced by these occurrences. Their distinctive voices open a vista to an array of images, ideas and sentiments.

In-depth, open-ended and flexible interviews were conducted mainly with residents of West Jerusalem who have memories of the Six-Day War<sup>1</sup> as adults, adolescents or children. Beyond the individual stories, one can clearly identify recurring moments and locations, as well as terms and idioms used to grasp and communicate them, that are shared by the majority of the interviewees. With this, one finds a powerful confluence of specific ‘moments’ in which history is made tangible and subject to processing by means of individual narratives. The interviewees point to and

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<sup>1</sup> This paper focuses on personal stories of Jewish Israelis. In line with their frame of reference, I will use the Israeli name given to this war. On the debate over the name of the war and the decision to call it the “Six-Day War,” see Segev (2007: 450–451).

interpret events that imprinted themselves in personal and collective experience and set important markers for how the ensuing years and decades would unfold. The study focuses on the unanticipated changing scenery of Jerusalem that emerged repeatedly in their stories, and the continuous, recurring interest in the memories of the first days following the capture of the Old City. Rich in vocabulary and emotional spectrum, these personal stories illuminate the various meanings associated with the events that transpired in the Holy City of Jerusalem, especially the Old City inside the walls. In their stories, people spoke of their confrontation with an unimagined physical, emotional and even spiritual transformation. This unique combination gave rise to the present article.

Most of the stories describe situations and feelings that seem to dwell between dream and reality. The master image dominating the plethora of related expressions is unequivocally the Western Wall. The wealth of examples, with their tendency to mix times and sentiments, required selection and organization that was found to be especially challenging. The interviewees return by means of memory – in many cases, as revealed to us, for the first time – to highly charged emotional events. These events are related through the perspective of more than fifty years of both personal and national life that add complex and variant contexts to the memories. Although, chronologically, the concrete focus is the days immediately following the war, and despite the fact that the salient emphasis of the stories is a formative memory of the interviewees' encounter with the Western Wall, those memories tend to mesh together time, space and, above all, past and present sentiments. This resulting tension is expressed in each of the individual stories as well as in my own difficulty in attempting to interpret the fleeting experiences described. Thus, they proved to be challenging both for the interviewees themselves and for me, as the author, aiming to center this article around an organizing axis. These challenges are reflected in the interview excerpts presented, and will be addressed again in the Discussion section.

Such expressions, always accompanied by overwhelming sentiments, were recalled vividly and tangibly in relation to concrete images, as they continue to be sustained throughout the subsequent passage of time. The Western Wall was an outstanding image within this context. This ancient stone wall, the remains of the Second Jewish Temple and a reminder of its destruction, appears prominently in the personal stories we heard.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Wall's authenticity is validated by tradition as well as archaeological research. It dates from the 2nd century BC, with its upper sections added at later periods. On the story in *Lamentations Rabbah* 1 of the negotiation between Vespasian, about to conquer Jerusalem and destroy the Temple and R. Yohannan b. Zakkai, which resulted in the remaining Western rampart, see Hasan-Rokem (2000: 170, 183–187). Storper-Perez and Goldberg (1994) in their ethnographic study of the Western Wall state that “the Western Wall, with its dense interweaving of religious and national significations, has undoubtedly become the central Israeli shrine since the 1967 war which brought all of Jerusalem under Israeli rule.” (Storper-Perez and Goldberg 1994: 310).

The overriding centrality of this site inspired me to relate to it as the war's *master-image* for Jewish interviewees. Its imposing concreteness became the generator for an outpouring of historical and religious Jewish yearnings,

A pivotal element of this capacity is based on Jewish traditions, which bestow a historical-religious memory to the stone wall itself, charging it with vivid sentiments that mesh Divinity and the Jewish people. This confluence is poetically articulated in the song *The Wall (Ha-Kotel)*, that infuses ancient stones with fervent emotions. Written within hours of the capture of the Old City, still within the days of the war, the now iconic song is a powerful expression of the reciprocity mentioned above, with its refrain: "The Kotel, moss and sadness; the Kotel, lead and blood // There are people with a heart of stone; and there are stones with a human heart. [...]"<sup>3</sup>

A scrutiny of these perceptions provides a potent lens for examining nuances in relation to the war and its consequences. Perceived in diverse terms among groups and individuals, the Gordian knot between this stone wall and the Six-Day War appears repeatedly in the stories, marking it as a loaded object that captures both unity and diversity between groups and individuals regarding the days of the war and its ramifications.

## 2 The Wailing Wall as an Object of Multiple Memories

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem [...]" (Psalms 137: 5)

The Western Wall (in Hebrew: *HaKotel HaMa'aravi* or just *HaKotel*, The Wall) is the limestone wall constituting the western border of Haram esh-Sharif, or the Temple Mount. The Wall is considered to be the single standing surviving remnant – one of the four retaining walls – of the Second Jewish Temple complex originally built by Herod the Great in 516 BC, and destroyed by the Roman Emperor Titus in 70 AD.

The Wall is known also as the "Wailing Wall," due to centuries-long Jewish pilgrimages accompanied by folk customs, such as crying at the Wall, and tearing one's clothes upon arrival in mourning regarding the destruction of the Temple and loss of national sovereignty. Other popular customs are related to its stature as an *axis mundi*, a site of penitence. This included the writing of pleas on the stones which was later adjusted to writing pleas on paper notes, inserting them between the stones and

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<sup>3</sup> For the story of this well-known Israeli song – created by Yossi Gamzu (words) and Dubi Zeltser (lyrics) after getting to the Wall with the paratroopers in the Six-Day War, see the (Hebrew) interview with Gamzu: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjlf4IeH-3g> (accessed June 11, 2020). The refrain, emphasizing human characteristics and emotions embedded in the stones of the Wall, is based on an article entitled "*Mei'achar Kotleinu*" (Behind Our Wall) written by Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah Kook in 1937, evoking God's constant presence at the Western Wall. For Kook's influential thought, see, *inter alia*, Aran (1988, 1997), Bokser (2006) and Ish-Shalom (1993). Also see: <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/16934> (accessed June 11, 2020).

into their cracks.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, in light of the ancient tradition that “the *Shekbinah* has never left the Western Wall,”<sup>5</sup> national dreams for the future were also embedded.<sup>6</sup>

Long considered to be the most sacred site where Jews were permitted to pray until 1948 when it came under Jordanian rule, Jews visited and prayed in the narrow



area next to the Wall, and images of this rather intimate place were well-known throughout the Jewish world.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 1: Wall of the Jews on Friday, 1938. (Lenkin Family Collection of Photography at the University of Pennsylvania Library)

<sup>4</sup> See Storper-Perez and Goldberg (1994) and, recently, Cohen-Hattab and Bar (2018).

<sup>5</sup> Shemot Rabbah 2: 2. *Shekbinah* appears in rabbinic literature (Midrash Tanhuma) to represent the divine presence of God. The Hebrew word means ‘dwelling,’ denoting the presence or setting of God.

<sup>6</sup> The term “Wailing Wall” was used mainly in English beginning in the 19th century. See, for example, Bonar (1866). For Jewish traditions and folktales about the Western Wall, see Hasan-Rokem (2000), Noy (1983) and Vilnay (2003). On Jewish folk-customs related to the Western Wall see Lewinsky (2007) and Storper-Perez and Goldberg (1994).

<sup>7</sup> See Löfgren, Barde and Van Kempen (1930) for the Report of the Commission appointed by His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, with the approval of the Council of the League of Nations, to determine the rights and claims of Moslems and Jews in connection with the Western or Wailing Wall at Jerusalem (UNISPAL doc A/7057-S/8427, February 23, 1968). Jewish attachment to the Wall, rendered with heart-touching pathos that aligns seeing with feeling, glorifies the unity of Jewish longing, and depicts the Wall as a reservoir of tears and sighs, is portrayed by Zalman Shazar, years later appointed the third President of the State of Israel, who visited the Western Wall for the first time in 1911: “You will go down through the narrow alleys of ancient Jerusalem and arrive at the Wall and stand there. Then you will not only see with your eyes but you will also feel with your entire being the single eternity in our past [...] And when your feet enter the courtyard of the Wall, here you feel and experience the re-weaving of your soul into the eternal fabric of 2,000 years [...] Into the space at this remnant of the Wall the sighs from all the ends of the earth and all eras penetrate [...] The Wall does not differentiate between lands and eras. The tears have all flowed from the hearts of one people, they have all come from one source and they will all pray to One.” The English translation appears in Ofer Aderet’s paper, “Prayers, Notes and Controversy: How a Wall Became the Western Wall” (Haaretz, May 14, 2013; <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/premium-how-just-a-wall-became-the-western-wall-1.5242783>; accessed May 25, 2020).



Figure 2: Praying at the Western Wall, The Old City, Jerusalem 1925–1930 (Shoshana Halevi Album, Yad Ben Zvi Collection)

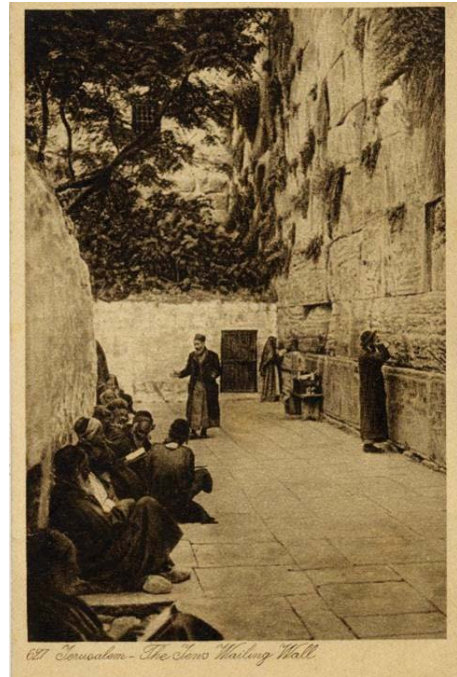


Figure 3. Praying at the Western Wall, The Old City, Jerusalem 1925–1930 (Shoshana Halevi Album, Yad Ben Zvi Collection)



Figure 4: The Western Wall, Kotel Hama'aravi. (Postcard, unknown photographer, Ben-Zion Kahana's Album 1920–1940, Yad Ben Zvi Collection)



Figure 5: Eliyahu Brothers publication, 1900–1920. (Ora Raanan Album, Yad Ben Zvi Collection)

The Wall is also sacred to Islam and known as the Buraq Wall (الْحَائِطُ الْبُرَاقِ, Hā'it al-Burāq), believed to be the site where Prophet Muhammad tied his flying horse, al-Buraq, on his night journey to Jerusalem before ascending to heaven. Before the Six-Day War, the Wall was rooted in a 3.6-meter-wide alley, which bordered the walls of the Mughrabi quarter houses directly. This simple neighborhood, home to descendants of Muslim immigrants from North Africa, sprawled between the Jewish Quarter situated above this neighborhood and the alley in front of the Western Wall. Due to this positioning, there was no perspective that enabled one to take in the entire expanse of the Wall (see Figures 6 and 7).



Figure 6: The Mughrabi neighborhood and Western Wall, 1952. (National Photo Collection)





Figure 7: 1950 (Matson photograph Collection, Library of Congress)

Cease-fire lines following the 1948 War divided Jerusalem between Jordan and Israel, leaving the Western Wall under Jordanian rule. Although Jews were given free worship access to the Western Wall according to the official cease-fire agreements between Jordan and Israel, this right was never activated (Golani 1998). As a result, Jews were banned from praying at the Wall (Bar 2008: 2). In many of the personal stories we heard, people describe specific locations in West Jerusalem to which they would go in order to get a distant and very partial glimpse of the Western Wall in the period from 1948 to 1967. This brief and limited peek in the direction of the Wall was cherished and sought after not only because actual touching was blocked but also due to the centrality of vision in the long-established traditions related to the Western Wall.

The Six-Day War broke out on Monday morning, and East Jerusalem was captured on Wednesday, two days into the war. The most famous victory exclamation was that uttered by Colonel Mordechai (Motta) Gur, who commanded the 55th Paratroop Reserve Brigade that conquered the Old City. His proclamation, “*Har HaBayit BeYadeinu*” (The Temple Mount is in our hands!), broadcast live, remains to this day an emotional peak, marking the ‘redemption’ of the Western Wall. Soon after, the army’s Chief Rabbi blew the *shofar* – the traditional Jewish ram’s horn<sup>8</sup> and

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<sup>8</sup> Blowing a ram’s horn (known in Hebrew as *shofar*) is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible in various contexts, including major ‘national’ events and purposes, such as in the revelation on Mt. Sinai or during the conquest of Jericho by Joshua. Further associations include the blowing of the *shofar* on *Rosh*

Israeli soldiers were documented crying in the narrow corridor at the foot of the Wall (see Figures 8 and 9).



Figure 8: Rabbi Goren holding a Torah Scroll with Paratroopers at the Wall. Photo: Micha Bar-Am, *Bamachane* (IDF Archive, Ministry of Defense)

This specific moment when Israel Radio broadcasted the dramatic announcement “*Har HaBayit BeYadeinu,*” marked by Gur’s excited voice repeating it twice as if to validate this astonishing realization, was reiterated repeatedly in the personal stories we heard, shaping that historic moment of the Israeli soldiers’ physical arrival at the Western Wall with images of emotional attachment – an ecstatic mixture of touching, praying, dancing and bursting into tears. The image of crying soldiers at the Western Wall became the most powerful trope of the Six-Day War and found expression in multiple formats. With this, the tears of loss and separation associated with the Wall were replaced with tears of joy and reunion.

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*Hashana* (New Year) to signify the idea of a new beginning. It is also linked to the binding of Isaac on Mt. Moriah (associated with the later Temple Mount). Due to its symbolic and sentimental meaning, the British Mandate, following the Arab riots of 1929, published a prohibition according to which Jews were forbidden to blow a *shofar* in front of the Western Wall. However, each year, especially on *Yom Kippur*, smuggling *shofars* and blowing them in front of the Wall became a defiant national practice.

### 3 The Imagined Temple Meets the Wall of Reality

“Whoever mourns Jerusalem merits and sees her joy.” (Ta’anit 30: 2)

The flavor of the first encounter of Israeli soldiers with the Wall is vividly portrayed by Teveth, who wrote,

[Generals] Bar-Lev and Narkiss and the rabbis headed by Rabbi Goren found the narrow plaza of the Western Wall crowded with soldiers emotionally overloaded, some of whom kissed the stones of the Wall, some of them who hugged them, while others cried like children. [...] The *shofar* blow increased the heartbeat; the sounds of singing, shouting, praying and blowing the *shofar* were intertwined. (Teveth 1969: 33)<sup>9</sup>

Haim, one of the soldiers arriving at the Wall recalls:

[I was one of] a mass of dusty, tired soldiers, all marching in one direction. Religious or non-religious, everyone wanted to arrive at the Wall, to touch the stones that we had yearned for over so many years [...] The moment of encountering the Wall was a moment of enormous exhilaration. A dream come true ...everyone around was crying.



Figure 9: June 7, 1967 Crying Paratroopers at the Western Wall (photo: David Rubinger. National Photo Collection)

<sup>9</sup> See Gurevitch and Aran (1994: 148–149) on the crying paratroopers at the Wall and its symbolic “reunification of Israeli and Jew, the ‘Jewish’ return of the Israeli to the sacred place of the Israelite, which has become in the diasporic era the symbol of Jewish yearning. [...] However, even this moment of returning to the place with its high sacredness did not escape the ambivalence we speak of,” as the Wall is not the Temple – and it is always the Temple and outside of it. Thus, they conclude, it condenses historical and religious meanings but remains utterly earthy.

Yitshak Yifat, who is remembered as one of the three soldiers in the famous photograph of the paratroopers reaching the Wall (see Figure 9 above),<sup>10</sup> recalls these initial moments in an interview marking 50 years since the War:

Here we were, at the place that the people of Israel had waited more than two thousand years to return to.<sup>11</sup> This can't be underestimated! [...] We, the paratroopers, had just completed a difficult face-to-face battle at Ammunition Hill. After that in the morning of June 7, we had conquered the Augusta Victoria<sup>12</sup> in a battle that was not so wonderful, the brigade commander, Colonel Motta Gur, ordered us to approach the Old City. We then passed through the Lions' Gate and entered the Temple Mount plaza. There was a narrow gate at the southeastern side. Through this we reached the Western Wall. When I arrived, the Mughrabi quarter was almost leaning against it. The sight of the huge wall with the enormous stones was very impressive. Seeing this, I recalled my grandfather, who was a religious man with a thick beard, and I felt like a link in a chain of continuity from Judah the Maccabee, from Shimon Bar Kokhba and from Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, who was trampled by a horse nearby (according to a legend). We were overwhelmed with indescribable joy. Here we were, serving the Western Wall on a silver platter to the Jewish people.<sup>13</sup>

The accounts overflow with emotions in exuberant phraseology – aroused at the actual sight of the Wall. They incorporate dreaming, longing and crying as well as continuity with national and personal ‘memories.’ Listening to these stories, one is struck by the extent to which the imagination was stimulated by the site. The crying soldiers, wrapped in prayer shawls next to a rabbi blowing the *shofar* in front of the Wall reinforced the coalescence of religious, historical and emerging national sentiments.

<sup>10</sup> This photo showing Israeli paratroopers in front of the Western Wall (from left: Zion Karasenti, Yitzhak Yifat and Haim Oshri) was taken by David Rubinger right after the conquest of Old City and the arrival at the Western Wall. The sheer fact that there were photographers there at these moments is, of course, a revealing of future intentions. This topic, however, lies beyond the scope of the present study. Yitshak Yifat is the soldier in the center, holding his helmet.

<sup>11</sup> Until 1948, access to the Wall was permitted to both Jews and Muslim and made possible under the British Mandate. Thus, the underlying meaning here is that for two thousand years the people of Israel waited to have sovereignty over the Wall.

<sup>12</sup> Augusta Victoria is an Evangelical Lutheran church-hospital compound built in the beginning of the Twentieth Century on the southern part of the Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem.

<sup>13</sup> See Bar-On, published May 31, 2017, in Ma'ariv (in Hebrew): <https://www.maariv.co.il/news/military/Article-586305> (accessed May 3, 2020). His wordings seem to echo a sentiment also found in the Hebrew lyrics titled “The Paratroopers Cry,” written by Haim Hefer following the Six-Day war, in which the Wall now sees the paratroopers and in the past, Rabbi Yehuda Halevi: “This wall has heard many prayers/This wall has seen the fall of many other walls/This wall has felt the touch of mourning women/This wall has felt petitions lodged between its stones//This wall saw Rabbi Yehuda Halevi trampled before it/This wall has seen Caesars rise and fall/But this wall had never seen paratroopers cry.” Notice the human senses attributed to the Western Wall.

Another soldier whom we interviewed, M.N., testifies to and even self-reflects on this potential. As a member of a unit waiting to enter the Old City after it was conquered, M.N. and other soldiers were sleeping outside the Dung Gate, only a short distance from the Temple Mount and the Wall. On Thursday, June 9, he organized a group of approximately ten soldiers to go to the Western Wall for a very early morning prayer. They arrived at the Wall via the Temple Mount which, at that dawn hour, they found to be empty. When recalling this episode, M.N. explained:

I think we did a really foolish thing by going down from there to the Wall. After all, what is the Western Wall? It is just some kind of a wall that throughout the years people have used because they were not able to get to the real place. Why didn't we stay there [meaning the Temple Mount]? Why did we go to the Wall? What is significant about it? Still everyone was eager to reach the Western Wall.

R.M., now a rabbi, was born in Belgium, and had moved to Jerusalem a few years before the war. In his story, he observed the religious spiritual impact of the Six-Day War in general and the encounter with the Western Wall in particular, even on very secular people:

The excitement when the soldiers called home: "Dad, Dad, I'm beside the Wall, I'm kissing the stones of the Wall!" Secular people who never knew what the Wall was it is so [...] difficult to describe, it was an atmosphere [...] indescribable! There was an intoxication of the senses. Do you know what this is? Each one had to pinch himself to see if it is an apparition or reality. Thank God, we got through it, and it brought about a wave of people who gave much thought to spirituality, to religion. Boys from the *Kibbutzim* from *Hashomer Hatzair* [meaning The Young Guard, a secular-socialist youth movement], who didn't know at all [...] the impact of the victory was [...] above and beyond. So that is approximately what I remember from that period.

#### 4 Visual Testimony: Destruction as Construction

"[...] and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually." (Chronicle 2, 7: 16; Kings 1, 9: 3)

The continuation of R.M.'s story/narrative reveals a subconscious appreciation of the impact and future consequences of a specific action carried out in tandem with the stunning victory. The detailed story focuses on the decisive action orchestrated by Dayan, in the course of which, the Mughrabi quarter was demolished and its inhabitants totally expelled. Significantly, the narrator frames this account by attributing to Moshe Dayan, in spite of his infamous reputation, the status of "being our miracle." In contrast to the hesitancy of other ministers portrayed in the story as being stymied, Dayan acted decisively and, as a reply, transformed the physical

environs of the Western Wall. Conceptualizing the entire scene as a miracle indicates the deep significance of the transformation of a familiar sight and the powers attributed to it.

With this, R.M.'s detailed story is a story about an instantaneous decision and action that has had long-enduring consequences:

We had one miracle, Moshe Dayan, who was Minister of Defense at the time. He was [...] also, not the most righteous man. But I claim one thing. He will receive his reward in heaven. The government met at night, for an emergency meeting, and they tell him, "How do we swallow this frog?" [Referring to the conquering of East Jerusalem]. They couldn't digest what the world would say. Would they let them be, not let them be? Moshe Dayan, quietly arose and left the meeting so that nobody would notice, went to an army camp, took six or seven bulldozers and twenty huge trucks, travelled with them [...] it was [...] the Wall abutted the Mughrabi quarter [...] he took a microphone, and notified that within 20 minutes all the families must take only their most important possessions and "get out of here."

It took three days. Starting on Saturday evening and for three days and nights, Israeli bulldozers worked to demolish the Mughrabi quarter, the neighborhood adjacent to the Western Wall whose inhabitants had been removed by Israeli forces.<sup>14</sup> This was done in order to create a vast public space in front of the Wall, intended to be opened in time for the upcoming holiday of *Shavuot* (Holiday of Weeks or of the First fruits, one of three historical feasts of pilgrimage to Jerusalem, the Christian parallel being Pentecost) which was celebrated that year on June 14, in anticipation of the mass crowds who would overwhelm the place. This hasty, violent project, initially conceived as a discrete operation, was depicted by Shalev-Khalifa (2018) as follows: On June 8th, at the height of the war, when Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers reached the Wall, preparatory activities were already being taken to exploit the momentum of victory and establish facts on the ground. It appears that, due to the political sensitivities of such an act, it was decided to appoint a civilian company for the task of destroying the Mughrabi neighborhood and preparing the plaza. Fifteen

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<sup>14</sup> See Masalha (2007: 79–80). The touching stories of the inhabitants of the Mughrabi neighborhood are, of course, part of our research project. However, their personal accounts are the subject of a separate article. See also "Palestinians remember Israeli destruction of Jerusalem's Moroccan Quarter: <https://www.thenational.ae/world/palestinians-remember-israeli-destruction-of-jerusalem-s-moroccan-quarter-1.44591> (accessed April 22, 2020). John Tleel, a Greek Orthodox Palestinian whom we interviewed for this project, opens the chapter "Under Israeli Rule" in his memoirs entitled "I am Jerusalem" with this description: "After their victory, the Israeli authorities did not waste time in changing the face of Jerusalem. Starting from what they have most at heart, the Wailing Wall, they emptied the Mughariba (North Africans) quarter, removed all of the families living there, and levelled their dwellings with bulldozers. In no time, a 10 dunum open space (one dunum equals 1000 square meters) was created from people's homes, and the façade of the massive Western Wall was exposed, which for centuries had remained out of direct view and had been accessible through a narrow alley" (Tleel 2007: 171).

of the most experienced contractors in Jerusalem undertook the task and arrived at the alleyway of the Wall on June 10, at the end of Sabbath, in order not to desecrate the Sabbath's holiness.<sup>15</sup>



Figure 10: Destroying the homes next to the Western Wall for a Huge Plaza. June 11, 1967. (Dan Hadani Archive, Israel National Library Collection)



Figure 11: Ruins of the Mughrabi neighborhood, June 1967 (photo album of Sokolanski-Sela family, Yad Ben Zvi Collection)

<sup>15</sup> Shalev-Khalifa (2018) further quotes the words of Ben Moshe: “To be considerate to the holiness of the Sabbath, when the Sabbath exited, I received an order to start evacuating the area, in the presence of the mayor, his deputy, the city engineer, and a group of contractors. Mr. Z. Prosak, will be honored by the Havdalah ritual [signifying the differentiation between Sabbath and the week], as those present could not hide their emotions, and tears of joy dampened their faces, and after that the hammers began to strike accompanied by song and an elation of the soul.” <https://israelalbum.wordpress.com/2018/05/13/%D7%90%D7%91%D7%99%D7%A8%D7%99-%D7%9E%D7%A1%D7%93%D7%A8-%D7%94%D7%9B%D7%95%D7%AA%D7%9C/> (accessed 25 April, 2020). Also see Benvenisti (1976), Haezrahi (1968), Nitzan-Shifan (2011: 65), Ricca (2010), Yaffe and Schiller (2007).



Figure 12: Demolishing the Mughrabi Neighborhood to enlarge the Kotel Pavilion, June 1967 (National Photo Collection)

Still following along with the first dramatic days after the conquest, let us listen to Shlomo, who was working for a contractor that razed the Mughrabi neighborhood:

[We worked] from Saturday night until the eve of *Shavuot* [...] to prepare for *Shavuot*. We worked day and night [...] . We had to expose the Wall and liberate it from its captivity. [It was] very exciting, very [...] God forbid, if they had not ordered the work, then, it would not have been a worthy Wall.

In Shlomo's phrasing, the tearing down of houses and removing of rubble turns into a process of liberation and release from captivity, to expose the "worthy Wall." Shlomo incorporates in his personal story the hypothetical unacceptable alternative path in which the site and its image would have remained unchanged.

As has already been noted, an essential feature of the stories is the centrality of the senses in the experience described. While during the 'waiting period' and the days of the war itself, hearing is central, in describing the days immediately following the war, vision becomes the focal sense. As illustrated throughout, the narrators turn to sight-related metaphors: a world colored grey suddenly became multicolored; familiar settings suddenly appeared different; a far-off, two-dimensional postcard suddenly invites the narrator to enter it and take it in as a personal experience. The sense of vision also serves an important role later, when this period is viewed reflexively and occasionally critically, as there are those who speak of blindness, of sight without insight, and visions that blurred the ability to see.



Examination of the interviews demonstrates that the first sight of the Western Wall in its new guise often led to what was described as forms of intoxication. The active and rapid metamorphosis engendered a visual epiphany. In the personal stories, this epiphany relates the first encounter with the exposed Western Wall on a diversified emotional spectrum.<sup>16</sup>

H.W., born in Poland, immigrated as a lone teenager to Israel in 1947. In 1967, already a political activist of the *Mafdal* party,<sup>17</sup> he was able to reach the Western Wall even before *Shavuot*. While telling the story of his first encounter with the Western Wall immediately upon the end of the war, he could not contain himself and broke down in uncontrolled tears.

Immediately following the end of the war, he was invited to a meeting of the National Religious Party in Jerusalem, which included around thirty participants. Included in the invitation, was a promise to visit the Wall at the end of the meeting. This visit to the Wall occurred before the mass pilgrimage on *Shavuot*, described by so many of the interviewees. Arriving at the height of the destruction of the Mughrabi quarter, his account further illustrates the emotional and spiritual impact of opening up the physical space next to the Western Wall:

The meeting ended, and they brought a bus that transported us all to the Western Wall. [...] The entire area was being cleaned from every direction. So we could assume that we were very close, as there were masses, masses! And as we approached, there were plumes of dust, and Teddy Kollek [the mayor of Jerusalem] stood in the middle of where the plaza is today [...] and gave instructions, “take down here, take down there.” All kinds of structures, all kinds of walls and such things [...] If it wasn’t for Teddy Kollek, if I may exaggerate, there would be no Western Wall. [...] When we look at historical pictures, what is the Wall? There is barely a passageway of a few meters [...] everyone facing the same small Wall, from the perspective of height, it was also low. That’s the entire Wall, what we know from the pictures. Today, it is unending. [...] So listen, what they didn’t do then, would not arise and would no longer be. [...] It may be that he saw from a historical perspective, that if we wouldn’t do it now, we would lose the momentum. [...] He was a man of vision, creative and cool, so it is possible that he saw the history that would come in the future, and decided, “I’m doing this now.” And look, another thing, for we see in the pictures, what is the Wall? A slab of wall, huge blocks, who knows how they placed them one on top of the other, and the space

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<sup>16</sup> Nitzan-Shiftan, from an architectural point of view, notes that the demolition of the Mughrabi neighborhood transformed the physical intimate experience of touching the stones into a visual experience in which the Wall, now located within a huge pavilion, came to look like an image (2011: 66). Also see Bahat (2017) for examples of disapproving views regarding the demolishing of the Mughrabi neighborhood and the new look of the Wall.

<sup>17</sup> The National Religious Party (NRP and, in Hebrew, *Mafdal*, initials for *Miflaga Datit Leumit*) was an Israeli religious Zionist movement, active from its formation in 1956 until 2008. The *Mafdal* gradually drifted from a centrist party to a right wing party associated with the Israeli settlers’ movement.

around the Wall is nothing, it is only a few meters, and low height, and if they want for the Jewish people that not tens of thousands, but hundreds of thousands will come [...] Indeed, for many holidays, events, the public would be there. So he thought, we need to find an appropriate area, and it is possible, I don't know, adjacent to the Wall, the houses that were there, some of them were already destroyed [...] so he took advantage of the opportunity and the People of Israel own him a big thank you. [...] Indeed, it is no longer the Wall of history, of the pictures of history. Suddenly, something else, suddenly around it, the space is different.

This detailed account illustrates the meshing of space and time, as the spatial opening of the Wall removes it, according to the interviewee, from the realm of “historical pictures” to a concrete present and promising future.<sup>18</sup>

The spatial transformation of the Wall was seen by masses of Israelis, who visited the place during the *Shavuot* holiday later that same week. Being one of the three annual feasts of pilgrimage to Jerusalem, *Shavuot* encapsulates and represents idealized past periods of Jewish nationhood, associated with the first and second Temples in Jerusalem.

The impact of the Wall in its new appearance was engraved as a visual icon symbolizing victory and its accompanying conversions. The potency of this encounter – for better or for worse – was etched in those moments into a highly perceptive sub-awareness. Indeed, the stories are replete with combinations of powerful physical and emotional descriptions as well as a range of reflexive statements.

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<sup>18</sup> Many interviewees referred to traditional visual representations of the Wall. For an overview of these representations, see Sabar (2007).



Figure 13 (caption according to source): “Several buildings in the vicinity of the Western Wall were destroyed to provide space for the rebuilding of the area for the many visitors to come”. June 17, 1967 (Dan Hadani Archive, The National Library of Israel)



Figure 14 (caption according to source): The demolished houses in front of the Western Wall, June 22, 1967 (Dan Hadani Archive, The National Library of Israel)



Figure 15: Western Wall soon after the Six-Day War, (probably on *Shavuot*) June 1967. (Pirroska Dorn, Israel National Library Photo Collection)

E.B. was born in Poland and came to Jerusalem at the age of five. She used to go to the Wall from time to time as a girl and young woman before 1948, but said the visits were sporadic, not like “the endless stream after the Six-Day War.” She describes the “reunion” with the Western Wall as follows:

The elation of the first encounter with the Western Wall is beyond words. It’s literally impossible to describe [...] It’s like something that [...] I don’t want to compare, it won’t be strong enough. But you have something, you lose it and you find it back. All the time, all the time, we didn’t calm down [...] You can’t describe that joy. No matter how many years I live, this joy will never come back!

Attempting to convey the magnitude of sensations in words, interviewees repeatedly spoke of the “euphoria” and “exhilaration” characterizing the days after the flash victory and its accompanying results. Moreover, most of the narrators utilized the plural voice when referring to the days following the war, stating, for example: “We were euphoric”; “We were victory intoxicated”; “There was excitement beyond

words”; “Those were days [for which] I have no words to describe how we felt.” Many of the narrators associated these sensations with the sharp transition from a deep, existential anxiety to a sweeping victory, but even more so with its accompanying visible benefits, which, at that initial stage, were highly vivid in the carnival of territorial expansion and, above all, the celebration of ‘Jerusalem’s unification.’ A central feature to be found in numerous narratives revolves around the lightning-fast victory. Its impact on the narrators is manifested in the use of various terms related to suddenness, surprise and even revolutionary upheaval.

Alongside the dramatic and inclusive expressions, many stories conceptualize these sensations in concrete and very personal accounts, encompassing particular memories with extraordinary, divinely-inspired events. The unique combination of the descriptive and the emotional enables access not only to the days following the Six-Day War but also to the meanings that accompany them until today. These multidimensional sentimental frameworks were extremely vivid in many interviews. Numerous interviewees burst into tears while narrating their reunion with the Western Wall. Nevertheless, as illustrated below, the Wall is also a focal image for upcoming divisions.

On *Shavuot* morning, only six days after its capture, the Old City was officially opened to the Israeli public. [...] From the pre-dawn hours, thousands of Israelis streamed toward the Zion gate, excitedly awaiting access into the Old City. At 4 a.m., the congregating crowds were finally permitted to surge towards the Western Wall, as more and more visitors continue to flock to the site of the Wall.

This “victory-pilgrimage,” which according to official sources was comprised of over 200,000 Israelis all walking to the Western Wall, was focal in our research project. Registered as an elusive memory in many of the personal stories, this first beholding of the Wall was and still is extremely potent.



Figure 16: A Few Days after the war. (David Rubinger/Yedioth Aharonot Group)

Encountering the Wall bodily, whether after years of separation or for the first time, is a central theme in our study. Listening to the interviewees' voices, the intermeshing of levels of consciousness and sensual experience becomes vivid and its potency exposed. Prominent among them were encounters with a suddenly changed landscape and concomitant spiritual elation. The central themes that expose this association among the interviewees include an elevating 'togetherness' and the loss of individuality in common group feelings of euphoria; the physical transition from restricted movement towards free movement and the sense of being part of a mass pilgrimage; dominance of specific senses, including those of touch and, above all, sight in a wide range of visually-related metaphors; and continuity with and estrangement from ancient national and more recent familial and personal memories. In addition to these characteristics, the stories are replete with transitions between sleeping, dreaming and wakefulness, as well as reflective contemplations.

## 5 A State Induced Pilgrimage: Narrating Euphoria

“Arise, and let us go up to Zion.” (Jeremiah 31: 6)<sup>19</sup>

The mass movement towards the Western Wall upon its opening to the general public on *Shavuot*, emerged repeatedly in the interviews. Highlights of people’s experience included the crowds and their exhilaration, their well-ordered behavior and the remarkable togetherness. All this was even more emotive due to the fact that the masses included the whole of the House of Israel, eliminating divisions based on age, gender, religious or ethnic affiliation. The notion of *communitas*, as developed by Victor Turner (1973), relates to the spontaneous sense wherein – for a limited period – participants experience a kind of egalitarian oneness. This ethos, typical of pilgrimages, was found to be highly relevant to the first journey to the Western Wall, further intensified by the holiday of *Shavuot*, with its traditional pilgrimage to Jerusalem. However, as will be demonstrated subsequently, some interviewees described this mass pilgrimage using idioms related to blindness.

D.O. was a young teenager in 1967 and her memories of that day phrased in somewhat poetic style are vivid and powerful:

[...] Everyone was happy, a smile was on everyone’s face [...] they were in the clouds [...] Masses, masses! [...] it was very crowded there. You came in, they were all in a mix, there was no [separation between] women, men, they were all together. Together they went to the Western Wall, touched together, kissed together, prayed together. It was an experience. Very, very, very strong!

E.O. who is about 80 years old, was born in Europe, and came to Jerusalem with her family in 1936. She recalls the Wall from her childhood before 1948, but her memories of the first days after the Six-Day War are sharp and remarkably concrete. The rejuvenation of the Wall was central to her multilayered excitement:

We did not suffer from the fact that the city was divided, we did not think of it every day. But immediately after its liberation, after the opening of its gates, there was enormous excitement. Without any comparison, with no comparison! [...] Suddenly, it was opened and people who were never in the Old City were curious to run and see what is in there, and people who still remembered the Old City, they ran towards the lights of memories. And I, I left my work, took half a day and ran as if in a relay race along Jaffa Road, very quickly. And they opened the gates and it was not just us who galloped towards the Old City, but also the Arabs flowed in conjunction with us. In smaller quantities, but they came. [...] So there was two-way movement, they came from the Old City and we descended the slope of Jaffa Road. I remember it as if it were today. And the Wall!! I had remembered that it was a narrow alleyway. Because afterwards they destroyed there to make that entire big thing. They

<sup>19</sup> New King James Version. Also see Mishna Bikkurim 3: 2.

destroyed that entire neighborhood. I remembered that there is a narrow road. So, it was an exciting experience as if we had discovered America. A fantastic emotional experience. And there was no hatred. And there was no antagonism, and the Arabs were very much in shock and were very quiet and sold us items willfully. At ridiculous prices. So that was that day. It was an exceptional experience. Afterwards, it was already a different story. [But then] the Arabs were still in shock for a number of months. The army took control over them of the entire West Bank and then all the Israelis travelled hysterically to see all the well-known and unknown sites.

A sweeping manifestation of these forms prevailed on *Shavuot*. Z.G., born in Jerusalem, was a young girl during the war. After her marriage she moved to the settlement of Kdumim in the northern West Bank. Here is her story about her first visit to the Wall:

Masses of people flowed, masses. I remember that we walked hand in hand, there was excitement, there was electricity in the air, exceptional excitement. It was something! And to see those stones, suddenly for the first time not in a picture, because beforehand during *Sukkot* (Feast of Tabernacles, or Feast of Booths or Shelters),<sup>20</sup> we would always hang in our *Sukkah* (tabernacle, Booth) a picture of the Wall, of Rachel's Tomb, and of the Cave of the Patriarchs. [...] It was in black and white or something like that, and suddenly we see it, it was an exceptional excitement. It was still without a *mehitzah* [dividing barrier between men and women] ... they had just taken down the houses of the Mughrabi quarter. It was really the beginning of the beginning.

For Z.G., the Wall transforms from its pictorial, imagined depiction framed as it was in their family *Sukkah* into concrete reality.<sup>21</sup> Her sensitive gaze makes a journey of fifty years, incorporating both the Wall and the Mughrabi quarter. In her concluding words anticipating the ensuing long period of occupation for which this was “the beginning of the beginning.”

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<sup>20</sup> *Sukkot* is a Biblical Jewish festival commemorating the huts that sheltered the Israelites during their wanderings in the wilderness on their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. Celebrated by the building of and staying in a *sukkah*, it is also one of the three annual pilgrimage holidays to Jerusalem.

<sup>21</sup> Hasan-Rokem focuses on the *Sukkah* as a dialectic praxis and notion in her nuanced article on material mobility versus concentric cosmology. Especially relevant to the present article and its underlying concepts is that of the *Sukkah* as Heterotopia versus Utopian ideas associated with Jerusalem and the Temple, and the connection of this tension with the three Jewish feasts of pilgrimage to Jerusalem, of which both *Sukkot* and *Shavuot* are central (Hasan-Rokem 2012: 164–166).





Figure 17: Israeli youngsters dancing the Hora in the Western Wall plaza in the Old City after the unification of Jerusalem; July 2, 1967 (Fritz Cohen, courtesy of GPO and the National Photo Collection)



Figure 18: Yosef and his sons visiting the Western Wall, 1967 (Photographer unknown, Winkor Yosef Album, Yad Ben Zvi Collection)

Y.R-K. was born to an established Jerusalemite family who have lived in the city for a few generations. She describes the visual makeover of the Wall:

We were told to leave the bomb shelters, that they had already liberated the Old City, and I remember the radio broadcast, how do they call it? ‘Online.’ [...] “The Temple Mount is in our hands,” and even beforehand at the Lions’ Gate, when Motta Gur says to him, “Go!” and [...] all that. I am a Jerusalemite. I was only once at the Wall before the War of Independence. As a girl, eight or nine years old. And I ran. It was during *Sukkot* or Passover, I can’t remember, I ran. My father walked with his brother and I ran after him. [...] There were steps, it was there and it was small and cramped. It didn’t impress me at all. But afterwards, there was such excitement! There had never been anything like this. It was simply unbelievable, you know, from such deep anxiety [...] [we felt] they were going to destroy the state. [...] and only a few days afterwards was the most amazing thing, that Teddy Kollek and I don’t know who else, were able to clean the entire plaza of the Wall and to make it very large.

In this depiction, Y.R-K. compares the cramped, narrow Wall of childhood familial memory with the national, open and expansive Wall – illustrated by the role of Jerusalem’s mayor and the national holiday of *Shavuot*. Thus, the transition from the familial to the national is presented as a transformative experience through an encounter with the Wall. Euphemistically describing the uprooting of the former inhabitants and their dwellings as ‘cleaning,’ Kollek’s sweeping gestures represented a modernist imagination of what there should be, but also the eradication of those who were there before. She continues:

My relatives came from Haifa with their three children. They brought with them sleeping bags and everything. And the following morning, we walked by foot to the Wall [...] We walked not exactly via the Old City, but via Mount Zion [...] I think that all of the Jews in Israel were there. And they filled up the Wall’s plaza. And started singing there. There was such a feeling of excitement! However, I remember that we already had arguments then, and I said, we need to give it back, we will have problems with them.

As seen above, Y.R-K. combines a reflective, general statement directed at the then future – which is now past, remains present and still future – with her detailed memories and overall excitement engendered by this first visit. In doing so, she is hinting at the links between euphoria and national blindness.

S.W., born in Jerusalem after 1948, was a soldier during the war but did not fight in Jerusalem, only reaching there two weeks after *Shavuot*. He describes the Six-Day War as a “revealed miracle.” In the interview with him, he was flooded with tears upon recalling his first visit to the Wall:

It was totally surprising. With no fear! It was only two or three weeks after Jerusalem was liberated. The walls fell, and suddenly, you pass through Musrara, a neighborhood that was just in front of the separation fence, and suddenly, you can cross it, you enter the Flowers Gate and reach the Wall – that, with everything I was brought up on, was the place I wanted to reach. It was a monumental experience!

S.W. illustrates how the sudden ability to move freely beyond what was previously a physical and conceptual border became infused with spiritual significance:

It was euphoria, impossible to believe this victory. It was simply a new people of Israel, renewed. [...] We were stressed. We waited. We anticipated. And suddenly [...] everything changed! Suddenly we are big heroes, we are a ruling nation! [...] everything was [...] it was something that you can't believe, impossible to believe! Just a total turnover that we didn't anticipate, think or expect to happen! And the Wall [...] the Wall was a place of prayer, a place of feeling, for me that was the meaning, but the meaning was this entire turnaround. [...] Everything was, it was unbelievable [...] nobody believed it would happen.

Other conceptualizations relate to the individual and spatial transformation following the war which was present in other interviews. E.N., born in Iran, arrived in Jerusalem as a child in 1949. In 1967, she worked as a school nurse in a neighborhood within walking distance of the Old City:

It is impossible, whoever did not experience it cannot feel this experience. It is something breathtaking. So we stood in line without complaining, we stood in line for hours, until we arrived, and everything that they destroyed was there, they didn't clean and this, everything was dust, dust like this and that, and we walked, we walked until we reached the Wall. We reached the Wall and you became mute. Really! Dumbfounded like that. And then everyone started kissing and praying and to thank God that we won. It was very moving. And there were masses, masses. And we returned home with our shoes full of dust, and this, as they didn't yet, they didn't pave yet, they did not have time. It was very moving. [...] We walked as during the Exodus from Egypt, we walked. [For years] the goal was to reach the Wall of which so much was spoken to us, and we would walk to peek from the roof, to see what it was. Some of our family had come 100 years ago to the land, came with donkeys and camels to the land [...] my aunt took us to this roof to try and see it. All this time, we waited for this day. [...] the fraternity that was there, that everyone was brothers. If only it would be like this now. [...] All of the People of Israel.

Framed by the opening sentence “whoever did not experience it cannot feel this experience,” E.N. goes back to highly concrete memories combined with awareness of national and familial attachments to the Wall. These links characterize many of the stories we have heard.

Another enthusiastic voice depicting the first encounter with the Wall is that of B.L., who was born in the USA and came to Jerusalem with her husband before the 1948 Arab–Israeli War:

Then on *Shavuot*, this was very exciting, everybody went up to the Wall. And you saw people mingling. [...] we were all surprised because there was this big plaza, [...] It was really thrilling. It was something unbelievable. [...] I mean, to think that I’ve lived to see it [...] It’s an amazing feeling, because you’re brought up all your life, about going to the Wall, [...] and all of a sudden – there it is.

M.B-D., a teenager in 1967, was born in Morocco, immigrated as a child to Israel and lived with her family in the neighborhood of Musrara, situated just behind the border adjacent to the Old City:

Right after the war, it was *Shavuot*, [...] and they let us go to the Western Wall [...] It was something! People came from all over the country and we all walked, we all walked! [...] I’ll never forget it! Pilgrimage, and it was so close! Pilgrimage, as described, [...] to a holy place! You felt as if you had returned to the Bible, as if you had entered the Bible. Can you understand what that felt like? Suddenly, the Western Wall, all of a sudden, all kinds of places [...] Suddenly it’s in our hands! Suddenly you get there, listen, it’s hallucinatory [...] so we were in some sort of euphoria that can’t be captured in words.

Her description is reminiscent of R.M.’s narrative:

We reached the Wall, actually, we came from a number of directions, which was also an incredible spectacle. It reminded me of a pilgrimage [...] during the times of the Temple. From every path you saw [...] it was still dark, it was still [...] before morning. Like ants, as such. Rows and rows of people!!

The encounter with the Wall stands consistently as the basis of a transformative experience. It was a highly uplifting experience for most of the interviewees, but there were also those for whom the metamorphosis of the place resulted in adverse feelings. The following exceptional narrative relates to the loss of intimacy in the encounter with the Wall.

Mira, a woman in her eighties and member of a Kibbutz in the Negev, remembers the Western Wall before 1948, when she was about twelve years old. Returning to the site after the Six-Day War is depicted in her story as a horrifying experience. As she stood in the open plaza that was constructed to face the Wall, she felt the Wall was now “stripped of” its “intimate simplicity,” which she remembers from her

trips to the Wall as a child with her father. This experience made her feel “terrible, like a woman made to stand naked in the sun in the city square.”<sup>22</sup>

The following account is that of S.E., a woman in her seventies, for whom the 1967 events inevitably mesh past, present and future:

And then Motta Gur exclaimed, “The Temple Mount is in our hands,” and they all rushed down to the Wall, because they had prayed all these years that the Wall will return. As if, even for us, the religious public, the concept of the Temple Mount was not yet in our vision. The maximum was the Western Wall. Then the Wall and the paratroopers crying [...] and so, the feeling that I am trying to convey is that all the aspirations, after the Holocaust, are suddenly drained into some sort of redemption, the fulfilment of the prophecies, of all the things we hardly even dared to dream about and we see them come true in front of our eyes. All the places came out of the Bible and [...] not only to us, it was [for] the entire Israeli public, it was not [politically] right or left, there were no such concepts. [...] As if God himself speaks to us through history and things really happen in front of your eyes.

S.E.’s account is indicative of her encounter with the Wall being conceived as a realization of a historical redemptive process. In her story, broad and abstract historical processes are condensed and actualized into specific moments.

Entering Biblical territories replete with Biblical images appeared in various versions. Interviewees found diverse ways of conceptualizing this experience. Thus, M.B-D, cited above, called repeatedly upon the expression “as if you had entered the Bible” or “as if you had returned to the Bible,” while S.E. utilized imaginative expressions of divine revelation by saying “as if God himself speaks to us.” As illustrated below, the mobilization of common personal experiences which relate to different orders of reality, and ones beyond reality, characterizes the accounts of numerous interviewees.

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<sup>22</sup> See Hemyan, this volume, pp. XX.

## 6 Between Dreaming and Eyes Wide Open: The Diversity of Points of View

“We were like dreamers ....” (Psalms 126: 1)

Dreams and dreaming dominate descriptions of the overall spatial alterations and particularly the initial beholding of the Western Wall. These very personal descriptions, with their raw, unfettered quality, echo the well-known biblical verse “we were like dreamers.” The centrality of visual imagery characteristic of dreaming and its verging on the fantastic makes the dream particularly appropriate for grasping these experiences. In addition, against existential fears of total destruction that prevailed just a few days earlier, the almost total absence of overt signs of physical devastation is highly significant. The narrators found themselves entering a city that had been given to them unblemished, to mesh with the familiar. This unique occurrence of journeying between the familiar and the unfamiliar is of course also typical of dreams. Finally, references to “blindness” also prevail, linked to the overall dreaming complexity. Blindness is linked both to the dream-like consciousness, the lightening victory and the dazzling effect of specific sites.

A.F., born in Jerusalem in 1938, explained:

You simply can't describe it to yourself. What people went through, what a shake up! It is no wonder that people's minds were screwed, they became messianic, because it was really an event that whoever had a basis of faith it could turn their head over, it is clear, whoever does not have a deep faith-based background, they went through it with all that we are going through today. But then people were types of, we were like dreamers, this was really the feeling [...] we cried when they said, “The Temple Mount is in our hands,” it was something that we looked at one another and we thought it was a dream, that it is unreal.

R.M. cited in length above, explained: “There was [...] a sense of intoxication. You know what this is? Each one went and pinched himself to find out if it was illusion or reality.”

Linking real spaces to dream-like ones is further expressed by A.S. Born in a Northern kibbutz, he was serving as a soldier in 1967. Relating to his memories of the days after the war, he portrayed a rather uncanny reality, employing images of self and space listed from fantastic tales:

Alice in Wonderland! [...] I kept saying [from then on]: All of a sudden a door opened for us and we went in. And that's the feeling, that's the experience, that's what I talk about.

R.E., was born in Jerusalem and has lived in the city ever since. She was in her last year of high school during the Six-Day War, and related her detailed and vivid memories with a highly reflective viewpoint:

As a girl, we were always told: don't approach the no-man's-land. There was a big sign: "Danger, border nearby, landmines, do not approach." So the awareness that there was a city beyond the fence – I knew. But I didn't have any realistic concrete image of a city settled by Arabs. [...] [Immediately after the war] they came to us and we came to them, you know, like curious children [laughing]. And we did not understand what might possibly happen. There was also a feeling of it being temporary. Who knows until when it will be open [...] You know what this felt like? As if you do the Passover cleaning and you move the fridge and you discover that there is an entire apartment behind the fridge. That's how we felt.

For R.E. the previously unseen and unaware of part of the city in which she lived is the focus of the story. The sudden ability to move beyond the previous border makes the place real. As such, and in contrast to other accounts, the ability to access an area is perceived as making it concrete and actual.

S.E., quoted above, lives in a Jewish settlement on land occupied in the Six-Day War. For her, this war is no less than Divine revelation. Describing the victory, she draws directly upon the verse "We were like dreamers." However, her interpretation of the verse differs significantly from the conventional ones. For her, the phrase illuminates a clear-cut condition of arousal from sleep:

It was [...] really, for this moment, it was worth living, and the truth is that I share this with my secular friends. [...] My father cried, everyone cried, there is a Psalm verse "In God's return. In the return to Zion we were like dreamers" – this was exactly the feeling! [...] There is a concept of deep sleep in the Bible. What is the deep sleep that can befall a person? So [...] suddenly I understand what "we were like dreamers" is. Deep sleep in the Bible [...] is a call for a new phase, so when he says in this Psalm "we were like dreamers," you understand [that] until now we were like dreamers, we slept, and suddenly we are something really, really different and new. It was really wow! [...] So it was very, the attitude was very different. I truly felt days of elation, as if you were floating, living really in something else.

As demonstrated in the inverted exegesis above, the encounter with the Western Wall is not the dream, as so many others described it, but an awakening from a dream. Thus, the Wall itself and the People of Israel are now awakening in tandem to a new era. Similar to many others, she bestows human attributes to the Western Wall: The Wall itself is now arising from a very long dream. In this awakening vision, the demolishing of the houses of the Mughrabi quarter may be seen as the removal of the Wall's sleep dust.

N.S. moved to Jerusalem as a student in 1966, one year before the war. She explains:

I will try to convey it. [...] there is what is known as cataract surgery. And I did it two weeks ago, and suddenly I look and I see colors! The lens, the lens

was murky and I did not see colors sharply. And suddenly I see the flowers, and I see the colors of the world. It is much more colorful! I had the same feeling then. Suddenly, the world is open. Everything is blooming, you see colors [...] Before [the war] Jerusalem was a gray city for me. A gray city.

R.E. told the following:

We didn't understand a thing, our eyes were completely closed, we were completely drenched in the joy of victory and the miracle. You know, because the fear was immense, so was the joy of victory immense. Without any reflection, without any criticism, without any understanding of how it looks from the other side, or what is the meaning of occupation [...] we didn't see all that. We didn't see, we didn't see. Our eyes were blinded.

Before returning to the concrete descriptions of encounters with the Western Wall, I would like to present J.S.'s dramatic and detailed description, which deals with her altered experience regarding the entire space.

J.S., born in the USA in 1926, moved to Israel in 1949 and in June 1967, lived in Jerusalem. At the age of 92, she narrated her memories in a nuanced and highly emotional manner. In the following story she tries to put the drama of spatial transformation she experienced following the war into words:

And suddenly this place [the Old City of Jerusalem], which had been visible externally, never the internal parts of a house or a home, buildings were visible but like on another planet, this is the only way to describe it. The same thing happened a few days later [...] we lived on a street named Bethlehem Road, and we thought it was a street, and it ended where there were – in the beginning, in the 50s – remnants of the major immigrant camp, located at the end of Bethlehem Road. [...] Anyway, [immediately after the war] we passed that [immigrant camp] on the road in the direction of Bethlehem. This was a few days later. And suddenly we were in Bethlehem! In a matter of ten minutes, it's very close. So, the same sensation. Suddenly I said, "What? I live on Bethlehem Road but [and it is] ten minutes away from the town of Bethlehem? I can't believe it!" It was like, again, entering another world that was close and totally sealed off before, vaguely visible. It was a major shock, a drama that I'll never forget. Because it was so near and so far. [...] it seemed like another world, it was like I can't even describe. Another type of experience, where a thing was so – for all those years that I lived in Jerusalem – totally incommunicado, a thing you looked at as something devoutly to be wished for to touch but unable, yet very near. [...] And you could only look at it through binoculars or from a viewpoint of some sort.

J.S.'s personal experience regarding the very first days following the war resonates with many others of our interlocutors. Similar to R.E.'s narrative, the sudden access



makes locations tangible and real. Of course, the openness of the space proved volatile and contingent to political and military events.

While the first sight of the rejuvenated Western Wall, which for many had already occurred in *Shavuot*, often led to similar modes of intoxication, there were other voices. R.T. was a young girl in 1967. Her first encounter with the Western Wall presents the concretization of childhood memories as a letdown, a myth ruined when actualized:



Figure 19: The Western Wall and Pavillion. Behind: the Dome of the Rock Mosque, 2007 (Photo: Moshe Milner. National Photo Collection)

[...] In school they talked about the Western Wall, at home they talked about it. It was always with a special atmosphere, with holiness, a special light [...] And for me as a child I was expecting to see something ‘wow.’ [...] And when we got there that first time I was disappointed. I said, “What? All these years they talked about this famous Wall, one of the walls of the Temple and this is it?” It was a big disappointment. Today it looks fantastic to me. But the initial encounter was terrible. Something was shattered there.

In the following interviews, we meet additional expressions which embody the drama of the concrete encounter with the Wall through a conceptualization that

both connects and disengages between fantasy and reality. In this way they combine descriptions of the first encounter with the Wall with diverse critical reflections.

G.H-R, born in 1945, arrived in Jerusalem as a young student in 1965. When narrating her memories from the Six-Day War, a prewar postcard-like sight of what is beyond the reaches of western Jerusalem is followed by a first visit to the Western Wall immediately after:

When I came to Jerusalem [...] the eastern part of the city was like a postcard for me, essentially two-dimensional. [...] In '67, I lived in the laundry room on top of a high building [...] from there I could see really well. [...] And in the winter of that year it was snowing. Like, before the war. In January or February there was snow. [...] That was the ultimate postcard. The city under snow, and you could see the Mount of Olives and all that. [...] [And after the war] my parents came to visit. There was an announcement that they were opening the city and the first time we could enter was the *Shavuot* holiday. Good. We went to see the Wall, it was terribly intriguing. And then, I remember that we ascended the path that encircles Mount Zion, and I remember it like it was today, the Gallicantu Church there, I remember someone said that this was the Gallicantu Church. And there was a house there. And the window had bars, and people sat behind the bars looking at us. And this was the moment that I understood what had happened. I hadn't understood before that the extent to which this thing would be like that. Suddenly, I understood [...] I am walking here, and they are in their houses. I sort of understood that there would be hierarchy, where we are free to walk and they are imprisoned in their houses. There was a curfew so that we could ascend and see the Wall. Because there were masses, masses. All residents of the Old City were under curfew. It was the first time that I saw with my eyes a curfew. [...] They looked curious, and also a little scared [...] I remember that there was dust [...] and what is really weird is that I don't recall in any way what the Wall looked like. I don't remember whether I approached the Wall, I remember the walk but I don't remember the Wall. I don't remember where we arrived at, what was there? I'm sure it did not look like it does now, but what did it look like? I have no memory. [...] What did it look like? Was it after they blew up the Mughrabi Quarter? It was rubble. I remember that it was possible to see that there had been a war, but I don't remember what the Wall looked like, I don't remember the Wall.

This detailed depiction of the pilgrimage to the Western Wall illustrates an uncommon in situ realization: the newly found access comes at a moral cost, separating those who are free to move from those confined to their homes. With the passage of fifty years, the sight of the local residents behind window bars becomes an insight so powerful that it erases the original sight for which this pilgrimage was intended. With the vivid memory of their eyes, the memory of the Western Wall fades into oblivion.

A critical approach is also apparent from the description of E.A., who moved to Israel from Iraq as a child, and has since then lived in Jerusalem:

It didn't occur to me for a second that we would conquer the city! [...] For me, the Wall did not say anything, it was beyond the mountains of darkness and the Jewish Quarter interested me like yesterday's news [Hebrew lit. "as yesteryear's snow"]. As simple as that. Meaning that the entire messianic drift, and the Wall, and prayer, and the heavens – it's not me! Why? This stone wall, for two thousand years we were upheld by a yearning for it and the Temple, the yearning upheld us. The yearning, not the stone wall [...] not the concrete, I don't need the 'concrete,' the concrete bothers me, because then I say, "What, this wall?" [...] my mother was a religious woman, her father was a rabbi, she would tell us on the roofs of Baghdad about the Wall and the holiness of Jerusalem [...]. [After the war] I took my mother to the Wall because she obviously drove me crazy. I still had not gone to the Wall because I told you what my attitude is. I took my mother, a small woman among thousands; I almost lost her among the crowds. I took her, I brought her, I looked at the Wall, and that's it. Meaning, no [...] truly, no strings were moved inside me.

In his account, E.A. presents the sentiments related to the Western Wall as a split between him and his mother. His mother, like most of the interviewees, longs to reach the actual Wall, touch and kiss the stones and thrust a personal request to God, while he, back then as today, glorifies the yearning, and wishes for it to remain a site of longing, the distant place of myth and folklore remembered from his childhood. Once the object of yearning is attained, it becomes merely a 'stone wall.'

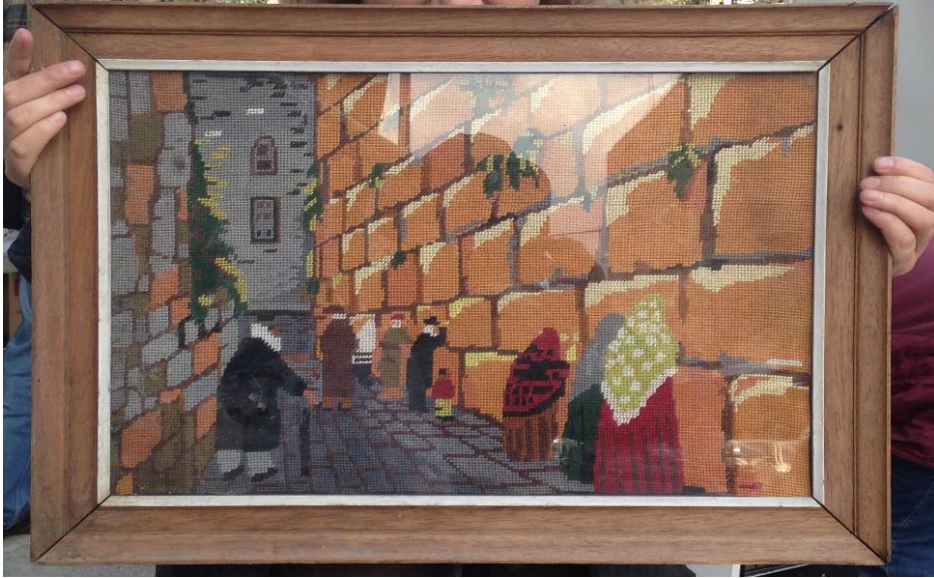


Figure 20: A needlepoint picture of praying at the Wall, Haifa flea market, 2019 (photo: Amos Salamon)

M.B-O., was born in Tel Aviv, and has lived in Jerusalem for more than fifty years. When relating to the Wall, he places his personal ‘credo’ as the organizing theme:

I am not only a secular person, but an atheist. I know there is no God, [...] it’s clear. But this place is important to me, and what matters is not that there was a temple there, because it is nonsense – I do not want to have a temple with all the smoking sacrifices [...]. But I identify with two thousand years of Jews who yearned to touch this Wall [...] and with the thousands of Jews who came here and touched the Wall weeping. [...] All this moves me to this day. Today it’s a bit difficult because they [the Ultra-Orthodox Jews] have taken it over [...] that I do not even think about going there. [...] But at first, I was definitely excited, I certainly identified.

The final quotation that I have chosen to present demonstrates a sense of emotional agitation: vividly encapsulating the overall euphoria interspersed with ruminations regarding what it engendered. But all this is still in a primeval stage characteristic of the amply loaded, passionate yet elusive nature of the entire corpus of interviews. In the story of L.M., a native of Jerusalem, who was a student at the time, every single sentence simultaneously conveys contradictory feelings:

I call it idol worship. That’s what I have to say, what can I tell you? It was a wonderful period. I miss it so much, what can I tell you? [...] it was a wonderful period. So good! And slowly I felt that it wasn’t worthwhile. Jerusalem

is too big for us. Here there are terrorists, here they lay bombs, all of the euphoria slowly dwindled.

[...] The Wall didn't do anything to me, not the Temple Mount and not the Wall, it didn't awaken in me any sentiments. I was [...] maybe I was influenced by [Yeshayahu] Leibowitz (1903–1994), who said “people are praying to stones, idol worship,” so maybe from him<sup>23</sup> [...] After all of that craziness, today I can't anymore [...] It has lost its taste, it isn't there anymore [...] And I think a lot about the war of '67 [...] how beautiful it was! It was exactly the *Shavuot* holiday, and everyone was with flags, “Jerusalem of Gold” by Shuli Nathan. And that song [...] it is, uh, you know? They sang it on Independence Day, and she sang the song “Jerusalem of Gold,” it was really, maybe a week before the Six-Day War, it doesn't matter. As if she prophesized it! [...] It was “for the watering holes” and all. It was something! And it moved me terribly! But enough, after that, I became tired of that song. Why? I can't stand hearing it! Because it reminds me of settlements, occupation, everything.<sup>24</sup> It already lowered my [...]

## 7 Discussion

Historian Alon Confino provides a highly relevant open invitation in an article published in Hebrew in 2008:

In writing the history of 1967, the possibilities of the postwar period must be emphasized: everything was completely open, no one knew the future, and no one knew how long Israel would remain in the [occupied] territories.<sup>25</sup> There were various plans: the Greater Land of Israel, returning the territories or just waiting for a phone call from King Hussein. It is necessary to grasp that cultural moment of not knowing, but also the process in which the lack of knowledge becomes temporary, and the temporality becomes something permanent. [...] From the outset, all of these views about the territories had co-existed. The question is when and how the transience of the occupation

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<sup>23</sup> Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz was mentioned in several other interviews as one of the rare Israeli voices who expressed regret over the Six-Day War victory in general and the conquest of the Western Wall in particular. His article in *Haaretz* newspaper from July 21, 1967, where he referred to the site as a “Discotel” (thus, combining “Disco” and the “Kotel” – the Wall) is especially worth mentioning. He was generally persistent in his warnings of the negative ramifications of the 1967 victory and the occupation of both Palestinian territories and people. Also see Cohen-Hattab and Bar (2018: 288). For the “Discotel,” see <http://www.leibowitz.co.il/leibarticles.asp?id=52> (accessed May 23, 2020). For his opinions on the 1967 occupation as a threat to the State of Israel, see Leibowitz (1995: 225–226).

<sup>24</sup> See Benvenisti on the ironies of “Jerusalem of Gold” (1988: 92).

<sup>25</sup> In Hebrew, the term is just “the territories” (*HaShtachim*). See Gavrieli-Nuri (2017: 23–27) for an enlightening discussion of neutral terms used in Hebrew in normalizing the ongoing occupation, where she emphasizes the fact that in Hebrew *HaShtachim* (as “areas”) is foremost a geometry-related terminology.

has become accepted, and how it is being expressed culturally and symbolically. (Confino 2008: 304)

In light of Confino's invitation regarding the 1967 crossroads, our ethnographic project provides a disclosure of layers not readily found in other forms of documentation. Focusing on personal stories collected in the framework of in-depth interviews offers not only vivid accounts that are indicative of folk creativity, but also hints at larger multiplex issues and cultural patterns.

The centrality of the Western Wall was highlighted repeatedly in the stories, revealing a prototype of attachment to this master-image. Once the Wall was 'liberated' by Israeli forces, its long-buried, culturally productive potency was manifested instantly. For the interviewees, divided as they were in their political and religious stances, these first days were suffused with a totally unfamiliar sensation, by and large depicted as elation and even intoxication. This euphoria is associated in the interviews with a range of factors. These included the deep existential anxiety present in the days leading to the war<sup>26</sup> and the enrapturing, cathartic power of the dramatic victory. Furthermore, with the reverberating reciprocity of "stones with a human heart," one cannot exaggerate the dramatic impact of the reunion with the Western Wall. It galvanized and unleashed yearnings and aspirations, some of them previously buried deeply or even totally unknown.

Already, at that initial visit, as hundreds of thousands of excited Israelis flocked *en masse* toward the Western Wall – their eyes directed at the ancient stone wall, while their feet tread on the shredded remnants of the Mughrabi neighborhood of which only dust remained – already there, with the congregation of packed bodies, seeds of the future were being sown.

Individual experience and spatial transformation following the dramatic victory are intertwined in many of the stories we heard. However, in as much as these are personal sensations, they appear – in different and even conflicting variations – in many of the personal stories, as the plural voice and corporeal images are used repeatedly.

In the description of the flocking of the masses toward the Wall, concepts related to vision – through a broad range of associations – stand out.<sup>27</sup> As such, the drama of the narrative shifts from an emphasis on listening during the waiting period and the beginning of the war, toward a wide spectrum of visual concepts. These

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<sup>26</sup> Before and during the war there was still no TV in Israel. See Plotkin's article in this volume for the Egyptian radio propaganda broadcasted in Hebrew and the blurred Israeli broadcasting. Other studies relate in detail to the widespread anxiety prior to the war; see, for example, Gan (2017: 336–337), Haber (1987), Oren (2002) and Segev (2007: 225–337).

<sup>27</sup> The commandment related to pilgrimage to Jerusalem is typically associated with sight and vision. The practice of pilgrimage, involves appearing before God (as in Deuteronomy 16: 16). The verb *רָאָה* has the sense of sight in a unique form in Hebrew that activated rabbinic exegetical imaginations to the reciprocity of sight or vision: "seeing" God (His Temple) and "to be seen" by God. For a detailed study of the centrality of the sense of sight in rabbinic literature, see Neis (2013).

include images of transformation from dreams to reality, from sharp vision to fantasy, and illusory changes in spatial orientation associated with sight and blindness.

The centrality of vision is a paramount feature in Rabbi Menachem HaCohen's book entitled *The Stones Speak*. Published by the Ministry of Defense publishing house in September 1967, it enjoyed wide popularity and was printed in numerous editions. The chapter dealing with the Western Wall makes the following claim:

From the moment that the borders were breached and the path to the Wall was opened, the masses of the House of Israel began flowing towards it in thousands, from all corners of the land and from the Diaspora. This mass ascent *the Western Wall had never ever seen* [emphasis mine, H.S.], and it seems that the Jewish people reward it and pay back twice as much for all the years in which it was severed. This is an unparalleled tangible expression of the deep spiritual connection between the people and the Western Wall. (HaCohen 1967: 68)<sup>28</sup>

Thus, with its sudden 'resurrection,' the Western Wall can be considered as the nucleus of an overall transformation. To the hundreds of thousands of pilgrim-visitors who ascended upon the Wall shortly after the war, the massive physical changes in its immediate surroundings, including the demolition of the adjacent neighborhood, manifested as an integral part of this resurrection. Although, of course, this was ordered and carried out following a decision taken by Israeli authorities, in most of the personal stories, it is described as having occurred in a seemingly spontaneous manner. This physical metamorphosis of the Western Wall enhanced the shift from sentiments of longing to those of national command.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, with the sounds of war not yet silenced and without any opportunity for reflection, the bulldozers that destroyed and evacuated the houses of the Mughrabi neighborhood designed a new center of gravity which undercut a familiar landscape and symbolized anew the axis of the Israeli present.<sup>30</sup> The plaza that was opened

<sup>28</sup> As has already been mentioned, attributing personified feelings and senses to the stones is a common motif in Jewish folklore regarding the Western Wall.

<sup>29</sup> The significance that the Western Wall has gained in the stories we heard – now as a physical 'place' – may well be connected to the Jewish idea regarding the interrelationship between the place and the Divine. In fact, as Gurevitch and Aran (1994: 135) remind us, "God himself is called Place (*Makom*). As 'place', God is origin and locus of the sacred which is not within the bounds of the cosmos, and is essentially unplaceable." However, with the unprecedented victory and the accompanying transformation of the actual place, it is no wonder that the Divine was so powerfully felt by many of the interviewees.

<sup>30</sup> Years later, Handelman (2010) in his paper on the actualization of power, has analyzed the overall "vector of force" created and embedded in four different "walls" (architectural forms) built in post-1967 "united Jerusalem," as the cityscape shifts from west to east. Interestingly, as Handelman puts it "it is the dynamics of their vectorization that are crucial, their zeitgeist diffusing through the spaces they organize as they do" (2010: 74). His analysis focuses on bureaucratic aesthetics and the vector connecting walls otherwise distant in topographical space from one another (2010: 76), examines the bridge pylon and three "walls" (2010: 61–62): the first is the new historical museum of the Holocaust (the 'museum-wall'). The second is a massive continuous stretch of new buildings (the 'mall-wall') that crosses the former no-man's-land between Jewish West Jerusalem and the southwestern walls of the Old City. The third is the 'separation barrier' between Palestinian East Jerusalem and its hinterland. In

overnight became a politically and religiously charged center. The Wall ‘adapted itself’ – politically and religiously – to Israel’s future and ‘grew’ in its physical dimensions. To the masses of pilgrims, the new look invested the Wall with transformative powers, symbolizing the magnetic change that many of our interviewees felt physically, and shaped, almost instantaneously, the central symbol of the Six-Day War for years to come.

### **Primary Sources (interviews, in alphabetic order according to first name)**

- A.F.** – Female, age 79 when interviewed by Yiftah Levin in Jerusalem on December 12, 2017.
- A.S.** – Male, age 72 when interviewed by Hagar Salamon in Jerusalem on August 7, 2018.
- B.L.** – Female, age 90 when interviewed by Hagar Salamon and Ivana Saric in Jerusalem on May 11, 2017.
- D.O.** – Female, age 63 when interviewed by Hagar Salamon in Jerusalem on August 7, 2016.
- E.A.** – Male, age 80 when interviewed by Ronni Shaked and Hagar Salamon in Jerusalem on July 1, 2017.
- E.B.** – Female, age 85 when interviewed by Roni Ohad in Jerusalem on May 28, 2017.
- E.N.** – Female, age 77 when interviewed by Yiftah Levin in Jerusalem on June 6, 2018.
- E.O.** – Female, age 80 when interviewed by Roni Ohad in Jerusalem on December 3, 2017.
- G.H.R.** – Female, age 72 when interviewed by Hagar Salamon in Jerusalem on December 17, 2017.
- H.W.** – Male, age 81 when interviewed by Hagar Salamon and Yiftah Levin in Jerusalem on March 7, 2019.

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his interpretation, this series of wall-forms “work” together “creating a multi-dimensional spheroid of forces to contain and imprison Palestinians’ hopes and aspirations.” Although the Western Wall is not mentioned in Handelman’s entire paper, the present study demonstrates the overarching significance of the 1967 encounter with “The Wall” to any other monumental ‘walls’ built in Jerusalem during the post 1967 era, and far beyond.



- J.S.** – Female, age 92 when interviewed by Hagar Salamon in Jerusalem on May 22, 2017.
- L.M.** – Female, age 71 when interviewed by Hagar Salamon, in Jerusalem on May, 2017.
- M.B-O.** – Male, age 88 when interviewed by Regina Bendix, Ronni Shaked and Hagar Salamon, (in the presence of Bosmat Ibi, Rony Ohad and Galit Gaon) in Jerusalem on February 19, 2017.
- M.B-D.** – Female, age 68 when interviewed by Hagar Salamon in Jerusalem on June 12, 2017.
- M.N.** – Male, age 84 when interviewed by Yiftah Levin in Jerusalem on March 5, 2018.
- N.S.** – Female, age 71 when interviewed by Hagar Salamon in Jerusalem on December 20, 2018.
- R.E.** – Female, age 70 when interviewed by Hagar Salamon in Jerusalem on January 30, 2020.
- R.M.** – Male, age 83 when interviewed by Yiftah Levin, in Jerusalem on September 6, 2017.
- R.T.** – Female, age 60 when interviewed by Hagar Salamon, in Jerusalem on April 11, 2018.
- S.E.** – Female, age 68 when interviewed by Hagar Salamon and Yiftah Levin in Jerusalem on November 1, 2018.
- S.W.** – Male, age 69 when interviewed by Hagar Salamon in Jerusalem on August 1, 2017.
- Y.R-K.** – Female, age 80 when interviewed by Rony Ohad in Jerusalem on May 18, 2017.
- Z.G.** – Female, age 63 when interviewed by Yiftah Levin in Jerusalem on November 29, 2018.

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## **INTERVIEW WITH A.M. (MALE)**

DECEMBER 2018

INTERVIEWER: FAHIMA ABBAS (F.)

Fahima was put in touch with A.M. through Hagar Salamon, who had met him in Jerusalem's Old City where A. runs a small laundry in the Christian quarter. He was born in Jerusalem in 1943 and grew up in a house in the formerly Jewish quarter that was under Jordanian rule between 1948 and 1967 and which, following the 1967 war, was taken over by Jewish Israelis. Fahima, herself in her 40s, is a Palestinian-Israeli who grew up in the Galilee, in the North of Israel. She moved to Jerusalem for her studies and stayed there. She could tell that A. was cautious at the beginning of the interview, a stance she related to the fact she was an Israeli-Palestinian. Fahima was aware, she told us subsequently, of a certain amount of reserve, not to say distrust, between Palestinians living in East Jerusalem or the Westbank and Palestinian-Israelis, and A. clearly recognized from her accent and wordings that Fahima comes from the North.

Sitting with him in his small shop, situated at the corner of a steep street from where A. could see people coming and going, Fahima was touched by the grandfatherly care he voiced for her. He encouraged her to never be afraid of any situation, not least based on the stories he was telling her. She sensed how he remembered the fear he and fellow Palestinians felt during those brief days of June 1967, and how strongly the events of 1948 colored how they experienced this new threat. He told her that they had learned from '48 that there is no hope, no chance to change the situation. Fahima, similar to many younger Palestinians, had rarely heard anyone in her family speak about 1967. For her, A.'s narration proved a revelation. Suddenly,

she understood why there was a picture of Nasser in her grandmother's house – hanging amidst family photos. All these years she had been puzzled by this unfamiliar face hanging among relatives, now she grasped what Nasser meant to her people, at that time and for years beyond.

F.: The first thing we want to ask you is: where did you live before the war of '67?

A.: I lived in the area Hosh al-Ghozlan, in the Jewish quarter.

F.: You lived there?

A.: Yes.

### WHEN THE WAR STARTED

F.: Okay, [...] and what happened [...] during the war of '67. What do you remember from the war of '67?

A.: The war started on Monday. It was a Monday. In those days I had a place in Souq al-Housor [lit.: the carpet market], also for ironing. It was next to the Jewish quarter. But it was called Souq al-Housor. My father, God bless his soul, had a place here, in the Christian quarter [...] also for ironing. Every one of us was working [in the family business]. I had my work and he had his. Anyway, we heard on the news about the events in Egypt and all the other things, but I stayed, I mean, I kept working until around noon, the same day I mean. My father came and asked me: "What are you waiting for? Go home!" I wanted to take my things and go at five so I told him: "Everything is alright." In those days we listened to our father, the children listened to their father, so I closed the shop and we went home. We lived in the area of Hosh al-Ghozlan in the Jewish quarter. We spent the night there. God helped us through the events; I mean, the light bombs and things like that. And we [...]

F.: [...] you felt the war? You felt there was a war?

A.: Of course, but you can say it wasn't "a war." It wasn't like people think. Not really a war. If it was war, all the armies were launched from their positions. So we heard the drums, I mean that we heard this [...] It was as if the world had collapsed or something like that.

F.: Was it stun grenades?

A.: Yes. Grenades and other things, and after that it was mostly light bombs. In our *Hosh* [set of buildings with an inner court yard] area we had some twenty families. So you could see [...] we were almost all the men in one place and the ladies in another place. Because nobody could guess [...] could know what would happen. And the next day was the same. The second day, it was

in the evening, they came into our houses. [One of them] said: “If anyone has a weapon – put it next to his house door.”

F.: Who came in? the Jews?

### MISLEADING RADIO BROADCASTS

A.: Yes the Jews. Before they came in, they spoke over the radio. That was the problem: you listened to two broadcasting channels. I’m sorry to tell you that but the Arabic one was lying to us, and the Israeli one was [...] I won’t tell you that [...] they broadcasted in Arabic but you said to each other: “Those Jews, maybe they are lying.” Yes. They said: “Put a white flag on your house and if you have a weapon, put it on your doorstep.” They said that in Arabic. And the Arabs told you: “We reached that point, we did that [...].”

F.: The Arabs? Which station did you listen to?

A.: The “Voice of the Arabs” [*Sawt al-Arab*].

F.: To whom did it belong?

A.: Egypt, because Egypt was the superpower back then. It was the source of it. We didn’t trust Jordan or the East Front because Jordan was bought: anything that happened, they overheard in Israel. Do you understand? They [the Jordanians] talked with Abdel Nasser over the phone and they [the Israelis] caught it live. He told them: “Come with me to the war.” But the king didn’t agree, he told him [Nasser] “I don’t have air cover.” So he [Nasser] answered him: “I have one!” Egypt in those days had a strong air cover, MiG [...] powerful Russian MiG aircraft. It’s true. And they [...] but you can’t know what the end of it will be. Anyway, the Israelis told us put your weapon outside, anyone with weapon – put it down and put out a white flag. But, on the other hand, “Voice of the Arabs” is telling you: We did those things and Ahmed Sa’id [said]: “Oh fish! Bon appetite” and Umm Kulthum published<sup>1</sup> [...], God bless their souls, “Our dear Abdel Nasser, we want to drink our coffee in Tel-Aviv.” We heard all of those slogans. We believed that any moment the Iraqi army would come. We had rooftops on our houses and we could see the Sahat al-Haram [Temple Mount] like it was in our hand, that close! From our rooftops we could see its floor. Anyway, we saw an army and I hoped it was the Iraqi army as people said it would be. But unfortunately it was the Israeli one. Do you understand? It was not Iraqi at all!

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<sup>1</sup> In 1967, Ahmed Sa’id was a well-known Egyptian radio broadcaster and the main announcer for *Sawt al-Arab* (Voice of the Arabs). Umm Kulthum is one of the most popular Arab singers famous throughout the Arab world and beyond, and a dedicated Egyptian patriot. She had many songs supporting Nasser.

F.: How did you notice it's Israeli?

### **ENCOUNTERING ISRAELIS (OR MERCENARIES) FOR THE FIRST TIME**

A.: They came into our houses, how could we know? We don't know anything about weapons and they all dressed in uniforms [...] all of that and "The Iraqi army! The Iraqi army!" All of that was rumors. We were surprised when they came to us in the afternoon of the second day, it was very fast and let me tell you: they weren't Jews, one of them was like two meters high and spoke English, his hair was bright and their clothes were torn. God save us [...] God save us, they were mercenaries. Do you understand?

F.: You mean they were Arabs?

A.: No, no [...] foreign mercenaries.

F.: From Western countries?

A.: Yes. From Western countries. And they were with that thing that you put in the animal mouth [referring to helmet straps looking like bridles]. They did those things and the Jews [...] we didn't know about them, we didn't know what Hebrew was.

F.: Did you hear Hebrew? Somebody spoke Hebrew?

### **TAKEN FROM HOME AND BLINDFOLDED**

A.: They all spoke English. At the time they took us nobody [spoke Hebrew] all of them spoke English. They took us to [...] they covered our eyes, [They took] all the men including my father and brothers. They took us to an area [...] even today I don't know where we were, I'm telling you the truth. They covered our eyes, so if someone tells you we were in a specific place, he is lying. Because we were blindfolded, so we couldn't know. Anyway, they took us to this place [...] blindfolded, interrogated us. But we felt gravel beneath us.

[...]

A.: It was on the way they took us. We were talked to by a table. Someone talked with you or asked you in Arabic. We were still blindfolded

[...].

At the time of Jordan [Jordanian rule], each had his occupation or work in his passport. So they took us separately to the table. It was a table just for questions. "What's your name? Where is your passport?" For example: There it is [...] he takes the passport. "What is your occupation?" and so on [...] "Ok. You can go." They didn't talk. Just questions and answers. What is his occupation? What is his job? They took us in vehicles in the night, so we couldn't recognize anything except the fact that we are in the yard of Sahat



al-Haram. It was the first moment [that we knew where we were], we didn't know where the interrogation was. We knew that we were under the *iwans*,<sup>2</sup> it was then when we saw those of the green berets, which are known as "border police." [At the time] we didn't know what border police were or anything like that. I'm telling you the truth. They spoke Arabic, I mean some of them spoke. And we didn't know what they were, Jews or something else. Most of them were Arabs or Druze but we didn't know that. That's right. We stayed the night over there. On the second day [...] at Sahat al-Haram [...] yes [...] they blindfolded us once more and so. On the second day, they brought us sandwiches [...] to Sahat al-Haram and told us that we can go to our home. "What do you mean we can go home? We need to go to the Jewish quarter, to Hosh al-Ghozlan, like that? And what will happen if we meet someone on the way?" We talked to someone, an officer. By the way, they took our watches, all our money and also the passports because [...] well, we were blindfolded. But all of it is not important. We told him [...] it was my father who talked to the men who told us to go home. "And if someone meets us on the way, what will be our proof that [all of this really happened]?" And do you know what he told us? He told us: "Use the cloth that we closed your eyes with and leave it on your neck and then, if someone sees you – you could tell him that you were at al-Haram." And we agreed. We took ourselves and it really happened on the way! We told them the story and they didn't have anything to say. We got to the house and the atmosphere there wasn't good either. We went inside [...] They took the people from other places: my friends, my uncles. And from other places. They cleaned the whole world. We heard the fire. And just God could know what would be next.

F.: What do you mean by "fire"?

### FIRST EXPERIENCES AS THE POWERS CHANGE

A.: Gun shots. If anyone got out, they shot his legs. Until today I don't know [...]. We heard the fire like I'm hearing you. [...]. Later, on Wednesday or Thursday, they told us that they wanted to open the shops for one hour. And we loved it [...] because my store at the carpet market was close to the wall and it was well-known that it was the Jordanian army which sat there. We wanted to go and observe instead of doing something else. We said that we must go to the wall because the world had changed and we wanted to see what had happened. We climbed from someone's [place] to the wall and God help us! I saw a soldier from the Jordanian army with his STEN machine gun. We called it STEN. You could put its legs on the wall. He and his gun were all burnt. Can you imagine? The Jews killed him with napalm grenades. It was

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<sup>2</sup> An *ivan* is a typical architectural feature in a mosque, featuring a vaulted space that opens on one side to a courtyard. Sahat al-Haram is surrounded by beautiful *iwans*.

a disaster, they had become one. The Jordanian army got orders to withdraw because those damn dogs knew. Sorry for talking like that but it is true! The big ones knew the scenarios and the little ones were left to be killed, the order didn't get to them. Some parts got the order and left, but a big part of them stayed to fight and those had the same fate. Right? But those who remained were killed, I mean, despite all the orders that came, it did not interest them, the fighters remained to think about ammunition and everything else. "Hello and goodbye," do you understand, my dear? That's us for the '67 war, it was a comedy. There were talks in the area of the al-Saadiyya neighborhood. There were a few armed men, for example, one had an English rifle with five bullets, it wasn't useful but he thought [...] he thought he would free the country or [...] it was a very emotional time [...] or something like that [...] believe me, everything was a waste of time. And when the Jews came peacefully – we presented them with everything on a silver platter, so it wasn't a war like what you think, they occupied, they went [...] no! But yes, there are many people who fled from the Jewish quarter to Jordan, a lot!

F.: They fled alone?

A.: The Jews brought trucks to Bab al-Amud [Damascus Gate, one of the main Old City gates] and said: "Whoever wants to go, come on, please! Anyone who wants to can get out via the bridge, who wants to get out safely – you're welcome!" They did not press anyone, but the intention was to get a lot of people out. You understand? Some people who were really afraid told me: "Only Allah knows what will happen, what they will do." [...] they had stories [...] So they left everything and went. But they went with the intention of coming back. Sorry, but they thought that it is for a day, two days, a week, a month [...] God knows how long. They did not think it would continue to these days; it was all illusions of the Arabs. Illusions [...] understand? And to this day, there are people who are waiting eagerly. There were people who had had enough after a month and began to return by infiltration. Do you know what infiltration is?

F.: No, what is it?

A.: Infiltration is without permission, crossing the Jordan River through the shooting. You understand? For example, they swam and crossed the river, which was the border. But what happened? There were people, Arabs, who worked with the Jews. For example, they told the Jews that a group of twenty wanted to pass, they made a deal with Israel that ten will pass, or you will catch them, or they would give them to them or some another arrangement [...] I mean they would let them be discovered. And a lot of people came through these infiltrations.

F.: And they stayed here?

### THOSE WHO FLED

A.: And they stayed here. Now those who stayed there – to this day there are people who suffer from the family reunification and their jobs are here, their shops are here, their homes are here, their families are here, everything that was their basis in this country [...] I swear to you! And they went there to live in tents [...] Where are they from? I will tell you the truth, it's a tragedy. And some of them are known, important people, but the fear made them emerge. And God knows that they suffer from this issue and to this day, there are people who are in the refugee camps of al-Baka and al-Yarmuk and in a thousand more places, in Jordan, I mean. And I can tell you that their situation is better than that of those in Lebanon, better than those in Lebanon! You understand? They work, build families, build houses, study. This is our situation today, can you understand?

### ABDEL NASSER AND THE TRAITOR

A.: As for the Arab countries, sorry, Abdel Nasser was the only one we thought of, but he did not escape responsibility, you are the president – you are responsible. He relied on his relative, al-Musheir [field marshall] Abd al-Hakim Amer. He was the commander of the whole army and a close relative of Abdel Nasser, and he [Nasser] believed in him. You understand? And Israel bought him [the relative] for a million dollars. Sorry. By the way, at the end he committed suicide in the hammam. You should know that! In any case he worked for [...] I mean Al-Musheir [...] Do you know what Al-Musheir is? Abd al-Hakim Amer [...] in the moment Abdel Nasser told him: "Is there anything new, al-Musheir?" What did he answer him? He replied: "Mr. President," they called him "the President." "Our planes are bombing Tel Aviv!" And do you know where the planes were? Ruined at Egyptian airports. They destroyed them completely. The nylon was still attached to them – they did not have time to use them. They were ruined in the airports, the Egyptian planes, and they were the ones which were supposed to give the Jordanian front the air cover. The Egyptian planes, which were a leading force, were destroyed at the airports. Every one of them at the airport – ruined!

F.: And that was before [...]

A.: Before they had any chance to leave [...] before they had time to leave! They were destroyed before they had any time to leave, and everything was with orders from Abd al-Hakim Amer, and Nasser asked him: "What is the news?" And he replied: "Our planes are bombing Tel Aviv." At the same time, they [the Jews] prepared an iron cage to put Abdel Nasser inside and take him to Tel Aviv as a prisoner [...]. If you did talk to any Jew [he would tell you] "Nasser should be killed!" He was so strong [...] he was popular, he was not a traitor but he had influence [...]. [In] '67, Nasser was the first to

resign, that's the truth! And as soon as he resigned, the people arose and demanded that he was kept on [as president]! But he had a stroke because of the situation, he got to the point where [...] that was the reason for his stroke, Abd al-Hakim Amer and things like that, he trusted him and everything, but he destroyed everything. Do you understand? Now his heir and the others were good. Believe me darling, I'm talking about Mubarak. He was a fine commander! Number one commander of the Egyptian Air Force, and that is not that easy. As for the hyena, the hyena, with all due respect, is Sadat. He arrived in '78 as I speak to you. Before he arrived, he spoke with all the Arab countries. He said: "I want to make peace with Israel." That was because he relied on no one and that was the only way for him. Then they praised the hyena, Begin and Carter. They said Sadat was the one who laughed the most about the Jews. Because he took his land without even a drop of blood. [...] He said: "I want the land," and he got it completely. And he got it after courts, and discussions and hard work and it was only a mile but he received the whole, to this day it has not changed. There was no settlement at the time, there was nothing, and it was easier than today, not a transference of Jerusalem and the West Bank [...] It was all in Sadat's time. When he reached the Knesset [Israeli parliament], the Arabs boycotted him and called him a traitor and assassinated him. But [...] I wish, I wish, I wish it would happen again as it did with Sadat. My dear, no chance, a few years after '78 there were no settlements and the Jews were back to expand. [...] Without Sadat we would not be here. Sorry I lingered.

[...]

#### **REAL ESTATE DEALS AND LEAVING THE JEWISH QUARTER**

F.: When you came back to the *Hashb* you lived in [...] do you still live there today or [...]?

A.: We stayed there until '70. In '70, [...] the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Religious Ministry, the Ministry for I don't know what, and there was one named E., if I'm not mistaken he died not long ago, E. was an officer in the army not in the police, He was old and spoke Moroccan. They appointed him with a few Arab brokers to buy the apartments in the Jewish quarter or here. He didn't pay with his own money. But no one lived in a house that was really belonging to him. Not one person!

F.: To whom would the houses belong?

A.: Rentals. All rentals.

F.: Here?

A.: Yes. All rented from the Nashashibi, the Ja'ouni family, the Al-Alami family. These were the families that had [properties there]. It was part of what they called "absentee land guard" or "ILA," you understand? Now, we were focused on the three stores of ours, giving the government something symbolic as a rental. The house we lived in belonged to the Nimer family. To the Nimer family and this was a *Waqf* [charitable endowment] of the Nimer family. Nimer collected all the rent for the year. We rented the place, he collected the rent from all of us. And what happened to us? A lot of people, the entire Jewish quarter [...] was emptied of people.

F.: The entire Jewish quarter was populated by –

A.: – Arabs. They were all Arabs.

F.: There weren't any Jews living in the Jewish quarter at the time?

A.: Before 1948.

F.: No, I mean during the war.

A.: No, no.

F.: The 1967 war.

A.: No [...] no Jews, where?

F.: No? Not even a single Jew?

A.: Where? The city was divided.

F.: [...] Were there Jews who entered the Jewish quarter? In 1970?

A.: In 1970? A million! Two times a million! I'm telling you, they sold it all, nothing was left, not from the orchards of the Ashkenazim and not from the Jewish quarter, it used to be full of Arabs and all the things were there! Those Arab brokers came from this land, from Israel. Surely they paid them very well, you know? "Take this amount. Go to Abu Azzam and buy him, go and make them to sell the apartment for several thousand pounds." Two, three, ten, or twenty. Some people never had a penny in their lives, they saw him and gave him [the apartment] and Israel was not interested in that story, she knew who lived there and did not ask about the owner of the apartment.

[...]

F.: But he was the renter?

A.: Renters. The country knew who lived in the apartments and did not know and did not ask who owned them and if someone says that the owner sold the apartments, he is a liar, no apartment owner did so.

F.: Well then, the renter sold?

A.: The renter! The renter sold something that wasn't his, now that's why I'm telling you that here lies the problem. The Ministry of Religious Affairs took over almost everything, there were not many parts left in the Jewish quarter [that weren't bought by Israel], believe me! Now there were about twenty [apartments] in our *Hosh*, ten or twelve of them sold. In other words, we and another five or six remained, we refused to sell. We have a house that we built in 1964 and it is still standing in Ras al-Amud, thank God. This was not our house [the house in the Jewish quarter] but the [agent from the Ministry of Religion] tried to convince us and we told him: "No." Also, I hope it won't happen to you, they began to bring to the empty apartments, the apartments that were sold, they began to bring donkeys [...]. They put them into the *Hosh*, put them in there, and started to make all kind of troubles. It was all over our heads, you understand? My father, God bless him, said, "How long can we stand it?" We had two stories, and our family was five and five, and I had a brother who was married, God bless, and they were all in good health and living well and a thousand times thanks to God. The brokers came to us and our father said: "This apartment belongs to the Nimer family, to the Nimer family, and we will not be involved with buying and selling." We went to Nimer and said: "Please here are the keys to the apartment. We have an apartment in Ras al-Amud, thank you and goodbye." We packed ourselves and left. The same thing happened with the neighbors, but I do not know if they sold or handed it over to the owner. [...]

F.: Well you're in the war [...].

A.: Yes.

F.: How many days?

A.: Three and four days.

F.: Three, four days and that's it?

A.: And that's it!

F.: This period [...].

A.: They say it was six days [...] three or four days and I've already gone to the market. I went down there. They started to open for an hour or two. On the third day, I was already in the market.

F.: On the third day you are already in the market [...].

A.: To meet the people.

**THE MARKETS REOPEN AND THE JEWS BUY EVERYTHING**

F.: When did you return to work? After a few days?

A.: Once we were allowed to open for two or three hours, everything was normal. And the Jews entered like crazy into the markets, everything was cheap. Everything was one Lira, the shops were packed. Clothes, souvenirs, sweets, they came in and cleaned out all the markets.

F.: Bought all the goods in the market?

A.: They bought lots! Why? To empty all the things we had in order to make us buy from their supplies and to fill our shops from them.

F.: All of it? But they will let you import goods from the outside

A.: There was no outside! There was nothing from Jordan, it was closed, there was nothing. Today you can bring meat or all kinds of things from Israel. [After the war we] sold at low prices but bought at high ones.

**CHANGING CURRENCY**

A.: Another thing that Israel did was to spread a rumor that the Jordanian Dinar would sink. They said it was worth nothing, one dinar for seven pounds or something like that. I know people, priests, who were millionaires; they brought bags [of money] to the bank! Bags! And went to change it in the bank. They gave their dinar and took Israeli currency. The dinar had its price in gold. Do you understand what this means? They fooled [the people], that the Jordanian dinar had devalued [...] there was faith among the people. We, all the children, knew that the Jordanian dinar had its value in gold, its value, that is, there was no connection, even if the government goes, there is gold in the safes. Not, it was not like the Lebanese dinar or [...] or other currencies [...] or the Egyptian, no, no [...] or even the Israeli Lira. [The Jordanian dinar] was like the U.S. dollar. You understand? But unfortunately they managed to fool the public. Everyone who had some amount went to the bank and changed it to Israeli money.

[...]

**PALESTINIANS ALLOWED TO KEEP THEIR JOBS WITH THE POLICE**

A.: Lira! It was worth nothing! Do you know it? The landlord gave you a hundred or two hundred and another one as a gift, like he was doing you a favor. The police wore Arab uniforms in 1967 and their salary was forty Lira. Forty Lira! The teacher also got paid forty Lira, the teacher! Forty Lira! The educated cops were paid fifty Lira, those despicable ones. They worked for forty Lira but don't forget it is forty Lira for someone who has a uniform and

looks well and so. [The Arabs] were allowed to join the police, not the army, the police. In the East Jerusalem police, there were many who arrived from the West Bank, from the Arab side, received uniforms from Israel, they stopped distinguishing between people from Jerusalem or [the West Bank] Anyway, many had Jerusalem Police uniforms but they came from the West Bank. After [Israel's] victory many left. But we still have some people who took the jobs in '67, some of them retired, some of them stayed and had officers' courses, went to Shfaram [where the Israeli Police Training School used to be]. Understand? There are those who remained in the police force and left, [...] and a few of them were from the Jordanian police, officers, do you understand me? And [the Israelis] did not get excited about them, they gave them a job and the same rank as before, [...] they had a responsibility, you cannot say that they insulted them. They were important.

**“IT WASN’T SIX COUNTRIES AND IT WASN’T SIX DAYS.”**

F.: Well in the war [...] the people who were taken [from their houses to the Sahat al-Haram], what happened to their women?

A.: They stayed in the houses.

F.: No one suspected them or anything?

A.: No, no [...] You mean like [...] no no [...] Believe me [...].

F.: When you returned, yourself and your father, [the women] did not talk to you? They did not ask you, “Tell us what happened in the war?”

A.: No, no.

F.: They did not tell you that anything happened [...].

A.: No, no [...]. They asked us [...] we asked about them and the houses, not the opposite.

F.: Nothing happened to them? Did they not feel there was a war?

A.: No[...] They felt it but it did not influence them, they stayed in the houses, no one went to bring a lemon. You understand? Why? I'll tell you: three or four days and it was over. The film was over. [It] is the simplest thing, they took us and that's it. You understand? That's what it was. They said that the 1967 war is a six-day war, six Arab states, and I do not know what else, it's their things. It wasn't six countries and wasn't six days. But they present it by saying what they want, but the truth is far from that, my dear. Those who say to you it was war, Israel fought and so on – it's all a lie. Believe me, it's all a lie. Everything was about submission. Jordan, as I tell you, gave the whole West Bank so easily. And they gave orders to retreat. The whole world was in Neve Ya'akov, a huge army camp. Every place was full of army. The army in



al-Ram withdrew. A lot of people were on their way to Jericho, convoys and more convoys and then bombs landed on them and they were killed on the way by those bombs. I'm very sorry. What did they think? God knows. [The Israelis] thought it might be an army or something like that, but it was families that ran away, women and children. God help them.

F.: But why was that? They heard that there was shooting. [...] Did not they hear gunfire?

A.: They didn't see anything.

F.: They didn't see anything? They just heard that Israel had entered.

A.: Yes. Because they heard. In the '48 war they fled, you understand? And many were afraid that they would destroy the land and you know it's important to us. They could do what they wanted, no matter what you say, unfortunately. It can be very bad and you cannot do anything. If you refused, you would become a victim.

[...]

A.: That's the truth. And those who say they attacked women [...] We [...]

F.: The women did not stay in the houses?

A.: In the houses.

F.: They took the men.

A.: Yes. They did not take a single woman. You understand? Even the little boys, the little boys remained. But me and my brothers and my father, not all the men.

F.: From what age?

A.: Over the age of 20 or something like that. You understand? That doctor, I told you about him, my brother, he was small yeah? Even my late mother told him: "They left me only you [...]." He was still small [...] "They were all taken away and you are the only one left." No one knew what was going to happen [...] Once we got back to my mother's house, we asked mother and the sisters: "Did they come inside? Did they make a search?" A search is like they entered and turned over things and picked them up and put them somewhere else [...] No [...] In this 1967 war when they entered, they came to us and gave us documents. We asked them: "What are those?" They answered: "It's for getting the Israeli I.D." "Okay, so where do I get one?" And he told me, "From the court on Salah al-Din Street," and it cost us ten Groush at that time [...] We gave them the document and we took a blue identity card. In green or in blue, no one could tell the difference between the blue and the green, if anyone told you he knew – he was lying, no one knew anything,

believe me. [...] We were really happy, they gave us something. It turned out that there was one for the West Bank and there was something different for Jerusalem. And then people started to apply for family reunification, and this is what is happening even today. Israel, how strong is Israel my dear? And yet the Arab [states] were lying, I'm sorry, I do not want to justify the Jews or tell you something like it, but it's a tragedy.

[...]

F.: Those Arab countries in the war did not intervene?

A.: No.

F.: None?

A.: We only encouraged, I will tell you the truth, only Egypt was the key for all of it. [...]. I had a radio, we listened to the "Voice of the Arabs" and the broadcaster used to sing [...] to talk [...]. If a Jordanian security intelligence officer passes by and hears you are listening to the radio, and the "Voice of the Arabs," he would take you and the radio. It was forbidden to listen to the "Voice of the Arabs." They said that the "Voice of the Arabs" was broadcasting against the Jordanian regime. Understand? Because [Jordan had] a monarch and all that, and the public did not agree with him, and we believed in Egypt, I tell you only the truth! But that does not happen today. I do not blame anyone but it's not like Egypt today. Egypt used to be one way and today it is something completely different.

[...]

F.: The Jerusalemites, what did they do in the war?

A.: Nothing! They had no weapons!

F.: They had no weapons?

A.: Why are you surprised? It was forbidden! They had no weapons at all. Now you can go and look at the municipality, the old city hall and not the new building that was built recently, the one that was before. You have the wall right in front of it, so from there we heard how the wall [...]. It was like the world was getting destroyed. We went out and do you know how the scalpel makes a hole in the stone? It's like small pieces, to this day! To this day you can see where the bullets hit, how the stone is broken. It's like cardboard, we heard explosion of a grenade and it was like cardboard, it sounded like the cannon of *Ramadan*.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In East Jerusalem, as in other Muslim cities, shooting a cannon marks the end of the *Ramadan* fast each evening.

F.: The Jews were those who shot?

A.: No! The Arabs fired from the walls.

F.: Okay, but they shot at whom?

A.: At the Jews! At the municipality building [...] but everything was for nothing.

F.: They just shot at a building?

A.: Yes [...] they shot [...] at what was ahead of them. In front of them was the building and there wasn't [...] there is down here this bell tower and in front of it [...].

F.: They shot at it?

A.: Yes, they thought [the Israelis] were there or something, but it was all false news. Do you understand? All the [Jordanian] infantry fired and the canons fired [...]. The artillery also [...] after the artillery stopped the shooting, they looked at the place they was shooting at – there was nothing left, it was like cardboard!

F.: Did you go there to see?

A.: Yes. I saw it all. I used to go to the Armenian monastery, there is a place there. It was before the 1967 war, and we would look at the Mamilla area, which was called no-man's-land. Nowadays it's the Mamilla mall, it was the no-man's-land. Everything was ruined there and whoever was caught passing – shot immediately. It did not matter whether he was a Jew or an Arab.

#### **WATCHING FROM NO-MAN'S-LAND**

F.: Who shot them?

A.: The two sides: the Jews stood on the border and the Arabs on the wall and people would sneak in from the inside and if they were caught or caught by the Arabs, they shot them and if the Jews caught them, then the same thing [happened]. You understand? It was in Mamilla all the way to al-Shamaa. I do not know if you know the area of al-Shamaa and Montefiore and Jorat al-'Anab, it was all in no-man's-land. You understand? The Armenian monastery had an open area, we could see the Qubbaniya of the Tomb of King David, but it was easy to find because it has a round shape. But when looking from a distance, we did not see people walking down there. No! It was forbidden! We were like this [...] near al-Bawaka, the Jews were in the Qubbaniya. We saw the Jews pass this way and entering the place, but in the distance we could not identify berets, not even green ones.

F.: From where would you see them?

A.: From the area of the Armenian Monastery. On the wall.

F.: So you did it in the war too?

A.: No, that was before the war.

F.: But in the war [...].

A.: In the war, the Bab al-Khalil [Jaffa Gate] was closed and also the al-Bab al-Jadid [New Gate].

F.: All right [...], they were closed in the time of the war.

A.: It was forbidden! Everything was sealed in concrete. This was the beginning of the no-man's-land. You understand? Everything, there was nothing there, everything was closed. Now about Jaffa Gate, I forgot to tell you that in the second day [...] I noticed that there was someone called Sheikh Yassin al-Bakri. God bless his soul, he was very eager and on Monday before the war, in the morning, he went out, [...] on a horse, that poor man, fooled by few youngsters and they all walked towards the Jaffa Gate.

F.: Where did they go?

A.: They said [...] they shouted slogans. They were from Talat al-Sharara, and from the al-Samu neighborhood which was attacked in the 1967 war.

F.: What happened to it?

A.: Al-Samu. The Jews attacked it and hurt them. Al-Sharara was the only [...]

F.: They attacked who?

A.: The people of Al-Samu. The army did it.

F.: The army of the Jews came and attacked them?

A.: Sure! They attacked there and killed a few people, and from then on things came out of balance and everything happened very quickly.

F.: Between [...] it was not between the Jordanians and [...]. It was between the Palestinians who lived there, and the Jews?

A.: No, no [...]. Jordan has nothing to do with it. Yes, the Palestinians of al-Samu. You understand? Al-Sharara was part of al-Samu. [...] Now I told you that I remember this Monday [...] Sheikh Yassin went out on horseback [...] and he went out, and the youngsters behind him, and some of them shouted slogans. What were they shouting? They called to him: "Our cousin, Abu Khalil, open the gates for us!" "Our cousin, Abu Khalil, open the gates for us!" We did not like this sight, who are you riding on a horse with a sword in your hand? Will you open Jaffa Gate? It was a tragedy! I'm sorry to talk like that. Just a few hours earlier he was like this [...] "Where is Abu Khalil? Where

is the Jaffa Gate?” Until the Jews opened the gate it was all concrete, the New Gate was also completely closed.

F.: In the war [...].

A.: Mandelbaum [gate] was the border.

### **BURNING DOWN THE EAST JERUSALEM POLICE CENTER**

F.: The Jews opened the [...]

A.: [...] of course the Jews! Sure it was them! Who wanted to open the gate? The Arabs? Write that the Jews opened this and they began everything. The first thing they did was take over the Qishla, the police center. They found there official things [...] names [...] you know, there are all sorts of things that [...] in the area [...] Salah al-Din was an area that was called the “court.” It used to belong to the passport department with all what comes with it. Also very secret matters. And there was one, a Christian, Abu Nicola Agenha. He was head of the intelligence. This guy, when he heard what was going on, and he really did the best, I’m not just saying that. He set fire to the entire office! This person. You see, he was a scholar and he heard what was happening, and there were official matters and basic and secret matters. So Abu Nicola Agenha set fire to the whole office, burning everything, no matter if they were good people or bad [people’s papers]. It’s true that it also helped some of the people, because there were a lot of people who had been under observation. Jordan is a serious country, even if it was only a mandate. I considered it a Jordanian occupation, it was also an occupation; Jordan occupied us for twenty years and did nothing here. Anyone who wanted something had to go to Jordan. You want to build a factory? Jordan. You want something else [...]? As if this dirty man [the Jordanian king] knew that one day he would hand over this area and it actually happened. As far as Jerusalem is concerned, do not forget that his grandfather was killed here and it is not a trivial thing. He was seven years old when his grandfather was murdered in 1951 and he was with him on the Sahat al-haram on that day. The ones who killed him were Sed-Mir and Asi. Their families were Jerusalemites and they were executed afterwards. When he was crowned as king he was eighteen years old and already king of Jordan. He was crowned and also his brother Fissal. One was the king of Iraq and the other of Jordan, East Jordan, Transjordan. But the man who actually ran things was one named Claude Basha. The king didn’t have anything to do; he was only king ostensibly. The person who ran all the affairs and the army was this guy. They called him Abu Hanik [the furious]. He was shot by a Palestinian. When King Hussein married Dina, we attended the wedding in Amman. She was the first Egyptian [wife]. He married her and we were at a wedding on the balconies. Dina is here today, I’ll

tell you where. She is in Bethlehem and married to a guy from the al-Tam'ari family.

F.: Yes [...] Salah al-Tam'ari.

A.: Well done!

[...]

F.: Was there a curfew during the war? I mean, did they tell you, "You must not leave the houses!"

A.: Sure, Israel. For example, they allowed us to leave the house for two or three hours, and then it was forbidden to be out again. The Arabs obeyed the curfew. There were no televisions like today; we used to sit and listen to the radio. After the war, we listened only to Israel Radio in Arabic, I'm serious. You would listen to them and believe what they said. You understand? It's not that the Jerusalemites are liars, but their radio was still more reliable than the Arabs' broadcasts we got.

[...]

### **THE DEMOLITION OF FAMILY DWELLINGS AT THE WESTERN WALL**

F.: There was no issuing of expropriation orders during the war.

A.: No, they issued an expropriation order only to the Mughrabi Gate. That's it. [The area] was all dwellings and shops that were adjacent to the Kotel [Western Wall], al-Mabkehm [Arabic term for the Western Wall] was the first thing they did on the second day of the war. On the second day, tractors removed the people, and they destroyed even the furniture, destroyed [the houses] with or without the furniture.

F.: They forced the people to leave?

A.: Yes, they were forced out because [...] because they wanted the Western Wall. But it looked nothing like today. It was much smaller! But they have expanded it. In those days the Mughrabi quarter was all residences. We lived in the Jewish quarter, we were very close to the Mughrabi quarter. If we have a chance, I will show you where the Mughrabi quarter was and where [...] where we planted all sorts of things [...]. We were very close.

F.: This was the only quarter near the Western Wall?

A.: Only the Mughrabi quarter, yes. The Mughrabi quarter, but no other quarters.

F.: And all the shops in the market remained Arab? They didn't issue orders to other places?

A.: No, no, they bought [other places].

[...]

F.: No, but during the war?

A.: No, they didn't take that during the war. All of this is new, everything is due to sales, and the only thing that was taken during the war is the Mughrabi quarter. It was necessary for them; they would do it at any cost. They did not give you the option; they let them go out of the houses and then demolished them, everything and not just the walls.

[...]

F.: If you need to summarize the war, what is war for you?

A.: The war, I say it as a joke, it has longing in it

F.: No [...]. War [...]. How did you live through the war? The war was not [...]

A.: How did I survive the war? I did not feel it. It was as if one occupier had gone and the other arrived.

F.: Did you feel that way?

A.: Yes. There was no confrontation [...] no. In war, you must use everything. You can't [...] Excuse me for saying that but they did not do anything. This war should have been total. But I felt that the Jordanian occupation was over and the Israeli occupation came. After they set it up, of course.

F.: How did the war affect your life until today?

A.: As usual, believe me.

F.: It didn't have much impact on your life?

A.: No. With all the pain of saying such things [...] I had it better before.

F.: So, before that, your situation was better, your situation would have been better financially.

[...]

F.: You have grandchildren, right?

A.: Yes. Fifteen.

F.: God will prolong their lives.

A.: God will keep you.

F.: And you. Well, these fifteen, are you telling them about the war?

A.: Yes, I tell them.

F.: What do you tell them exactly?

A.: I tell them that it is all just lies on top of other lies.

[laughter]

F.: But do they ask you, for example: “Grandfather, tell us about the war?”

A.: Some of them do. Some people ask questions: What was back then? What happened? What [...]

F.: And what do you tell them?

A.: I tell them that Jordan, and all the Arab countries were a failure and the Jews [...] I do not compare the Jews and say they are better. They were more determined. I tell them that the Jews believed more in their words than the Arabs. The Arabs are from our own, but they laughed at their own people and it's still like that today. Fear strengthens them, I tell you the truth.

[...]

### **IT WAS LIKE A MOVIE**

F.: What did you think of this war? Did you think they were going to invade Jerusalem? Is that what you thought?

A.: Yes. Of course! The city surrendered, there wasn't [...] And it wasn't just me. Even people older than me knew that Jerusalem had surrendered. Believe me dear, whatever you want, I'll describe to you. Like a movie [...] like a movie.

F.: That's it! Describe the movie here.

A.: Like a movie [...] like a movie [...] my great God [...] my great God [...].

F.: I want to hear [...].

A.: My dear, it was really like a movie, my dear. You can't catch it [...] if you hear it, you wouldn't sit like that. Without being disrespectful, but yesterday you would sit like this, a respectable lady, and on the second day you woke up and you were under occupation. You understand what I mean? And all [of this] with the “assistance” of the Arab countries. And what was your harm? It's like a dream, as the saying goes: swallow the fire and it will eat you from inside. Swallow the fire – and be burnt from within. We were sitting on this fire and you can see the result. There was hope that at any minute it would be better, but on the second day, the Jews said, “Hold up your white flags! Up! Up! Up! That place is to surrender.”

[...]



### THE EXPERIENCE OF '48 INFLUENCES DECISIONS IN '67

A.: The truth is that my mother, God bless her memory, was very sober, I told you. My Dad lived at the time of the 1948 war, and my mother also, that time wasn't so far from tragedy.

F.: No [...] Where were they at that time?

A.: It's not important; they thought they would come back.

F.: In 1948, they also lived in Jerusalem?

A.: Yes, of course. But they did not want to experience the same thing again. Kfar Kassem<sup>4</sup> and things like that, everything that happened to those who remained and those who fled. You understand? They killed a lot of people then, not that it surprised the Jews, we are not saying that they were saints, no, but during the war of 1967, they were not allowed [to kill]; if they were allowed to, they would have killed more.

F.: Who did not allow them?

A.: I imagine that the big countries were saying: "You occupied the territory so at least don't make them run away." That's how I feel that if not [for that prohibition], the Jews [...], because it was a mess, you understand? But I think that they entered places, but had no interest in what was going on in them, even today they are destroying a lot. Today! If he [the Jew] goes searching, then he destroys everything, today! And in those days [...] Today there are more possibilities and they can do more things, unfortunately. But at the time of the war, it wasn't like that, and I understand a thing or two about wars. One may do many crimes, but no one accounts for them. In the war they were good, do you understand me? No one was interested in us. If, God forbid, he made problems .

F.: You think that your family was aware of the situation?

A.: Yes and still they did not think about escape! No no! And where could we run? It was really an option [...] And what would have happened [...] In Hebron [...] But as I told you, God blessed us, we survived, and for my father it was the same thing [as in '48], we saw the situation that was before and how people suffered or how [...] and I tell you, without intention to hurt you, what

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<sup>4</sup> Mentioning Kafr Kassem relates to a tragic massacre which occurred in this village on October 29, 1956. The village of Kafr Kassem was then near the border with Jordan. It was the first day of Israel's Sinai operation, and a curfew was administered on the villages in that area to avoid raids coming through them. However, many villagers had not heard of the curfew, and on their way back home from their fields that evening, a Border Police unit had shot and killed 43 men, women and children and injured 13. An Israeli court later would call the order to open fire "blatantly illegal." See Lieber, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/60-years-on-in-kafr-kassem-a-massacre-still-bleeds/> (accessed April 30, 2020).

should have happened – we accept it, life or death. And that’s what happened to us.

F.: We will not move from our land.

A.: That is the truth, that is, even if my sisters and myself were dead. You know what? We said the *Shabada* [the Islamic creed, declaring the oneness of God and acceptance of Muhammad as His messenger], you do not know what will happen, so we could not stand it anymore and we said, “All of this is the will of Allah.”

F.: Did you say the *Shabada*? Did you say it that night?

A.: Sure, you do not know what will happen at night, it was for any case [...]

F.: How much did you managed to sleep that night?

A.: It wasn’t a sleep, you are sleeping with your clothes on, and with the shoes, of course, you understand? At any moment you may go out and you can’t know because they came in waves all night long. As the saying goes: If the fish is asleep, we will sleep too. But my uncle thought of something [...].

[...]

A.: We thanked God before everything, really [...]

F.: You thanked him for staying alive?

A.: Sure! You can say many times that you have faith in your Lord but it’s always a possibility. And we knew that war can be unclear, no one asks questions. Do you understand? There is no one who asks and there isn’t anyone responsible. One big mess. But it was just the opposite. I don’t want to protect the Jews, but it’s not like people say it is, that they’re sure the Jews destroyed more or entered the houses after we left, took the men and raped the women. I’m telling you the truth. All of this didn’t happen and also wasn’t close to happening.

[...]

It may be war, but people like to dress well

F.: And you had a laundry?

A.: Yes.

F.: After these days, what hours would you open? Of course you weren’t open for long hours.

A.: I worked [...].

F.: Were there people who brought you things to iron?

A.: Sure! There were! There were! But it depended on the situation

F.: Exactly! Everyone and his needs, but the work was as usual?

A.: Yes, as usual, as usual.

F.: Seriously?

A.: You know why? God is great! It was something basic for the people, and why? Some people have gotten used to being well dressed. You understand? They did not care what happened around them. [...] Honestly, I'm not kidding you. It goes with your question: Someone tells you, "I don't care to die just for a dress like this." Each one has their own decisions. No! One had to be neat. Understand? Especially the Christians, I respect all the people, it's not something against them, but the Christian would, if he was religious, if he was religious! He should have had a pressed shirt and trousers. In the name of Allah. I, at the time of the Jordanians, would charge two Qirsh for a shirt, at the time of the Jordanians! Two Qirsh! You understand? And for a set of pants I would take sometimes three and sometimes five. Ironing with an iron made of iron, and there was enough work for me. Saturday was always a mess because everyone dressed for Sunday. Thursday was also full because of Friday prayers of the Muslims. You understand? And there were people who did not care about anyone else, as you said it yourself, the war is over, you see what your fate is and you can go back to dressing. Believe me [...]. No no [...]. From that point on everything was good. People were good, they were pleased. What they used to say? War, war, but I want to dress, I want to live, God will not stop anything, understand?



# The *Naksa* in the Shadow of the *Nakba*

Ronni Shaked

## 1 Introduction

This article focuses on the personal stories of Muhammad Naji.<sup>1</sup> He now resides in the village of Abu Gosh, west of Jerusalem. Muhammad Naji's life events and memories extend throughout the most salient stages of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: the *Nakba*<sup>2</sup> and the *Naksa*,<sup>3</sup> that include the Israeli occupation and the reality of everyday life of the Palestinians under Israeli control. Naji's family, like 750,000 other Palestinians<sup>4</sup>, turned into refugees as a result of the *Nakba*. Up to 1967, they had been living as refugees in the village of Imwas (Emmaus) in the Latrun Valley, west of Jerusalem. On the fifth day of the 1967 war, Israel drove the village population from their homes and lands. After the expulsion, Israeli forces demolished the village, and once again the family became refugees and escaped to Jordan. In the mid-1970s, Naji family members returned to the West Bank, and several years later, were

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<sup>1</sup> As with all interlocutors in this project, the name has been changed to protect the privacy of this generous individual in an environment that may perhaps not respond negatively to the hardship related, but where just the anxiety that there might be personal retributions would be hard to live with.

<sup>2</sup> The 1948 Palestinian exodus occurred when the Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes during the 1948 war and was also known as the *Nakba*, literally 'disaster,' 'catastrophe' or 'cataclysm.'

<sup>3</sup> The 1967 war was also known as the *Naksa* 'setback,' an Arabic name for the defeat of the Arabs during the 1967 Six-Day War.

<sup>4</sup> There are different estimates of the number of Palestinian refugees in 1948, for example: according to Walid Khalidi (1992: 582) there were 714,000–744,000 people, according to Janet L. Abu-Lughod (1971: 161) 770,000–780,000 and according to Benni Morris (2004: 240) 900,000.

approved for family reunion, returning to their village of Abu Gosh in Israeli territory, from which they had been expelled in 1948.

Muhammad Naji's story, as related to the author of this article and to Hagar Salamon in an interview held in Hebrew at Naji's home in Abu Gosh, is an inseparable part of the Palestinian odyssey, yet another patch in the fabric of individual stories that touch upon the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The *Nakba* is the dominant and most formative experience of Palestinian society (Sagy, Adwan and Kaplan 2002). It was the worst disaster that had befallen this people and the trauma it created individually and socially engendered a collectivity that had not been palpable before. It is openly expressed as the "chosen trauma" of Palestinian society,<sup>5</sup> leaving a scar that refuses to heal.

The 1967 trauma was very forceful: A military defeat, along with a moral, political and religious downfall, that was perceived by the Muslims as fatal strikes against an Arab-Muslim country and Muslim holy sites (Ma'oz 2019: 246). The defeat occurred at a time when the Palestinians were still deeply immersed in the posttraumatic processes of the *Nakba*, and had yet to digest and process this prior catastrophe. The *Nakba* overshadows every other event in Palestinian life; the *Naksa* increased the trauma of the *Nakba* and became an integral part of it.

Muhammad Naji is no different from other Palestinians who experienced the *Naksa* and whose lives are conducted in the shadow of the *Nakba*. Even though he succeeded in rehabilitating his economic existence, he feels insecure and sees his future threatened. The interview<sup>6</sup> with him, conducted by two Jewish Israelis, was held after the interviewee had requested to consult with his family and close friends as to whether he should relate his life story. He was mostly advised not to give the interview. However, he made his own, final decision to share his story with us, despite the concern that it might bring him harm. His fear was twofold: Israelis might retaliate for the things he would say, and members of Palestinian society might perceive the interview as an act of treason and cooperation with the Jews. This is what Muhammad Naji said at the beginning of the interview [this and all following interview excerpts have been translated from Hebrew]:

So after I told you I would be willing to talk to you, I had some bad feelings and thoughts and I don't know how to explain it [...] I was thinking that if I tell you something you don't like, then it might hurt me, perhaps my story will be published, will pass on to the government, then I will be hurt. Do you know what people told me? That I must be nuts. I'm putting myself in a risky situation, many asked me if I wasn't stupid. They warned me that it is a story

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<sup>5</sup> A "chosen trauma" is the mental representation of a historic event in which the group has suffered a catastrophic and traumatic defeat that includes loss of life and humiliation by the enemy; a chosen trauma has a crucial impact on the collective feeling of victimization. The chosen trauma is openly expressed, leaving an emotional scar that refuses to heal (Volkan 2004).

<sup>6</sup> The quotes that appear in this chapter were taken from the interview held with Muhammad Naji unless noted otherwise.

about Jews, Arabs, politics and Palestinians. “If you say something good about the Jews, the Palestinians will call you a ‘*Khayan*’ [traitor], and if you go and say something good about the Palestinians, the Jews will say, wait, but you live among them [the Jews], you will get hurt.” Even my wife told me, “Why are you making them your business? Why get involved?”

Repression of the *Naksa* from the established collective narrative finds its equivalent in the silence of the individual. Many of the Palestinians whom we interviewed during our research process, admitted that they avoid recounting their experiences and memories from the *Naksa* period. If they do so, then only on rare occasions and to a limited family circle; even then, they share only a small part of their story. The specific nature of our study led to many stories being told fully for the first time, including that of Muhammad. During our interview with Muhammad Naji, we learned that he too had never shared his personal story with his family and avoided discussing his memories with his close friends. He admitted that only on rare occasions did he relate parts of his life story to his children, mostly when the memories are relevant to current events.

None of Muhammad’s family members were present during the interview. His wife remained in the kitchen, from which no cooking odors emerged, nor were there any sounds heard. At times she walked in and out of the guestroom where the interview was being held, and it may be assumed that she listened to what her husband was saying.

Muhammad Naji was born in 1952, four years after the *Nakba*. Like 750,000 other Palestinians, his family became refugees as an outcome of the 1948 war. They were expelled from the village of Abu Gosh during the *Nakba*, and wandered from place to place, aiming to return to their village and their land. They reached Ramallah in the course of their wanderings, and from there, came to the village of Imwas in the Latrun Valley, about thirty kilometers west of Jerusalem, where Abu Gosh residents owned land and agricultural plots. Muhammad Naji’s childhood and adolescent years, up to the 1967 war, were spent as a refugee in the village of Imwas.

I was born there, in Latrun, in Imwas. I went to school there, in Imwas. You know where Latrun junction is today? That’s where my school was, precisely that junction. There’s this pipe there, under these high planks – that’s from the school’s garden. And our house, where I was born and raised. I grew up there, in Imwas, but Imwas isn’t our real village.

Refugee families had found shelter in Imwas, as in other Palestinian villages in the West Bank. They were received as ‘guests’ – a status of temporary residents. A ‘refugee’ does not denote a social or economic status in Palestinian society, but rather a political status. Hence, the villagers treated them as ‘strangers,’ and the refugees themselves were careful to avoid any negative friction with the village members, such as arguments, fights or conflicts, knowing that their inferior social status would work to their disadvantage. The refugees’ isolationism as a separate group and their lack

of integration into the permanent Palestinian population forced disaffiliation upon them, and reinforced the individual and collective identity of the refugee, transforming the status of ‘refugee’ into an icon of memory (Shaked 2018: 124).

Since 1949, these refugees have received special aid from the United Nations’ Relief & Work Agency, specifically designated for the Palestine Refugees in the Near East.<sup>7</sup> The major thrust of the aid provided is in the form of monthly food rations. The agency’s aid became a target of mockery among the villagers, as the food provided was considered poor folks’ food. The villagers ridiculed and teased the refugees, calling them “fava bean eaters,” and removed them from the social circles of the village community. Hardly any marriages were registered between refugees and the village’s permanent residents. Even the cemeteries were separated.

Between 1948 to 1967, the Jordanian royal family conducted a policy of Jordanization in the West Bank. At the core of this policy was the enforcement of the Hashemite<sup>8</sup> hegemony over the Palestinians and an attempt to create a Jordanian identity via steps of de-Palestinization in order to ‘erase’ the Palestinian identity. Thus, the use of the word ‘Palestine,’ for example, was forbidden in official Jordanian documents. In its stead, the use of the phrase ‘West Bank’ was introduced. School textbooks also ignored the existence of the Palestinians almost totally (Gelber 2004: 262–263; Karsh 2003: 189–192; Procter-Ronen 2002).

This policy was challenged by the Palestinians with the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization in May 1964 and the revival of Palestinian nationalism. The Palestine Liberation Organization applied a hostile policy towards the Jordanians among the Palestinians in the West Bank, forcing King Hussein to cope with the Palestinians via various means of supervision, including the educational network. However, the Palestinian schools were a hotbed for a resurging Palestinian nationalism. Palestinian teachers, most of whom were young, educated and from the *Nakba* generation, nurtured patriotic sentiments among their students’ and inculcated in them the hope of attaining the right of return, along with beliefs in the delegitimization of Israel. This was done outside the curricular framework, for instance, by learning patriotic songs and preaching the need for sacrifice for the national Palestinian struggle and the realization of the right of return. The world of the young generation was imbued, along with national education, with the delegitimization of Israel and Zionism, the hope for the destruction of Israel and the realization of the right of return. The opportunity to galvanize this atmosphere appeared with the outbreak of the 1967 war. Muhammad recalls:

We had classes all the time about how we are an occupied people, the Jews came and took our lands. We were taught in school that the Jews were coming from all corners of the world, they came and conquered this land, they took it, and they kicked its inhabitants out – meaning, they are the bad guys. The Jews dispersed the people of Palestine to all around the world, that in the future we would need to be

<sup>7</sup> About UNWAW and its work, see <https://www.unrwa.org/>.

<sup>8</sup> The Hashemite or House of Hashim are the royal family of Jordan; they have been ruling since 1921.



strong and be in the army and get our lands back. They taught us poems and songs, most of the lyrics are about victims, about the land being taken from us, about pain and suffering. Those are the songs we learned.

## 2 The Outbreak of the 1967 War – Palestinian Euphoria

From mid-May 1967, when the winds of war began to blow, euphoria overtook the Palestinian people, based on the hope of an Arab victory and the destruction of the state of Israel. The Palestinians waited anxiously and joyously for the outbreak of war. They placed their trust in the promises given by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser to defeat Israel and return them to their homes, from which they were expelled in the *Nakba*.

This euphoria was further kindled via the Egyptian radio station, *Sawt al-Arab*, which at the time was the most popular station in the Arab world, particularly among the Palestinians.<sup>9</sup> The most popular broadcaster of the radio was Ahamad Sa'id, who tended to use coarse, popular language and slogans. He played a major role in forming Palestinian public opinion in the period immediately prior to the 1967 war. These impassioned broadcasts greatly increased the Palestinians' euphoria and the hope for a victory that would lead to correcting the injustices of the *Nakba*. As the eruption of war came closer, the *Sawt al-Arab* radio station intensified its impassioned broadcasts and Muhammad remembers the increased feelings of impending victory among the Palestinian population:

Who! [...] People were dancing in the streets! They were waiting for the time that everyone could go back to his house and his land. Everyone was dancing in the streets and going to each other's houses and saying "Turn on the radio. Let's see what Abdel Nasser and Sa'id are saying [...]."

Despite the limitations and prohibitions on listening to the *Sawt al-Arab* radio station by the Jordanian Authority, Muhammad recalls how the Palestinians listened punctiliously and enthusiastically to the station, and did so while keeping an eye open for any Jordanian policeman or soldier outside the house. According to Muhammad, during the broadcasts, the family would send one of the young boys out into the street who would signal to them if a policeman or soldier appeared.

In those days, we couldn't even turn on the radio [...], then we would keep – if for example a policeman or a soldier would come in, then my father or uncle would turn off the radio, change the channel. So the soldier or policeman wouldn't hear that we're listening to the *Sawt al-Arab* radio station. Because we were afraid. It was very scary.

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<sup>9</sup> For more details about the *Sawt al-Arab* radio station, see Boyd (1993).

When war broke out, the Palestinians' euphoria increased greatly. Ahamad Sa'id enthusiastically broadcast fictitious victories of the Egyptian army and the destruction of Israeli planes and tanks. "The enemy's planes are dropping like flies," he said. The Palestinian listeners believed these broadcasts, filled with pathos and enthusiasm:

Ahamad Sa'id was saying, "Umm Kulthum [the famous Egyptian national singer] is with you; we are going to throw the Jews into the sea; blessed are the fish, we are sending them food – the Jews; now is the time to raise our flag on the shores of Tel Aviv!!" [...]

The Palestinians trusted Ahamad Sa'id and the Egyptian radio's reportage of dozens of Israeli planes claimed to have been shot down. The purported 'news' led to cries of joy and waves of happiness.

In our interview, Muhammad Najidid not hesitate to criticize the Arabs who had believed these false broadcast reports, especially those that bragged about the downing of hundreds of Israeli planes. He remarked cynically:

I'm talking about Arabs, not Jews. First they said 23 airplanes, then 38, then 100, 200, they were talking maybe about 3000 airplanes and that was on the first day!! And here I am thinking, 60 years later – how stupid these people were and how they [the radio] broadcast such things [he smiles and laughs].

The arrival of the Egyptian commando forces in the West Bank was received with enthusiasm and joy. The commando soldiers who passed through the village roads on their way to the battlefield were received with honor and admiration as the liberators of Palestine. The villagers were eager to help the troops that passed through their villages. The soldiers' requests to fill their canteens with water were met with enthusiasm and the youngsters who took part in this simple activity felt that they were helping the war effort against Israel.

On June 5, this was Sunday – there were 600-750 Egyptian soldiers who came from Egypt and were being taken to Imwas. So they came and stopped by our house, and one of their officers asked my father for water. I went, I brought a canteen, I took it to fill it, and the second man said, "Me, too!" To tell you the truth I was pleased. They wanted to free Palestine; they wanted to return us to Abu Ghosh. I was happy like the entire world is happy, they would bring us back our family. I had never seen my uncle. I had never seen my grandmother. It's like a broken family, the family doesn't exist.

The Egyptians had set up a field hospital in the center of Imwas in one of the empty houses. The villagers volunteered to help with food, water, sweets, blankets and clothing. The refugees among the Palestinians were the most ecstatic; they imagined the commando soldiers as the spearhead that would lead to the destruction of Israel and make possible a return to their villages from which they were expelled in the *Nakba*.

There is very little testimony regarding the arrival of the Egyptian commando soldiers in the West Bank, and to the Latrun area specifically. Israeli military historiography briefly mentions three commando companies of the Egyptian army that arrived in the Ramallah area, whose mission was to occupy Lod airport. General Uzi Narkiss (Narkiss 1975: 161) relates that the commando soldiers were exposed on June 6, after having attacked an Israeli army administrative vehicle. They were surrounded, and were forced to surrender after the field in which they were hiding had been burnt. The following morning, three Egyptian commando soldiers were caught on Israeli territory, about fifteen kilometers from Latrun. It was assumed that they had lost their way. Several commandos were captured in Imwas.

As opposed to the enthusiastic welcome given to the Egyptian soldiers, the Palestinians on the West Bank did not care for the Jordanian army, to say the least. They treated its forces with suspicion and distrust. Moreover, they blamed the Jordanian army for deserting the battlefield and the Palestinians, as they had done in 1948.

Jordanian forces had been deployed in Imwas, which was considered a strategic junction. However, on the night of June 4, 1967, prior even to the outbreak of war, Jordanian army trucks arrived at the village and evacuated the soldiers, leaving the protection of the village in the hands of a dozen National Guardsmen who were not trained, and who had only light weaponry. Muhammad Naji commented sarcastically and asked rhetorically, "Is that what will help against the Israeli army?" This move was perceived as a betrayal of the Arab war effort, as an abandonment of the Palestinians to the mercy of the Israeli army, and even as part of a conspiracy by King Hussein to cooperate with Israel and enable the Israeli army to occupy the West Bank. Muhammad Naji recalls that his mother saw one of the volunteers of the National Guard. She knew his parents, and she convinced him not to fight: "The Jews are already at the Jordanian Bridge, here, we can already see their buses, it will be just like what happened in '48, go throw away your gun and change clothes and go be with your parents. They need you."

Muhammad Naji felt proud of the village *Mukhtar*<sup>10</sup>, who dared to throw accusations in the face of the senior Jordanian officer who was in the village then, claiming that this was treason against the Palestinian people and that King Hussein was abandoning them to the Israeli army, just as his grandfather, King Abdullah, had done during the *Nakba*.

Suddenly army cars showed up, the soldiers began climbing into these trucks, and left the village. When the *Mukhtar* saw the soldiers leave, he started cursing at the head officer. "You're doing the same thing to us as you did in '48, you're leaving the rest of the Palestinians to the Jews, why are you taking our children to be killed?! And these Egyptians who came here, thousands of kilometers away, you left them and you're running away?" The officer said, "I

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<sup>10</sup> *Mukhtar* (Arabic) is the head of a village. *Mukhtars* are usually selected by some consensual or participatory method.

had orders.” The officer was furious at the *Mukhtar*, and said, “If you say another word I’ll shoot you.” The *Mukhtar* answered, “I am not scared of you!”

In Imwas, there was hope that the Egyptian commando soldiers, who were deployed throughout the fields close to the Israeli border, would be the protectors of the villagers and lead the military operation to victory. However, this slight hope died as well.

After midnight, we started to see lights on the horizon. There were illuminating bombs that turned night into day, and they stayed bright for at least a quarter of an hour. If you had a coin and you threw it between people, you could find it from that light. Sounds of explosives were heard. The Egyptians who came from far away knew nothing about the area, and the Israeli soldiers started to kill the Egyptians. From 750, there were 100 left.

In the morning, it became clear to the villagers around the area that the Egyptian commando forces had been defeated in battle. Failure on the battlefield was not blamed on Abdel Nasser’s soldiers, but rather on the collaborators with Israel. This conspiracy theory was once again revived. Villagers related how the commando soldiers had been led by a guide from the nearby village of Beit Nuba, who was none other than an Israeli agent, “a collaborator with the Jews who was given money by them,”<sup>11</sup> who had abandoned the Egyptian soldiers in the field and then escaped.

### 3 The Occupation of the Latrun Valley and the Village of Imwas

On the night of June 6 to 7, sounds of shooting and explosions were heard in the village of Imwas. These were the sounds of battle between the Israeli soldiers and the Egyptian commando forces. The sounds of battle immediately raised the trauma of the *Nakba*. The automatic reaction was to escape, as quickly as possible.

[My mother] woke us up and told us to put on underwear – 2 to 3 pairs each, and 2 to 3 pairs of pants, and 2 to 3 shirts and summer clothes, and we yelled, “Why are you doing this?” And she answered that the Jews might win like they did in ’48, and “maybe we don’t know where they’ll throw us, so to make sure you will have clothes, if the top layer is destroyed or gets messy, you’ll take off the top layer and have the bottom layer!” That’s what she finally told us [...] You understand why she did that?

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<sup>11</sup> At this point in the story, Muhammad Naji burst out laughing, clearly laughter resulting from embarrassment; it made it easier for him to present the conspiracy theory and excuse the defeat of the Egyptian soldiers.

The occupation of Imwas, like all the other villages in the West Bank, was accomplished without battle. The Jordanian army forces that were stationed in the village had retreated during the night even before the Israeli forces arrived. National Guardsmen – a small armed force made up of the village inhabitants – understood that they were powerless to engage in battle. They took off their uniforms and hid their weapons. The Israeli army entered the village without encountering any resistance.

We saw that the Jews were coming near [...], buses were coming, buses, not tanks and not jeeps, buses of Jewish soldiers came into the center of the village and started to let soldiers off. The bus waited by the side and the soldiers got off. And spread out [...].

The Palestinian population was obedient. The Israeli soldiers passed between the houses, knocked on the gates or doors, and spoke one short sentence, “Go to the *Mukhtar’s* house.” Muhammed’s frightened parents sent him to open the door. Facing him was a young Israeli soldier, with a helmet on his head and a rifle in his hand. This was Muhammed’s first encounter with an Israeli soldier, the first time he faced a Jew whom he had learned in school to consider a demonic figure. “He was 20 years old, maybe 19, young. My heart jumped, and I wanted to run away and be back with my mother and father.”

There was no need to explain the instructions “Go to the *Mukhtar’s* house” to the villagers. With automatic obedience, they left their homes and went to the nearby square close to the *Mukhtar’s* house. The village residents – men, women and children, the young and the elderly – all stood together in the square. “We were all assembled there. Those of us who arrived saw almost the whole village there.” An Israeli military jeep stood at the corner; inside sat three or four Israeli soldiers and an officer. One of the soldiers spoke through the jeep’s megaphone and ordered: “Go to your King Hussein, this is the way!” and pointed down the road heading east. From the square began the march of hundreds of villagers towards the road leading to Ramallah. Some of them were holding white flags, others were carrying parcels, and many others had nothing at all. They marched in silence along the side of the asphalt road in one long line.

According to a document, apparently from the Israeli Defense Forces, the village of Imwas was occupied on the night of June 5 to 6:

Squads from the Egyptian Commando Battalion continued to operate in the area for three days. During the searches, a few Egyptians commandos were killed or captured. One of the Egyptian commandos was wounded inside the village of Emmaus. The residents of the village were ordered to evacuate the village. They did it unopposed. The order to destroy the village houses was approved by the political echelon.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> [https://amiramorenbikes.com/2018\\_0917\\_latron\\_tashach](https://amiramorenbikes.com/2018_0917_latron_tashach) (accessed September 28, 2019); in Hebrew.

## 4 The Expulsion

The march to Ramallah began at 8 a.m., a distance of 33 kilometers. Many women were wearing plastic sandals and were forced to remove their head coverings and use them to protect their babies from the sun. They did not have any food or water. Israeli soldiers posted at the crossroads gave out conflicting instructions, and, from time to time, the marchers were forced to leave the main road and march through fields or olive groves. Muhammad recalls:

We started to walk. My mother was wearing plastic shoes. It was a hot day. You could see the vapors from the tar on the road. People were sweating. The walking was difficult. Along the roadside, there were thorns. We reached a village, on the way, there was no water! But I remember there was water for the goats and the cattle, dirty water, full of garbage. I remember clearly how my father put his hand in the water, moved the dirt aside, and gave my little sister water, at the time she was maybe two and a half years old. Today she's over 50 years old. Nowadays, when we begin to tell the story, she starts to get angry at our father for giving her that water. [Laughs and continues the story with a big chuckle]. He said to her, "What, you think I'm the Strauss Corporation [a large food and beverage plant], I can make a popsicle and give it to you?" [Muhammad is so amused that he begins to repeat the story]

When the line of marchers reached a well near one of the villages, a fight broke out. Who would be the first to drink? One villager took out a knife and threatened his friends. In some places, the villagers were forced to drink filthy water from a water trough. Even the babies were given this filthy water to drink. Muhammad's mother, who was carrying his baby sister, stopped near a water trough, took off her head covering and used the fabric as a filter for the filthy water, which she then gave the baby to drink. This is a well-known story in the Naji household. Many years later, after the family had returned to the village of Abu Gosh, Muhammad and his brothers would tease their sister and retell the story of the filthy water she had drunk on the forced march of expulsion from their village. "Till today she is angry about having drunk water meant for cattle, and blames this event for all her troubles and difficulties."

The march continued for twelve hours, till the evening. "It was very difficult. And I can't explain it, because a mind can't grasp how difficult it was," whispered Muhammad. The hungry, tired and frightened marchers reached the Old City of Ramallah, where they noticed groups of villagers that had either been expelled or fled from their homes, all gathering at the doors of one of the monasteries. They stood behind them, waiting for their turn to enter, but a monk standing in the doorway refused to give them entry.

[...] The monks came out and said, "We have no place here, go to your Muhammad – go be with him" [go to your Mosque, find refuge with your

Prophet Muhammad]. Some people from Imwas grabbed the monks and said, “In this situation there is no Jesus, no Muhammad” and began to beat up the monks, we were so upset, our brains stopped working. [...] So the monks went over to the side, and people came into the convent, maybe four to five thousand people.

The villagers who had fled or were expelled had no patience left. They cursed the monk, pushed him aside and broke into the monastery, taking up residence in one of the school rooms. They slept on the floors, some even on the students’ desks. At night, they suffered from the cold weather. There was water in the monastery, but the bathrooms were unable to accommodate the thousands who had found shelter there. Many people relieved themselves in the monastery’s courtyard. In the morning, the men left to search for food. Muhammad’s father came back with a carton of cucumbers, and his uncle brought a carton of tomatoes which was stolen from the vegetable stalls at the wholesalers’ market. The hunger was difficult to bear; an old man went and found a few pita breads, and fights broke out over a small pita or a rotten cucumber.

During the first days after the war, Israel was surprised by the successful occupation of the West Bank, and decided to try to bring Palestinian life back to normal. One of the first decisions taken by the Minister of Defense, Moshe Dayan, regarding the Palestinian population was to allow the villagers who had fled to return to their homes. Perhaps Moshe Dayan’s decision was also the result of lessons learned from the *Nakba* – to prevent the shame that Israel had expelled the Palestinians from their homes and villages. Four days after the war had ended, Israeli army vehicles drove through the streets of the Palestinian cities. The occupiers called, through a loudspeaker, on all those who had fled to return to their homes.

Thousands of expelled villagers who were staying at the monastery in Ramallah, started on their way back to their homes, amongst them the villagers expelled from Imwas. The march on foot back to Imwas took longer. The villagers were tired and crushed. This time, as they were walking back, there were many gestures of solidarity and help from people through whose villages the marchers passed, providing them with food, water, clothing and shelter for the night.

When the expelled villagers of the three villages of the Latrun Valley neared their homes, they were stopped at a military checkpoint, and were informed that they could not continue to their villages and must turn back to Ramallah.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Amos Kenan, an Israeli journalist who at the time was serving on reserve duty at the checkpoint in Latrun Valley, was shocked when he saw the deportation of the residents and the demolition of the villages. Right after the war, he wrote an article in the Israeli daily *Yedioth Ahronoth*, in which he described in detail the line of marchers who were not allowed to return to their homes: “[...] there were old people there who could barely walk, old women who were muttering, infants in their mothers’ arms, small children. The children were crying and begging for water. [...] Some of our soldiers burst into tears. [...] The children who walked along the road, crying bitterly, will be the Fedayeen (terrorists) in another 19 years, the next time around. That is how, on that day, we lost the victory.” (Amos Kenan, *Yedioth Ahronot*, June 20, 1967, translated by the author).

Soldiers, who stopped us on the way, said, “You can’t go any further. Not to Imwas and not to Bayt Nuba.” My mother was furious and started cursing – the Arabs, religion, what not, my mother went insane. People told her, “You’re being an infidel,” and she said to them, “How am I an infidel, what religion?” In short, Mother was crazy. She lost her mind because she had such a hard time with that trip. I told you, she had plastic sandals on, and in that heat, her legs were totally burnt.

Following the expulsion of the villagers, an order was given by Israeli army headquarters to begin destroying the houses in the village. This was an act of revenge and payback for the disgrace of the 1948 war – when soldiers of the Israeli Defense Forces had been unsuccessful several times in conquering these villages. According to Palestinian statistics, nearly 3200 houses and structures were destroyed in the three villages of Imwas, Beit Nuba and Yalu.<sup>14</sup> According to the same statistics, 17 villagers were killed during the occupation of Imwas and the expulsion of its residents, at least half of them while their houses were being destroyed.<sup>15</sup> These were not casualties of war activities but vengeful killings of citizens who were unarmed.

The residents of Emmaus, including the Naji family, did not witness the exploding of their homes. They were in Ramallah while the bulldozers were destroying the village. When they tried to return to the villages a few days after the war ended, as quoted above from Muhammad’s interview, they were stopped at an Israeli checkpoint on the way to the village and did not see the ruins of their homes. However, there are some testimonies of the destruction.

About a month after the war, the French Catholic weekly magazine, *Temoignage Christian*, published sections from the diary of a nun named Marie-Therese, who had visited the area of Latrun immediately after the war’s end. The diaries were only made available to the Israeli public in 2010. She wrote:

Here is what the Israelis don’t want us to see. Three villages that were destroyed systematically with dynamite and bulldozers. Alone, in deathlike silence, the donkeys walk around amidst the ruins. Here and there, a crushed piece of furniture or a torn pillow peak out from the clumps of plaster, stones and cement. Israeli tractors from nearby *kibbutzim* are quick to plow the Arab’s lands.<sup>16</sup>

This clearly supports the testimonial of Israeli writer and journalist Amos Kenan cited above.

The Israeli photographer Yosef Hochman from Kibbutz Harel, close to the Latrun Valley, documented the expulsion and the houses’ demolition with his camera, but he kept these photos hidden away for ten years, as he says, “out of self-

<sup>14</sup> <http://emwas1967.blogspot.com/2014> (accessed May 3, 2021).

<sup>15</sup> [http://emwas1967.blogspot.com/2014/08/blog-post\\_85.html](http://emwas1967.blogspot.com/2014/08/blog-post_85.html) (accessed May 3, 2021).

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.defeatist-diary.com/index.asp?p=memories\\_new10242&period=10/11/2009-30/6/2010](http://www.defeatist-diary.com/index.asp?p=memories_new10242&period=10/11/2009-30/6/2010) (accessed December 28, 2021).



ensorship.”<sup>17</sup> The first photo exhibit of the destruction of the village homes was launched in Jerusalem in 1978, but after only a few days, the exhibit was closed as the photos had been intentionally damaged, most probably by right-wing activists.<sup>18</sup> The exhibit was opened once again in 2009 in the Kibbutz Gallery in Tel-Aviv.<sup>19</sup>

## 5 Escape to Jordan

As soon as the real results of the war – Israel’s victory – spread, memories of the *Nakba* reinforced the Palestinians’ existential fears and anxieties, and thoughts of escaping and fleeing almost automatically arose. This was one of the reasons that led nearly a quarter of a million Palestinians from the West Bank to abandon their homes and escape to the East Bank to the Jordanian Kingdom. This journey of flight on foot, filled with suffering, created an immediate associative connection between the *Nakba* and the *Naksa*.

The Naji family, similar to many other helpless Palestinians, escaped to Jordan, where Muhammad’s two older brothers had been living for years. With the little money they had, they paid a truck driver to take them. The truck was crowded with dozens of others who had fled. It brought them close to the Jordan River, where many other trucks were parked, from which men, women and children were quick to jump out, some of them carrying their parcels, and all began marching towards the broken remains of the Allenby bridge that had been bombed during the war. It, too, was very crowded. Everyone had to step very carefully, choosing their footing amongst the broken iron pieces. It was an obstacle course, like a challenging juggling act:

The bridge was broken. There was a tree in the river, up and down, and up, like planks so people could go down and up. There were people coming from Amman to greet their families, and there were people from the West Bank who were going there. And there were soldiers standing on the side – if they saw something that wasn’t ok, they started shouting, starting to scare people, starting to get involved.

Delegates of the Red Cross who were at the bridge also helped the Palestinians to cross. They carefully registered the new refugees. When these reached Amman, among them the Naji family, they were registered once more by the Red Cross in the list of Palestinians who wanted to return to their homes in Palestine. The new refugees in Amman resided with their relatives, who themselves were refugees from the war of 1948. The Naji family lived with Muhammad’s older brother. One of his brothers joined the Fatah movement, and went to live in one of its training camps.

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<sup>17</sup> Semadar Shefi, “The Kibbutz, Shared in Common: Peace Then”, *Haaretz*, May 22, 2009.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Researching Israeli newspapers reveals that there is hardly any mention of the destruction of the villages. These events had no impact on public opinion to demand a rectification of the injustice.

Another brother was captured by the Jordanian authorities and forced to be a recruit in the army. Muhammad remembers this difficult period for his family, his role in supporting the family and the eventual return to Abu Ghosh:

Nobody helped us. We had to pay house rent, water and electricity bill, expenses we didn't pay at Imwas. We had a hard life, we had no money. My mother demanded that I go to work in order to support the family. I was young, just 15 years old, and I wanted to continue my studies. In Imwas, I was a successful student, and now, instead of going to school, I had to work. I found a job as an assistant doing whitewashing. In 1971, I was approved a license from the Israelis to visit my family in Abu Ghosh. As soon as I arrived, I started working with my uncle. After three months, when the license expired, I returned to Jordan and there I continued to work. Fortunately, after a year, we received a family reunification certificate, and returned to Abu Ghosh.

## 6 Between Remembrance and Deliberate Forgetting: Imwas as a Test Case

Remembrance and – no less so – forgetting are existential and fundamental characteristics of the conflict. Remembrance and forgetting are not detached from one another, insofar as building a memory is simultaneously a deliberate act of erasing the traces of events that the memory-builders wish to obliterate (Gillis 1994; Zerubavel, 1995: 8–9). The harsh experience of Muhammad's family and many other Palestinians from Imwas finds confirmation – in a different manner of historical assessment and justification – on the Israeli side.

The village of Imwas [Emmaus] is one of the oldest villages in the Holy Land. The village lies on the eastern outskirts of the Latrun Valley, on the main road between the plains and Jerusalem. Control of the Latrun Valley guaranteed free passage to Jerusalem, which explains its strategic importance. According to the United Nations Partition Plan, ratified by the UN on October 29, 1947, the Latrun Valley was included in the area designated as part of the Arab state. However, due to its strategic importance, David Ben-Gurion, Prime Minister of Israel, instructed the army to occupy the Valley. For him, Latrun was of crucial importance in the fate of Jerusalem, which was under Arab blockade in 1948.

In Israel's collective memory, the battles of Latrun in 1948 are marked as a scathing military failure. The Israeli armed forces led five unsuccessful military attempts to occupy the valley. A total of 168 Israeli soldiers were killed in the battle, and, at war's end, the Latrun Valley remained in the hands of Jordan. Benny Morris claims that the failure of the battles in Latrun in 1948 was engraved in Israeli collective memory as one of the traumatic failures in the history of the Israeli Defense Forces (Morris 2003: 217). Therefore, conquest of the villages of the Latrun Valley in 1967

had a great symbolic significance for the Israelis (Segev 2005: 375). However, during the 1967 war, the police station and surrounding villages were occupied within several hours without any war effort, and without any losses on the Israeli side. Immediately after the battles, General Uzi Narkiss, who commanded this military campaign, stated: “We have settled an old score from 1948.”<sup>20</sup> In his book, Narkiss emphasized that “we shall never give back again the Latrun valley – which was a thorn in our side in 1948” (Narkiss 1975: 194).

On the sixth day of the 1967 war, Israeli bulldozers destroyed the houses of the three Latrun Valley villages – Imwas, Beit Nuba and Yalu. From the Israeli point of view, it was part of the revenge for the humiliation suffered by the Israelis in 1948.

The destruction of Arab villages as part of changing the landscape, and as part of the process of erasing memories of the past and building a new narrative are an inseparable part of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Hundreds of Palestinian villages were deserted during the *Nakba*. Most of them were erased from the landscape, either through physical demolition or by planting forests over the villages’ ruins. Jewish settlements were built on some of sites of the destroyed villages, and the Arab village names were changed to new, Hebrew names. In most villages, some remnants remained, such as a cemetery, or sections of walls or structures, bearing witness that different lives were once lived in these places. Noga Kadman claims that Judaizing the Holy Land, which constitutes a basic value in Zionist nationalism, and shaping Israel’s domain, including the erasure of empty Arab villages from the landscape, are part of the formation of a selective collective memory that emphasizes the past Jewish history of the land and relegates hundreds of years of Arab existence to the sidelines (Kadman 2008: 40–41).

Regarding the destruction of the villages, there has been a collision between ‘remembrance’ and ‘deliberate forgetting’ since June 1967. This struggle is maintained between the State of Israel, its institutions, that actively effect deliberate forgetting and building a new narrative in the region, and the Palestinian people and their civilian institutions, struggling to return to their villages and homes. In the Latrun villages, this creates an interface between the *Nakba* and the *Naksa*. Imwas refugees are an integral part of the *Naksa* refugees, and their struggle has merged with the *Nakba* refugee struggle, with both of them demanding the right of return.

## 7 Deliberate Forgetting

How was this deliberate forgetting implemented? In December 1969, Israel built a settlement on the ruins of the village of Beit Nuba – one of the three villages that were destroyed. The agricultural lands of the three Palestinian villages were transferred to the hands of Israeli farmers. The new agricultural landscape does not resemble the Palestinian Arab agricultural landscape.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://defeatist-diary.com/index.php?p=memories&page=10242&period=5/31/2010> Joseph Algazy, Defeatist Diary (accessed November 8, 2021).

In the early 1970s, Israeli authorities planted a forest on the ruins of Imwas, and created a public park that offers leisure facilities. The forest was planted by the Jewish National Fund, and the park was built with a donation from Canadian Jewry. At first it was called “Canada Park.” However, after the donors discovered that it had been built on the ruins of Arab villages, the name was changed to “Ayalon Park.” Most of the signs put up in the park’s vicinity use the name “Ayalon-Canada Park.”

Many signs are posted throughout the park, yet, not one of them mentions its Palestinian past, or the names of the villages upon whose ruins the park was built – except for one sign that was once posted, following a Supreme Court decision in 2004, which mentioned the name of the village. This sign remained in place for several weeks, but was then vandalized by Israeli hikers, and today nothing remains of it.

The Israeli establishment kept the story of the conquest of the three villages, the expulsion of their inhabitants and the destruction of their homes hidden from the media. The events did not appear in war albums, textbooks, travel guidebooks and official cultural output. The new maps published by Israel’s Measurements Department do not include the names of the villages, nor does the interior park map signify or indicate any mention of Imwas. The Israeli establishment succeeded in ‘erasing’ the story. Today, the great majority of the Jewish population in Israel is totally unaware that the relics of villages that were destroyed in 1967 lie under the Ayalon-Canada Park.

## 8 Memory

The village Imwas that was destroyed in 1967 was ‘privileged’ to be included in the Palestinian collective memory and was added to the list of those villages destroyed during the *Nakba*. This was due to the great similarity of the expulsion of the villagers and the destruction of their homes to what was done in 1948 to hundreds of other villages. And, just as the memory of the *Nakba* villages is perpetuated (Shaked 2018: 130–135), so, too, the memory of the village Imwas is upheld: Pictures of the village were collected from the Jordanian Mandate period and up to the sight of the forest, underneath which lie the village remains. A video was produced and distributed via YouTube<sup>21</sup>, describing the village in 1967 prior to its destruction, along with photos of the destruction of the homes and describing the remnants of the village. Maps of the village, as seen before 1967, were redrawn.<sup>22</sup> The refugees return to the village in a ‘visiting tour.’<sup>23</sup> In 2012, following rumors that Israel intends to pay

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fgs7H4zSzw> (accessed May 3, 2021), also see <https://www.zochrot.org/en/village/52872> (accessed May 3, 2021).

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.palestineremembered.com/al-Ramla/Imwas/> (accessed March 28, 2020).

<sup>23</sup> https://www.arab48.com/%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA/%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9/2019/02/24/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B4%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%8A%

compensation to the expelled villagers, the refugees of Imwas signed a pledge to a “Treaty of Honor.” It states that they are committed to cling to their right to return to their village and their home: “We won’t agree to receive any compensation against our right to return to our home.”<sup>24</sup> In June 2017, the fiftieth anniversary of the destruction of the villages of Latrun, the refugees of the villages set out on a demonstration march in Amman, the capital city of Jordan, demanding to return to their homes.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the internet site “palestineremembered” that deals with the mapping, description and detailing of every one of the villages destroyed in 1948, for example, devotes a special internet page to Imwas. The explanation regarding the site can be read: “This was the continuation of the ethnic cleansing that began in 1948.”<sup>26</sup>

The expelled Imwas villagers opened a website account on Facebook and established a non-governmental organization to preserve the memory of the village. This organization also has an internet site<sup>27</sup>, where details about the village’s history are posted, along with photos. At least two of the villagers opened a blog on the internet under the name “Imwas.” The blog carries historic descriptions of the village from the Canaanite Period to the present, photographs of the village, and a list of the names of the villagers who were killed both in the 1948 war and the 1967 war. The internet site became a *lieux de memoire* and a virtual meeting-place for the villagers from the destroyed village, and they became a “Memorial Community” (Nora 1989) that preserves the local identity and cultivates the yearning to return to the destroyed village.

## 9 The Clash between Remembrance and Forgetting

The dynamics of remembrance and forgetting are an inseparable part of ethnic-national conflicts, especially in conflicts in which two nations each perceive a defined territory as theirs. In such cases, the dynamics lead to a clash between remembrance and forgetting. Such a clash is one of the accelerators that perpetuate the conflict; it contributes to the empowerment of social beliefs in the delegitimization of the opponent, and serves to thicken feelings of anger, hatred and revenge, which then lead to violence.

The clash between remembrance and forgetting is built into every conflict, and is increased in many different situations of everyday life. One such situation, in

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/de3mes/posts/d41d8cd9/1827659367263201> (accessed December 28, 2021; see picture appended).

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10212566537536735&set=a.10204461485235493&type=3&theater> (accessed December 28, 2021).

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.palestineremembered.com/al-Ramla/Imwas/> (accessed May 3, 2021).

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/de3mes/posts/d41d8cd9/1827659367263201> (accessed December 28, 2021).

which the clash is characterized by very strong emotions, is during the physical presence of both conflicting sides in a specific place where memory clashes with deliberate forgetting. Memory, of course, is a very important factor in struggle, and the interconnectedness between collective memory and political struggle is strongly evident in Palestinian society.

In 1971, Muhammad Naji, who was then living in Jordan, received a permit to visit Israel. When he arrived in Israel, he went to visit Imwas. "Imwas was our first home," he admitted. "I saw the destroyed homes, noticed the young saplings that had been planted on the village land. Nothing, there was nothing there. Small seedlings. I cried and went back," he told us.

Since the Naji family returned from Jordan to Abu Ghosh, they would occasionally visit the village of Imwas. Muhammad recalls that when his parents and grandparents were still alive and the family planned to spend time together, he and his brothers preferred to travel to the seashore, to Haifa or Acre, but the older generation always chose to go to Imwas, to have a picnic under the olive trees. "For me to really enjoy myself, is to be under the trees in Imwas," the mother would say.

Once, the family went to picnic on Imwas land. A young Jewish man, a friend of Muhammad's brother, joined them.

We reached the village ruins and sat down close to where our home had been up to 1967. As we were eating, this Jewish lad began explaining about the place. "This is Canada Park. It was built with donations on land that was empty." My mother listened to the conversation, she became very angry and said to my brother, "Translate what he's saying." My brother tried to evade this, "I'll translate for you what he said when we get home," he answered. Mother insisted. "Translate it for me now I heard something, understood some of it and it's not right. Translate it for me." My father intervened and said to her, "We came here to have a good time, let it go." Mother was furious. "No way, I want to know what that Jewish lad said." My brother then translated and said that the Jewish lad had said, "This is Canada Park." Mother exploded. "Absolutely not, that's a lie. This isn't Canada Park, it is Imwas. I gave birth to fourteen children here. Come, I'll show you where my house was, the cemetery where some of my children are buried. There are cemeteries here, we lived here. How does Canada come and build a park here, over Muslim cemeteries?", she said angrily, then explained. "There's nothing to be ashamed of, the truth has to be told. That's it, we're done. Let's go back to our home in Abu Gosh," she said. That Jew was terrified. My brother turned yellow, then black, yellow-black, he was very embarrassed.

An additional emotional turmoil, relevant to the clash between remembrance and forgetting that relates to Imwas, is presented in this story: In 2014, Muhammad Naji took part in a guided tour for the members of the Abu Gosh Community Club to northern Israel. The guide was Jewish. When the bus passed by close to the Imwas, the guide explained that the scenic views were those of Canada Park. The guide's

explanation regarding Canada Park caused Muhammad great emotional turmoil. He called out loudly to the guide, “Stop,” and then demanded the guide “tell the truth about this place.” Muhammad Naji showed emotional distress when he related this story during our interview. His tone was raised, he spoke more quickly and waved his arms.

I jumped off the bus. Wait!! Alarmed. “What’s with you?!?” I said, “Tell people the truth! Either you’re lying or you don’t know. If you don’t know, give me the microphone.” He said to me, “What’s wrong, what did I do to you?” I said, “You have it wrong. Why are you lying to these people?” And I said to the group on the bus, “This is Imwas [...]. I was born here. And my mother gave birth to me here in 1952, and I went to school here where the road intersection is, and those pinecones are from the school grounds!” [His tone is agitated and forceful]. The guide was alarmed, then he said, “I didn’t know [...]” So I said to him: “Then you will learn! Ask, don’t lie to people!” He said to me, “That’s what we were taught.” I told him, “So they are liars. Why are you telling them things that aren’t true?”

## 10 Epilogue

I toured the Ayalon-Canada Park in April 2019. It was filled with many visitors, youngsters and tourists. Hiking through the forest and along the paths of the park could not erase the vestiges of the Arab village. Many remnants of houses are still spread out throughout the area. Fences, terraces and olive trees remind one of the Arab village landscapes. In random conversations that I held with visitors at the park, there was only one person out of more than a dozen with whom I spoke who said that based on the ruins he saw around him, he assumed this was a Palestinian village that was demolished in the 1948 war. Clearly, the actions taken to deliberately erase the village of Imwas from memory are effective – hardly any Israelis know the story of the expulsion of the village inhabitants and the destruction of their village in the 1967 war.

On the other hand, the Palestinian refugees of Imwas, such as Muhammad Naji, are living their *Naksa*. They are deeply immersed in the memory of the village, of their own house, they are still smelling the land, want to drink from Imwas spring water, and dream of rebuilding their homes which were demolished in 1967.

Muhammad Naji lives in Abu Ghosh today but insists: “Imwas is my first home, I want to return there.”

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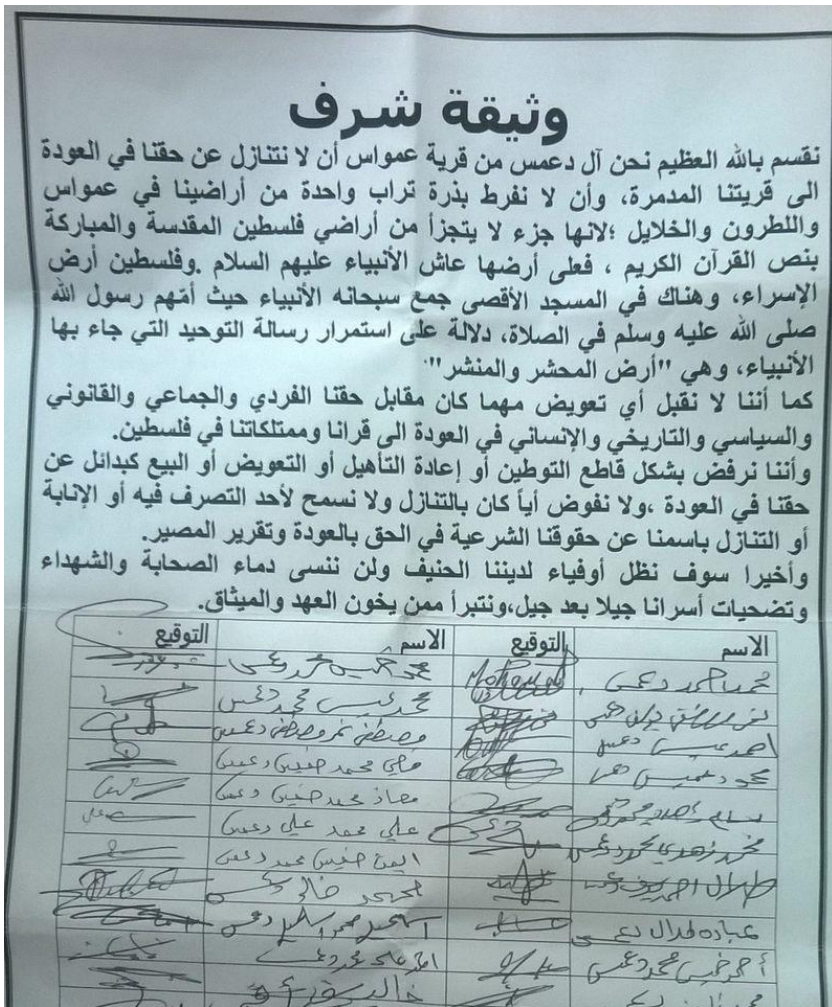
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NOTE 25: "Treaty of Honor." It states that they are committed to cling to their right to return to their village and their home: "We won't agree to receive any compensation against our right to return to our home."



## INTERVIEW WITH C.A. (FEMALE)

JANUARY 2018

INTERVIEWER: HAGAR SALAMON (H.)

The interview took place in the living room of C.'s apartment in Baka, a neighborhood of West Jerusalem. Hagar has known C. for more than 30 years. She was excited about the project and enthusiastic to tell her own story. C.'s narrative contains poignant memories of her mother who had immigrated to Israel from Yemen and regained agency while speaking Arabic with Palestinians in Jerusalem after the 1967 war. C., born in the second half of the 50s, grew up in a *moshav* (a cooperative farmers' village) adjacent to Jerusalem. In her story, she recalled details of life in her pre-1967 childhood marked by farm work and the simple pleasures of Saturdays unsupervised by adults.

Looking at photographs brought forth further memories of how C. was attracted to Palestinian dresses and embroideries, not just buying and wearing them but embarking herself on copying some of them. From the present vantage point, she recognizes facets of Orientalism. Yet, she also recalls the excitement of the time, and acknowledges how her own familial connection to Yemen found a linkage in embroidered Palestinian dresses and merged with a desire to bring about a particular kind of belonging in Israel.

**WE SUDDENLY FELT FREE**

C.: Okay, so I remember that I was eleven years old, that is, I was born in '56 and that was '67. I remember that I was 11 years old. I remember that [...] during the war, our bomb shelter under the house didn't have any heating. And I remember my mother on the grass, crying, because my brother was in the paratrooper [unit] and [...] you know [...] she was scared [...] worried [...]

H.: Before the war?

C.: During the war. During the war, I remember her sitting on the grass and crying. As if she was in mourning, even though nothing had happened yet. For no reason, you understand? Just from fear and worry. That's something I remember clearly. Um [...] and then later, I remember, I think the strongest feeling was that we suddenly felt free. Because we lived in *moshav* Ora, which was very near the border. [...] For as long as we lived there, as long as I remember, we always had a night watch. My father was in charge of it; we went to wake up the guards at night. We were really closely involved. We helped, and managed it, and there was always this fear. Nobody wanted to live at the top of the hill. No one wanted to live [there]. It had a great view, but because it was close to the border, nobody wanted to live there. And there were always stories of infiltrators and fear of infiltrators, and [I remember a lot of] running around. It was as if you had to be active, all the time, 24 hours a day, no breaks, you had to be alert all the time. I remember two incidents. The first was that my father was in a course in the army. That is, he was in the Border Police, in officers' training, and he was leaving, um [...] early Sunday morning. And he opened the door and there was an Arab sleeping there. He was old. I don't know if he was just, you know, confused, there by accident, but [...] you know, to suddenly see an Arab! As in: the enemy. The distance between Batir [the next Arab village] and Ora was so short, but you only have your imagination of what an Arab is, we had never seen Arabs, we had only heard about 'the Arab.' And it was terribly frightening. Of course, they immediately called whoever needed calling, and they took him to security personnel and questioned him. I think he was just some old man who got confused, because why would he, like, just be sitting there. But it was very scary. That's one thing I remember. The second thing I remember is [about our orchards]. Our orchards were right next to the border. There was a train and Batir was on the other side, Husan was further north, and I remember, when I was young, one time the pickup truck came back with the men, but with blood. Um [...] because [...] they had killed one of the fieldworkers. And we –

H.: The Jewish workers?

C.: Yes, we saw the blood. I remember, you know, these kinds of things can leave you with a horrible impression, and hugely fearful of what the enemy can do. And then suddenly the border moved further away. Now, not only did it get further away after '67, but suddenly we didn't need to do guard duty anymore. That whole deal of guard duty at night – we didn't need it.

### **THE ENEMY TURNS INTO A NEIGHBOR TO ENGAGE IN BARTER WITH**

C.: But not just that. Suddenly, the women from Batir showed up with fruit and vegetables. They grow it in the springs, you know, everything's organic and such. And my mother was super thrilled. Suddenly those enemies were the people closer to her than, say, your mother. And yes, she could speak the same language [Arabic]. The whole barter system was very familiar to her from Yemen. They brought vegetables and whatever they grew, and she gave them chickens and eggs. Now, they always got the deformed chickens and sold them in the city cheaply. And the eggs that were a little dirty.

H.: The ones that were damaged or not considered kosher [strict set of dietary rules in Judaism]?

C.: Not because of *kashrut* [*kosher* state], you know, if the chicken is limping. You know, actually now that I think about it, did we eat them? Maybe we didn't, it could be that.

H.: But if you could slaughter them, you could have [...]

C.: Yes, yes, you know what, I didn't think about that. I just know that this is what they always kept the dirty eggs that didn't have to be cleaned and processed for them, and they always took them and, you know, there were regulars – women who had connections with women in *moshav* Ora. You know, it was through the women, more than the men? Suddenly, the entire world opened up. It's just amazing – my mother, who to this day does not speak Hebrew very well, was suddenly able to express herself freely. And in general, her connection to the Old City. [...] As if suddenly she felt at home. My mother felt at home, for her own reasons, right? And us too [...] We felt at home and that's another thing. [...] We were only able to find jeans and checkered shirts in the Old City. All those coveted items [...] who could even dream about them before that. I also don't remember how exactly we found out about them [...] but we did. We just knew that jeans and checkered blouses with circles were very American and very fashionable.

H.: Circles?

C.: Circles here, on the sides, I think. Because it was very fashionable and suddenly we could go to the Old City and buy tons of these clothes and it's something about the identity, you know, something about our identity.

Because we grew up in a *moshav*, you know. In high school, I stole my sister's jeans. It was a big deal to have jeans. So I stole them from her. She was in the army so the whole week I would [wear them]. Then, on Thursday, I had to wash them and put them back.

H.: So she wouldn't know [laughing] [...]

C.: [...] that I wore them. Also striped shirts. All sorts of fashionable American things. So every Saturday, we made a habit of going to the Old City, like everyone else.

### **TRAVELLING TO THE OLD CITY AFTER THE SIX-DAY WAR**

H.: Did you have a car or did you go on foot?

C.: No, no [...] Not by car, we didn't have a car. We would go – I'm trying to think – we walked [...]

H.: On foot all the way from the *moshav*? [...]

C.: No no. Then it was considered okay to hitchhike. You could hitch a ride, it wasn't considered dangerous. So, you know, you'd walk and hitch a ride. And if they stopped then [...]

H.: [...] somebody from the *moshav*, on the way.

C.: Somebody from the *moshav*, and so they'd let you off somewhere and you'd continue the rest of the way on foot.

[...]

H.: And on the way back?

C.: I think it was the same thing. You know, I don't really remember, but it depended on the day. I think it made a difference what time it was. If it was evening we could take a bus back. And maybe it was arranged. But in any case we would wing it.

### **SHABBAT IN THE MOSHAV BEFORE 1967**

H.: So, it actually also changed the whole way you behaved on *Shabbat* [Judaism's day of rest on the seventh day of the week].

C.: That's true, that's true, because [...] before, *Shabbat* was, from what I recall, *Shabbat* was spent in the *moshav*. Where would we go? Maybe to Ein Karem? We could walk to Ein Karem, to the spring, to Hadassah and Ein Karem. So that was a route on the way.

H.: But that is a route with no shopping.

C.: Yes, and we used to make *Ja'ala*<sup>1</sup> for the kids. We used to call it '*Simcha*' [Hebrew for happiness, also used for celebration] rather than *Ja'ala*, and everyone would take some of the leftover *Ja'ala* and go to the spring and share it, I think. I'm not sure. I don't think there was a distinct routine. But it's like, that's what we used to call it. Happiness. Like the happiness of *Shabbat*, that's funny.

H.: How many kids were there in the *moshav* then?

C.: From my age group, it was really small, so it was always both the bottom and the top class, sometimes four and sometimes five. [...] In my year there were seven children.

[...]

H.: What attracted you about going to the spring? That is, why the spring and not stay in the *moshav* for *Shabbat*?

C.: I don't know, it was a lot of fun. To go out, I think maybe because on the other side we were so afraid to go and then suddenly the other side was open. So there was always fruit, and there was always [...] a thing about picking fruit on *Shabbat* or not picking on *Shabbat*. If we closed our eyes it was ok [...] there were all kinds of silly rules. As if, if you close your eyes and pick the fruit, it's ok to eat it.

H.: You wouldn't notice that [...]

C.: [...] it's a total deception. Ways to get around the rules. So there was always the fruit from Jarah, the Arab village. So there were grapes and strawberries and apricots [...]

H.: Hang on, you're not talking about Ein Kerem, you're –

C.: Not Ein Kerem. Jarah. There were beautiful houses that our *moshav* stupidly destroyed. The houses from Jarah were below in the valley.

H.: That's where you'd go.

C.: Yes, that's where we'd go. There was no spring there. That is, they called it a spring, but it had run dry.

[...]

C.: That area. No, so we were just on the other side. Now it's all flowers. That is, I don't know, it was beautiful, nice, freedom [...] and we were by ourselves. Our parents would be sitting at home with the *Shabbat* gatherings so [...] there was this feeling that no one was on top of you. Now, remember we grew up

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<sup>1</sup> The *Ja'ala* is a Jewish Yemenite traditional gathering on *Shabbat*, holidays and life cycle rituals encompassing prayers and singing in which a mix of seeds, nuts and spices is served.

in a village. Every day we had daily tasks. There was no freedom. There was – every day you had to work in the chicken coop or in the orchard. In the vineyard, but that’s seasonal. We had fields and vineyards and chicken coops. We had to work every day. There were seasonal tasks. We also had to read, had to do homework. [...] And, of course, we had to participate in housework [...] so, it was a very busy day for a child. On *Shabbat* – that is, we had to work on Saturday night, you see – but Saturday, you were free from morning to evening. That was real freedom. To run around, they wouldn’t shout or call you or anything. There was freedom for the children, so the older children would run around with the little ones and we would keep an eye on them. [...] Boys, girls, everyone. I remember in the afternoons, especially on such beautiful winter days or in the spring, everyone went to look for fruit. [...] It was like a celebration. A celebration to go there, because every time we saw new things, new things that grew. So it was a lot of fun.

H.: And then after ’67?

C.: Ok, so after ’67, well [...] we were older. So, you know.

H.: You were about 11.

C.: A little younger, yes. And I really don’t remember what the younger kids did. [...] It was before they even built a road infrastructure and all that, so the *moshav* life was less unified. There were two *Hamullot* [big families] who fought with each other, but on the other hand they prayed in a single synagogue with two different versions of prayer, which is really amazing. That’s almost a singular phenomenon in the *Moshavim*. [...]. But when everything opened up, there was really a sense of security, of being safer. So people went out more, and they were less, you know. The feeling of community was kept but not in the same way as before.

### **SUDDENLY YOU COULD BREATHE: TRAVEL AND ENCOUNTERS**

H.: Consider, first you told me about hitchhiking. Which means that people’s observance of *Shabbat* was breaking a bit, and at the same time –

C.: Yes, I think so. It’s hard to recall now that you mention it. I’m trying to think. I don’t think I was hitchhiking at the age of 11. I think I must have been in high school, so I would have been 13, 14, 15. I must have started hitchhiking then. Before that I assume not.

H.: Do you actually remember your first time in the Old City? Was it with your parents or [...]? Immediately after the war? When?



C.: Not, I really don't. I know that my parents took us on trips with my uncle, who was very Israeli, he was in the *Nahal*.<sup>2</sup> We had a car, first a pickup truck then an Opel, and they would load us all into the car at 4 a.m. and then we would go on trips. At first we went to the Negev, and then [...] That is, that was before –

H.: Before '67.

C.: Before, yes. And then [after '67], often, to Judea and Samaria. A lot. To all those places. From Hebron to Nablus. Like so many Israelis did. It was a celebration, simply a celebration. A celebration because it was so captivating to see what was in this, [...] this forbidden area. And suddenly it was [open]. It was fascinating to see how they [the Palestinians] lived. Jericho - it was so much fun there! We stopped there every time. It was so much fun. And [...] well, of course, you know how emotional people are about the Tomb of the Patriarchs, the holy places. Of course we come from a traditional household, of course. But not [...] you know, it is not, it's okay, it's stable, not excessively so. But mostly to be able to see how they live, the villages, what the agriculture was like there, what things they sell. What else – I remember the tastes. It was lovely. Just so lovely. Everything was so different. Just this feeling that suddenly you could breathe. [...] I remember always saying what fun it would be if you could just keep driving. Not long ago – three or four years ago – I was in Sweden and we went to Norway, and there was no border crossing. You don't even realize you're now in Norway. There's no sign. Not even a sign that says Norway. Nothing. And here [...] of course, before the Six-Day War there was this narrow state, and constantly the fear that if you reach the border, something will happen to you. And then suddenly it was open. And suddenly you see what is beyond the mountains of darkness. [...] I don't know. It was just charming. My mother would go to Bethlehem to do shopping every Thursday.

H.: Every week?

[...]

C.: Every week, suddenly to be able to go to Bethlehem and everything is cheaper, and you can buy both cheaply and a lot. So it was a celebration every Thursday when she came from the market, and we could see what she brought and everything.

H.: Wow.

C.: And, of course, of course the whole story of Sinai, too. That was a bit later, when I was a soldier and I was in Eilat, and after that [...] you know

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<sup>2</sup> *Nahal* refers to an Israeli military unit that combines military service and agricultural work.

[...] We went through the same stage that all the young people go through. To go to Nuweiba, to Sharm, Dahab, to hang out there. To live off pita, with no money, live off of Bedouin pita and somehow. And a sense of freedom. You know, it's like a Bob Marley stage. And a sense of freedom of another kind. Different from the other freedom –

### **THE GOODS FROM THE OLD CITY TRANSFORMED BODY AND HOME**

H.: Now tell me, when you went to the Old City on *Shabbat* – who did you go with, usually?

C.: Sometimes alone, sometimes with a friend, and sometimes with my sister, with one of my sisters. But I often went alone. [...] And I really wanted to go and there was no fear, at all. So I went. It was so interesting to go look around, walk around, see what's what. Of course you know I have the embroidered dresses upstairs. I have the white embroidered dress [...] and the blue embroidered dress [...] and they were all [...] And the quality is actually very good [...] Of course, there was a time when we wore these *glabiot*, is that what we called them? And [...] you know the whole house has changed, even now I remember, the sheep's fur, the beanbags, the tables [...]

H.: Beanbags?

C.: Beanbags, furs. I remember [...] The way the room looked –

H.: With the smell of the sheep. There were coats too, do you remember those words? Vests.

C.: Sure, I had one of each, a white one like that. Very warm but smelly. Not important [laughs]. You'd put on perfume and it didn't exactly help. And the tables were [...] ah [...] the tables.

H.: Copper tables. Did you buy it in the Old City?

C.: Yes, in the Old City. And to this day my mother has a table at home like that made out of iron like this.

H.: Yes, yes, yes.

C.: Embroideries, [...] sure. We bought all kinds of embroideries and added them to clothes and it was really [...] well, it is also a part, [...] also our identity. You know, Orientalism, but also, I think for my mother's side of the family, it was connected. Because she also embroiders, and she loved the Old City, and she also found the embroidery there [...] Not quite like Yemen, but something she identified with?

H.: Did she go with you?

C.: She often went alone. With us, too, but also alone. [...] To this day she tells me how much she misses it. Both Mahane Yehuda market and the Old City. She used to go all the time, she would go to the Old City at least once a week, buy spices. [...] She once bought a silver piece of jewelry that she still wears as part of her replica outfits.

H.: That she had bought in the Old City.

C.: That she bought it in the Old City, yes, that's where she found it. It was fun for her because she would go to the market – even though in Yemen women weren't allowed to go to the market, so it wasn't recreating that experience, but it was the smells, the flavors, the sounds, they were all things she related to more.

H.: You said she spoke Arabic with them. She understood Arabic?

C.: So, yes, she did. Obviously there are differences between dialects and sometimes when she watched the news she couldn't understand, but when it's face-to-face it is easier. With the news she barely understands it [...] but in the context of trade and with the women, she managed beautifully. For her it was [...] as if she suddenly had a way of communicating. [...] Before that, you know, she was considered illiterate. She had trouble speaking Hebrew, ah –

H.: [...] being understood.

C.: Yes exactly, to this day she still has an accent. And suddenly she has [...] such connections to that world, to Yemen. All of the immigrants. Not just them. It's like a connection that you [...] that you're forever linked to it. It's not something that fades away. It may be weakened, become less dominant, but it's like spotlights, that's how I imagine it. It's always there. And here, with the [...] Israelization. You need to push it aside a bit. And suddenly the Six-Day War happened, and for her, it opened up. [...] There's a reason I'm emphasizing this. Because it did something for me, too. I really wanted to be Israeli. And [...] as you know, we were all raised that way [...] to speak Hebrew and [...] forget about [...] other things. And my father internalized it. My mother actually remained very traditional, and it's lucky for me that she did. And I always wanted a different mother. A more modern mother, more opinionated, more educated, more more more – to be so Israeli. So I would have a model. Suddenly, the war made space for her, as if the bringing down the borders meant she had a place. Suddenly I see her managing. I saw her [...]

H.: [...] wow, amazing.

C.: And apparently it did something to me, too. The fact is [...] that my love for silk, and embroidery, and silver jewelry [...] we got it from the three items she brought with her from Yemen, but also from the fact that she was always going to the Old City and bringing back fashionable items. She wasn't the

only one who bought them and she – a Yemenite woman, how would she know what's fashionable – but she bought them, so it meant she was –

H.: Up to date.

C.: Yes, she knew what was in style. It's like [...] Things connect [...] worlds collide. Precisely with those Arab women. Amazing.

H.: That's so interesting.

C.: Yes, so [...] I always say that we all learned good taste from her. Because [...] we saw what she brought home. She has a collection of menorahs [candelabrum used in Jewish worship] that she purchased in the Old City. Jewish menorahs but they sold them there.

[C. now shows a number of photographs that illustrate how the items bought in the Old City featured in the home and were worn.]

#### **YOUR CLOSET IS A LANDMARK – PURCHASES POST 1967**

H.: Ok, now I'm going back for a second [...] That's [...] ok. When you went to the Old City, and you know some of the merchants – did they recognize you?

C.: Yes, but I don't know if by name, but they would know my face.

H.: For example, the ones at the American store?

C.: They would know me, yes. It felt very comfortable. You know, they wanted to sell and we wanted to buy.

H.: But past that, did you have a feeling [...] I don't know [...] Ahh [...] How did you see them, for example [...]

C.: Um, I don't know. Look, this is now. In retrospect, we didn't think about it.

H.: I'm talking about time. Try to think back.

[...]

C.: I'm wondering if it ever occurred to me [...] I think that it went well. It [...] we had good relationships [...] [umm. No [...] I wasn't very preoccupied with how they saw me. Because it seems to me that they were happy to sell [...] so, fine. But it could very well be that they thought, now that I think about it, that we were crazy. Spending money on second-hand clothes. After all, they wouldn't wear it, they were used, dirty things. Who knows who used it last. But you know, free market, supply and demand, but they certainly could have thought that [...] I don't think that young [Arab] people of our age bought these clothes in the Old City. I think these things were only being sold

to the Israelis – there were things that only Israelis bought [...] so [...] you know. Like when I think of India, where they sell those baggy pants and clothes. The Indians would keep asking me – not me, because I dressed very well – “How [come] you have so much money but you look so unkempt with those baggy pants.” I went with the clothes, I bought clothes in Indian stores, so I looked Indian, no [...] it [...] but more [...] and I guess it could be the same [...] And there of course there’s the [...] the merchants sell these clothes because there is a demand. So if I draw a parallel, then of course there is [one].

H.: Yes. And the embroidered dresses, you said you called it *glabiot*?

C.: Yes.

H.: That’s with embroidery and women.

C.: Yes. Yes.

H.: When would you wear it and how did you choose them even?

C.: By the quality of the embroidery. Now clearly there are different qualities of embroidery and the one we chose – I have a white dress, which is equal to things you would see in a museum, I think. Maybe the blue one less so but the white is really high quality. Now it was [...] we bought it and everyone wore it. All the girls wore it, there were five of us. At one point we were able to wear each other’s clothing and this was an outfit that – we used to wear it for festive occasions, for going out in the evenings – Saturday night was the time you’d go out.

H.: Would you wear it to go downtown? Or to a movie, say?

C.: Yes, definitely, with Jesus sandals, you know, that’s how it went [...] it’s all a play of one sort or another. Those sandals with thin straps [...] you’d feel like [...] like a little shepherd up from the valley or something. It was a very local feeling, [laughs] I think about it. Because we influenced each other. Say [...] one sister the other sister [...] My mother influenced us and we [...] I don’t know if we influenced her [...] She definitely influenced us but. Each one of my sisters led. We each had our style. And I had one sister who always went around with those biblical sandals.

H.: You mean the sandals with long straps that get tied up the leg.

C.: You tie the straps and tie it up.

H.: That’s what existed at the time.

C.: And that was, wow, to wear those sandals with that dress [...] very biblical [...] it was not by coincidence. With that local dress [...] it felt [...] really [...] it felt very good. Plus the dress was also comfortable. Loose. I didn’t know it at the time, but we were skinny. It wasn’t a problem like it is today [...] But it

was fun and comfortable and it was very beautiful. I remember that I really loved the –

H.: The bodice?

C.: It was square, not revealing, but it was very beautiful and that burgundy embroidery. This burgundy embroidery on white, it's [...] yes, it was very beautiful.

[...]

C.: I'm the one who always keeps things. I'll see things in the home being thrown away, so that's why I have porcelain cups from the fifties in the kitchen.

[...]

C.: I was always at home [...] I took the things that I saw weren't being used, and I kept them. I have a chest upstairs full of all kinds of old things that are also [...] Yemenite embroidery.

H.: Why do you keep [the dresses]?

C.: I don't know. You know, it's part of history. Your closet [...] it's a landmark. First of all, [the dress is] very beautiful. The embroideries are very beautiful. I have a drawer full of embroideries from all over the world. And second, maybe we'll get back to it again and wear it again, you never know. The fashions are [...]

H.: Recycled.

C.: Yes, and even if it is not something that is very significant [...] ah [...] in [...] our development [...] and in [...] the creation of who we are [...] that, that [...] it's important because I think that [...] There's a lot of clothes that I didn't keep, so why these –

H.: Yes, that's exactly how I am [...]

C.: So I think it's exactly what I've said, it's the ties between the Israeliness and the Yemenites and the Arabs and my mother too [...] It's something that gives you a good part of your identity [...] in this tangle of identities that you really are. Every one of us goes through that. Where exactly in Israeli society do you belong, so it gives you a good place that connects us to many parts of society. It makes you belong to a lot more than you [did] before.

H.: So interesting, tell me what you think, about the Arab women who embroidered it, and saw the Israeli women wearing it, what did it make them feel? There's that side we didn't think of.

C.: It's true, we didn't think of it. We were very selfish. You know, there's really the feeling of [...] You know, we [...] I don't know how [...] I don't think we thought about it then but now we definitely do. We [...] we provided income, I don't know [...] I don't know if I thought about it consciously but now [...] "You have to appreciate the fact that we are interested in it" or something like that. Maybe that was what we felt. Look, I think it's a mixed emotion. Because if we like it then it probably has a value, i.e. –

H.: For them –

C.: From their point of view, it can be a positive feeling. Now, I'm trying to think whether they wore these clothes or they were already museum artifacts, for them. I think, with the women of Batir, they wore embroidered dresses. Though everyday ones.

H.: When they came to visit you.

C.: When they came to visit. I definitely remember the embroidery and their belts [...] the style [...] yes [...] they definitely wore traditional garments. Now it's also interesting – the women who made these dresses – were they for sale or did the men take them because they realized there was a market? You know the story from Yemen, or, you know, anywhere, whether ethnic things are let go or whether they become valued goods. So [...] it's not clear [...] truly. [...] I think it's a very complicated issue because [...] yes, it can evoke, yes, positive emotions, if, if it's out of context [...] it can suddenly [...]. If somebody isn't wearing it properly, or not according to the cultural codes, or [...] violates it. Something like that. But I don't know if they would have seen us wearing them. Say, if I went to the Old City wearing it. I don't remember. Could be. I certainly might have worn the dress and then [...] How would they have looked at me [...]

[...]

H.: Do you ever take those dresses out? Look at them?

C.: Sometimes, yes [...] unfortunately not [...] not as much as I'd like to, because [...] You need to air them out and make sure they're ok sometimes. So not as much as I want, but I do usually take out things around Passover, yes. And then, you know. You wish you had more time to take care of things and handle things. You know.

[...]

H.: Did anybody get married wearing it?

C.: No, no, no-one. [...] Listen, you must hear the story about my sister. [My older sister], she's one of those women who didn't want to go to a bridal

boutique [...] She took *keffiyehs*<sup>3</sup> and sewed them [...] – She asked a seamstress to make them for her wedding dress.

H.: From *keffiyehs*?

C.: From a white *keffiyeh* cloth [...] you know, that's this light, transparent [...] That's how she made her veil. I have a picture.

H.: No embroidery?

C.: Nothing embroidered but clearly she went to the Old City and she bought the fabrics and had it sewn for her. It was really – really – their cloth. It was very, very beautiful.

[...]

H.: Unusual.

C.: We were very impressed by how daring she was.

[...]

H.: So someone made it for her.

C.: Someone made it for her, she just bought the fabric.

H.: So she did make a white dress.

[...]

H.: But I – I'm just asking myself – after all, no one threw them away. And they weren't made to be sold. They didn't do that. They made them for themselves, that's pretty clear. And then at some point – it's getting sold. What happened there?

C.: Yes, that's really interesting [...] when you think about it.

H.: And that's what I'm trying to understand.

C.: Thinking about the woman who made it [...] it takes months, and you're attached to it, and all of a sudden someone else is wearing it, and you don't know if she appreciates it. It's very difficult, very difficult, how did we not consider that? In general [...] You know, it was for sale, we bought it. We never thought about the woman who embroidered it.

H.: Now that I'm asking you, then suddenly you think, wait a moment, what did she think [...]

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<sup>3</sup> A *keffiyeh* is a traditional Arab headdress, usually made of cotton, worn throughout the Islamic Middle-East. Although the iconic one is that of a fishnet pattern, here the reference is to a white one, mainly worn by women.



C.: Yes, exactly, it's a painful truth [...] If I'm this attached to this dress, and –

H.: And you weren't the one who embroidered it.

C.: And I wasn't the one who embroidered it. I see [...]. I see it with my mother, how every dress from Yemen is [...] a story. It's a big deal. It matters, and [...] And we never thought about it. We never considered the women, at all.

[...]

C.: It must also be the, you know, our desire to belong. Because of our transient feeling of belonging and not belonging.

H.: It gives us a kind of [...] connection.

C.: An anchor, that's why you keep it. And with those biblical sandals, this combination of Israeliness, the Bible, Jewishness, this, you know, Orientalism. It's such a basic thing [...] And that custom of taking pictures. At the beginning of the 20th century, it was in fashion to dress up in Palestinian clothes and take pictures.

H.: No, definitely. The first time they would dress up and take pictures [...]

C.: No, but what I'm saying is, I'm trying to think – is it the same feeling. On one hand, it's been years now, but on the other, we still feel [...] I think, to this day, whether we belong or don't belong.

H.: True, true.

C.: It's not so obvious. And then suddenly, we're really wearing a borrowed identity that we [...] took –

H.: And it's not... at some point we also stopped. That is, there was a practice here that ended [...] The dynamics aren't the same. Suddenly it isn't [...] it's not [...] as beautiful as they are, now they're beautiful and in the closet. That is to say, they aren't being worn anymore. [...]

C.: Do you think it's connected to our sense of security here, that we don't need more –

H.: I'm not sure.

C.: Because just the fact that we're keeping them doesn't mean that [...] though I did say that maybe we'll go back to wearing them.

[...]

H.: Sorry I didn't mean to, it was so much fun when we first started! [laughs]

C.: No, no, it's alright. And – you know – you suddenly think, you suddenly think about the other side. Because really this victory was the [...] I don't know if I thought in those terms. I remember Ben Gurion's statement, about returning the territories, and I thought that was the right thing to do, and I don't remember how old I was, but I remember that, on one hand, there was this fun and freedom and [...] the curiosity and all that but [...] I think it was [...] also the [...] what are we doing. How are we [...]

H.: That's the thing, it's really about trying to delve into that situation. I think, you know [...] the things we can talk about today, we're always talking about tragedies. They were not there, they were not there – it's a very clear and important point, I think, to understand, try to reach that experience then, which wasn't. When you wore the dress, there was something naive, so to speak, in our experience of wearing it. "It's just a beautiful dress," as you put it nicely, and we're wearing it [...] And that means we appreciate their aesthetics and agree to put them on our body [...] It's not a bad thing, it's good. We're willing and happy to do so. We [...] did we consider the women? We didn't consider them. That didn't exist.

C.: True, we didn't think about the other side. Definitely not [...] it was really [...] It was part transparent, part service, but [...] No, no [...] There was also a sense that [...] that this really helps them. At least from the experience of [...] those women who bartered with my mother.

[...]

C.: But, you know, it's also about those initial things that connect us to this country, to this land [...] when you think about it [...]

H.: The straw and the furs, these things.

C.: I think – we were rootless, to a certain extent.

# The House on the Border

*Aziz Haidar*

## 1 Introduction

This paper features the story of a house as reported in 2017 on Facebook by a Palestinian woman from Jerusalem. It demonstrates the importance of closely examining the relationship between two politically conflicted populations: the Jewish community on the west side of the city and the Palestinian community on the east side. To frame this story properly, the paper begins with an assessment of how the relationship between the two populations has – or perhaps better put – has not undergone scholarly examination, before the story will be reported in full.

Research on Palestinians, citizens of Israel and the Palestinian territories, is mostly Israeli research, so it is important to follow its development and the trends of change it has undergone. The research, its contents, assumptions, methods, interpretation of its results and their use constitute an indication of the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the population studied. The nature of these relationships is also reflected in the disregard and ignorance of important issues for understanding reality in everyday life.

This paper focuses on a neglected but important issue in the relationship between the occupier and the occupied in the city of Jerusalem. It is the issue of the relationship between the two populations living in both parts of the city and, in a very few cases, in mixed neighborhoods.

The study on Palestinian society in the Occupied Territories since 1967 was a continuation of the study on Arab-Palestinian society in Israel before 1967. To a large extent, the study in the two populations is very similar in terms of the topics

and issues studied, the issues that disappeared from the researchers' eyes and the professional identity of the researchers involved in this study.

Research on Palestinian society in Israel has developed in three stages. The first – between the first days of the state until the 1970s – was characterized by a clear division of labor between a few Israeli orientalist, who undertook research on this society, and the Israeli sociologists and anthropologists, who hardly dealt with the subject (Haidar 2004). During this period, the research focused on the study of political organization, the trends of change in the political positions of the Palestinian population, the formation of national identity, and patterns of protest and struggle. Some work also dealt with the processes of modernization both within a 'traditional cultural-social and religious' structure that is 'permanent and unchanging,' and a substance that is fundamentally different from 'modern' Israeli society.

The first phase of the study of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, after 1967 is identical to the first phase of the study of the Palestinian citizens of Israel in terms of being orientalist in nature and focusing on the same questions and issues. Research on the Palestinian population moved to a second phase in the late 1970s when criticism of dominant approaches and research methods began to emerge. This was part of the general critique of the study of Israeli society which sought to shake off the connection between the state and the establishment and the sociological-anthropological research in Israel (Ram 1993). The criticism was directed at both orientalist and social science research.

Critical sociology in Israel positioned itself ahead of "institutional sociology," which had been almost the only school in sociological research in Israel until the late 1980s (Mizrachi 2017: 73). At this stage, the study of Arab-Palestinian society in Israel had undergone a change in terms of disciplines and fields of research due to the entry into this field of research of social scientists and Palestinian researchers, from diverse fields, and the adoption of critical theory. But this development did not occur in the study of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories beyond the Green Line. This work is stuck at a stage that is a mixture of the first and the second stage. The critical move in the social sciences uses the Palestinians as a basis for a critical examination of Israel and Israeliness, a critique of various dimensions of Israeli culture and Israeli society (Rabinowitz 1998: 194). Despite this, there is still a commonality in the study on the two populations, namely, the disregard for the nature of the relationship between the Palestinian and the Jewish-Israeli population in daily life.

The third stage in the development of research began in the early 1990s. From this point on, the study of Palestinian society in Israel is established, becomes interdisciplinary and converges mostly into the critical theoretical position (Ram 1993). Research on Palestinians across the Green Line has continued to focus primarily on the study of political behavior, leadership and document research.

Characteristic of the study at all stages is that it ignores the relationship between the two populations. Both the orientalist and the critical approach bypassed the phenomenon of relationships at the local level; instead, research focused on the macro-political research and organizations, the impact of 'modern' Jewish society on

‘underdeveloped traditional’ Palestinian society, and responses of the Palestinian population.

The absence of the relationship between the two societies in everyday life from the existing sociological and social research indicates significant blind spots, both in that which existed in the first decades of the establishment of the state of Israel, where a state perspective was adopted, and in the critical approach that emerged later. The tendency to examine Palestinian society and define it first and foremost through its relationships with the Jewish majority society, whether these are perceived through the modernization approach or through the critical stance, has led to ignoring the internal social dialectic that takes place in Palestinian society as a product of these relationships.

The lack of research on the internal dynamics and relationships between the two populations has contributed to the trend of blurring the connection between Palestinians and Palestinian territory, alienation and primitivization (Shohat 1989). It integrates this concern at best into the Israeli discourse of alienation (Rabinowitz 1998: 196), the discourse of testimony that works to separate the Jews from the non-Jews, conditionality in the definition of identities of both sides, and conditionality of the difference, and use of a religion that has greatly increased in the last two decades. The liberal intellectual discourse that began to show appreciation for the cultural difference of the Arab-Palestinian and, thus, used cultural preservation as a method of isolating the Palestinians (Rabinowitz 1998: 202) contributed to this trend.

One recognizes that scholarship regards the phenomenon of the existence of personal and social relationships between Palestinians and Jews in everyday social contexts of labor and commerce along with deep hostility between the two camps at the political level as an anomaly in the liberal discourse that emerged in Israel beginning in the 1980s (e.g. Bronstein 2015; Mizrachi 2011). This is due to the fact that liberalism presupposes continuity and consistency between society and the state, and in relation to what is done in different social spheres in the life of each individual (e.g. work, society, family, politics). This expectation is based, first and foremost, on “the sanctity of the individual in liberalism: Life, therefore, produces cross-border continuity between all spheres” (Fisher 2015). On the other hand, it seems that it is precisely the protection of collective boundaries for life spheres (such as family and community) that creates the infrastructure for good neighborly relationships and mutual respect between different groups in the traditional communal worldview.

These issues of relationships and boundaries are even more important when living in a mixed city such as Jerusalem. The study in Jerusalem was expected to be different in this respect from the study of Palestinian society in the territories.

I will briefly present the main perspectives through which Israeli social scientists approached the study of Palestinian society and relationships between its members and Jews living in Jerusalem. I will point out the blind spots that led to the disregard of relationship research on a personal and social level. First of all, it should be noted that Orientalists still control the study of Palestinian society in the territories and in

Jerusalem. It goes without saying that Oriental research cannot be expected to address the question of relationships at the local level.

The question has, thus, almost completely disappeared from the eyes of the few social sciences researchers who have studied Palestinian society. They have ignored the relationships between residents from the two groups in Jerusalem over the years, although the issue of interpersonal and social relationships is also an essential research site for understanding the real life and relationships developed between Jerusalem Palestinian residents and the Jewish majority.

A reality has developed in Jerusalem in which the Palestinian residents of the city are living under a municipality they did not choose. They are deprived of the right to vote for representatives of the *Knesset* (Israeli parliament), which determines their fate. And they are in a dilemma regarding their connection to the Palestinian Authority, which has no authority in the city. The reality has been shaped by the complex relationships created between the residents of the eastern part of the city and the Israeli government, on the one hand, and the Palestinian Authority, on the other.

Meeting and activity are created between the residents of the two parts of the city: meeting groups between Israeli and Palestinian neighbors, who sometimes engage in point-by-point struggles without raising comprehensive political demands (Cohen 2007: 138, 141). There were those who expanded their activities in the field of neighborly relationships and other dialogue groups to create a framework for dialogue. Although members of these groups occasionally participated in protests, the organizations were on a local basis and addressed specific issues, and did not form part of the city's institutionalized political activity (Cohen 2007: 141).

The field of relationships between the residents of the two parts of the city has been examined in several comprehensive studies, most in the context of examining the relationships between Jews and Palestinians in the city at the community level (e.g. Roman 1984, 1992; Shtern 2010, 2015; Shtern and Asmar 2017; Shtern and Vayzer 2021), but these studies do not address the interpersonal relationship level. In fact, the studies that claimed to investigate relationships are also mostly investigations of employment and trade (e.g. Roman 1984; Shtern 2010), organizational and group relationships. The central insight that emerges from these discussions is that the individualistic ontology underlying the liberal imagination of critical sociology clashes with the world of communal significance of the respondents in the variety of contexts. This collision does not allow one to see certain behaviors of inter-rogues but as an anomaly.

In order to counter this blind spot, I will now turn to the story of "The House on the Border." The narrative was told by E.A., a Facebook user, who had begun to tell the story of a house located in Jerusalem, and its fate, intertwined with her own and that of her family, since the War of 1967. She began to post in September 2017, and expanded on her initial Facebook post, narrating more and more details that shed light on the complicated, and yet also neighborly relationships between Palestinians and Israelis during and after what she calls "The War of June." The core

narrative concerning the house is embedded in the most fascinating stories about the impact of war on the lives of a Palestinian family for many years up to our present day.

E.A. posted in Arabic, the set of her posts appears here in English translation, followed by a commentary.

## 2 War of June

Starting from today, I will recount the story of our home, it is a Jerusalemite house story, a land's story. The story is long; I apologize to those who do not prefer such stories. It all started during the war of June; my father-in-law, who was a great owner of lands in his village, had finished building a big house consisting of three large apartments. The house was almost finished when the war started, and because the house was close to the armistice line, the Jordanian army, who was situated on the top of the hill next to the house, came down and used the house to store weapons in the basement, and set up the artillery behind it. The war ended fast. And before everyone realized the shock, the Israeli army, disguised in Iraqi army outfits, was standing on the outskirts of the house.<sup>1</sup> They arrested my father-in-law, who was a former Jordanian soldier. His money was confiscated; he was carrying it in his pockets in anticipation of what would happen. They thought he was responsible for Jordanian soldiers' salaries. He was arrested with another officer in a military car, and the rest of the soldiers in another car. As they were driving, the enemy's tank clashed with a Jordanian hidden tank and so my father-in-law was able to run away and get to a shelter because he knew the area very well.

11/09/2017

The war ended. The country went down. The displaced in the mountains came back to their houses. My father-in-law came back without anything after they had confiscated his money. He was responsible for a big family, and the situation was really hard. In that period, Jews started coming to Jerusalem, discovering its roads, streets and corners, buying from its markets. You could see many [Palestinian] youths selling antiques and souvenirs from their houses for a living. For my husband and his brothers, they followed a different way for making a living. They were still in school and their elder brothers were studying abroad, so they had to take responsibility; the Jordanian army left boxes of weapons in the basement, so my husband and his brothers used to open the boxes of bullets, emptying the gunpowder from them and selling it to whoever bought. By this, they ensured a respectable living, and [they

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<sup>1</sup> F.A.'s assumption that Israeli soldiers were disguised in uniforms of Iraqi soldiers goes along with the conspiracy narratives discussed by Yuval Plotkin (this volume).

resorted to this] especially because they were not able to get the wheat crop from their vast lands, a large part of [the land] was burnt because of bombs.

12/09/2017

The man who used to buy gunpowder from them recognized that the bullets were new, not antiques collected from the streets. The traitors [among the Palestinians] were very cooperative from the very beginning, so this man informed the police, who waited for [my husband and his brothers] close by until they arrived back home and arrested them to lead them to the house. The police continuously announced in speakers that whoever had weapons had to hand them in. My father-in-law did not do this. When [the Israelis] raided the house, they were shocked by the number of weapons they found. As a result, they issued an order to demolish it and sealed it with red wax. Among the forces who raided the house, there was a reserve officer, who was actually a civil engineer, his wife was a Moroccan [Jew] and spoke Arabic; he liked the house, so he secretly offered my father-in-law a deal: he would not demolish the house, but asked to live in it in return. My father-in-law accepted the offer; especially because he had other houses that were rented to foreigners and that were empty because of the war, and the empty houses used to be confiscated as absentee property, and one of the houses had already been confiscated because it was empty. The deal was done, waiting for the family [of the reserve officer] to come.

13/09/2017

The family came to the house: the father, the mother and two daughters. They occupied the house for 35 years; good and sweet neighbors. Trying to be loved by other neighbors, especially, because the mother spoke Arabic. She gave birth to 5 children; who then when they grew up were the worst kind of Jews. One of the daughters got married to an intelligence officer responsible for our area. We started claiming the house back again already in the first years; no was their answer. My father-in-law refused to get rent from them. The journey in the courts had started to get the house back. First my father-in-law, then my husband. My husband became responsible for family matters because his other siblings were living either far away or abroad. That's why my husband was the one in charge. During his lifetime, my father-in-law distributed his wealth, because all his properties were confiscated for settlements, French Hill, Pisgat Ze'ev, Ramat Ashkol, and nothing was left.<sup>2</sup> This big house was written to be my mother-in-law's, the other house, also confiscated, was named to be my husband's. It was an injustice for my husband because his house was confiscated by an Iraqi Jew. When we got married, my

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<sup>2</sup> E.A. uses names for neighborhoods in Northern Jerusalem which were used after 1967 when these neighborhoods also grew.



husband confronted me with all the truth, so I promised to stand by his side until this dirty man would leave our home. The first Intifada helped us, anonymous people burnt his car and wrote quotes on the walls of the house, asking him to leave or else he would die. He negotiated with us, either we would pay him, or he would be replaced by a religious Jew. We were able to collect the amount of money with the help of my brother, may God heal him. We lived in the house, we spent huge amount of money to preserve it and then we were ready for getting back the big house.

14/09/2017

To get back to the big house, my mother-in-law renounced the house for my husband, who then became the only person responsible for it after the death of his mother and father. Afterwards, Israel announced the Protection Law which offers everyone who lived in a house before 1968 the protection in the house he/she rented, they could not be evacuated unless they agreed and got paid a certain amount of money. Because the house was very big, the Jew rented half of the house to another officer, which was against the law; this loophole was in our favor. So, our attorney, with a just judge, was able to get half of the house back. But before they left, they destroyed the doors, windows, kitchen and bathroom, so the house would need renewal, and they continued using the other half. We were unable to rebuild the ruins in the second part, which we got back, because that required a huge amount of money. They started teasing us, because we got back half of the house; they tried to run over my son, they hit me, and I was taken to hospital, they accused my husband of burning some of their belongings. We entered into a state of war in which they were the stronger side. At the same time, my husband's brother, a doctor, came back from Spain for which he had left his family for 25 years. He only came back with our nagging (me and my husband) after we found his address, for my mother-in-law wished to see him for one last time before she died. When he came back, he was drowning in problems and divorced, but he was rich. My husband asked him to come back to the homeland, he offered him the house to live in it, he only had to rebuilt it. He accompanied him to the Ministry of Health to give his papers. He accepted the offer, and my husband renounced [ownership] of the house for him officially. We waited for his promise to rebuilt the house, but he did not. He returned to Spain and the house was left for 10 years; the taxes compiled and everyone knows how expensive the taxes are in Jerusalem. All the taxes for 10 years were in my and my husband's name; we had to pay them because [the brother] did not live there.

However, we were shocked when he came back behind our backs and put the house up for sale. He visited us many times, stayed in our house, we took care of him, tried to explain [to him] why it was important to get the house back

from the Jews. When we used to ask him to pay the taxes and repair the house, he always claimed he had a bad financial situation. Which was a lie. We could not do anything, because the house was officially written in his name. To return to the other half of the house; the Jewish family still lived there; the father was dead, the children were adults now; they either went abroad, or lived in their own apartments in West Jerusalem, and the mother was left alone. The second Intifada had started.

15/09/2017

The lonely Jewish woman began to feel afraid, she was now alone in the big house. One time, she was leaving her house and was shocked by an air strike near my house. I was sitting on the balcony, I ran to help her. She thanked me for that and the next day she came to visit me [and brought] a present. Here, I decided to use the situation in order to reach a deal concerning the house. Ramadan began, we welcomed her each day to eat with us, and sometimes she used to come with her daughter. She informed us that she was thinking of leaving the house and getting whatever amount of money she could get from it. According to the law, she could sell the house and take 2/3 of its price and we would get 1/3 of it, then it would be owned by a new owner [neither the Jewish woman, nor E.A. and her husband]. During the same period, the situation served our interests again; Jewish settlers had attacked the house thinking it was owned by Arabs, she called the police for help. Only one day before, a young, masked man had knocked on her door in the night, telling her: "I am from the Black Panther party." This was enough to force her to run to West Jerusalem. The house became empty. But we could not take it. Then, she announced in a Jerusalem newspaper that she was selling the house. Now brokers, mercenaries and collaborators proliferated to get the house. We would stand up to them and make them understand that this was our home and no one else would take it. At this time, my husband had throat cancer and began a difficult treatment journey that affected the course of our lives. It took a lot of our time, his life was the priority. [The Jewish woman] learned of his illness and expressed great sympathy with him, while later facilitating the path of negotiations.

16/09/2017

While we were busy treating my husband, we were looking for someone to help us. We resorted to the [Islamic] endowments (the responsible institution and director of the Islamic [Waqfs]) and their response was: Give us the right to dispose of the house for fifteen years. Then we would get the right to buy it. So we refused and said it was better to stay with the Jews, for then, at least, we were guaranteed it was ours. Then we resorted to the Palestinian Authority and met one of the veteran ministers. He is still in PA to this day. He sat and put his leg on the other and said to us with a curse: "Do not pay her one

penny. From now until the end of the year, we will have gotten Jerusalem back, and then you kick her with your feet,” and he waved his foot laughing.

The Jews are still in Jerusalem. The worst is that some of the relatives were preparing to pay the amount and take over the house, but we refused. We decided to work on our own. She [the woman who lives in the house] asked to meet us at her new home. She offered us a deal, to pay her half the amount she was offered which was \$ 200,000 and she would hand over the house. She justified this [by saying that] she was doing this because she had not forgotten that I had saved her life and hosted her at my table. After several deliberations, she said: “I am traveling to see my son and spend a holiday in Poland, and I need five thousand dollars to pay the government to cancel the reservations on me,” she had accumulated taxes. My husband gave her the money and she gave us the key to the house and said to my husband: I trust you and I know you will not fool me and act as if you were at home. We respected her promise despite the pressure of all members of the family to take over the house, and when she returned she was happy, because her children were mad at how she had handed us the key and [they thought us] capable of betraying her. We met again in her house, and we agreed with her to pay the amount over a period of four years in which we paid a thousand dollars per month to her, with a down payment of half of the other amount. The lawyer was keen to obtain a written consent from her daughters and sons so that no one would ask us for the house later.

17/09/2017

We started thinking about the \$ 1,000 a month, we were both employees and we had four children in private schools. We decided to rent our house, which we lived in and it was in good condition in order to pay the monthly amount, and move to the house we received, and worked to repair it gradually as much as we could; it needed to recover water and electricity lines, and be painted. Before moving into it, my brother and cousin helped me, so the house became habitable again at their expense. We settled in the big house and started to implement the agreement and pay a thousand dollars a month, and the second half of the amount as a down payment was paid with the help of my family and borrowing from friends. Here the government began asking us to pay the accumulated debt on the second apartment which [my husband] had given to his brother. We received a warrant to reserve our house and our salaries if we would not pay, and even imprisonment. We appealed to [his brother] to come to the country and take responsibility for [his part of] the house). He refused and said that he had some financial difficulties and asked us to solve the problem. We paid an amount to stop the warrant and started looking for a tenant who would renovate the house and live there. After a long effort, we found a

Christian association prepared to pay the taxes and repair the house [to use it] for five years as its headquarters.

E.A.'s story reveals the impression of the first encounter between Palestinian residents of Jerusalem and the Israeli army and the Israeli legal system, and between them and Israeli citizens. It also reveals an important part in the development of relationships to this day. The latter are complicated in most cases, but "The House on the Border" illustrates how such complications unfold over decades. At the core of the events narrated, one can identify the root cause, namely, the ambiguity between personal relationships and formal ones. Simultaneously, the story reveals that personal relationships can be a tool for solving complex problems between the two opposing sides.

The case of "The House on the Border" is revelatory of the fact that the relationship between the strong and the weak, the occupier and the occupied, is multifaceted. There are facets that can trigger ambivalent positions on the part of both sides, based on how personal relationships have unfolded. These bondages may also change as a result of the change in power relationships at the local level; certain events give relative power to the weaker side of the equation or behavior on either side or both of them jostle the relationships.

In the first meeting after the 1967 war, the victorious Israeli side revealed its power in its ability to decide to demolish the house of the Palestinian family, expropriate its money and assets and make the family impoverished. An Israeli army officer could save the house from demolition in return for his residence in the new house, which, in fact, became his property and enabled his family to sell it to the same family – the actual owner of the house.

Empathetically, the power relationships on the ground can change without the influence of real power at the general level being free from the control of formal relationships. This was the case in two occurrences: the first intifada (1987) and the second intifada (2000). In both cases, the Palestinian family was in a position of relative strength because the authorities and the army, which were the source of power of the Israeli family in conflict with the Palestinian family, could not affect personal relationships.

In the first case, the Israeli officer was forced to negotiate with the Palestinian family who returned half of the house to itself. In the second case, the second intifada, the officer's wife had to give up because she could not face threats. The irony here is that she received threats from religious Jews who thought that a Palestinian family lived in the house. Again, this event shows how complex relationships can sometimes be absurd; but they can also be a tool in solving complex problems. The assistance given by the Palestinian woman to the Israeli woman and her hospitality during the month of Ramadan was the main reason for softening the other's position and deciding to sell the house to the Palestinian family at half the price she originally demanded.

While maintaining good relationships with the enemies who have been expelled from their homes has solved a complex problem, the story attests to the fact that these relationships have aided the Palestinian family more than the Palestinian authorities could have ever done. Therefore, ambivalence is shown in the positions of the Palestinian. This ambivalence is reinforced by the activities of the Palestinian collaborators, who belong to the same people. After all, because of this affiliation, the other side can deprive them of their homes and assets.

It must be noted that ambivalence is also revealed on the powerful Israeli side when the Palestinian woman helps the Jewish woman even though the latter lives in the former's dispossessed house.

As it became clear from the story of "The House on the Border," the exposure of the internal logic of different groups also, in this case, opens new avenues for understanding reality at the local level. People distinguish between different spheres in life and behave accordingly, and the most prominent is the demarcation between everyday life and the political sphere.

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## **INTERVIEW WITH S.E. AND, OCCASIONALLY SPEAKING, HER FRIEND SA.S. (BOTH FEMALE)**

NOVEMBER 2018

INTERVIEWERS:

YIFTAH LEVIN (Y.) AND HAGAR SALAMON (H.)

The interview took place in an apartment in West Jerusalem that S.E. uses when she is in Jerusalem. The interview was scheduled long before as S.E. is a prominent figure in her religious-national community. Nevertheless, she secured a generous time for our interview, and was very cooperative and open. As we were two interviewers and two interviewees, it was a multi-voice meeting, but S.E. was undoubtedly the main speaker. She began her personal story talking about her parents and especially her Holocaust survivor father, as she connects the present situation with his legacy. In this manner, S.E. relates to the Six-Day War as a national and personal continuation from the Holocaust. For her, the war and its implications are direct results of a divine intervention that was implied by various events before and during the war. On the other hand, she argues that in spite of the war's events and their implications, the Jews were not spiritually ready to contain or accept their task in history and leverage the spiritual culmination that the war's achievements offered them; she considers the intervening decades as a slow readying for the true goal, the return to Temple Mount which she perceives, at the time of the interview, as a growing aspiration beyond her highly religious circle.

Later, S.E.'s recollection exemplifies what it meant for religious Jews to be able to visit and live in landscapes, such as Samaria, where the Biblical narratives unfold.

During the interview, her personal stories and views are led and strengthened by well-known Hebrew songs written after the war, that she cites or sings. Both S.E. and Sa.S. refer to numerous (generally male) individuals who were of significance to their religious community and political stance. Another emphasis is given by both interviewees to the popular culture that accompanied the war and its outcomes, and which expressed the ecstasies among the religious-national community in Israel.

### **THE HOLOCAUST AS A DARK SHADOW IN THE WEEKS BEFORE THE SIX-DAY WAR**

H.: We are essentially interested in the personal story, where it meets people in their personal tale.

S.E.: So I think that my personal tale [about the Six-Day War] really begins with my parents. My father is a Holocaust survivor, which is a very special story in the end, we'll put it like that. At the end of the war he managed to escape, together with his brother, from the Death March. The Death March of Buchenwald, [...] they were a group of nine or ten, they were pretty young, my father was twenty one years old, and they succeeded in escaping to Switzerland. They knocked upon the gates of Switzerland that were locked, I have to say that the Swiss did not open them, but my father was a German speaker and they presented themselves as political prisoners who were stuck there, they had all sorts of maneuvers, all sorts of things of the Red Cross. Back then my father weighed thirty kilograms and had serious dysentery. They actually carried him on their arms, the group, so that he could speak, [since] he was the only one who spoke German. They opened the gate, they entered and they closed the gate yet again. Now they were a curiosity and this we know not just from his stories. My brother a few years back dug around and found, these days you find everything, found someone in Switzerland, found in an archive the description; we have newspaper clippings of exactly how this group arrived, and they looked – how did they put it in our childhood? – one stripe in the pajamas; they looked horrible and it was a curiosity. The Princess of Lichtenstein came to dine with them [...] and the mayor received them and so on, and they offered them, and this is the main part of the story in this context, that they offered them Swiss citizenship. Now how many people in the world are offered Swiss citizenship? And my father was the leader of this group and he refused and said, "We will not remain in Europe, just to the Land of Israel." And, in fact, in all of his years to the US he traveled, he never traveled to Europe, never stepped into Europe again, never set foot upon the ground of Europe.

Y.: Not even in Switzerland where he was treated nicely?

S.E.: Not even. He had [this] to say about the Swiss, they did in fact absorb him but he said that [...] he held against them that they didn't open the gates



for everyone and that all in all the antisemitism was not insignificant. Yes, they offered him [citizenship] but he really didn't want it. So we grew up with that tale, the Land of Israel. [...]

So that's my father, and he was injured in the War of Independence [in 1948]. [...] He was injured in the eye. Since he was in Switzerland so probably because of that [...] I assume – the international Red Cross recognized him as a refugee so that when he was injured they sent him to America for eye surgery in the hospital. There he met my mother, who came from a family who today there aren't really such things, but they were very Haredi [ultra-Orthodox], very Haredi but Zionists. But she herself learned Hebrew and she was in a youth movement [...] the Religious Shomer [guard]. [...] They got married there and immediately made *aliyah*.<sup>1</sup>

[...] my father always dreamt of being a farmer in the Land of Israel, and I grew up in Kfar Pines. It's a laborer's town which we then called The Shomron [laughs], it's not exactly the Shomron [Samaria]. [...] When the Six-Day War broke out I was in 11th grade, I was sixteen and a half, yes. [...] back then I grew up with the Bnei Akiva<sup>2</sup> education, we learned about Gush Etzion, the subject of the Lamed Heh [the 35] of Gush Etzion in the war [of Independence] was really ingrained in us deeply. I really recall the fear that gripped us in the days of preparation for the Six-Day War, [...] I recall my father digging rifle pits so that there would be something, there were no bomb shelters back then like today, certainly not in a village, so we dug a rifle pit of sorts beside the house. And my father who was no stranger to war. It was [...] it was frightening, it was [[considers for a moment] it was threatening. I recall how our relatives from the US called us and urged my mother [...] to take the children and come to America. It was truly a feeling of threat; afterwards we found out that in Tel Aviv they had prepared burial plots for tens of thousands, they thought that this is what would happen. It's hard to believe today but it was really, really threatening indeed. And in truth I believe now, how many years after the Holocaust was this? Really nothing, twenty years or so, nothing.

[...] My father back then as yet didn't speak of the Holocaust at all, he never spoke of the Holocaust. This I say in brackets, I remember myself as a girl, I found pictures where you see him and his brother in pajamas, it was already from Switzerland but even as a girl of five years old, I recall that it – the pictures were truly frightening, I felt as though even today I recall the feeling in my stomach that there is something truly horrible here because they were so emaciated in a manner that I was really petrified. It's interesting in as much as [...] I didn't know anything, they didn't speak of it, it didn't exist. And I asked, "What is this," and they said, "It's nothing," and hid the pictures.

<sup>1</sup> Lit. "going up," it is the term used for the immigration of Jews to the Land of Israel.

<sup>2</sup> "Children of Akiva" – the largest religious Zionist youth movement.

Then they didn't speak, my father didn't speak of the Holocaust, only many years subsequently when there were already grandchildren that asked, and that's it. He didn't make the connection but I did see that feeling of being chased, threatened, he was threatened, there was truly a feeling of that's it, they're about to destroy us anew. But on Monday morning, when the war broke out, we, of course, had no idea that they destroyed all this [meaning the Egyptian air force], no one knew at all. We got up in the morning, in the village there were draftees, we woke up in the morning to travel to school, I studied in Hadera, we hear, they began to hear the thunder of the war in Jordan. You'd hear the cannons, it's quite close to us, [...] And then, "What?" I remember we said, "What? They promised us that Jordan wouldn't enter the war." Suddenly there was fear from that direction. We went to school, after two hours we were sent home. [...] It's hard to believe, it was Monday morning, on Wednesday afternoon we were sitting by the shelters and we heard that the Temple Mount is in our hands.

Y.: Where were you, in the rifle-pits at that time?

S.E.: No, no, no, no, no. We as youth went, it's an agricultural village, we went to the chicken coops of those drafted in agriculture. Simple.

Y.: During war time.

S.E.: During war time. During war time, yes, on the first day we heard the thing, but it didn't really reach us in fact. We were freed and walked around.

H.: There weren't any shelters or anything in which you slept?

S.E.: No, no, no, no. In Jerusalem they slept in shelters but not near us. We didn't feel it. In that sense we were the hinterland.

Y.: But he dug rifle-pits at the time of the war.

S.E.: During the war time there was actually no need. We didn't have any sirens by us, so there was no need. We continued in the village, there were those drafted so all of the young wives of the husbands were all nervous but not too much, it's hard to believe – think about it – on Wednesday afternoon, from Monday morning until Wednesday afternoon already a lot of it was defeated. I just remember, really, even today I tear up, just how we stood.

**THE NEWS OF VICTORY AND FINDING EARLIER SIGNS OF IT**

S.E.: [...] I remember where we sat beside the shelter, the shelter of the radio at home, and we're sitting there, and my father is really crying [she speaks in a trembling voice].

He [...] Yes, he cries and we hear, yes we hear how they describe it, how they are passing, how they are running through the Old City.

[...] On the broadcast. You could hear them talking.

Sa.S.: [about] the *shofar*<sup>3</sup> blowing and "The Temple Mount is in our hands."

S.E.: No, before the *shofar* blowing, "We are running, we are this, we are here, we are there."

[...] we could hear that "We are running inside of the Old City" and then Motta Gur<sup>4</sup>, "The Temple Mount is in our hands," and they went down to the Western Wall because they felt that the Wall, really, they didn't pray atop the Temple Mount, they prayed to the Wall all those years, that the Wall should return. It's as though the concept of the Temple Mount, even for us, the religious community, it wasn't yet, that is to say it wasn't yet in our vision. At most, the Wall. After that the Wall and the paratroopers crying. And I didn't tell another thing that actually happened, that was so powerful. On the evening following Independence Day of the same year which was three weeks earlier, when we were already in this atmosphere of the threat and all, on Saturday night, you know – the Hebrew Song Festival. [...] at the very end a young singer, Shuli Nathan, sang "Jerusalem of Gold" of Naomi Shemer, and really from that Saturday night onward we sang, it caught on immediately, the whole country sang "Jerusalem of Gold." Then there was a part, suddenly something slipped in that wasn't in our minds before, but in the same night, this I knew only afterwards, so this isn't exactly among my [personal] memories. But in the same night of Independence Day, then it was each year and today as well, the head of the *yeshiva*<sup>5</sup> at "Merkaz HaRav" gives a class of sorts and Rav Tzvi Yehudah [Kook], may he rest in peace, gave a class in the *yeshiva* [...] Consider that we are in the midst of this waiting period and he, suddenly in the middle of the class, says, "Where is our Nablus? Where is our Hebron?" and begins to cry. "Where is Jerusalem?" it was completely out of the blue. This here and this "Jerusalem of Gold" [song] were like two prophecies. Of course the students at Merkaz HaRav were in the war afterwards and I heard other stories, actually my husband also attended that sermon of "Where is

<sup>3</sup> The *shofar* is a musical instrument typically made of a ram's horn that is used in ritual contexts in Judaism.

<sup>4</sup> Mordechai (Motta) Gur, born in Jerusalem in 1930 commanded the brigade that penetrated the Old City of Jerusalem during the Six-Day War, and broadcast the famous words, "The Temple Mount is in our hands!"

<sup>5</sup> A *yeshiva* is a Jewish educational institution that focuses on the study of traditional religious texts.

Hebron?” and he didn’t fight in the Six-Day War, he was in it but still didn’t fight, he wasn’t yet in the army, hadn’t yet gone through basic training. But I heard Yochanan Fried tell how they got to Bethlehem and an Arab man came out towards them, ran to them, and they’re saying he says, “Here is your mother’s key, Rachel’s Tomb!”

[In a trembling voice] Yes, really. I heard this on the radio a week ago, Yochanan Fried told the story. [...] All those years [this Arab man] guarded the entrance. [...] “Here is your mother’s key.”<sup>6</sup>

### **A PROPHECY REALIZED**

S.E.: [...] understand that today is really such a different world, but who wrote back then – I don’t recall who wrote it, but it was not religious singers who sang it. Who sang it? It will come to me. “See, Rachel, see, See, Master of the Universe, they’ve returned to their borders.” Even Dahlia Rabikovitz who wrote “Emek Dotan,” “There the brothers sold Joseph.” It’s as though [...] the feeling that I’m trying to convey, it’s as though all of the aspirations, all of this and also after the Holocaust, suddenly comes together in a sort of feeling of, of redemption, of fulfilling of the prophecies, of all the things that we barely even dared to dream about and we see them being realized right before our eyes. All of the places popped out of the Bible and I’m telling you, really, not just for us [the religious], it was almost the entire population of Israel. It wasn’t right or left, there weren’t even those concepts, [...] it was as though God Himself was talking to us through the history and here things were happening right before our eyes. And I still remember that on that Wednesday we heard, it was really, I said before this moment it was worthwhile to live, and the truth is that I also share that with secular friends.

[...] What they didn’t merit throughout 2,000 years, truly a feeling that you live in a historical turning point, actually and spiritually, and everything comes together, everything that we learned, it was really something that was really, really etched in and really, really significant.

[...] I told you that my father cried, everyone cried, we stood around [the radio] and it was really, there’s a chapter of Psalms [126] “When the Lord brought back the captives to Zion we were as dreamers.” That was exactly the feeling. The deep slumber [...] the concept of a deep sleep. In the Bible what is a deep sleep that falls upon a person? So I said to him, “Suddenly I understand what ‘we were as dreamers’ means.” A deep slumber in the Bible, one of the commentators says, of course, how each time it is an invitation to another state of being, so when he says in this psalm, “we were as dreamers,” so you grasp [pauses for a couple of seconds], until now we were as dreamers,

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<sup>6</sup> Yiftah Levin’s paper in this volume considers the various key narratives told in interviews by highly religious Jewish interlocutors.

we slept, and suddenly we are in something completely different and new. It was truly wow. To live through this was to feel so strongly in the terms that seem today the steps of Messiah, the steps of redemption, not Messiah in the personal sense, I'm not in that place that many teach, but also Maimonides says that it's not a specific person but rather an era, an era.

[...] so just one last memory from the war itself, what I also recall so distinctly, that it was Wednesday afternoon, and on Friday we already traveled to Hadera<sup>7</sup>, I don't even know why, don't remember, maybe to school, and stood on the coastal road and we saw the whole army come from the south and head northwards. In Egypt it was all over, I actually remember them, we're standing, yes, seventeen year old girls and the soldiers were just wow. All the soldiers passing, throwing flowers at them, clapping for them. An entire army travelling in tanks and half-tracks, I don't know what, and heading up to the Golan Heights and on the first day the Golan Heights was in our hands.

[The interview turns to recollections of going to Jerusalem after the war as well as to other sites of deep significance for S.E. and Sa.E.]

### DANCING AT THE WESTERN WALL

S.E.: We traveled with school I remember, actually with our high school, for the individuals it took longer [...] We got there and I think that when I was there, there still wasn't a Western Wall plaza when we went there the first time [...] they immediately demolished the houses but there was still no plaza. [...] There was a passage, yes, but it was already a slightly wide passage but not what there is today. [...] it's not like today that anyone can go, there weren't the same means, but two weeks after it, two weeks I think.

[...] we went and danced there, I see in the picture that there was great rejoicing, but I don't recall specifically that my fingers touched the stones in the Wall, this was not [...] I don't recall the [...] truly the tremendous excitement was in the war itself when we heard about it, and also still during the war I recall Meir Ariel who wrote the song [...] You know? Do you know it? "Jerusalem of iron, and of lead and of black, For all of your walls we set it free." He sort of [...] "Stoned, the battalion burst forward, full of blood and dust, and mother after mother joined the community of the bereaved." He was the first that [...] showed the other side, a paratrooper that came and grabbed us as though, the [...]. The price and the pain, after all we saw it as [...] it doesn't negate it, but it's another shade that exists. We also knew boys who were killed, of course.

H.: [addressing Sa.S.] Do you remember your first encounter with the Wall?

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<sup>7</sup> A small town next to where she lived.

Sa.S.: I don't recall my first encounter with the Wall, but I do recall the first encounter with Rachel's tomb, [and] with the Cave of the Patriarchs [in Hebron]. It really comes right back for me, and I was younger, three years younger than her. I really remember, I don't know why I specifically remember Hebron, the arrival in Hebron [...] And at the Cave of the Patriarchs. We walked around and looked for the entrance, I remember ourselves coming en masse by bus [Arabic public transportation which she had mentioned earlier in the interview]. The first encounter with the Wall I don't totally recall. I do remember the walk through the market afterwards. We walked to the Wall via the market. [...] We went in through the market, the approach to the Wall then was only via the market. [...] The Arab market was open and received us warmly. [...] It was clear that any child could walk there, it's like, it was a different time, not [...] not just that we weren't afraid, the Arabs really respected us. It was a place that as soon as we arrived, it was a place of honor at that time, in Hebron as well I recall.

S.E.: I studied at university a year and a half after that, I studied at Hebrew University, I would walk all over Jerusalem on foot, walk through the market alone on foot, yes, really walk. That's how we would reach the Wall, only through the market. [...] through the Jaffa Gate but via the market [...]

### **HIKING ALONG THE PATHS OF BIBLICAL FOREFATHERS AND ASCENDING TO SAMARIA**

S.E.: I'll skip to when the ascents to Samaria began – it was actually after the Yom Kippur War, whereas even during the midst of the war the core began to come together, the Elon Moreh core who met with – before this people would go up to Samaria and Hebron, and Kfar Etzion. For me it was really a meaningful encounter, here – you're bringing up long forgotten memories. In the summer following the liberation [...] It was, I think it was in the end of when I was in 12th grade, in '68, so I went, [...] I was a counselor for a group of Bnei Akiva England and together with them we went to the Wall “to do antiquities,” meaning to dig in excavations. And it was in the framework of a “Field School” [of *The Society for the Preservation of the Nature*] that had just been established immediately, Har Gilo Field School, not religious at all. And they began to hike in the area and at the same time Kfar Etzion went up and my girlfriends were there, and people that I knew were there, I used to visit Kfar Etzion frequently. I remember that the Kfar Etzion Field School didn't yet exist, there was Har Gilo. I remember it well, hiking with Har Gilo Field School, and they were saying, “See, here – on this path Abraham the Patriarch traversed.” It was, they also felt, like a feeling of connection straight back 4,000 years to the Bible. It was really powerful, also with them afterwards in the archaeology. I'm saying that the Har Gilo Field School really cultivated

this feeling. We walked along paths in the area of Gush Etzion and really felt, we are here on the paths of our forefathers. And I think that it really gave me the [...] the desire to go to Samaria, to live in Samaria. [...]

[...] when I got to Samaria I also took the kids [pupils] – at the beginning I was the principal of an elementary school and I did take the kids, we took them and we saw it. It was an experience, then, I remember the first time that I came to Kedumim. We rode, it was the eve of Passover, and along the way you really see, just like in the Book of Ruth, just like in all of the stories, you really see them with a sickle and harvesting the fields, there was still a bit of barley before Passover.

[...] The plow, the olive harvest, the grinding stones that [...] it was all there, I even took the elementary school kids there. Today the Arabs are not like that any longer.

[...] I would take the kids to see the tools, the grinding stones, and by the way, there were relationships – until the outbreak of peace there were excellent relations! [laughs] [...]

H.: I'm curious if as a girl who grew up so close to Samaria, just across from those hills [...] Did you look out there? Did you think about it?

S.E.: Not at all.

Sa.S.: It was there, it was the border, like today when you look at Egypt and Jordan – “*there*”. There and not here.

S.E.: There, as I said, those were things not even in our dream.

H.: There's nothing that obstructs the view – you can see it.

Sa.S.: You see, but it was *there* – it was Jordan.

S.E.: It was like beyond the horizon, when Rachel the Poetess writes, we did sing this, “There, the Mountains of the Golan,” so we would actually gaze at this, what was close by, it was just [...]

[...] No, but Jerusalem yes. To Jerusalem, I recall, we would go to Mount Zion, there was the Holocaust Cellar on Mount Zion, that was the place we would go, school brought us there, and then we climbed up onto a bench, to the left there was a window through which you could see where the Wall is, not exactly, maybe the edge of a stone of the Wall. This I remember, that experience, that we went and headed upstairs and peaked.

[...]

H.: So when it suddenly, that feeling that it's suddenly within reach, do you remember that?

S.E.: I remember it really well, I remember yes, actually, yes, we rode, we rode, we began to ride, we rode past Damascus Gate to Jerusalem, and traveled to the Dotan Valley.

Y.: That's just over the mountain there.

S.E.: Right, it's quite close indeed.

Sa.S.: Nablus was a place we'd travel to. We drove inside of Nablus with ease.

S.E.: We drove via Nablus. [...] my father was the driver. We traveled to undertake hikes, we began touring the land. [...]

I remember also in the area of Gush Etzion, near Hebron, Solomon's Pools, all sorts of things, water tunnels, the Siloan tunnel in Jerusalem, many things that are really also in the Bible, you suddenly feel the meaning.

H.: The physical sensation, can you attempt to describe it? [...] people speak of something really powerful in a physical sense. Did you have anything like this?

Sa.S.: Again, I say yes, that feeling really of walking by foot on those paths, it's something, it's suddenly a contact of sorts. [...] Yes, I really felt an uplifting of sorts, as though you're floating, really living something different.

H.: The word, "euphoria," always comes up.

S.E.: Correct.

Sa.S.: Yes, also the media was, everyone, that is to say – everything – the street. The street was in euphoria. The media was so through songs. They brought us in, all the time, with talking, with stories, all the time more and more soldiers speaking and more soldiers telling stories.

[...] It was really the atmosphere, really the state's coming into being.

H.: But the word "euphoria" is maybe something that each person will feel differently, that's why I'm asking.

S.E.: So I'm saying that from my perspective this euphoria was, it wasn't the intoxication of victory as many describe, at least not for me, as a girl, a woman, we didn't 'win,' it wasn't from that place. It was from the place of 'we've returned.' We've returned, we've come to the place. [...] It's primarily a feeling that we arrived at a place where here is our history, where so many thousands prayed here, cried here, yearned for it, longed for it. This, for me [...] It's true that the large stones, of course, have an affect but this, let's see if I see large stones like these in Stonehenge, I don't know what.

[...] here we have the historical baggage, this is what makes it [...]



### **ADMIRING THE ARMY, ITS SOLDIERS AND GUSH EMUNIM LEADER, HANAN PORAT**

Sa.S.: S.E. mentioned earlier that the war was very close to the Holocaust, really, really close. [...] Our parents were still at the stage of getting out of that place and I think that the euphoria was a part of it, of this unbelievably insane might, you thought there were no more Jews in the world, it was clear to you that you were the last Jews, that there are no more Jews in the world and wow – there are Jewish soldiers and the Jewish soldiers, this I recall my father speaking about, “The Jewish soldiers conquered the Wall, the Jewish soldiers fought.” This soldier, for him to walk the streets and see a soldier was to stand at attention and in silence.

[...] Admiration. Here, in Israel, a soldier, I need to stand at attention and be silent if, therefore all they said, the Chief of Staff said, “There is no criticism, there is no such possibility.” It’s not a place where you can say something because, “Wow, there are soldiers in Israel,” because they fought, [...] Holy of Holies. It was really true in the experience.

S.E.: Abba Eben, when they talked then afterwards about what will be and what they’ve done and so on, so he called it, “the borders of Auschwitz.” It’s as though there were limits beforehand, there were borders, that’s how they felt then, I imagine, the fear, so here we’re back in the same place.

[...] We raised a state, we thought we’d done something, boom, they’re going to destroy us.

Sa.S.: They’re going to finish us off, the experience of the joke, “the last one should shut off the lights,” that joke was really, it expressed the [...] the really tough feeling, that’s it, we’re shutting off the lights.<sup>8</sup>

Y.: It actually interests me, you mentioned that you joined the Samaria core group – to where?

S.E.: It was the first group, Kadum, it was the Kadum Village. [...]

H.: But that was already later.

S.E.: It’s what began what was called “Gush Emunim,” perhaps it can be said the true beginning, even before they called it Gush Emunim, there was actually this core group that went, it began like this with Hanan Porat, who was one of the establishers of Gush Etzion, who were right away, I believe, by Yigal Alon after the Six-Day War and demanded to return to Kfar Etzion and

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<sup>8</sup> She refers to jokes told before the Six-Day War when numerous Israelis decided to leave the young state again due to the tough economic conditions. The joke claimed there was a sign at the airport, asking the last person leaving to switch off the lights.

they, like anything it wasn't simple, but they did let them, Yigal Alon was also connected. And then there was pressure for Hebron, and it was also '68 – '69.

Y.: Really immediately after.

S.E.: Immediately after. I also think that Yigal Alon let them [...]

S.E.: It awoke, first of all quickly, I saw Kfar Etzion and my heart [pauses for a moment] went out [laughs] to get there. Hebron too, it's as though, I said, "Wow, it's really [...]" like it's horrible but I never got to be there.

Sa.S.: But they also fired us up, do you remember Hanan Porat in his talks? Hanan Porat was a personality,

H.: He was also handsome.

Sa.S.: He was also handsome and attractive, but his speech was uplifting in a way [...] to hear Hanan was to swallow him.

H.: He was like [...] had a full forelock [...]

Y.: I only ever knew him as bald. [...]

Sa.S.: Just from hearing him talk, and you'll just go up and follow wherever he goes.

S.E.: It was really clear, Hanan would talk about it even before, he says go.

Sa.S.: So we go.

S.E.: To return, we return. Back then I was a student here at the Hebrew University, and yes, then I'd go on school breaks and summer holidays to Kfar Etzion, to Hebron. It was clear to me that I'd want to build a home in a place like this.

Y.: When you reached Kfar Etzion so were there remnants of the community from before the War of Independence? Or was the hill already empty?

S.E.: There was the oak tree, I don't recall that there were vestiges, that's it though, in Kfar Etzion there is now a fantastic new film also reconstructing it, and you see it, so you just can't remain impassive to what was there and how they destroyed them. It's awful, just awful. For me it was [...] I can't say it – just a moment [...] it was something that was really within me, it was clear that it was necessary. I really wanted to and my husband was slightly less gung-ho, he wasn't really at all, and he studied medicine then and it wasn't so relevant that we'd move.

Y.: Far away.

S.E.: Yes. And then at any rate, when they began the ascents and heading into Samaria, I really pushed for it and said we must go there. The truth is that in

the beginning, he thought of the Golan Heights but in the end we were infected with [laughs] the Elon Moreh settlement group [that went] to Samaria and we went up there really almost at the very beginning.

Y.: Until then you had been living in Kedumim?

S.E.: Yes, and when we got there we arrived with our eldest who was five years old, and he learned, it was unforgettable, he learned, you see how they lived those things, and he learned in kindergarten, “And Abraham passed and walked to Nablus and until Elon Moreh” [Genesis 12:6] in the Lech Lecha Torah portion, and then he said to his teacher, “Yehudit, when Abraham was here we were still in the old apartment” [they laugh] [...] He wondered just like that – “How come I don’t know Abraham?” So he explained it to himself [laughs].

[...]

#### REFLECTING ON INTERVIEWING AND RECALLING ONCE AGAIN

Sa.S.: What is your research? What is it about? You are the research assistant. And what is your subject?

H.: About '67, about the stories related to '67, personal stories, how people remember on a personal level, experienced the time period.

S.E.: That’s interesting. Yochanan Fried – it’s really interesting. Yochanan Fried who tells about Bethlehem, amongst the fighters that [...]

H.: Is it a good idea for me to speak to him?

S.E.: Yes.

Sa.S.: A personal question you should ask is, “Where were you standing at that moment?” It’s simply amazing, “The moment you heard the first siren, where were you?” and see that everyone remembers. There is not a child who doesn’t recall where he stood when he heard the first siren, and that moment of “What’s this now? Is that war that we’ve been speaking about beginning now?” It was such a moment that [...] and afterwards the additional moment was, “Where did you sit? With which radio? What did it look like?”

H.: People remember.

Sa.S.: Of course I remember what it looked like, a great big old-school radio transmitter, we sat by the neighbors, we all sat, all the neighbors together, you hear the entry to Jerusalem, the [...]

H.: It’s interesting – I wonder if someone said ahead of time that on this broadcast there would be something [...]

Sa.S.: No, the radio was open all the time, all the time.

H.: It's not that they gathered [...]

Sa.S.: There was not a moment that we weren't listening.

S.E.: Who was it, the spokesperson? Herzog, Haim Herzog. Yes, the whole time we were listening.

Sa.S.: We listened the whole time to the commentary and the talk about what was happening. On the first day they said, they told that the Arabs, on the Arab radio they were saying that Tel Aviv was destroyed, and in the first moments that's what they said, that there is no Tel Aviv.

S.E.: "The Voice of Thunder from Cairo [...]" [laughing]

Sa.S.: Tel Aviv no longer exists, it doesn't exist anymore. Something in that made us ask, maybe there is some truth there, there were moments.

S.E.: Right, it was frightening.

Sa.S.: Until we heard the story of the airplanes. Then we knew that [...] [pauses] [...] we understood.

H.: When did they tell the story of the airplanes?

Sa.S.: I don't recall.

S.E.: I think already still during the war.

Sa.S.: During the war immediately we knew, I just don't know when.

S.E.: Right, I don't recall either.

Sa.S.: When [the Israelis] destroyed all of their airplanes it was.

H.: On the same day? Monday?

Sa.S.: I don't recall when they said.

S.E.: But we already knew that they were walking via Sinai, that we already knew, yes, we knew.

H.: Even before "The Temple Mount is in our hands"?

S.E.: Yes, we already knew. They told that [...]

Sa.S.: They reported all the time.

H.: Meaning it was relaxed.

S.E.: Look, the thing is that everyone had someone in the army, it wasn't really relaxed, but this feeling of threat [...]

H.: Of another Holocaust.

S.E.: Right; it was already gone.

[...]

H.: Do we have anything else? Do you have anything you want to add?

Sa.S.: Stickers that we stuck on the windows, we stuck masking tape on the windows.

Y.: I'm also interested in Sinai – if you travelled there, the search for Mount Sinai.

S.E.: I can actually say, sadly I say that I have never been to Sinai, it never worked out for me. [...]

Y.: I am actually interested in the search for Mount Sinai as another very significant Biblical spot.

S.E.: No, because there's something in our tradition that Mount Sinai isn't a site.

Y.: Not a part of the Land of Israel.

S.E.: No, not for that reason, rather in order not to turn it into [...]

Sa.S.: To something physical.

S.E.: To something ritualistic. The event at Mount Sinai when the Torah was given, not to turn the material essence that is Mount Sinai, it's a concept deeply rooted.

Y.: And nothing was established there.

S.E.: Exactly. [...] Not in our community, they didn't go down to Sinai for reasons of religious sentiments. Perhaps for reasons of – it's interesting.

Sa.S.: Curiosity, a trip.

S.E.: Curiosity. And I'm also not even sure that it's identified as in that identification. [...] But there is really something in the tradition that it is completely prevented from [...]

Sa.S.: Knowing.

S.E.: From turning this place to a holy site disconnected from, there is the Torah. That's its role.

Sa.S.: There also aren't any *midrashim*<sup>9</sup> that say where it is located or anything.

S.E.: True.

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<sup>9</sup> *Midrash* (pl. *midrashim*) means “exposition, investigation” and refers to the biblical interpretation prominent in the Talmudic literature, containing legends based on biblical verses and stories.

Sa.S.: There's not discussion about it.

S.E.: No, on the contrary. They say that it disappeared. Let's just say that it was given in the period of paganism and if the Torah had not been given, the world would be completely awash, and there was an interest in not turning the place into an issue, to a place where people would come and worship it rather than the Torah.

Sa.S.: With a bit of extrapolation, it's also the same with Moses whose burial spot is unknown.

S.E.: Right, Moses' burial spot is also unknown, right.

Sa.S.: Where also the same reasoning applies. [...]

H.: Anything else we've forgotten to say?

### **ON IMMIGRATION FROM THE SOVIET UNION AND THE TEMPLE MOUNT**

S.E.: The immigration from Russia, if we're talking about a miracle, that Judaism. There was a song that we'd sing, who wrote it? I know who wrote it, Yitzchak Meir, "To the vanquished fire, Beneath the ash I'll sing, To a boiling brook in an icy prison [...]" It's about Judaism.

Sa.S.: She remembers and just whips out [laughs] names and songs.

S.E.: And "the kernel of wheat hidden beneath a snowy field, in which dozes the bread of kings [...] a voice cries out from the Ocean of Silence." I won't begin to tell you, but this poem describes them as though Judaism that wasn't Judaism at all, when the Communists messed up everything and didn't let, and there were a few Habbad hassidim in all sorts of places. People couldn't perform a circumcision ceremony for fear of death.

Y.: They negated Christianity, too.

S.E.: Christianity too.

H.: Yes, yes, communism.

S.E.: Christianity too, but Judaism, all in all there was tremendous antisemitism over there. I sometimes say that all of those Ukrainians that we bring over with the Law of Return, who chased our forefathers [laughs], who knows, all these completely unrelated [laughs], at any rate. So Jews were absolutely there, and how is it that it suddenly woke up within them? From the fact that, it's also in part thanks to the gentiles, thanks to the antisemitism then they knew that they were Jewish because they told them in all sorts of places, but still, to make them suddenly, why should they yearn for it? They didn't learn about it, they didn't hear about it, it's something very [...] and

suddenly there's like a wave, almost like a worldwide tsunami that washes over them, it's really [...] That's "To the vanquished fire beneath the ash," the poem [...] [laughs].

H.: So this [the Six-Day victory] blew the ash away, essentially?

S.E.: It blew the ash away, the fire, yes.

Sa.S.: It erupted.

S.E.: And the fire erupted. That's of course what happened there too, suddenly the whole movement of 'refuseniks,' all of that, all of the people. It's inconceivable, inconceivable, just inconceivable. That's it, I think that I think this way in life there were a couple of moments that I had that I had to give, that were the most [...] then something that I had that was almost parallel to the Six-Day War was that Sharansky came to Israel. I also remember how we gathered. We were also a lot of us earlier participants in the struggle and when he arrived, it was just a feeling [...] You have to recall, it's not like today when Russia is nothing – not nothing, but [...]

[...] There was suddenly a feeling, no but it also collapsed, suddenly we vanquished this evil empire. Man, it is possible to overcome an evil empire.

H.: But you know, if we look at what happened, the fact that despite that, it's like, despite what happened at that event, things are not [...] Why is that?

S.E.: You know, in the *Kabbalah*<sup>10</sup> there is a concept that I feel would really, really be appropriate. There is a concept that's called, "the shattering of the vessels," and it says – sometimes abundance comes down, the kabbalah always describes these sort of processes, abundance descends but there are no vessels to receive it, and the vessels shatter.

Sa.S.: S. said it earlier, you said it earlier in other words, in simpler terms, that we never even dreamed, we never thought of Judea and Samaria, of Jerusalem, it wasn't even within reach of [...] within the realm of our thoughts, it was beyond all vision. Therefore when we got there we didn't know how to grasp it all with, as a nation, we didn't know how to contain it.

S.E.: As a nation, there weren't vessels to contain it all.

Sa.S.: That we gave the Waqf<sup>11</sup> the keys, it was obvious. What happened to us? We received it, like we got to the place that we most dreamt of for 2,000 years and it passed beside us, and just the Wall, we wanted just the Wall, we

<sup>10</sup> The *Kabbalah* is a school of thought in Jewish mysticism.

<sup>11</sup> The interviewees refer to the Jerusalem Islamic *Waqf*, the Islamic religious trust best known for controlling and managing the important Islamic holdings of *Haram esh-Sharif* (Temple mount) structures, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock.

shrank, meaning, the statement that we didn't think about it, we weren't there, the vessel wasn't ready.

S.E.: We didn't think of the Temple Mount. Period. The vessel was not prepared. Look, for us it's very symbolic that we received the keys of the Temple Mount and we passed them along, Dayan passed them to the *Waqf*.

H.: Wait, the keys were in his hands?

S.E.: Dayan.

Sa.S.: Moshe Dayan passed them back.

S.E.: They gave him the keys and he passed them to the *Waqf*.

Sa.S.: They surrendered. They handed over the keys, of course.

H.: I didn't know that they handed over the keys, I knew [...]

Sa.S.: Like the keys.

H.: That he gave them the control, but I didn't know that there was actually a thing with a key.

S.E.: But then the religious community didn't even say anything.

Sa.S.: That's it, we slept, we fell asleep, we fell asleep on the watch, we just didn't get it.

S.E.: The entire foundation.

Y.: What did need to happen?

Sa.S.: The excitement that happens today, the return and the desire to get to the Temple Mount which didn't exist then. We got to the Wall, as though the Wall was the pinnacle of our ambitions – there is a wall, a panel. That's it. Today the pinnacle of our aspirations is not the Wall, the *Kotel* is a wall which is part of [...]

S.E.: The Cave of the Patriarchs until the seventh stair.

Sa.S.: The Cave of the Patriarchs until the seventh stair, yes. We were forbidden from getting to those spots altogether. Then we got there, we touched the stones, we got there – wow [emphasizes] and suddenly, little by little, we realized, wait, it's in our hands, the great thing, the real thing. We didn't get to it, just [...]

S.E.: I think that it's something else, this thing. What is this shattering of the vessels in a deeper sense? I think that if you go with the direction that it's a part of the redemption, it's part of what the prophets foresaw, it's part of it, so it obligates you from the religious perspective as well. Not completely, I



don't mean it obligates you to observe the commands, but at least it obligates one to [...] hmmm [...] change the spiritual foundations, and this, let's say that there are people for who this did work, they really drew closer [to religion] as a result of this.

H.: There are many who drew closer.

S.E.: There are many, even like we said of the Judaism of the Soviet Union, but there are many that this barrier, as though, "I'm not there. If I accept all of this and this is the Land of Israel [...] what does that mean now? Does it mean that I'm not a rational, western human being, a part of the western culture, and don't speak that language?" We spoke today of language; this is language. It's a language that even if there was excitement in the beginning because abundance really did descend, because we were in a feeling of really being threatened, and yes, people really did connect because all of the Hebrew poetry that still today is part [...]

Sa.S.: The soulful place connected.

S.E.: The soulful place, exactly.

Sa.S.: Of the nation, connected, not from the mind or any other place. In the soul of the nation was reception, but not in the mind. How did she put it? The vessel was not prepared.

S.E.: The vessel was not prepared.

Sa.S.: S., but this also relates to the individual and the collective, that there were too many individuals. Then, in that time we were, there was something general, but as regards the Temple we still weren't, we weren't in the place, we were individuals who were praying.

S.E.: We were also far; I think that we are far today as well.

Sa.S.: Individuals who pray to the Lord, yes, even today we are there.

H.: Each one [...]

Sa.S.: When we pray the silent *amida*<sup>12</sup> for example, but [...]

S.E.: We don't feel; what's the place of the Temple.

Sa.S.: In our general lives, in the phenomenon of the complex of the nation.

S.E.: Yes, it's also tough; tough. I say it's not – let's say that I do pray and so on, but I don't constantly strive for it, it's, I don't understand what more things that are necessary, there are those that are preparing more [...]

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<sup>12</sup> *Amidah* literally means "standing" and refers to a series of blessings recited while standing; it is the core prayer of every Jewish religious service.

Sa.S.: There are processes that are happening. Also the process of going up to the Temple Mount, it's suddenly a process of a nation – where did this come from? Where did it come from? Why did it come? It is after all the resistance of the religious, I'm not speaking of the resistance of the Arabs. The resistance to going up to the Temple Mount from religious reasons, there are the reasons that [...]

S.E.: Among the national religious population there are absolutely attitudes that [...]

Sa.S.: But the normative attitude was to not go up to the Temple Mount. [...] That was the approach, and suddenly there is a sort of wave that bursts forth that's happening here, and it exists among the religious society and also among all types of society, secular and religious, and this is desire and dream. What attracts this? What happened here? There is something in the Jewish soul that causes movement, this movement exists today, whether we want it or not, agree with it or not, it exists.

S.E.: And is growing stronger.

Sa.S.: And is growing stronger by the tens of thousands is already the talk, we're no longer talking individuals.

S.E.: That's right, it's growing stronger. Many more are going up.

Sa.S.: And yet there is still a great controversy over whether it is permissible to go up or forbidden, meaning, still within the community there are rabbis that unequivocally prohibit going up to the Temple Mount.  
[...]

S.E.: Halachically it's prohibited.

Sa.S.: Halachically, from the halachic [Jewish law] perspective there are sacred areas that the High Priest [of the Temple], you don't know where [...]

S.E.: And even those who do go up, won't go up, those who are religious, won't go up to every place, won't get to every place. Those who don't go up claim that you can't know what [...]

Sa.S.: It's impossible to know which places, which boundaries, what are the limits of the sanctity.

Y.: So those going up are more lenient from the perspective of the definition of the boundaries.

S.E.: Uhhh, yes.

Sa.S.: I don't know if they're more lenient, it's not leniency. It's an approach to the contrary – they'll say that *they're* the strict ones – we must push forward

the redemption and the anticipation of the redemption, there's a concept of the anticipation of the redemption, that you must anticipate, dream and desire it in order for it to come to fruition, until we want it, it won't come. So they say that we must express our anticipation through our feet, our hands, in the physical.

H.: But in your opinion, the goodness that descended in '67, is it still possible to connect with it as it were? Or is it, have we sort of lost it?

S.E.: I, no, I don't think we've lost it.

Sa.S.: The momentum of construction in Samaria I believe is the outcome, it is the reality of today, and the fact that more people are even coming, whether it's ideological or just because.

H.: Because it's comfortable for them.

Sa.S.: Because it's comfortable for them, and pleasant for them, but it's a movement that's happening.

S.E.: I'm not going to speak about Samaria which is let's say politically controversial, but if you actually look at the attitude to the tradition in general among the population, in which ostensibly the opposite ought to have happened, that it would gradually decrease, and this because already in the previous generation [...] I'm not speaking of the religious that [...] I'm speaking in general, the secular Torah study institutions that are sprouting up, meaning I see it as, okay, there are those among us that would say oh no, it shouldn't [...] but I see it all the time and the people's desire to know, to connect to their Jewish identity from a deep place, excites me. I'm not referring to the matter of observance of the commands, in my eyes the meaningful matter is the desire to connect to the identity, observance of the commandments is between them and God will decide what, but the fact that there are so many people for whom it's important that they get to know and understand and are connected, that excites me each time anew.



# Fantastic Key Encounters during the Six-Day War

*Yiftab Levin*

## 1 Introduction

This article examines stories centered around the event of transferring keys. These narrated images arose in the course of our interviews with Jewish-Israelis when referring to the most elated moments of the 1967 Six-Day War. Upon rereading stories dealing with keys in the various interviews, I drew a broad range of connections related to the worldviews and experiences of the interviewees within the context of the war and its consequences. The key, as a substantive and metaphoric object, became a multifaceted symbol in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, particularly in the city of Jerusalem and its environs. Naturally, the key has practical importance; however, and more importantly, it holds meanings of control, ownership, transfer of property, and serves as a symbol of the memory of home and property left behind by Palestinian refugees. The centrality of the key within the Palestinian context is beyond the scope of the present article (Sa'di & Abu-Lughod 2007; Webster 2016). This article concentrates on stories relating scenes occurring during the war, in which Arab<sup>1</sup> civilians transferred keys to some of the most important religio-historical sites to Jewish soldiers, in particular the keys to Rachel's Tomb and the Mughrabi Gate, which

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<sup>1</sup> The tags Arab and Palestinians used by Israelis are controversial in the internal Israeli discourse and are politically charged, as each holds territorial, cultural and national meanings (Rabinowitz 1993). The use of both terms in this chapter, therefore, will change according to the context of the argument.

links between the Western Wall and the Temple Mount.<sup>2</sup> The various stories will be analyzed against the specific worldviews and experiences of the interviewees.<sup>3</sup>

The Western Wall, a remnant of the Temple in Jerusalem, and Rachel's Tomb near Bethlehem, the tomb of a sacred female figure who served as a metaphor for the concept of God returning the people of Israel from exile, both symbolize the sense of yearning for a return to Jerusalem and the Holy Land.<sup>4</sup> However, a discussion of these events is not only important due to these sites' roles symbolizing the desire to return to the land of the Bible which could not be accessed after the 1948 war. Those stories focus on Jewish-Israeli meetings with Palestinian-Arabs who lived from 1948–1967 under Jordanian rule. Those encounters share similar structure and narrative roles. They are narrated by the key recipients and echoed by others, including the media, and relate events that occurred on the third day of the war while arriving at the sacred sites. I ask how the stories of key transfer encounters shaped formative events of encountering both holy places and the Palestinian Arab Other?

I argue that a discussion about key transfer events within the wider context of the war, and in light of its results, contribute to the understanding of the relationship that emerged between Jews and Palestinians as respective rulers and subjects who emerged during the war. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to shed light on those stories from a Jewish-Israeli narrative perspective. In this view, the key transfer is narrated as both cultural and intergenerational, as a mode of justifying the rule over the holy sites. The events narrated occurred within the context of combat. Most of the interviewees are soldiers, who define themselves as national religious Jews.<sup>5</sup> As the various chapters in this book show, the results of the war were of immense significance to all population sectors of Israel and Palestine. However, the national religious public attributed meanings to the events not necessarily shared by other sectors. For them, the implications of the war relate to a grand divine plan whose fulfillment was manifested partially with the reunion with biblical sites, among them the Western Wall and Rachel's Tomb.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> There are also stories relating to the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and Torat Haim synagogue in the Muslim quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, that will be discussed in future publications.

<sup>3</sup> Please refer to the list of interviews at the end of the chapter for the names or abbreviations used for each interviewee.

<sup>4</sup> See the contribution on the Western Wall by Hagar Salamon and the contribution on Hebron and the Cave of the Patriarchs by Ronit Hemyan in this volume.

<sup>5</sup> The Jerusalem Brigade: Yohanan Fried \* (Battalion 62), Rafi Miara (Deputy Company Commander, Battalion 62), I.K. (Patrol Brigade), R.B. (Company Commander, Battalion 161), N.M. (Battalion 161), I.E. (Company Commander, Battalion 161); Paratrooper Brigade: Yoram Zamush (Company Commander, Battalion 71), M.M. (Yoram's Signal Operator), Avraham (Yoram's Runner); Civilians: S., S.S., L.D., and T.G. \* The names of Yoram, Rafi and Yohanan are fully disclosed because their stories have been documented in this context through various media which I quote in this article. The other interviewees are mentioned only by their initials.

<sup>6</sup> An example of this can be seen through the "Combatants' Discussion" project (Alberton et al. 2018), which dealt with the feelings of soldiers returning from the war. It included a conversation with some of those interviewed for the present project. These conversations were archived until the publication of the jubilee version of the book.

Over 50 years after the war, the interviewees who play central roles in the key transfer encounters, now in their 70s and 80s, present their stories following predictable narrative structures, even though they ended in often unexpected ways, and contradict other narrated versions.

## 2 Analytical Tools

In this article, I use analytical tools based on two branches of research in folk literature. The construction of the war story as an epic tale (Propp 1968) and Todorov's (1981) approach to fantastic literature as a genre for understanding the key transfer encounters.

I propose, therefore, reading the stories presented and the events they treat as fantastic (Todorov, 1981). Todorov's characterization of the fantastic has similarities to the events described by the interviewees. Using the concept of the fantastic in no way diminishes the dire consequences of the war, particularly the pain felt by the Palestinians. Instead, the use of fantastic characteristics is a metaphorical approach to understand events from the narrators' perspective. As the stories contain war events narrated by different participants in disparate ways, they require interpretations that remove them from realistic descriptions of the war and imbue these narratives with fantastic elements. Hence, we are faced with the task of understanding the narratives not as historical events, but as cultural, and perhaps even cosmological events, whose interpretations are influenced by Jewish traditions from various periods within the context of the folklore of the Six-Day War.

Removing the narration of key encounters from the flow of a personal interview, I also employ components of a formalist approach to the study of folk literature which focuses on the connection between the various characters and their actions. It allows one to clearly recognize the formal structure and organization of the plot (Propp & Liberman 1984: 67–81). Propp (1968) analyzed “wondertales,” illustrating that the characters are exchangeable or malleable elements of the story, while their actions may be abstracted as stable functions, necessary to advance the narrative in a predictable manner. The key transfer encounter stories illustrate that the narrators, some fifty years after the events, construct their personal narratives by referring, surprisingly, to most of the narrative roles that Propp identified in his “wondertale” analysis. The roles noted by Propp are: the hero, the villain (the rival of the hero), the donor who provides the hero with a magical agent, the helper who helps the hero during his/her mission, the false hero who claims to have completed the hero's mission, the dispatcher who sends the hero on his/her mission, and the princess and her father<sup>7</sup> (Propp 1968: 79–80).

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<sup>7</sup> It is worthwhile noting that there are some variations regarding the hero's identity. While certain narrators refer to all seven of Propp's roles, others neglect some of them. In addition, some roles are fully physically manifested, while others are referred to implicitly or metaphorically.

### 3 The Tale

According to Todorov (1981), the fantastic story portrays events that cannot be explained through the laws of nature. The fantastic depicts the misgivings and uncertainties of a person facing two possibilities: the first is the determination that an event is a sensory illusion, the product of the imagination, and the laws of nature continue; the second is the determination that the occurrence did, in fact, take place and must, therefore, be explained by other, previously unknown laws. The chain of events related in the personal stories focused on in this article are characterized by uncertainty, beginning with the “waiting period”<sup>8</sup> leading up to the war, a period defined by an atmosphere of a growing and real existential threat. The quick and sweeping victory with its dramatic changes in the region was generally characterized by a feeling of euphoria. How can the contrast between these two extremes be explained? According to Todorov, the movement towards the fantastic gradually begins from uncertainty, becoming clearer and more direct as all the elements contribute to the effect that appears at the end (Todorov 1981: 63). According to the interviewees, explanations were given through signs, which place a fantastic chain of events within a structure, which, unlike Todorov’s approach, is not part of a duality but is, instead, based on faith in Divine Providence, reinforced by the events. The interviewees characterize events that occurred before and during the war as signs hinting to the future. Nikiforov, who preceded Propp, cites the hero’s miraculous birth as the first function of the tale (Jason 1971: 62). Yoram, the hero of the key transfer encounter of the Mughrabi gate, cites his own birth as a sign of the future 25 years later:

I was born on June 7, 1942. One of Kibbutz Yavne’s first babies [...] and I am the son of a father who was the only member of his family who survived Berlin [...] My grandfather had a business with two brothers in Berlin [...] and on Kristallnacht, the Nazis blew it all up, burned it [...] grabbed him, the Nazis beat him almost to death [...] and he survived but was blinded [...] they were expelled from the Lodz ghetto [...] and 19 family members were killed on the same day I was born. June 7, 1942. Now, exactly 25 years later, coincidentally, on June 7, 1967, I waved the flag on the Western Wall. This is somehow hidden in the story of the Jewish people. (Yoram)

The greatest tragedy and the war’s victory are mediated by Yoram’s life story, they are entwined in his birth and function in the war. The miraculous birth designates the hero’s function in the tale, the ‘coincidence’ interweaving the events, are all revealed to be crucial components in our heroes’ manner of constructing their tales’ plots.

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<sup>8</sup> The name that was given in Israel to the period between Independence Day, May 15, 1967, and the beginning of the war, June 5, 1967.



The sermon delivered by Rabbi Zvi Yehuda HaCohen Kook (RZYHC) on the eve of Independence Day, May 14, 1967, shortly before the Six-Day War, at the Rabbi's Center Yeshiva in Jerusalem serves as the first sign.<sup>9</sup> Some of the soldiers involved in combat in the war, who were studying at the time at that Yeshiva, attended the sermon, or heard about it afterwards.

On Independence Day at the Rabbi's Center, we had a custom, in which all the students would gather for a feast of giving thanks to God for the liberation of the Land of Israel, the establishment of the State of Israel [...] That same year, on Independence Day, call it a coincidence, but we think it's more than a coincidence. Rabbi Zvi Yehuda [...] told us that on the 29 of November [1947] [...] great joy erupted in the streets of Jerusalem [...] "and we met [RZYHC and Rabbi Charlap], the two of us together in a small room, we expressed great joy, but also great sorrow. Great sorrow due to the impending partition of half of the country, my country would be divided" [...] He had such a way of speaking, that he would sometimes jump very loudly, almost shouting, "And what do you think, that we have forgotten Jericho?" All this, according to the partition, would be given to the Jordanians and the Arabs. "What do you think, we have forgotten Jericho? We have forgotten Shechem? We have not forgotten! And beyond the Jordan River?" That's how he shouted that roar, it impressed everyone [...] and two weeks or three weeks after Independence Day, actually a month later, all these places were conquered by us. So, it made a big impression on us. (I.K.) (see Appendix 1)

The second sign, described in greater detail, relates to the song *Jerusalem of Gold* written by Naomi Shemer and sung by Shuli Natan at the Hebrew Song festival in Jerusalem the next day, at the end of Independence Day (Appendix 2). The interviewees note that the song was sung by them or in their presence during the war.

Here, I.K. describes Yohanan, who is the hero of the Rachel's Tomb encounter, singing the song:

The next day we came to study at the yeshiva [...] The nature of the study is that during the course of learning, we break into song [...] to stimulate thought [...] But Hebrew songs we would not dare to sing, they were considered profane [...] Then Yohanan entered one of the doors and suddenly, he sang *Jerusalem of Gold*. So, he sings a secular song and I think, "What's with him?" He said, "You heard that song yesterday?" I said, "Of course." He said, "It captured the heart." And that was true, it captured the heart. I sang it too, and the truth is we all sang it. So, this too expresses the will of God [...] this detail too has its place. (I.K.)

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<sup>9</sup> The Rabbi's Center Yeshiva was established by his father, Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook, and served as a connection between Jewish messianism and political Zionism (Aran 2013).

The interviewees, each in their own words, provide a singular interpretation of these two events. Despite their proclaimed caution at invoking prophecy, they note in retrospect that these significant occurrences hinted at events that happened soon afterwards. According to Propp's (1968) narrative roles, the two symbol providers, RZYHC and Naomi Shemer, personified the dispatchers who send the heroes to their mission.

It is a coincidence, a coincidence, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda was no prophet, there are no prophets today [...] I believe that there is guidance from the heavens. I believe the Almighty is directing what is happening in the land [...] and I firmly believe this coincidence is no coincidence. It is a coincidence that, The Almighty, forgive me for the crude expression from a thinking perspective, but it is the truth, in my opinion, that a coincidence that is directed by the Almighty [...] we heard about these things and this approach every year. But this was surely exceptional. Because we noticed that it was unusual. But we didn't attribute it to anything in this world, it was inappropriate to attribute it to anything. (I.K.)

Listen, to write such a prophecy, to write something like that, one or two weeks before the war [...] how do people get the muse? [...] She (Shemer) wrote it "and there isn't descending to the Dead Sea," but there is immediately, "descending to the Dead Sea via Jericho," and everything became true. "We returned to the water holes," we returned to everything. It's a prophecy. (A.S.)

It was totally out of the blue. This is here [the sermon at the Rabbi's Center] and *Jerusalem of Gold* are like two prophecies [...] I heard Yohanan tell how they arrived in Bethlehem and an Arab came out to greet them, running to greet them, and said, "Here is the key of your mother, Rachel's Tomb." (S.E.)

The day after Independence Day, the "waiting period" began with the mobilization of army reserves, when the villain (Propp 1968: 30–35), embodied by Egyptian President Abdel Nasser, leader of the Arab states, closed the Straits of Tiran. The threat to the regional stability provoked the uncertainty that characterizes the fantastic movement (Todorov 1981). This was felt among the civilians and especially among the soldiers. At this point, the heroes are called into action and must leave their homes (Propp 1968: 38–39) as the Jerusalem brigade is deployed in and around Jerusalem.

We were on Mt. Herzl [at the western edge of Jerusalem] for two weeks [...] as a "waiting period" involves waiting [...] nothing happened. The country

was in great confusion, also politically, Eshkol [the Prime Minister] then known for his stuttering.<sup>10</sup> (Yohanan)

At one point, the guys said [...] Let's get all the cars, let's go to Eshkol [...] We'll park the cars across from him and tell him that he must start the war, it is impossible to wait like this. Of course, it was a joke, but a joke that was said. (I.K.)

At the same time, the Paratroopers Brigade were training near Lod Airport, as the uncertainty increased due to the real threat to their lives if the war plans were to be realized.

The war was intended primarily for the Egyptian army [...] And we prepared for a very dangerous parachute descent, very, very dangerous. It was nearly a suicide operation [...] 50 % casualties were expected. (Yoram)

There is the song "*Que sera sera*. Whatever will be will be. A black car will wait." We talked, all those difficult jokes. [...] There were two backgrounds [for the parachute brigade's pin]: some will have a red background, and some will have a black background, the mourning edition. We joked [...] it was clear that not everyone would survive. It was obvious, of course. (A.S.)

In dealing with the real threat to their lives, the heroes are called by Moshe Dayan for the first test of their ability to perform the mission (Propp 1968: 39–42), only four days after his appointment to defense minister. The war began on June 5 in the morning, as the uncertainty that has prevailed in recent weeks continued.

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<sup>10</sup> Many interviewees refer to Eshkol's speech broadcast on the radio a week before the outbreak of the war (May 28, 1967), which reflected the fear and apprehension of the approaching war. Two days after, Eshkol appointed Dayan, former Chief of Staff, to the position of defense minister. The following is a recording of the speech on Voice of Israel radio: <https://soundcloud.com/nationallibrary-of-israel/28-1967a> (accessed November 9, 2021). "The response in the world to Dayan's appointment: Israel's position will be more rigid" Maariv, June 2, 1967. [http://jpress.org.il/Olive/APA/NLI\\_heb/?action=tab&tab=browse&pub=MAR&\\_ga=2.192757034.1654236019.1567318688-1217283777.1567318684#panel=document](http://jpress.org.il/Olive/APA/NLI_heb/?action=tab&tab=browse&pub=MAR&_ga=2.192757034.1654236019.1567318688-1217283777.1567318684#panel=document) (accessed November 9, 2021).

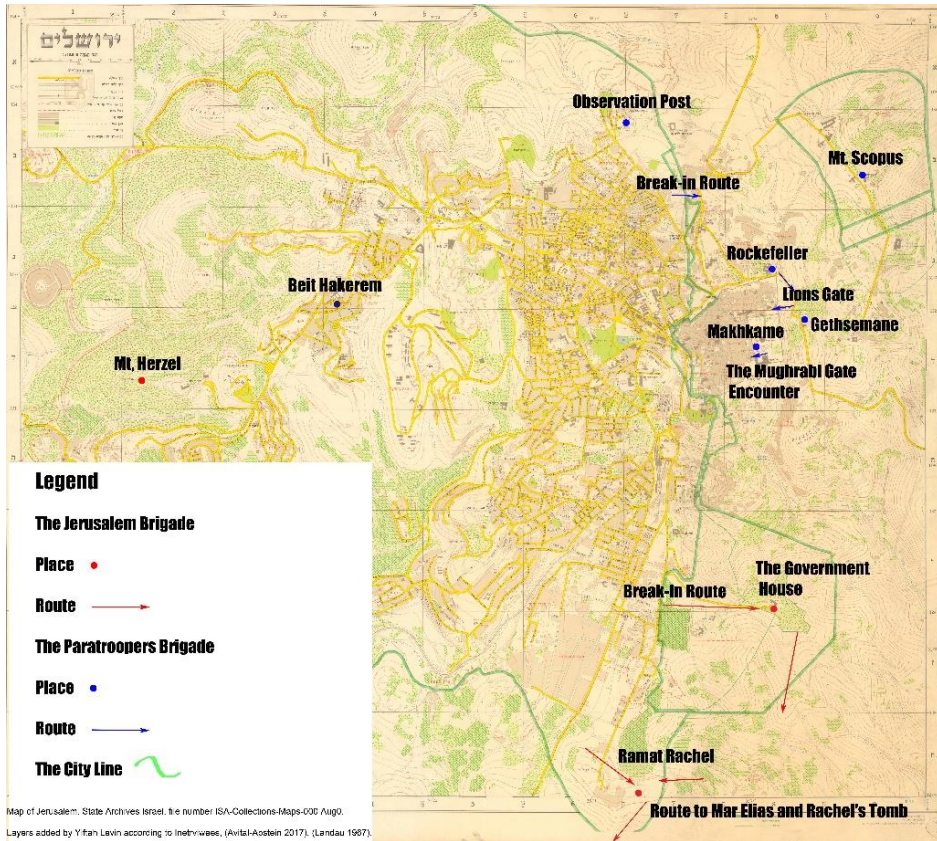


Figure 1: Map of Jerusalem. (State Archives Israel, file number ISA-Collections-Map-000 aug0). Layers added by Yiftah Levin according to the information by interviewees. Cf. also Landau 1967)

The officers arrived first, and the fantastic events began to transpire as they looked toward the Jordanian city. Yoram, the “hero of the story,” was anticipating his mission, while the battalion commander embodied the “helper (that will facilitate) the spatial transference of the hero” (Propp 1968: 79) to where he will complete his mission.<sup>11</sup>

Over there we saw the Jordanians preparing and beginning to organize at Ammunition Hill, the Police Academy, Wadi Joz, etc., Augusta Victoria Hospital, Mt. Scopus. And we set a plan, more or less [...] I asked for my mission from my battalion commander, to be the commander on the front. I was

<sup>11</sup> The interviews illustrate that the following conversation is not unique, and that the nature of the war dictated that there were discussions and negotiations at varying levels of command regarding who would do what and how.

meant to be the leading front commander, to be the first to break through to the Old City and to the Temple Mount. I requested, I bothered, and he promised me. (Yoram)

The rest of the soldiers then departed towards Jerusalem, singing *Jerusalem of Gold*, the song which quickly became part of the war's folklore, blurring the distinction between secular and sanctity.

On the way, we were singing, what else, but *Jerusalem of Gold* [...] We are ascending to Jerusalem, on the one hand, frustrated by the thought that we are meant to be a defensive force rather than an attack force, as they taught us. And, you know, we are singing songs of Jerusalem [...] "Judah will be inhabited forever" and "From the summit of Mount Scopus" [...] and somebody is reading chapters of Psalms, one of the traditional, religious guys. (M.M.)

At night, the Paratroopers Brigade organized at the rear-side neighborhood of Beit Hakerem, where the sounds of explosions and the anxiety of citizens combined with fantastic events, whose signs, in retrospect, were beginning to become apparent.

Both Yoram and L.D., each in a separate interview, illustrate this duality as they narrate the night's events.

There was absolute darkness. Like the plague in Egypt. Shelling, fires, sirens, not a soul around. Where is everyone? In the bomb shelters. (Yoram)

And I remember I told them again "whatever will be, will be. In the shelter I'm not sitting, I'm in my house, and whatever will be, will be" [...] I was just sitting here with scissors in hand, and I said, "That's it, they are coming to murder me" and I'm with the scissors. But in the middle of the night, I went down anyway [...] here were a lot of our soldiers [...] and basically, they sat up all night and talked [...] and I think she [the neighbor] also gave them the flag, that they drew during the War of Independence. It was kept that way in the family [...] and I believe that flag was hung in the Old City when it was conquered. (L.D.)

In her description, L.D. emphasizes the gap between the existential fear that took hold of her in those moments, and the symbol of victory, the conquest of the Old City and the raising of the flag that was given to soldiers by her neighbor. Yoram and the other paratroopers were the soldiers in the bomb shelter that night. L.D., the civilian, like Avraham, the soldier, who was staying at this time outside her home, uses the same phrase, "Whatever will be, will be," to express fear. Several interviewees recall their fear of "a second Holocaust," as mass graves were dug in public parks in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv during the "waiting period". Contrary to L.D., this same meeting is described by Yoram as the beginning of the mission and his role as the hero.

We were in their living room, down in the shelter [...] This family was very excited to hear about the mission, to hear the commands, and see it on the map [...] And then the grandmother came out, excited, with her cane, and returned with this flag from her apartment. She gave it to me, in tears, in tears, truthfully. “You should know that the entire Jewish people is pushing you with its fingers towards the Western Wall.” No kidding, with tears, truthfully. Exceptional excitement. She felt history taking place in her hands, in her fingers [...] she gave us feelings of yearning of generations [...] “It is not the entire Jewish people, it is all the generations of the Jewish people.” That’s how she corrected herself. All the generations of the Jewish people. From that moment, we were glued. (Yoram)

The description of this encounter completes the story of the hero’s birth and gives it an additional meaning as an essential element in the history of the Jewish people. This story weaves together personal and family history with national memories of the Holocaust and the symbol of the people’s longing for a mythical past – the Western Wall. As such, a *third sign* was revealed. While the earlier signs – the sermon at the Rabbi’s Center and the song *Jerusalem of Gold* – were presented before larger audiences, this time, the sign – the flag – was personally given to Yoram. The grandmother, forced to leave the Old City in 1948, transferred the flag to Yoram, the officer who will take his soldiers to the Old City and hang the flag over the Western Wall. Thus, the grandmother plays the role of the donor who provides the magical agent, the flag, that possesses a magical property (Propp 1968) that hints at future events. The hero is chosen to receive the magical object and, therefore, to take on a mission.

Another version of that scene is narrated by Landau, one of the soldiers that fought together with Yoram, who wrote about the events upon the war’s conclusion. His version varies from Yoram’s, although the basic elements of the fantastic, the hero, and the donor are still present.

The old woman’s<sup>12</sup> request electrified the group [...] Afterward, the company commander asked one of his commander’s permission to take and conceal the flag under his combat belt. “When we arrive at the Western Wall, I will raise it with my own hands above the holy rocks,” he promised the grandmother. Indeed, Zamush, the only religious company commander in the paratroopers’ division was specifically the one upon whom the plot of the flag being flown befell [...] when he heard the story, the young officer trembled. When he was a small child, he had gone to pray at the Western Wall, and he now felt the deep meaning of the historical task that had been granted to him and his soldiers. From here onwards, it was not a normal combat task, but a

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<sup>12</sup> “Old woman” and “grandmother” are both used to indicate the same character.

mission that had been given to them by the Jewish people. (Landau 1967b: 58–59).

The heroes of our tales were identified following the events by a few journalists that covered the war (Haber 1967; Landau 1967a), although it is said that they were recognized by those in their immediate surroundings beforehand. For both M.M. and Landau, Yoram was identified as a charismatic hero.

The old woman, she identified him [...] He has an uplifting, impressive presence. If I were to walk into the room, and try to get into the grandmother's shoes, I would turn to him. He is dominant and has a charismatic character. He has a presence. (M.M.)

Yoram's physical appearance allowed him to be identified as such, while the role of the hero was given to him due to his religiosity and was predestined by his previous connection to the mythical site. Therefore, as a charismatic hero he embodies the culture (Csordas 1990), a Jew that returns victorious to the site that symbolizes the yearning for Jerusalem. Furthermore, Yohanan will be identified as a hero by the very same cultural process.

In the story about the flag, a link is drawn between the '48 and the '67 wars, as the basis for the actualization of the mythological yearning for the Western Wall, through the experience of both civil women and men soldiers. A local journalist (Shot 2001) mentioned that the flag was bought in Tel Mond, a town in the coastal area, and did not originate from the Old City of Jerusalem. However, years later (Gil-Har 2008; Stein 2018), the tale's heroes still appear on news items celebrating the '67 anniversary commemorating the flag's myth.

That night, the paratroopers' battalion 71 passed through the City Line into the Jordanian city, and engaged in combat in the American Colony, Wadi Joz, up to the Rockefeller Museum adjacent to the Old City walls. Along this path, the fantastic chain of events became clearer as they approached the Old City and the Western Wall.

#### 4 The Climax of the Fantasy

The pinnacle of the fantastic events is the encounter in which an Arab man hands over the key to the holy site to Israeli soldiers. The fantastic appears in various sources when meeting with the Other. However, beforehand, the fantastic is revealed through signs that create a certain order from previously sporadic events. Smith (1985, 27–32) and Todorov (1998, 28–32) describe the fantasy of Columbus "discovering" the Americas as an attempt to fit these discoveries into his worldview. This approach is applicable to the holy site "discovery" narratives. The signs envisaging the fantastic encounter with the holy sites are delivered on several levels: the song *Jerusalem of Gold* is given on the national level; RZYHC's sermon is given to his disciples and published afterwards; the flag is given to Yoram and marks him as the

hero of the event. However, the fantastic is also the encounter with the Other. In essence, the encounter with the holy site is mediated through the encounter with the Other. Schreffler notes that “European chroniclers in the ‘age of discovery’ similarly evoked the world of dreams, uncertainty, and hesitation in their descriptions of the Americas” (2005, 302–303). The use of this discourse was a tool for preserving the distance of the subject from the world being described. Taussig (1993) presents a complex picture of the encounter with the Other, when, in the process of mimesis, the subject is drawn to the representation and the represented, as the subject attempts to unify with the object. In the stories discussed here, this representation is the Old City of Jerusalem and the Western Wall for which the soldiers yearned before the war. At the beginning of the 20th century, Rachel’s Tomb and the Western Wall were recognized as “the two special monuments of the national tragedy” (Ben-witch 1919, as cited in Sered 1995: 122). The Western Wall and Rachel’s Tomb were represented for years through paintings hung in the *sukkah* (tabernacle), through engravings and flags intended for *Simchat Torah* in the synagogue, and through childhood memories of those who lived there before the War of 1948. Yoram describes the tours that he conducted along the City Line with his study group from the Rabbi’s Center Yeshiva, in which Yohanan participated. During the tours, he pointed out sites beyond the line, such as Mt. Scopus, the Western Wall and the Temple Mount. Between 1948 and 1967, Mt. Scopus was held by soldiers disguised as police in an Israeli enclave within Jordan. M.M., who served there, described how he looked down on the Old City: “And I stand there [...] feeling like Moses on Mt. Nebo. Across from you, you will see the land, and there you will not enter.”

M.M., in the account of his longing for the Western Wall, alludes to the biblical figure of Moses, who led the Israelites through the desert, but was forbidden by God from entering Israel, only able to gaze upon the land from the adjacent Mt. Nebo (Deuteronomy 32: 52). The representation of Jerusalem as a near but distant dream, a childhood memory, a fantasy, materialized through the encounter with the place and its people. The encounter with the place is a return, the fulfillment of biblical prophecy, and, thus, serves as an actualization of the fantasy, which is expressed by the stories of subjects, although it broader meanings.

## 5 The Mughrabi Gate Encounter

The two ‘key transfer’ encounters took place on the third day of the war, June 7. After two days of fighting in Jerusalem, the third day became decisive.<sup>13</sup> The various details in the ‘fantastic story’ create a gradualness (Todorov 1981: 63), as moments before the key transfer encounter, the fighting intensified. Thus, the key encounter is structured as the culmination of the fantastic events, standing in contrast to the

<sup>13</sup> The Jerusalem Brigade advanced to the territories south of Jerusalem toward Bethlehem and Hebron. The Old City was occupied by forces of the Jerusalem Brigade and the Paratroopers Brigade (Avital-Epstein 2017).



other semantic components, but simultaneously constitutes an element in the broader course of events. The story is understood as a coherent unit when each element is understood through its relationship to the other elements (Todorov 1981). The hesitation of encountering the Other is illustrated through the escalation of the fighting:

We are on a street that ascends towards the corner of the Wall [...] Jordanians are sniping and firing at us [...] the tanks were meant to lead and then the patrol [...] We receive a command to stop. There was a complication which continued with firing and a tank that had caught fire at the Gethsemane Church, and the rescue of the wounded under fire. There were heroic acts [...] There were Carmel films [documentary films] about the defenders of the quarter [the Jewish Quarter in 1948] being taken captive. From where? They were taken through the Lions' Gate to captivity in Jordan in Um Jimal [a camp in Jordan]. The same gate that we entered from the opposite direction. (M.M.)

Yoram's company entered the Old City through the Lions' Gate, which quickly transforms from a symbol of defeat in the 1948 war to a symbol of victory in the 1967 war. At the gate, the soldiers turned left towards the Temple Mount. Their detailed description of the combat during climactic moments reinforces the fantastic image of events, while giving them the validity of a true story.

On the right was a tent, we opened fire, we didn't look if we killed or not, it was just a lot of firing to warn, to chase out, to smoke them out, and we continued to move towards the mosque. To our left, a half-track vehicle with the division command passed us, fired to the left and ascended the steps [...] And this issue of the Temple Mount plaza and the Old City, as long as they did not fire, and it's not as if there was not an order, it was some kind of self-discipline, in my opinion, there was something in the atmosphere, in a spirit of holiness [...] And then they came up from the left, we went to the right, and from the right side there were the steps opposite the arches in the front courtyard [...] there were Jordanian vehicles and we saw people under one of the arches. Sh. [abbreviation] [...] kneeled with a rifle grenade, aimed it downwards and eliminated the two soldiers who were underneath. (A.S.)

And there is smoke, and from out of nowhere an Arab emerges in a white jellabiya [robe]. A red ribbon is on his hand, on his arm, and he says in broken Hebrew, "I am good." I'm good, like I'm one of the good guys. And Yoram turns to him [...] and says to him, "Where is the wall of the Jews?" And Yoram, I think, speaks to him in English, actually. He thought he did not know Hebrew; why would he speak Hebrew to an Arab? Apparently, this was probably one of the Western Wall's ushers, of this place, one of their guards who guarded the Western Wall area. And he is in complete panic, this Arab, but Y. [abbreviation] turns to him and tells him, "Calm down." He calms him

down. “We won’t hurt you.” And he tells us, “I know what you are looking for,” in Hebrew. In Hebrew, but disjointed. Half Hebrew. Half English. He leads us to the Mughrabi gate, to the gate, and on the way, we are looking at him, and a key is hanging from his neck, but *wabad* [a real beast of a] key. Huge. He leads us to the wooden door, green wood, to this day it is still the same original door. And he hands us the key, and along the way he says to us this sentence, which is not written in any other place, “For 19 years I waited, I knew you were coming.” (M.M.)

At the height of fighting on the Temple Mount, again the role of the donor that provides the magical agent (Propp 1968) appears, when the Arab in the white robe appears, leading them towards the Western Wall. The hero and his soldiers are granted the ultimate magical agent, the key, which allows them to reach the desired Western Wall. The encounter is strengthened by the contrasting elements that emphasize arrival at the fantasy’s climax – the exit from versus entry through the Lions’ Gate, the loss of Jerusalem in 1948 versus the victory in 1967, combat versus revelation, and the giving Arab versus the receiving Jew. Hence, the key encounter holds the mediation of dualities that symbolizes the arrival of the story’s heroes to the Western Wall at the most elated moment of the war.



Figure 2: The Mughrabi Gate Key that was taken by paratroopers on their way to the Western Wall. It is now kept at the Ammunition Hill memorial site, Jerusalem. (Photograph by Yiftah Levin)

## 6 The Rachel's Tomb Encounter

Only a few hours after the first key encounter, a story emerged connecting the events into a fantastic tale among the soldiers situated in Kibbutz Ramat Rachel, as the combat and fear of intense conflict intensified:

There was constant bombardment from Mar Elias Monastery towards us [...] Until we were informed on Wednesday [...] at noon, that we are ascending to Mar Elias [...] we were very scared, because Mar Elias was a formidable thing [...] and you see the people in the woods, looking at pictures of their family [...] there was great fear. Especially since we had the feeling that Mar Elias Monastery was filled with [Jordanian] soldiers because they were constantly shelling us and shooting at us. (Yohanan)

Yohanan, similar to Yoram, is identified by another person as a charismatic hero, hence, he is provided with the magical agent. Here, it is the right to conduct prayer, which hints to the future role of the hero.

One man approached me, grabs my back and says, "Yohanan, maybe pray *minchah* [the afternoon prayer]? Now is the time for *minchah*" [...] Then the prayer begins with silent prayer, and then the cantor repeats the *Shmonei esrei* [the prayer of 18 blessings] [...] After the second and third time, someone approaches me and says, "No, no! Stop!" I thought we were done and going out to battle. "Stop," he says, "I want to take some flags and every time we are to say 'amen,' a command will be given to the tanks to shell." I stand and say the blessing out loud, around me, the crowd answers 'amen,' he gives a sign to the tank, and the tank hits it. One, two [...] not a real bombardment, they knew they had to shell, so instead of shelling, it was a prayer along with shelling [...] We finished praying. Because G. [abbreviation], the *kibbutznik* [...] is not religious, he says, "I think we're going on our way, after this prayer, we will surely succeed." I said, "Okay, we will succeed" [...] We descend with our heart jumping, the heart is simply jumping, who knows what is waiting for us at Mar Elias? We descend to the valley [...] we wait. We don't know what, soon they'll start shooting at us. They don't shoot, nobody shoots. You descend downhill and ascending a relatively easy climb [...] we are breathing hard [...] ascending, ascending. The first who ascends to Mar Elias starts shooting in all directions, and there is no response. Mar Elias was empty. That is the amazing story in this whole business. For two days we were bombarded. For two days we were scared. Once we descended, we were sure they would cut us down [...]. Everyone is touring around. The feeling is that you are not in combat at all [...] Quiet, there is nobody in this entire mighty fortress [...] Nothing, nothing, where is everyone? (Yohanan)

Yohanan connects the prayer service directly to the success of the attack on Mar Elias, thereby expediting the fantastic movement, and preparing the ground for the

encounter in which an Arab transfers the key. Similar to the description of the battle on the Temple Mount, the detailed description of the fear experienced reinforces the fantastic occurrence in sensual reality, giving it validity. The geography of Ramat Rachel, Mar Elias and Rachel's Tomb, and the concrete nature of the key as an object validates the entire story.

Onward to Bethlehem. We get on the road, without war, without anything. A march. We are marching [...] walking and walking and walking, we arrive at a group of houses, the houses have white flags. The surrender of Bethlehem. It surrendered. Even before we reached Bethlehem, they surrendered. They hung clothes, white undershirts, white underwear, everything was hung on every house [...] You could see that there was a great effort to show that they surrendered [...] We arrived at some city square, and in the square, suddenly some old Arab was running around, not old but somewhat old in his sixties or seventies with a robe and some kind of *abaya* [traditional Arab dress], holding something, "*Hadha El Maftub*"<sup>14</sup> [Here is the key]. It is the key to Rachel's Tomb. He gave it to me, to G. the key to Rachel's Tomb [...] G. gives me the key, G. tells me, "I don't know what to do with this, Yohanan, you take it." I kiss it like it's the first time in my life, I know what it is. Jerusalemites have myths about the key to Rachel's Tomb, all kinds, that it can solve infertility problems and the like [...] Jerusalemites knew there is a big key, a key like this, a big one [...] I put the key into the pouch, and the events continue – three half-tracks come passing by. One of them is a friend of mine [...] with a big red beard, I.K.. He stands on the half-track and yells, "We are making history," like he is in summer camp or whatever, "We are making history, not war, history." He continues, "See you later, see you later, see you later." (Yohanan)

We were driving, I passed by some place, a regular street, and then I see Yohanan [...] I'm with a hardhat and I sit next to the driver [...] I'm trying to get my head out with the hardhat towards Yohanan, but I don't succeed. I didn't dare try to open the door, either way, we are in a war [...], I said, "Yohanan!" He answers, "Here is Rachel's Tomb." I said to him, "Where's Rachel's Tomb?" It was no longer possible to detect it because Rachel's tomb always stood alone, and now it was among a row of houses." (I.K.)

Yohanan and I.K. emphasize that they did not recognize the tomb due to the change in the area that was familiar to them from the pre-1948 period, and as it has been etched into their memory from various classic representations.<sup>15</sup> Although both tell of the same occurrence, they perceived them differently, even in contradictory ways.

<sup>14</sup> Key in Arabic is *Mafta'ab* and not *Maftub*. Yohanan quotes the Arab, but says what he thinks the word in Arabic is, but is not really Arabic.

<sup>15</sup> In those representations where "the tomb is alone on the hill at the side of the road," originates from the biblical description of her death (Genesis 35: 16–20) and its commemoration by Jeremiah (31: 14–16).

Furthermore, upon entering Bethlehem and particularly after receiving the key, especially vividly in Yohanan's story, the fantastic movement has turned the war into a journey or pilgrimage, as "fear" turned into "march" and then "summer camp."

A soldier who was slightly behind narrated a different version of the entrance to Bethlehem and the 'key encounter.' In his description, there was no miraculous revelation, the initiative was Yohanan's and his conduct was almost like that of a visit to a tourist site rather than of a site of combat:

He went looking for the key. Went around among the houses, knocked on the houses. Searched for a key. They referred him to the one who holds the key and he opened Rachel's Tomb [...] Everyone asked, why are we stopping, why not enter? They said Rachel's Tomb is closed, someone went to look for the key. (N.M.)

Rafi tells his own version of the key encounter at Rachel's Tomb. In his story, Rafi is the protagonist, not Yohanan. Here, too, the narrator emphasizes the geography of the crossing from Ramat Rachel to Bethlehem:

Then we descend [from Ramat Rachel] down the slope toward Bethlehem [...] we walked in two columns, the force I led in the company, Tz. [the Company Commander] was 50–60 meters behind with the rest of the company [...] we continued on foot [...] There were no [Jordanian] soldiers, either they fled or escaped by vehicles [...] This is the story of Rachel's grave, and it's as if it is happening to me now, why I kept telling it, and no one can come to tell a different story. Everyone can vouch for the fact that I was there with my soldiers, one of them spoke Arabic, right? A Jerusalemite [...] And then I arrive, I remember it was a stone wall and some kind of blue wooden gate like that, and an Arab woman calls for me, I kind of hear, understand some Arabic, I enter, she shows me the tomb and tells me, "This is the key, we waited for you to come." Of course, I was excited, I remembered [...] also in my childhood, we studied Torah at the Heder [religious elementary school] in Morocco [...] The Bible, in general, and the story of Ruth the Moabite and Bethlehem fields, right? And Rachel's Tomb. (Rafi)

In describing the events, Rafi illustrates his awareness that there is a competing version of his story. Yohanan and Rafi's stories compete with one another, each claiming that he carried out the hero's mission, which aligns with Propp's (1968) differing portrayal of the hero versus the false hero. According to Nikiforov (Jason 1971: 62–63), in folktales, in addition to the central hero role, there are also the secondary roles, such as the hero's assistant, and the object he is attempting to obtain, a bride or a magical object. If so, I suggest that the key given to soldiers is the magical object that the heroes are sent to obtain. Since the renovation of the tomb by Montefiore in 1841 until the separation from it in 1948 war, Jewish caretakers held the keys to Rachel's Tomb (Shragai 2005: 66–94). T.G. tells of Gad Freiman, the son of Shlomo Freiman, the Ashkenazi caretaker of the tomb until 1948, as a charismatic figure,

similar to how Yohanan and Yoram are described. Here, too, there are the basic narrative roles that appear in all versions of the bestowing of the key – the hero, the donor and a magical object.

When I went there to see Rachel's Tomb [...] I had a picture in my head from my time as a girl, in which I remember a big key which was used to open it. I know that afterwards they [the Freiman family] came and went, this I know from the stories that the guard told "knew you would come." They even knew him, the guard who was there. (I.G.)

## 7 The Key as a Miraculous Object

Yohanan describes the encounter with the Arab and the receiving of the key as a fantastic moment, which completes a course of transformation during the war. This movement began before the war and intensified with the prayer and events that followed it. Obtaining the key to the holy site from an Arab donor is accompanied by an intimate sense of wonder at the object's legendary magical powers. The magical nature of the key is related, among other aspects, to its extraordinary size. Similarly, the key for the Mughrabi Gate is described as one of exceptional dimensions. These descriptions intensify the events that preceded or followed the key transfer. In the case of the Mughrabi Gate, the miraculous moment is the juxtaposition of the encounter with the combat that has just concluded. Yohanan describes the excitement he experienced upon receiving the key and the magical powers attributed to it regarding fertility problems. According to Sered, since the 1930s, Jewish women who suffered from complications during labor would lay the key to Rachel's Tomb under their heads to ease childbirth; in addition to these traditions which developed during the 19th century, the key symbolized two dimensions of the myth of Rachel – female fertility and the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel (Sered 1995: 135–136).

Receiving the key serves as a recognition and glorification of the hero character, and the importance of the story is mirrored by the immediate interest of the main Israeli newspapers. The war began on June 5. Two days later, the events described here occurred, while as early as June 9, an article in the daily newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* appeared, describing the transfer of the key to Rachel's Tomb to Yohanan, in a meeting that was attended by Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan and senior generals:

The Commander of the military unit in the area said that when his men entered Bethlehem, they met a man running toward them. They stopped at his side, and he handed over to the radio man from company B, Yohanan Freed, the Jerusalemite, a huge key. This was the key to Rachel's Tomb. (Haber 1967: 3).

In Life Magazine's *Special Edition, Israel's Swift Victory* (June 30, 1967), this encounter, as well as the image of Yoram and his soldiers on the Temple Mount, are

photographed. Many of the interviewees note that Dayan's appointment shortly before the war is remembered as one of the events that contributed to raising the morale of the citizens. Indeed, Dayan is widely documented during this period in newspapers and the victory is largely attributed to him. Thus, he can be placed in the role of father of the princess foreseen by Propp (1968). Yohanan recalls that during the meeting with Dayan, he had a conversation with him about the name of the war, which is also documented in the same newspaper article. The Mughrabi Gate encounter, documented in the book *The War on Jerusalem*<sup>16</sup> (Nathan 1968), is described there also through the lens of fantasy. Although it is not stated that the Arab man handed over the key while showing soldiers the way to the Western Wall, the event is linked by the author to the tradition of the keys of the Temple (Jerusalem Talmud. *Shkhalim* 26: 1–2), where it is written that the keys were transferred as a deposit at the time of the destruction of the First Temple:

Legend has it that when the Priests saw that the Temple was burned and destroyed, they took its keys and ascended to the roof of sanctuary. As they stood there in groups, they turned to the Almighty, and threw towards the sky the keys to His house. Then they jumped and fell into the fire that consumed the Temple. Simultaneously, a part of a hand came out of the sky and picked up the thrown keys. (Nathan 1968: 311)

Sered (1995, 122–129) argues that although the “tears of Rachel for her children” was a symbol of mourning over the destruction of Jerusalem since the prophecy of Jeremiah, only towards the end of the 19th century were the words of Jeremiah re-interpreted within the context of the return of the Jews to the Land of Israel during the early days of the Zionist movement.

The heroes of the keys' stories revalidate their current status through the role they played in the war. Thirty years after the war, when Rafi served as Deputy Mayor of Yavne, a local newspaper said that Rafi was the first combat officer from the city and describes the key encounter (Vaserman 1997).

Yoram, as the receiver of the Mughrabi Gate's key, also comprehends himself years later as part of the Western Wall's tradition and as a carrier of the history. During the war, a dramatic change occurred near the Western Wall, when the Mughrabi Quarter was demolished in preparation for the plaza that exists to this day. However, since then, any intention of archaeological excavation or construction in this area has caused resistance, which has often overflowed into violence between the two sides. An article about the expansive building plans that Yoram promotes at the Temple Mount and its environs illustrates how his story serves as a confirmation for the plans:

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<sup>16</sup> Moshe Nathan was a journalist, and later a radio broadcaster, who covered the war for the military magazine *Bamahane* (lit. In the Base Camp). For the purposes of his book, which was a best seller at that time, he interviewed 400 soldiers and collected a variety of archive material. <https://www.haaretz.co.il/gallery/cinema/1.1737270>, <https://www.the7eye.org.il/42308> (accessed December 30, 2021; the link does not work outside Israel).

Zamush is convinced that because we received on that day the key and opened the gate, it will remain under our sovereignty. And now the commander of police in Jerusalem, Ilan Franco, determines what happens there. Why should we suddenly act according to the decision of a policeman? (Pepper 2007).

According to Yoram, receiving the keys grants the state sovereignty over the place; he states, “I have an account to settle with my grandparents and my great grandparents, and with my brigade deputy, Moshe Stempel, who was with me when we liberated the Western Wall and was killed several months afterwards” (Pepper 2007). Thus, the historical right is deemed more powerful than the authority of the law. Twelve years later, in 2019, Yoram and other soldiers were photographed on the Temple Mount, for a report aired on Independence Day on the occasion of the retirement of the Jerusalem police District Commander (Vered 2019). It seems that ‘receiving the key’ serves the heroes to accumulate symbolic capital and recognition, through their personal war experience linked to a mythical past.

## 8 The Arab that Provides the Key

We knew that in Bethlehem, we’d encounter some historical sites [...] but when we saw this Gentile-Jew with the key, he says, “*Hadba El Maftul*” [Here is the key, in Arabic], and it was Rachel’s Tomb, we saw his face. (Yohanan)

In the mimetic process, the replica receives power from the original, while the perceiver, the soldier, is drawn into the representation (Taussig 1993 59–62). The representation of the sacred place is transmitted through the representative, the Arab who provides the key, while the soldier sees him as himself, a gentile Jew. Nevertheless, the process is bidirectional (Taussig 1993), as Yohanan mimics the Arab’s words in order to validate them. Thus, the Arabs who provide the keys are the representatives that embody the representation – the encounter with the place is an encounter with people, and a Self, the Jewish soldier, that is expressed through the Other, the Arab. The Arab is the figure of the biblical Jew who provides them the key that was left for his safekeeping. Similar to M.M., Rafi also describes the Arab donor as someone who guarded the site.

They have some kind of fear of the holiness of the God of the Jews, you see? [...] I remember she was very sad, the Arab woman, she was very old, maybe it was her job to safeguard it, maybe she lived there. This is a custom, in Morocco [...] I saw it in Jewish cemeteries, where there are no longer Jews [...] the Arabs live in the cemetery and keep guard. (Rafi)

S.S. holds a similar opinion regarding the encounter at Rachel’s tomb: “He kept the key all those years [...] ‘the Jews will come, and I will hand it to them’” (S.S.).



When describing the encounter with the Arab, while he ignores the key's existence, Landau emphasizes the Arab image as holding an historical function – to guide the Jewish soldiers towards the sacred place.

While the group of commanders is dealing with the combat over the Old City from the Temple Mount plaza, next to the entrance of the Omar mosque, the paratroopers unit opened a path towards the Western Wall. An Arab civilian dressed in white – it could be that history appointed him to be the celebratory guide to the soldiers – ran ahead of them on their way to the Western Wall. At first, he did not understand what the group of emotional soldiers who had taken hold of him wanted from him. Afterwards, as he (the Arab) understood what they were after, he smiled and began walking slowly, with great importance, to the alley that leads to the Western Wall [...] they discovered a small gate on the right side of the alley. A paratrooper broke through the gate and suddenly broke out in a wild scream, “The Western Wall! I see the Western Wall!” (Landau 1967: 169)

What is the source of the argument that the Arabs were waiting for the arrival of Jewish soldiers? Cohen (2003) points out that there is a tradition among the students of the Rabbi's Center Yeshiva, where several of the interviewees were educated. It concerns the Arabs' expectation of the return of Jews to the Land of Israel by virtue of ancient right. Muslim traditions speak of the returning of the Jews to the land, but within the context of the preparation for doomsday, when they would face a choice between conversion to Islam and destruction. The members of *HaShomer* (lit. the Guard), a Zionist movement from the 1920s, not like other Zionist movements, were close to the Arabs, learned Arabic, and exchanged stories with them. Therefore, it is possible that they molded these traditions to their needs, in order to obtain recognition of their right to the land and justification of their actions from the perspective of the Arabs that lived on the land (Cohen 2003). The author Shay Agnon, who apparently mediated these ideas between the secular Zionists and Rabbi Kook, wrote, “I and all of Israel did not stop believing that the Land of Israel is ours and all the nations that sit here are none other than guards that the Almighty placed here until He returns Israel to the Land of Israel” (as cited by Cohen 2013: 338). Cohen (2003) added that after the 1967 war, in order to allow the establishment of Jewish settlements in the territories conquered, RZYHC revived the argument that the return of Jews is an enshrined value in Islam.

According to Rafi's version of the story, the key was presented to him by a woman. Even though Rafi does not link this woman to Rachel, the narrative is not accidental. In the last two hundred years, there have been occasions in which Rachel was revealed to believers (Sered 1995: 139–140). During the military clashes in recent years in Gaza, soldiers have attested that Rachel was revealed to them and warned them of dangers (Appendix 3). The incidents received widespread attention from rabbis, while the various versions all emphasized Rachel's mythical traits, as a mother who ensures her son's wellbeing. Another testimony from years later, was that of

Hanan Porat, a member of Yohanan and Yoram's *yeshiva*. Porat related such a narrative that occurred when driving to Rachel's Tomb, in 1995:

I am near the Mar Elias monastery, I innocently turned on the car radio, and am instantly shaken to hear the anguished cries coming from the square. I stopped the car in amazement and listened to the message from agonized Eitan Haber, announcing the death of Yitzhak Rabin [...] then suddenly, I hear a distant voice crying in my ears: "Rachel is weeping for her sons." I bit my lips until they bled, and I said to myself: now at this very moment, Rachel is mourning the death of Yitzhak Rabin, who is no longer with us. (Cohen 2012).

The revelation that Porat describes, as opposed to that of the soldiers, is vocal rather than visual, and by this indicates Jeremiah – "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children."<sup>17</sup> The event took place following the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Chief of Staff during the Six-Day War, in November 1995, 28 years after the war.<sup>18</sup> Similar to Rafi and Yohanan, Porat also indicates Mar Elias' physical proximity to Rachel's tomb, but in contrast to them, he relates his revelation to this physical proximity, even if he hears a distant voice. For Crapanzano (2006), the "scene" is a shadowy world, the subjective effects on the paramount reality, whose side effects manifest in the world. The scene is the encounter of the ideal version, as it is comprehended through myth, and the real version of the occurrence, as it is manifested through ritual. One casts a shadow on the other and vice versa. The ideal cannot be disconnected from the real, but the relationship between them is divergent (Crapanzano 2006). This is how Rachel's myth is embodied by the gloomy Arab woman donor, who sits and waits for her sons to return to the tomb, through a kind of pilgrimage that revives the myth of return to the holy site and to a mythical era.

## 9 The Fantastic – the War as Pilgrimage

The fantastic events occur as a confluence of revelation juxtaposed with battle descriptions that preceded it, in which the central contrasts are combat versus revelation, sacred versus profane and purity versus impurity. Eliade (1961) describes the construction of the world as a duality of cosmos and chaos; the cosmos is the known world, while the chaos is the foreign, dangerous and chaotic space. In wars, it can be said that soldiers move from the cosmos towards chaos. The moment of the outbreak of combat serves as the transition from the familiar world, Jewish Jerusalem, towards the crossing of the City Line into the chaos of war in the Jordanian

<sup>17</sup> Jeremiah 31: 14. English version retrieved from <https://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt1131.htm> (accessed November 9, 2021).

<sup>18</sup> The Hebrew date on which Rabin was assassinated is 11 of Heshvan, the memorial date of Rachel according to tradition.

city. Getting to the Temple Mount is akin to arriving at an *Axis Mundi*, the world's axis, the holiest site that constitutes the meeting point between the upper and lower planes of the cosmos, with the subterranean water [*tehom*], which connects them (Eliade 1959: 12–16). That which is sacred is forbidden. Eliade claimed that “the sacred is at once ‘sacred’ and ‘defiled’” (Eliade 1959: 14–15 as cited by Douglas 2001: 8). This duality is reflected in the transition from the Western Wall and the return to the Temple Mount towards the *Makbkame*<sup>19</sup>.

We return to the plaza and reach a metal gate fastened with a lock, we break it, try to open it, we shoot it, also with a rifle grenade. There was an old man there who was hit by our rifle grenade [...] it was a terrifying sight [...] And we saw some people who looked like guys from Harlem [...] And in front of us stands a tall man [...] hugging two women. One black and the second white [...] it was an American Jew who converted to Islam named Abdullah Schleifer [...] a beatnik Jew from New York who converted to Islam and came to the Old City [...] To this day, this man has been lost to the Jewish people [...] one of my friends tried to hit him, move him out of the way, Moshe Stempel [the deputy brigade commander [...] prevented him, otherwise he would have broken his [...], he would have killed him on the spot. (M.M.)

Desecration of the holy is embodied by “the guys from Harlem” and especially in the image of the Jew who had converted to Islam, embracing two women, one black, one white, as a kind of representation of the unresolved conflicts between the sacred versus secular, the Jew versus the Muslim, and war versus pilgrimage. The image of a man embracing a black woman and a white woman, is well-known in folktales.<sup>20</sup> In these stories, there is a meeting with a man, and next to him are two women, one black and one white. The man presents a riddle to his guest, essentially a choice between the two women. The solution to the riddle does not depend on the woman's color but upon a deeper insight, based on the nature of the ties formed between a woman and her partner. I propose viewing the encounter with the converted Jew as a choice that occurs on the threshold, as part of the story of Jewish Israelis reconnecting with a holy site which they had not been able to access. When reaching *Makbkame*, a rite to sanctify the place is performed – raising the flag that Yoram received only two days before while singing *Hatikvah* [the national anthem] facing the destroyed Jewish Quarter, as the cosmos is consecrated as a mythical archetype<sup>21</sup> (Eliade 1961). Immediately upon his arrival at the Western Wall, Yoram sent soldiers to bring the dispatcher, RZYHC, to visit the Western Wall.

<sup>19</sup> *Makbkame* - A Mameluke period madrasa and courthouse on the Temple Mount.

<sup>20</sup> IFA 1665: 17081, 12856.

<sup>21</sup> Another flag was hung over the Mosque of Omar (Landau 1967a) and removed the same day, apparently due to an order by Dayan (1976: 388). Landau's description in his book (1967b: 169–171) is almost identical to his report from the same day, excluding the flag hung on the Mosque of Omar.

## 10 The Meeting with the Dispatcher

I thought they should be here at this time. And I sent two soldiers [...] “In the Geula neighborhood you will find Rabbi Zvi Yehuda and Rabbi Hanazir<sup>22</sup> and bring them here.” [...] Just when they arrived, our Battalion commander also came with Rabbi Goren with an entourage of military rabbis. (Yoram)

The role of Rabbi Shlomo Goren, the Chief Military Rabbi, during and after the war was fundamental to the biblical and messianic fantasy during that period. Thus, he served as another dispatcher. Yohanan and Rafi emphasize that they handed the keys over to Rabbi Goren a short time later. Another encounter took place with the dispatchers from the Rabbi’s Center Yeshiva. Yoram wrote that a few weeks after the war he was invited along with Yohanan to RZYHC’s home:

[...] he permits Yohanan to pour a glass of wine – “*le’chaim*” [to life – the traditional Hebrew toast] [...] quoting from his sermon (and highlighting that due to the war) “Hebron and Jericho and Shechem are ours” and then visited Rabbi Hanazir who said to them, “Welcome, pay homage to the heroes of Israel.” (Zamush 2016: 37)

The second sign that preceded the war, the song *Jerusalem of Gold*, was sung by the Jerusalem Brigade in Bethlehem as soon as they heard that Western Wall had been conquered.

We walked and walked and walked and walked and crossed all of Bethlehem [...] today, the Deheishe refugee camp is there. So just before Deheishe, there is a quarry [...] We go up the hill and the commander, G. [abbreviation], instructs all the guys to deploy on the hill [...] And we hear on the transistors [...] we hear the Western Wall was liberated. We start dancing on the hill, everyone there. (Yohanan)

We drove onward and arrived at Deheishe, to this *jabla’ah* [I.K means a mountain in Arabic, which is Ja-bal]. And on this *jabla’ah*, we only hear one thing: tak, tak of the hoes. Because they got a command, you see, in this stupid rock terrain, that everyone would dig his own personal trench [...] In another minute, the Jordanians will be shelling here, so all you hear is tak, tak, tak, tak, tak [...] Then a radio broadcast began at eight [...] reporting on the conquest of the Western Wall, and then the whole mountain began to sing in a choir, a men’s choir. I’m a little bit emotional. A men’s choir, *Jerusalem of Gold*. All the mountain, you hear, the clatter of hoeing and you hear *Jerusalem of Gold*, the whole mountain, a men’s choir like that of the Red Army, you know what I

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<sup>22</sup> Rabbi Hanazir (Nazirite) was an alias of Rabbi David Cohen. He was a student of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Hacohen Kook, the father of RZYHC and founder of the Rabbi’s Center Yeshiva. He was mentioned by Yoram and Yohanan as a central and important figure alongside RZYHC, the head of the Yeshiva. His daughter was married to Rabbi Shlomo Goren.

mean. Two or three hundred soldiers, infantry soldiers, 28 or 29 years old, singing. It was an unforgettable sight, as you can see; when I tell you, I get emotional. (I.K.)

The song was written and sung by a single woman singer before and after the war. During the war, it was sung several times over a few days by a group of men. As such, the song that expressed the longing for Jerusalem, went through another stage in becoming the symbol of the war, but also a symbol of the return to Jerusalem. On the following day,<sup>23</sup> the second dispatcher, Naomi Shemer, came to sing to the soldiers and to the mayors and heads of the churches who had surrendered just the day before. As such, the villain had to accept the results of the combat in the face of the dispatcher and its representatives, the new rulers of the occupied territory.

That Thursday evening, we were told: you are receiving a prize; Naomi Shemer is coming along with Shuli Natan. They are coming to perform an evening of songs for us at the Bethlehem movie theater. Three days after the start of the war, they came. We invited the mayor and all the church leaders, we invited everyone. And they sang [...] *Jerusalem of Gold* of course, but also other songs. (I.E.)

Stein (1999, 25–26) points out that the experiential empowerment depicted in the quest stories of the Jewish Sages is “first and foremost the seal of mythic actualization.” Here, too, the history of yearning for the holy sites and the encounter with them is characterized by various combinations of “the magical, the mythological, the rebellious and the empowered [...] in the face of the limits of the institutional culture” (Stein 1999: 26). With the awakening of the figure of Rachel in the context of the return to Israel during the early period of Zionism, various writers had begun to link her to the Land of Israel and its nature (Sered 1995: 131–132). If we return to the sermon of RZYHC, it appears that, among other images, he describes the biblical land as desired by God. “Every grain of sand, every forearm [described through biblical measurements], every tract of land, and every piece of soil belongs to the land of the Lord.” Thus, the female images in these stories, such as the encounter with the Arab woman at the entrance to the tomb, the imagery of the land as desired and the arrival at Rachel’s tomb resonate with the mythical figure of Rachel as the mother waiting for her sons’ return from exile. Thus, it can be said that Rachel portrays the figure of the princess (Propp 1968), who waits for the hero after completion of the mission. Thus, the key encounter, in fact, does not just stand by itself as an episode of the war, but serves as the fulfillment of an ancient Jewish fantasy, particularly among the national religious sectors. At the same time, it is at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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<sup>23</sup> During the conquest of the Bethlehem area, there were at least three acts of surrender by the mayors of Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour to the commanding officers of two battalions. According to R.B., Rafi, Yohanan, I.K. and I.E., during one, the officials of Bethlehem approached the soldiers; in the others, the Israeli officers approached and got them to sign a surrender document.

## 11 Discussion

The key encounters of the Six-Day War emphasize the centrality of holy sites and the meetings with local Palestinians. In this framework, what is the significance of encounters with Others as described within the context of arrival at a holy site or through the search for a holy object? As Girard (1965) argues, mimetic desire of the subject toward the object is essentially a triad, dependent upon a mediating factor of that desire. If so, the soldiers' desire for the coveted holy sites is mediated through a third party, the male or female Arab donor of the key.

Indeed, the encounter with the Other holds a crucial role in Jewish and Christian folklore of holy sites. Stein (1999), for example, argues that the Talmudic journey of Rabbah bar bar Hannah in search of the dead of the desert and Korach's tribe represents a rejection of authority as

an expression of a need to experience a fundamental, pre-cultural, non-institutionalized foundation, a need involves breaking the boundaries of the present. It is not surprising that the search for this foundation is mediated by the figure of the Arab, the Other: he does not belong to the cultural framework that conceals from the eyes of society the location of foreign elements. (Stein 1999: 20–21)

Here too, the journey to *Axis Mundi* is a journey that breaks the boundaries of the present – towards the mythical Jewish past, and here, too, the arrival at these places is mediated by an encounter with the Arab, the Other. Furthermore, Hasan-Rokem notes that motifs of deciphering signs in Jewish culture associated with Arab culture (1989: 121) are related, for example, to a Jew's holiness, as an Arab interprets the bellow of the Jew's bull as heralding the onset of the destruction of the Temple and signaling the coming of the Messiah (1989: 117). Moreover, Christian traditions that refer to the Holy Land, treat the image of the Jewish figure as Other (Limor 1996). In these traditions, knowledge or an object, are transmitted from the Jews to Christians through the use of force or judicial decision. In addition, Limor (1996) points out Jewish, Muslim and Christian narratives that describe the Jews as showing Caliph Omar the Foundation Stone of the Temple Mount, where the Caliph then built the Dome of the Rock. Limor (1996) claims that the Jews hold the metaphorical 'keys' of both holy sites and Christian texts. In our case, there are actual keys in addition to the metaphorical keys that allow entry or express the transfer of ownership and control over the holy sites, conquered during the Six-Day War.

Limor (1996) notes that although Christians regarded the Jews as having the knowledge and authority to identify and legitimize holy sites and sacred objects, the Jews did not attribute holiness to them. Similarly, in the events discussed in this study, interviewees claimed that during the encounters, the Arabs said they were waiting for them and knew that they would return. Thus, according to the interviewees, the Arabs acknowledge the Jewish 'truth' and justify the Jewish presence and their future status as subjects under occupation. However, similar to Jews in

Christian tradition, the Jewish soldiers recognized the presence of Arabs, so that the encounter itself, characterized by the key transfer or leading Jews to the holy site, served as an act of recognition of the Arab Other and their right to the holy site. Thus, the arrival of the soldiers and encounter with the Arab key guardians constituted a confirmation of historical Jewish presence at the site and transfer of ownership, marked by the transfer of the key and the establishment of new relationships between the previous temporary owner and the new owners of the holy sites, as well as with the surrounding colonial sphere. The previous owners are represented by the old Arab, while the new owners are represented by young Jewish soldiers. The transfer is both cultural and intergenerational. In this context, we note the event of the woman who had fled the Old City in 1948 transferring the flag to the soldier who conquered it in 1967. Yoram's description of the key encounter includes additional meanings that contribute to future colonialist relations:

We found an old Arab with a key around his neck [...] "And I knew the Jewish Wall, [that] you would come for 19 years," in Arabic, in Arabic. My deputy speaks excellent Arabic, was a Shin Bet [Israel Security Agency] man [...] He did not give it to us, we ripped it off him. But he certainly flattered us and cooperated [...] so he grabbed him, and he spoke to him in Arabic, interrogated him and so on. He asked what needed to be asked. We started arresting all the men there. We gathered 250 people there [...] on the Temple Mount, there was a huge encampment [...] soldiers hiding, soldiers wearing pajamas, as if they were uniforms [...] So, during the continuing combat, we were searching, there were shots, and we hit at least 12 of them, dead [...] So, he grabbed one of these Waqf officials, who started singing, talking. So, he, it turned out, also had a key. We caught everything that moved, everyone that moved [...] "the key to the gate of the Jewish Wall, I knew for 19 years you would come here," he started to sweet-talk us like that. (Yoram)

Compared to the previous description of voluntary giving, here Yoram notes that the key is taken aggressively. In addition, the encounter is described as occurring on a battlefield, as the images presented reflect asymmetrical relationships of domination and power, presenting the enemy in diminutive and insulting terminology, describing them as "soldiers wearing pajamas, as if they were uniforms [...] we hit at least 12 of them, dead [...] one of these Waqf officials [...] started singing." What drives the recoiling from the Other? The verbal and physical violence towards the other? Bhabha argues:

The myth of historical origination [...] produced in relation to the colonial stereotype functions to "normalize" the [...] colonial discourse as a consequence of its process of disavowal [...] The desire for an originality which is again threatened by the differences of race, color and culture. (1994: 74–75)

The arrival at *Axis Mundi*, the desire for the center of the Jewish world, the forbidden place, encounters a fantasy of imagination and difference – a man in a white robe

who speaks Hebrew, a Jew who converted to Islam, who is embracing a black woman and a white woman. The mimetic desire grows and culminates in a passion for originality – raising the flag and singing the anthem over the Western Wall. “Not itself the object of desire but its setting [...] the production of ‘colonial desire’ marks the discourse as a ‘favored spot for the most primitive defensive reactions such as turning against oneself, into an opposite, projection, negation’” (Lapalanche and Pontalis 1980: 318, as cited in Bhabha 1994: 81). The encounter with the Arab is the encounter with the negation of the Jew in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict – but the key transfer is also a transfer of control. “What is being dramatized is a separation [...] that repeats obsessively the mythical moment of disjunction” (Bhabha 1994: 82). Transfer of control involves an act of violence. The fantasy occurs on the backdrop of war, which alongside the encounter with holy sites, marks one of the key moments in the relationships between Jews and Arabs in the Middle Eastern sphere.

## 12 Closing Remarks – The Fantastic Fulfillment

This article analyzes ‘key encounters’ that appear in personal stories of soldiers during the Six-Day War. In their stories, these encounters are presented as climactic moments that echo characteristics of the epic tale, while the narrative framework of the war and its aftermath utilize characteristics of fantastic literature. The events serve as a mirror of a broader change that occurred following the war among specific sections of the Jewish public in Israel. Among the soldiers whose stories are narrated in this chapter, those who identify as national-religious are also its protagonists – Yoram, Yohanan, I.K., N.M., A.S. and S.E., who identifies as a national-religious Jew, describes the fantastic:

It’s as if all the aspirations, all of this, and even after the Holocaust, suddenly accumulate into some kind of sense of redemption, the fulfillment of prophecy, of all the things we hardly even dared to dream of, and we see them come true in front of our eyes. All the places came out of the Bible, and I really say not only to us, it was to almost the entire public in Israel [...] And it was as if God Himself was speaking to us through history, and things are really happening right before our eyes. (S.E.)

The key encounters were fantastic events that occurred right before the soldiers’ eyes as they arrived at the Western Wall and Rachel’s Tomb. They fulfilled the ancient desire that was embodied within the representative sites. The Arab provided them with the key, and by this, for them, the control of the site, opening a new era, for both sides involved in the key’s encounter.



## Appendices

### 1 Sermon by Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Cook on Independence Day

And where is our Hebron – Have we forgotten it? And where is our Shechem – Have we forgotten it? And where is our Jericho – Have we forgotten it? And where is our Ever - *baYarden* [Trans-Jordan]? Where is each clod of dirt, each piece of [...] the Lord's land? Can we sacrifice a single millimeter of it? God forbid! (Psalms 17 of the State of Israel, 1967. English translation from Hoch 1994: 96–97).

### 2 *Jerusalem of Gold*, written by Naomi Shemer; performed by Shuli Natan

The broadcast tape dated May 15, 1967:

The mountain air is clear as wine; And the scent of pines; Is carried on the breeze of twilight with the sound of bells. And in the slumber of tree and stone; Captured in her dream; The city that sits solitary; And in its midst is a wall.

Chorus: Jerusalem of gold; And of copper, and of light; Behold I am a Violin for all your songs.

How the cisterns have dried; The market-place is empty; And no one frequents the Temple Mount; In the Old City. And in the caves in the mountain; Winds are howling; And no one descends to the Dead Sea By way of Jericho.

Chorus

But if I come to sing to you today; And to adorn crowns to you; I am the smallest of the youngest of your children; And of the last poet. For your name, the lips score ; Like the kiss of a seraph; If I forget you, Jerusalem, Which is all gold [...]

Chorus

We have returned to the cisterns; To the market and to the market-place; A ram's horn calls out on the Temple Mount; In the Old City. And in the caves in the mountain; Thousands of suns shine; We will once again descend to the Dead Sea; By way of Jericho!

Chorus

<http://hebrewsongs.com/?song=yerushalayimshelzahav> (accessed November 9, 2021).

Naomi Shemer's performance can be heard here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjmMllp8hJg> (accessed December 27, 2021).

### 3 On the revelation of Rachel to Israeli soldiers in the Gaza Strip

The revelation of Rachel to soldiers in Operation Cast Lead

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxDbH-JVwIw> (accessed December 28, 2021).

An interview with a soldier on the topic

<https://www.inn.co.il/News/News.aspx/189655> (accessed November 9, 2021, link only available in Israel).

Rabbi Eliyahu relates to the revelation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrHAx9vn6Xo> (accessed December 30, 2020)

Rabbi Obadiah Joseph relates to the revelation

<https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3661185,00.html> (accessed December 27, 2021, available only in Israel).

The mother of everyone – an explication on the revelation of Rachel – Rabbi

Shmuel Eliyahu <https://www.kipa.co.il/%D7%99%D7%94%D7%93%D7%95%D7%AA/%D7%90%D7%9E%D7%90-%D7%A9%D7%9C-%D7%9B%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%9D/> (checked June 15, 2019; the link is no longer available).

What is it about Rachel Our Mother in Operation Cast Lead - incredible!

<https://www.fxp.co.il/showthread.php?t=15736720> (checked December 28, 2021, the link is only available in Israel).

### Primary Sources (interviews, in alphabetic order according to first name)

**A.S.** – Male, aged 72 when interviewed by Yiftah Levin in Shluhot on April 16, 2019.

**I.E.** – Male, aged 86 when interviewed by Yiftah Levin in Ramat Gan on June 16, 2019.

**II.K.** – Male, aged 80 when interviewed by Yiftah Levin in Jerusalem on April 4, 2019.

**L.D.** – Female, aged 80 when interviewed by Yiftah Levin on March 15, 2019, in Jerusalem.

**M.M.** – Male, aged 75 when interviewed by Yiftah Levin in Hod Hasharon on March 28, 2019.

**N.M.** – Male, aged 76 when interviewed by Yiftah Levin in Jerusalem on April 3, 2019.

**R.B.** – Male, aged 82 when interviewed by Yiftah Levin in Shoresh on July 17, 2019.

**Rafi Miara** – Male, aged 75 when interviewed by Yiftah Levin in Rehovot on July 18, 2019.

**S.E.** and **S.S.** – Females, aged 68 & 65, respectively, when interviewed by Hagar Salomon and Yiftah Levin in Jerusalem on November 1, 2018.

**T.G.** – Female, aged 71 when interviewed by Yiftah Levin in Jerusalem on June 27, 2019.

**Yohanan Fried** – Male, aged 78 when interviewed by Yiftah Levin in Jerusalem on November 30, 2018.

**Yoram Zamush** – Male, aged 77 when interviewed by Yiftah Levin in Jerusalem on February 6, 2019.

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# Double Refugees: Between Personal and Collective Memory – West Bank Palestinian Women Remember the 1967 War

*Salwa Alinat Abed*

## 1 Introduction

The war of June 1967 had major repercussions on Palestinian society in all aspects of life: society, economics, politics, culture and more. However, research has not granted significant attention to Palestinian memory of the 1967 War, relative to the memory of the 1948 War. Numerous studies have examined the 1948 War and its implications from multiple perspectives, including: politics and ideology, memory of the war, the Palestinian refugee problem, and the war and its aftermath.<sup>1</sup> Women received substantial attention in studies of the 1948 War, particularly women of the refugee camps, as their contribution to the construction of Palestinian memory and history has been studied from various perspectives. These studies encompassed different types of information: individual and collective memory of war, gender and class issues, and narrative and ideology (Allan 2005).

This study focuses on the connections and contradictions between memory, gender, and social status under occupation. The article examines the individual memory of women from the West Bank who experienced the 1967 War. Their stories offer an in-depth perspective of the character of the Palestinian memory of the war, and illustrate the gaps between the official memory that shaped the political and the ideological perspective of the educated elite, and Palestinian popular

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<sup>1</sup> Khalidi (1998); Sa'di (2002); Sa'di and Abu Lughod (2007); Sela and Kadish (2016).

collective memory, which is focused in this study on rural, agricultural women, who lacked any formal education.

The article is based on in-depth interviews of fifty women living in the West Bank conducted during 2018. Nine of the interviewees were from Ramallah, ten were from Nablus, five were from Qalqaliya, five were from East Jerusalem, 14 were from Hebron and three were from Jericho.<sup>2</sup> The women's ages ranged from 62 to 80 when they were interviewed.

At the time of the 1967 war, most of the interviewees were already married with children. Most had married at a young age, between 12 and 14. Two of them were teachers. They all worked in agriculture and in the home. Some of the interviewees were only between six and ten years old in 1967 and specifically recall the experience of having to leave their homes and the fear of war. Fifteen of the interviewees had experienced the 1948 War as well.

Most interviewees lacked any formal education and were illiterate. Three stated that their financial situation was good in general due to their father or husband running his own business. During the interview, the women were asked to address the following issues: life before the war, the war experience, life following the war, and how the Jews treated them. The names presented in the article are pseudonyms, but the data presented reflects the interview material accurately.

The interviews were conducted according to the qualitative research method (Kessen and Kromer-Nevo 2011; Shkedi 2003), which allowed the women to tell their life experiences without the interviewer passing judgement or attempting to direct them. The interviewees chose how to begin the interview and how it would terminate.

Another attribute of historical-social qualitative research relates to the purpose of the study. In qualitative research, the goal of the study is to reach an understanding of the meanings or variety of meanings attributed to the phenomenon being studied. The interviews in this study serve as vehicles to trace the central characteristics of the women's memories through the examination of various claims and explanations in their statements, cross-referenced with historical sources.

The following analysis of the interviews deals with the experiences of women according to three major timelines that emerged during the interviews: before, during and after the war. Through the women's description of their experiences during these periods, their narrative of the war can be understood in depth, and compared with the official national narrative that was shaped by the political and economic elite, and leadership of Palestinian organizations and parties.

I reexamined the relationship between private memory and collective memory during the interviews and how each contributes to the construction of nation and identity. I was specifically interested in establishing whether the memories of

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<sup>2</sup> The interviews were conducted as part of the trilateral research project *Half a Century* funded by the DFG in which Israeli and Palestinian interviewees participated, and whose purpose was to examine their perspective on the 1967 war.



individuals had undergone a process of merging so as to transform into a uniform entity called collective memory, or whether private memory actually remained separate from the collective memory. This study aims to illustrate that, indeed, the personal memories of women are not reflected in the official collective memory. The reasons for this can be attributed to a combination of factors: their low socioeconomic status, gender, lack of education and lack of connection to any political organization. Their memories are not considered to be 'valuable' in the face of national memory that was shaped by men of influence. The marginalization of women in society strengthens the argument which claims that the content of national memory is not just 'the story' of the individual or the group, but also a determination of the identity of the person of value and his or her status within society. Based on the personal stories of these rural women, as presented in interviews conducted more than fifty years after the events themselves, I argue that Palestinian women created a personal narrative from a female perspective that views family formation, maintenance and protection as an essential purpose which overrides, to some extent, the goal of nation-building and the establishment of an independent state, toward which the official national narrative aims. These Palestinian women were able to create a unique narrative that wavered from the national Palestinian and Pan-Arab narrative due to the fact that their daily lives prevented their exposure to the clan- and city-based narratives constructed by the political elites.

It is difficult to determine, based on the interviews, whether these women's memories represent a new narrative, wholly disconnected from the official narrative. I believe it would be an overstatement to claim that their narrative serves as an alternative to the accepted narrative. They did not declare or strive for a 'revolt' against the accepted national narrative in their interviews. However, I argue that the interviews presented within the context of this oral history project emphasized issues that had not previously received attention, either in academic research or in the Palestinian national narrative, which is still under ongoing construction and consolidation.

In order to present this claim, I have divided this article into three sections: the first section discusses the national Palestinian narrative during the period between the 1948 War and the 1967 War; the second section discusses the encounter between collective memory and female personal memory; while the third section deals with issues related to the memories of women of the 1967 War.

## **2 The Palestinian National Narrative between Two Wars**

Various organizations and movements which advanced the armed struggle against Israel were established in the West Bank, in Gaza, and in various Palestinian population centers in Arab countries from 1948 to 1967. The younger generation of Palestinians criticized the Arab states for poor functioning during the 1948 War and for abandoning the Palestinians. The main organizations were Fatah, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine,

the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Muslim Brotherhood, the National Arab Movement and others.<sup>3</sup> These organizations took on a Palestinian national agenda and worked to strengthen Palestinian national identity among Palestinians, especially refugees in camps in the West Bank, Gaza and Arab countries.

The written history of the Palestinians was clearly influenced by the political and social trends. The writing about the 1948 War and the status of the Palestinians was largely emotional in nature, often carried by polemics, apologetics or expressions of anger and frustration. The vast majority were devoid of self-criticism, and instead intensified their criticism of others, including the Jews, the British, the Arab states or Palestinian organizations (Kabha 2011: 145).

Following the defeat in the 1967 War, a new generation of Palestinian historians and authors emerged, who no longer felt any allegiance to Nasser's Pan-Arab vision, as they supported a unique Palestinian identity and independent Palestinian struggle of a prolonged guerrilla conflict instead of a war between armies. Palestinian authors were influenced by the PLO's ideas which were emboldened following the war. This was a new generation of authors who wrote critically and were not deterred from disparaging the functioning of the Palestinians and their leadership. These writers included Abdul Al-Wahab Al-Kayyali, Biyan Noihad Al-Hut and Mahmoud Kamel H'leh. Most of these writers were published through the Palestinian Research Center that was established in Beirut in the mid-1960s. Some of them were graduates of Western universities and wrote as academic historians (Kabha 2011: 146).

One of the important consequences of the 1967 War was the reinforcement of the feelings of trauma of the 1948 War. It was also an opportunity for refugees in the territories occupied in the West Bank and Gaza in 1967 to meet with the Palestinians who remained in Israel after the 1948 War. The Palestinians began to visit various places in Israeli territory. Following the 1967 War, a new Palestinian generation arose, which distinguished itself from the older generation that had been deeply touched by the 1948 War. In addition, popular resistance culture was emboldened, while the ethos of resistance advocated by the PLO was reflected in the new literature (Kabha 2011).

The older generation was involved in the 1948 War, while the younger generation grew up after the war. Each generation's approach towards collective memory was different. While the older generation attempted to clear itself of blame for the war's failure and blamed external parties, the younger generation attempted to strengthen the relationship with the homeland by preserving collective memory. Collective memory had a single purpose for Palestinian refugees of both generations: to maintain and preserve their identity while under Israeli control. According to Sonia Abu El-Nimr, a leading researcher in the field of oral history, this was the only way for refugees to transfer their messages to the next generation (1993: 56).

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<sup>3</sup> Al-Kayyali (1970); Al-Kh'alili (2001); Al-Shakiri (1973); Kabha (2011); Shemesh (2004); Steinberg (2008).

Over time, Palestinian authors began to see a need for the formulation of a Palestinian narrative and the construction of collective memory. Ali Al-Khalili, for example, suggested that Palestinians should emancipate themselves from the victim image in order to restore, observe and digest their history (2001: 162). The researcher Mustafa Kabha has emphasized that the process of the historical academic construction of the 1948 Palestinian narrative is still incomplete. Palestinian authors began to slowly release themselves from the image of the victim and move beyond various conspiracy theories and the externalization of responsibility and guilt (Kabha 2011). This process had major implications on the research and writing on the Palestinian issue.

Significant research has been conducted on the 1967 War by Palestinians, Israelis, Arabs and foreign researchers. Two types of publications appeared in this context: professional historical writing and publications by those who had experienced the 1967 War as politicians, officers, soldiers and prisoners of war. Most of the writing was conducted by men who discussed the military, political and economic aspects of the war, and the impact of war on regional and international relationships.<sup>4</sup>

Palestinian authors dealt with the background to the war, its causes, the events of the war and the consequences of the war for Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and those exiled. The authors also dealt with the empowerment of the PLO, which became the sole representative of the Palestinian people in the Arab and international arenas.<sup>5</sup> The official narrative of the 1967 War was shaped by the heads of Palestinian organizations and parties, under the leadership of the PLO, as well as the heads of the Arab states involved in the war and those who stood on the sidelines in opposition to the war. Following the war, Palestinian and Arab intellectuals alike described feelings of humiliation and disappointment of the Arab world due to their defeat. Each of these authors examined the war at the macro-level, presenting their worldview while maintaining their own interests.

The official national Palestinian narrative, in essence, argues that the Palestinians underwent a national catastrophe (*Nakba*) in 1948 when Israel conquered their homeland, resulting in the creation of the refugee problem. Responsibility for the defeat of 1948 is attributed to the United Kingdom (who held the mandate over Palestine/the Land of Israel), who assisted the Zionists, to the Arab states, who betrayed and abandoned the Palestinians, and to the veteran Palestinian leadership, who did not function correctly as the war approached and was preoccupied with internal conflicts.

According to the official Palestinian narrative, the *Nakba* is a national event which is to be remembered and legitimates Palestinian refugees' right to return to their homeland. The 1967 War strengthened the Palestinian national narrative,

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<sup>4</sup> Among the central Palestinian authors were Walid Kh'ladi, Yadi T'saie', Nur Al-Din Masalha, Sheikh Abd Al-Hamid Al-Sayih and Khalim Barakat, as well as dozens of United Nations reports.

<sup>5</sup> The PLO was established in 1964 in Jerusalem through the sponsorship of Egypt and was recognized as the sole representative of the Palestinian people at the Arab League Summit in Rabat, 1974.

following the Israeli occupation of the entire land of Mandatory Palestine. According to the national narrative, the Palestinians are a people who have the right to establish an independent state and the legitimacy to use all means to get rid of the colonial Israeli occupation. The Palestinian national narrative simultaneously combines two images: that of the victim as a people, that has been forcibly removed from its land, and that of the hero, who struggles for independence and sacrifices heroic martyrs who are granted a place in heaven.

Before discussing the differences between women's personal narrative and the official narrative, there is a need to describe the context in which these Palestinian women lived from the 1950s to the 1970s. During that period, the Palestinians were dispersed among several countries, and most of them were refugees without property and sometimes without basic rights (for example, in Lebanon). Pan-Arab nationalism, under the influence of Egypt, strengthened in the 1950s, alongside the rise of Palestinian nationalism and the armed struggle against Israel. It is important to distinguish between two periods: that of Jordanian rule over the West Bank from 1949 to 1967 and the Israeli occupation from 1967 onwards.

Under Jordanian rule, certain organizations were established, some of whom opposed the regime, such as the communists and Arab nationalists. The Jordanian regime oppressed them by strengthening Islamic organizations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, who were mainly concerned with returning society to Islam, without active involvement in politics or opposition to the Jordanian regime. Most of the Palestinian urban elites and clan leaders supported the Jordanian regime and even participated in Jordanian parliamentary elections. Indeed, the elites accepted the annexation of the West Bank to Jordan. However, the younger generation opposed Jordanian patronage, establishing organizations such as Fatah, which was committed to strengthening Palestinian national identity and the independence of Palestinian decision-making.

Both under Jordanian and then Israeli rule, until the outbreak of the first Intifada in 1987, the Palestinian population in the West Bank was not actively involved in the armed struggle against Israel. The main activities of the armed struggle took place outside the borders of the Occupied Territories. However, following the 1967 defeat, there was overwhelming support among residents of the territories for the PLO's ideology and leadership of the Palestinian people (Steinberg 2008). The majority of the Palestinian population in the West Bank was agricultural during the period of Jordanian rule and during the initial period of Israeli rule. The Palestinians lived in the villages and central cities of the West Bank. Following the 1948 War, refugee camps were built on the outskirts of major cities, such as Jerusalem, Nablus, Tulkarem and Hebron.

Until 1967, the Gaza's educational system was based on Egypt's, whereas the West Bank's educational system was based on that of Jordan. As a result, each region studied with different textbooks and implemented different pedagogical approaches. This division continued in 1967, following the Israeli occupation, but with a certain change: the concept of a distinct Palestinian identity and history was

removed from textbooks, both at elementary and high school levels (Kabha 2011). Such schools were located in urban centers such as Jerusalem, Nablus and Qalqilya. Students travelled to neighboring Arab countries for higher education, such as Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt (Kabha 2009). Higher education was an essential tool for exposing the younger generation to nationalist and Pan-Arab ideologies. The various organizations attempted to mobilize the student public for the national struggle. Higher education impelled the educated public to take a more active role in political action. Two distinct groups engaged in higher education: refugees and city-dwellers. Although there were also schools in Palestinian villages, they were sparsely attended, as boys cultivated the land from a young age, while girls engaged in housework and agriculture. Only a small number of girls completed school.<sup>6</sup>

The ideas of the educated elites were disseminated through various media, most notably radio, newspapers and fliers.<sup>7</sup> They spurred Pan-Arabism, Palestinian nationalism and the struggle against Israel, and were also spread amongst women in both urban and rural environments. However, the interviews in this study illustrate the gap between the ideological discourse and the content of this discourse that was absorbed by rural women, and the issues that were of interest to them during and after the war.

In summary, from the 1948 War until today, no official Palestinian national narrative has been formulated due to the political, social and economic conditions of the Palestinians and their dispersion among various countries (e.g. Jordan, Syria, Israel, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, *inter alia*). In addition, there is a dearth of Palestinian institutions that engage in documentation and the collection of relevant documents (El-Nimr 1993: 54–55). These conditions have delayed the creation of an official narrative, while simultaneously contributing to the development of Palestinian collective memory. Although collective memory was formulated without a guiding hand, it does have a clear goal of preserving Palestinian heritage and assisting in the composition of Palestinian history.

### 3 Between Individual and Collective Memory: Women and Palestinian Nationalism

Memories come in different forms and depend on the present and its connection to the past. Memory can elicit joy, trauma and many emotional shades in between. In the Palestinian case, the debate over collective memory raises other issues, such as the construction of narratives, oral history, the creation and construction of Palestinian nationalism, and the place of weaker groups, such as women and farmers, in

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<sup>6</sup> For data on higher and elementary education in the West Bank during Jordanian rule and the beginning of Israeli rule see the booklet published by the Tami Steinitz Center for Peace Studies: *Palestinian Education Programs* (2003).

<sup>7</sup> An example of such a journal was *Our Palestine* which was distributed by the *Fatab* movement. See Kabha (2011: 204–205).

the construction of the national and collective narrative (Kassem 2013; Sayigh 1998).

Numerous scholars have investigated the term ‘collective memory,’ the most prominent being the French scholar Maurice Halbwachs, who viewed collective memory as a part of a discourse that exists in a cultural framework, and not just as an act of recalling information. According to Halbwachs, humans summon memories from the past through social memory frames. He emphasized that the individual remembers as a member of the group, their memory is not private or personal, but always serves the group to which they belong. Collective memory can take on various forms: the commemoration of events, ceremonies, rituals, and develop through other means. These forms collectively serve the solidarity needs of the group (Halbwachs, 1992: 182). Halbwachs and his followers have illustrated that memory is a shared group experience which serves to recreate the past. Within this context, the individual’s memory contributes to the memory of the collective. However, the collective does not have to be homogeneous, as there can be several groups within a society that have different and variant memories (Halbwachs, 1992: 182).

We can conclude from Halbwachs’ claims that collective memory has great importance for the history and culture of nations who have been defeated in battle. In the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Palestinians and Jews both utilize collective memory as a defense mechanism against the other, and for building and strengthening national identity. The Palestinians, similar to other peoples, have witnessed formative historical events such as the 1948 War and 1967 War. These wars had both short- and long-term implications in the construction of Palestinian national identity, as the Palestinians were dispersed among various countries. Two motifs are frequently utilized in the construction of national identities and collective memory: heroism (the active element) and guilt coupled with a sense of sacrifice (the passive element) (Sorek 2011: 465–468). These two motifs are clearly present in Palestinian collective memory. Despite their inherent contradiction, both elements served to strengthen Palestinian nationalism. The victim motif was strengthened following the 1948 War. Palestinians, most of whom became refugees, saw themselves as victims of betrayal at the hands of the Arab states. By contrast, after the 1967 War, the PLO gained power, resulting in the strengthening of the hero narrative, which portrayed Palestinians as activists who ruled over their fate and could make independent decisions. Both of these themes coexist, as neither cancels the other nor comes at the other’s expense.

Another central issue in the literature is the relationship between collective memory and nation-building. In the Palestinian context, collective memory has served the construction of Palestinian national identity. Palestinians have attempted to preserve their pre-1948 history, and have, thus, told stories about their communities, customs, dress, folk tales, songs and other cultural elements.<sup>8</sup> There have been

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<sup>8</sup> For more research on embroidered Palestinian maps by Palestinian women in the context of collective memory construction, see Salamon (2016).

several initiatives and projects in recent decades to preserve the Palestinian villages that existed before 1948 in Palestinian memory. This also served as an attempt to challenge the Zionist narrative, which Palestinians see as the narrative of the oppressor and occupier, rewriting history to serve their own needs. Memory was of particular importance to the Palestinian refugees in the refugee camps (El-Nimr 1993: 54–61).

The defeat in the 1967 War further reinforced the need to crystallize Palestinian collective memory, as, following the war, the hope that the Palestinians would return to their lands in Israel was weakened. Based on this assumption, Palestinian scholars have conducted research on Palestinian collective memory. Some have utilized oral history by interviewing Palestinian women as a means to reinvigorate memory. One of the key motivations of the researchers was the fear that the older generation, who had experienced the 1948 War, were passing on, risking the disappearance of primary accounts of pre-1948 Palestinian history. Most of the studies dealt with the collective memory of the 1948 War, and there was little work done on the memory of the 1967 War.

Various institutes and historians have attempted to advance the field of Palestinian oral history over the past three decades, including efforts to give a platform to Palestinian voices from variant locations, thus, contributing to the Palestinian national narrative and collective memory. The comprehensive book written by Mustafa Kabha and Namer Sarhan (2000) dealing with Palestinian oral history was among these initiatives. Kabha and Sarhan undertook twelve thousand interviews, among them, four thousand of the interviewees were women. In addition, Kabha documented the 1936–1939 Arab Revolts through interviews with the revolts' participants (Kabha 2009). Fihaa Abd Al-Hadi published an important book, a product of these interviews which were held in various locations, including Israel, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. This book dealt with the political role played by women from the 1960s until the early 1980s (Abd Al-Hadi 2015). Other initiatives include that of Birzeit University,<sup>9</sup> the Islamic University in Gaza,<sup>10</sup> the Oral History Archive at the American University in Beirut<sup>11</sup> and websites, such as “Palestine Remembered.”<sup>12</sup>

Rosemary Sayigh was among the first to interview women residing in the refugee camps in Beirut in the 1970s. At that time, women were not considered to be legitimate historical sources, since they were not believed to have the capability to properly frame a story or weave a plot. Through her pioneering research, Sayigh presented their stories to the public, illustrating that they could serve as a rich and

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<sup>9</sup> Birzeit University, located near Ramallah in the West Bank, has supported oral history research since 1983.

<sup>10</sup> The Islamic University in Gaza undertook an oral history project in 1998.

<sup>11</sup> The archive website is at <https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/Pages/poha.aspx> (accessed November 11, 2021).

<sup>12</sup> “Palestine Remembered,” established in 2000, is a very popular website. The English version is at <https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/Pages/poha.aspx> (accessed November 11, 2021).

diverse source, had the capacity for storytelling, could be informative and collaborate with scholars. The uniqueness of these stories lies in the fact that they neither reflected the historical national narrative, nor did they speak of political ideology or parties, but told the story of their real lives. They told their stories as witnesses of historical events, even if they did not describe these events chronologically (Sayigh 1998: 43–42, 57).

In the 1990s, Ahmad Sa'di conducted research on Palestinian collective memory. He analyzed photographs of Jaffa before the 1948 War and texts written by Palestinian visitors, most of them refugees from the 1948 War who received permission from Israel to visit their original towns in the 1970s. After the 1967 War, Israel allowed Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza to enter its territory under the policy of "open bridges." The texts written by the visitors were published in 1998 in the journal *Al-Carmel*.

The *Al-Carmel* journal, a cultural journal ideologically associated with the PLO, published a special edition in 1998 entitled "A place for memory, memory of the place." Sa'di's analysis of the visitor's texts illustrated the centrality of the 1948 War in the creation of Palestinian national identity. Memory served to preserve the power of the *Nakba*. Sa'di claimed that memory concretized how people experienced the events and their feelings about them, while not necessarily offering an account of events as they actually occurred. The Palestinians described their lives before 1948 as a "paradise" and the 1948 War as "banishment from paradise" (Sa'di 2002: 176–197). Sa'di emphasized the war in 1948 as an essential "location of memory" for the Palestinians (Sa'di 2002: 177).

The 1948 War, which the Palestinians and Arabs called the *Nakba* (disaster) created a rift between the past and the present. The *Nakba* signified a wedge between the 'natural' and the 'unnatural.' Therefore, as Sa'di argued, Palestine did not develop as a state similar to the other Arab states in the region. At first, the Palestinians thought the *Nakba* was a temporary event. Over time, two distinct generations were created: the "*Nakba* generation" that experienced Palestine before the 1948 War, and the generation that followed, "who could only imagine what took place there" (Sa'di 2002: 186–187).

Sharif Kana'na conducted research during the 1980s about the villages destroyed during the 1948 War, utilizing primarily interviews with Palestinian refugees from villages in the Jerusalem area. One of the main conclusions of his research was that Palestinian refugees used collective memory to bridge the past and the future, in the hope that they would return to their independent state. They established the concept of "a community of memory" – an imagined community that gave them a sense of security and hope.<sup>13</sup>

Palestinian women have used their collective memory as a means of resistance when living under foreign occupation. Through memory, they could create new worlds about their destroyed homes and villages (Holt 2015: 98–106). Studies have

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<sup>13</sup> For an expansion on Kana'na's research, see Magat (2000).



shown that many Palestinian women live in unsafe and dangerous conditions (Holt 2015: 100; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2005: 135). The researcher Maria Holt met with Palestinian refugees in refugee camps in Lebanon and the West Bank and found that these women are constantly dealing with pain and loss. They did not associate themselves with the heroic national narrative or express a distinct national ideology. They expressed nostalgia for the past, which they contrasted with their dissatisfaction with their lives in the refugee camps (Holt 2015: 102–104). Studies dealing with the memory of the 1948 War illustrate that women did not accept their lives in refugee camps and attempted to return to “paradise” through memory. Holt’s research aligns with Sa’di’s claim regarding the desire to return to “paradise,” and with Sayigh’s finding regarding the lack of both ideological expression and connection to the national narrative. These claims were also found in the narratives collected for the present study.

In contrast to these studies, the present study examines the memory of the 1967 War. The interviewees spoke about their experience of the 1967 War and its aftermath. They did not talk about ideology, national or otherwise. They did not refer to a narrative of heroism, but to survival needs in the harsh reality under foreign occupation. Their narratives reflected attempts to cope with the new reality following the war, yet, rarely emphasized particulars of the war experience. In addition, all of the women interviewed, villagers, city-dwellers, residents of refugee camps and Bedouin, shared a common denominator: they all viewed the war as a major event of historical significance in their personal journeys as wives and mothers. Several women, for example, described the transition from their extended family home to a smaller home in a refugee camp and their feelings of alienation there. They spoke about the difficulties of housework and raising children, and their husbands’ extended absences. They described feelings associated with being wedded at a young age and attempts to find resources of support and solidarity within their communities. These were the issues that were important to them. They were largely unaware of the major events and changes in the Middle East analyzed by historians and politicians. To them, the ‘homeland’ was depicted as the family household, rather than the occupied territory.

#### **4 The 1967 War in the Memories of Palestinian Women**

The interviewees constructed personal narratives surrounding the events of the 1967 War. They described their lives before and after the war. The experience of the war was central to their lives and the lives of their families. They spoke of the quiet life before the war, feelings of fear and loss during the war, and of feelings of an unclear and insecure future following the war. The 1967 War brought to the forefront certain burning issues in Palestinian society, which were disclosed during the interviews: the awakening of memories of 1948, the refugee issue, the image of the Jew and attitudes towards the Jordanian regime.

Another event, no less important than the war and its consequences, was the women's married life and their move into the home of their husbands' extended family, where they took on work in agriculture and homemaking. Both war and marriage were major events in these women's lives, which frequently became intertwined, impacting their quality of life and sense of security. When asked to speak about the 1967 War, all interviewees spoke about their marriage experience as a very significant factor in this context. They described their lives in the shared family home and praised the solidarity and work ethic of the extended family. Some spoke of their difficult housework, work in the field and while herding sheep. Some claimed their marriages were somewhat unsuccessful. When describing the war, they always spoke about the extent to which the war impacted family solidarity or estrangement.

The fact that the interviewees focused on comparing married life before and after the war is not accidental, resulting from the women's basic need for security and a sense of belonging. In times of a lack of security from governmental authorities, the family unit replaces the state as a source of protection and becomes central in people's lives. In essence, describing family life serves as a way to deal with the fear, pain and loss that accompanied the war. In their conscious memory, marriage and childrearing serve as acts of construction and continuity that stand in contrast to the destruction and estrangement caused by war.

The interviewees recalled varying war experiences, depending on their place of residency. The different stories reflected the internal variance within Palestinian society: the situation of shepherds in the Hebron area was different from that of agriculturalists from the areas of Ramallah, Jericho, Jerusalem or Qalqilya. In addition, certain interviewees explained that they had left their villages for Jordan or other Arab countries, such as Kuwait. Some left their villages for a nearby city, such as Nablus or Ramallah, only to return after a few weeks, while others remained in their villages.

## 5 The Awakening of 1948 War Memories

The memory of the 1948 War was awakened a few days before the outbreak of the 1967 War and during the war itself. Saham was born in 1940 in the village of Marda in the Qalqilya region. She had never had any formal education. She has one daughter, who is married and lives abroad. Her husband disappeared in the late 1980s for reasons she would not reveal. He returned recently, but Saham refused to live with him. Her interview took place in her family's home. In 1967, she lived with her parents, her grandparents and her brothers and sisters. As an adult, Saham worked in agriculture in a male-dominated environment. Agriculture was the main source of income for rural Palestinians during this period.

Saham had clear memories of the 1967 War. She heard about the outbreak of the war on the radio that was in the home of *Mukhtar* (the government representative

to the village). According to Saham, “People were afraid of war, and feared that their fate would be similar to that of the 1948 refugees.”<sup>14</sup>

Saham’s narrative, as well as that of the others, illustrated that the trauma of the 1948 War was a powerful presence for Palestinian residents within the context of the 1967 War. They feared that the events of 1948 would repeat themselves, their daughters would be raped, they would be forcibly expelled from their lands and they would be massacred. In other words, the War of 1967 rekindled the fears of the Palestinians from 1948, for both refugees and original residents. The interviewees cited fears of expulsion, murder, rape, and other scenarios based mainly on rumors and experiences from the 1948 War.

Rahma resided along with her family in al-Fuwar refugee camp in the Hebron region. The family was economically well-off. She attended school and considered herself to be an educated woman. Similar to other interviewees, Rahma claimed that the timing of the war was not surprising. She stated, “Everyone knew about the war. We heard on the radio that Abdel Nasser had sent his troops to Sinai.” At the same time, Rahma described feelings of “significant depression and anxiety among the residents, the people lived in ignorance, while only the educated knew what was going on.”<sup>15</sup>

Despite the awareness of the possibility of war, Palestinian residents were confused upon its outbreak and did not know how to act. One of the reasons for this was the memory of the 1948 War that was firmly etched in both personal and collective Palestinian memory. Fatma was ten years old during the 1967 War and lived at the time in the Aqbat Jaber refugee camp in Jericho. Fatma’s family were refugees of the 1948 War. The memory of that war was alive and vivid for the adult members of the family. Fatma reconstructed conversations about the 1967 War between her father and other members of her family and neighbors. According to Fatma, they recalled the events of 1948, and discussed the need for women and children to leave their homes in a truck and travel towards the East Bank of the Jordan River. Fatma noted that they feared that the Jews would slaughter them in this war as well.<sup>16</sup>

Some of the interviewees had become refugees in 1948 and learned a lesson from the experience of leaving their homeland. One of these interviewees was Zainab, who was seven years old during the 1948 War, and recalled fleeing along with her father and other family members at night. She remembered the fields and sesame crops that were left behind. Their escape followed the news of the Deir Yassin massacre.<sup>17</sup> Zainab recalled masses of people fleeing from every direction towards Hebron. She expressed criticism of that flight, believing it was a mistake,

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<sup>14</sup> Saham (pseudonym), August 14, 2018, Kafar Marda. All the names of the interviewees are pseudonyms.

<sup>15</sup> Rahma, March 3, 2018, Hebron.

<sup>16</sup> Fatma, August 14, 2019, Aqbat G’aber refugee camp, Jericho.

<sup>17</sup> For additional reading on the massacre at Deir Yassin in the 1948 War and on its place in Palestinian consciousness, see Al-Kh’aldi (1999); Dawud (2010); Morris (2018); Sarif (1987); The Palestine National Liberation Movement, Fatah (1969).

“Why flee? The people then were naïve. Why leave property and land and flee? We had 80 dunams [four acres] of agricultural land and flocks of sheep. What could have happened had we stayed?”<sup>18</sup> On this issue, Amna added,

When the War of 1967 broke out, I shepherded sheep in the fields. My neighbor started shouting, “The Jews are coming!” We all fled. We were very scared and we fled; we could not withstand the Jews as they conquered the land. There were no battles with the Jews because the residents went into hiding when they heard the sound of planes in the air.<sup>19</sup>

Zinab’s description and that of other interviewees indicate fear among Palestinian residents, most of whom were farmers who were not involved in the war. The war fell upon them from above in the form of air force bombing. However, the situation was different from location to location. According to the interviewees, there were locations at which there were no violent incidents at all, and the residents returned to their homes after spending a few weeks sheltering in nearby caves. By contrast, there were areas in which significant violence occurred, such as the Qalqilya area. The devastation caused to this city reminded Palestinians of the 1948 War. An interviewee named Narg’is, born in 1951 in Qalqilia, explained that the city was bombed during the war and Israeli soldiers invaded it. Her mother decided to flee Qalqilya towards Nablus. She recalled:

The sound of the bombing was loud. We slept in the cave overnight and people used their shoes as pillows. All the residents were like one family. On the second day, we walked down a road and a bus picked us up and transported us to a school in Nablus. After a month in Nablus, we heard a radio broadcast from London asking us to return to our homes. At that time, we were planning to leave for Kuwait.<sup>20</sup>

Narg’is recalled the state of Qalqilya upon their return:

Everything stank, animals, such as chickens and pigeons, were lying dead. The property in our house had been stolen, but upon seeing the devastation of the city, we quickly forgot about the theft. We did not see any Jordanian soldiers. There were still explosions following our return to Qalqilya. We didn’t stay there for long, after a year, we left for Kuwait.<sup>21</sup>

Amna, another interviewee hailing from Qalqilya, was 14 years old when the war broke out. Similar to others, her family heard on the radio that a war had been initiated. Her father asked her to take her brother to the nearby village of Nabi Elias, where residents of Qalqilya were gathering. She explained:

<sup>18</sup> Zinab, October 2, 2018, Hebron.

<sup>19</sup> Amna, August 10, 2018. Qalqilya.

<sup>20</sup> Narg’is, November 16, 2018, Qalqilya.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Narg’i.

We walked six kilometers, but we didn't feel it due to being scared. There were bombs; we took cover occasionally. We heard news that people had been killed. On the way, I saw a bomb fall on a Jordanian soldier and kill him on the spot. We fled toward a cave in the area and hid there for three days. There were planes scanning the area. My mother suggested to a man to raise the white flag, to ensure that the Jews would not come and kill us. Then the Jews called us to come out and surrender.<sup>22</sup>

Amna's statements indicate that women were not passive during the war but took responsibility for their families. They also made decisions and offered suggestions on how to deal with difficult situations. As illustrated above, a woman suggested to a man how to respond to a difficult situation during the war.

Other interviewees from Qalqilya told of the devastation in the city during the war. Suzanne, for example, who was 15 years old at the time with an elementary school education, had clear memories of the war. During the war, she was at home, on school vacation. She recalled the destruction of the library during the war. According to Suzanne, everyone knew that the war was approaching, due to Nasser's speeches at the time. According to Suzanne:

In '67, we all listened to Nasser's speeches, in homes, in cafes, in the streets below the electric poles. We all heard Nasser's promises, and were optimistic. I was optimistic and imagined the return to Haifa and Jaffa. Nasser promised to conquer Tel Aviv during the war.<sup>23</sup>

Suzanne's statements indicate that the war was expected and even created a sense of euphoria among Palestinian residents who relied on the promises of Arab nationalist leader Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser. When the war broke out, some of the residents transferred food to caves or moved into the larger and more sturdy homes of neighbors. Suzanne's family moved from house to house with other families. The men gathered in one house and women and children gathered in another. Suzanne describes bombs being dropped at night nonstop. When the bombing paused, residents buried their dead relatives. Suzanne described a situation which she could not forget:

I was with my brother who was five years old, and my sister who was three, along with our mother. I remember how we all slept in our mother's lap. We thought we all needed to be close to one another, so that if we died, we would die together with our mother.<sup>24</sup>

After that difficult night, Suzanne's family and others fled Qalqilya, in fear for their lives, and searched for caves in the area. According to Suzanne, the fields were filled with people in shock and frightened of bombings. Her family happened to come

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Amna.

<sup>23</sup> Suzanne, August 8, 2018, Qalqilya.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Suzanne.

across a car traveling towards Nablus and caught a ride. Her father had a radio which broadcast that the UN had met for discussions. Suzanne commented on the news, saying that she “learned in school that the UN is supposed to solve problems.” Her father commented ironically, “This is a different UN than you learned about in school.”

Suzanne’s father’s comment illustrates his lack of faith in the UN intervening to assist the Palestinians. Suzanne’s family fled to a very large cave near Nablus. Numerous families from the region congregated in this cave. According to Susan, “There we heard that Jerusalem had been conquered. People started screaming and throwing dust on their faces, as a mark of grief and pain.”<sup>25</sup>

The next day, troops entered the city. According to Suzanne:

We thought we were seeing soldiers of Arab countries, Iraq or Algeria, people were happy, but it turned out that these were Jews, who declared a curfew. I remember one of the men went out into the street and they shot him. They told people that this is not a joke, that they should stay in their homes.<sup>26</sup>

The condition of Suzanne’s family was better than that of others who had spent approximately a month in the caves or in a school in Nablus, which served as a temporary refugee camp. Suzanne’s family was hosted by her uncle in Nablus. Suzanne related that there was not enough food for everyone, but, at least, there was a house in which to reside. After a month, several residents, including Suzanne’s family, began to return to Qalqilya. They arrived at their house, which had been completely emptied of its contents. Other houses had been either burnt out or completely destroyed.<sup>27</sup>

Fathya, another interviewee from the Qalqilya area, was 37 years old during the war. She noted that she had no education, like most Palestinian women her age, who were occupied in agriculture and child-rearing. Fathya said that during its attack on Qalqilya, the Israeli army blew up the school in the city, resulting in the death of 18 people. She explained that she has still not forgotten the awful smell in Qalqilya, due to the destruction and mounting dead bodies. She recounted:

The terrible smell came from the masses of dead. People were killed on the streets. In one incident, there were several young men who were sitting on the side of the road drinking coffee, who had not yet left the city. A plane hit them, and they died instantly. The Jews’ tractor came, collected them, and covered them in dirt. After the war ended, their parents came to the area, each took their son and buried him in the town’s cemetery.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with Suzanne.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Suzanne.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Suzanne.

<sup>28</sup> Fathya, August 26, 2018, Qalqilya.

The narrative of the women from the Qalqilya area corresponded with the official Palestinian narrative which was publicized in testimonies of residents on the Wafa television network.<sup>29</sup> The description of what had happened in the city was that of a disaster on the scale of 1948. There were battles in which soldiers of the Jordanian Legion and the Palestinian residents attempted to resist the Israeli invasion.<sup>30</sup>

Other families from different locations preferred to flee to the East Bank at the beginning of the war rather than face the war. Fatma's family, hailing from Jericho, took this approach. Fatma was the eldest daughter and had four additional siblings. According to her narrative, she was the one who held her youngest sister, who was less than a year old. Her mother was busy packing essential items, such as documents and birth certificates. In addition, they packed clothes, water and food in small boxes. The family boarded a bus and had to sit on the bus floor due to overcrowding.

Fatima said that Jordan was the preferred destination, due to its proximity to Jericho and the presence of family members there. The mother and her children traveled to Jordan while the father was forced to remain in Jericho to sell off his sheep and collect debts from people who owed him money.<sup>31</sup> Fatma recalled the difficulties and fear that accompanied them during the journey to Jordan. She remembered the Israeli aircraft shelling, which scared the travelers, who had to disembark from the bus and hide in the bushes. She specifically remembered the sight of Jericho on fire, and explained, "We saw the demolished houses, the ground totally burnt, scattered organs of animals. There were rumors among the residents that the Jews were coming to kill everyone. I was very scared."<sup>32</sup>

Another story that Fatma has not forgotten is her younger brother falling into the Jordan River when they attempted to cross it. Her mother started screaming and asking for the help from the men, who came and rescued the little boy. As in other narratives, Fatma's story illustrates the great responsibility imposed on Palestinian

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<sup>29</sup> According to the Wafa News reports, the Israeli army soldiers destroyed about 80 % of the city's buildings, houses, shops, bakeries and more. Most residents left the city. The soldiers forced those who remained to leave. Those who stayed were called over loudspeakers to gather in the city center, where they were loaded onto trucks and transferred to the East Bank, to Jordan. It is estimated that 5,500 Palestinian refugees arrived in Jordan, in addition to thousands of refugees who flowed into the nearby Nablus and Tulkarm areas. The Israeli army offered the Palestinians to set up refugee camps there, but they refused. According to data from the city of Qalqilya, after three weeks, approximately 9,500 out of the 15,000 Palestinians who resided there before the war returned to the city. For more information, see Navani (2018).

<sup>30</sup> Taha (n.d.). He is a Palestinian author and researcher from Qalqilya.

<sup>31</sup> The interviewees referred to the two banks of the Jordan as though they were two distinct entities. When speaking of moving to Jordan, they refer to the East Bank. They referred to the West Bank as a distinct area, even separate from Jordan, despite the fact that Jordan had annexed the West Bank to its territory following the 1948 War. Perhaps this is a statement of the nonacceptance of Jordan's annexation of the Palestinian territories. This perception is the logical explanation for the fact that the interviewees speak of moving to Jordan, although they are coming from territory that was part of Jordan, at least from the official Jordanian perspective.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Fatma.

women to organize the departure, leave the family home, travel to a new location and keep the family safe in Jordan.

After crossing the Jordan River, Fatma recalled that the bus stopped at a desolate, empty village called al-Wahdat. Following the war, a large refugee camp was built there, which housed refugees from the war. After inquiring, the family arrived at the home of a family that they knew, where they found dozens of others from Jericho. She explained:

The small house contained a large number of frightened people who talked about the 1948 Deir Yassin massacre and feared it would repeat itself in this war as well. There were people who feared that the Jews would come and conquer Jordan as well. The people covered the windows of their homes with black tar in the hope that the planes would not notice them and would not blow up their homes.<sup>33</sup>

Fatma's family resided in this house for a few days, and afterwards continued to a different city to an aunt's house, where they were hosted warmly. They then settled in the refugee camp and did not return to their home. Fatma's father joined them after a month. Fatma, who was a 12-year-old girl, studied at school in the refugee camp, where she also married a few years later. Fatma's husband, who was 17 at the time, did not want to continue living in a refugee camp and returned to the West Bank.<sup>34</sup> While attempting to cross the border, his leg was wounded, but he managed to arrive at the Qalandiya refugee camp near Jerusalem where he lived. Fatma's family chose to stay in Jordan and were granted refugee status. Eventually, Fatma joined her husband.

Rahma, mentioned above, told a story that illustrates the refugee identity. As described, Rahma lived with her family in a refugee camp near Hebron. Her father was a butcher who owned a shop in the refugee camp. Rahma's narrative indicates that her father wanted to be granted official refugee status. She explained:

For several years, my father refused to move to Hebron, even though he had land there, because he did not want to lose his rights as a refugee. Afterwards, he lived in Hebron and his business continued to run in the refugee camp.<sup>35</sup>

Rahma illustrates that at least some Palestinians found it important to be registered as refugees and to take advantage of the benefits provided by refugee aid organizations such as the United Nations. Another interviewee explained that there were those who refused to accept a refugee certificate, as they viewed it as a degradation

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with Fatma.

<sup>34</sup> I choose to use the term 'return' to describe the phenomenon of Palestinians attempting to return to the territories conquered by Israel following the war for various reasons. The Israeli literature tends to use the term '*bistatinut*' – loosely translated as infiltration – a term with clear security connotations. This term is also used to describe the cross-border attacks of the *Fedayeen* – Palestinian fighters who entered territory conquered by Israel in cross-border attacks.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Rahma.



they could not stand. The question of refugee status was a central issue for numerous families during and after the 1967 War, which had no clear answer.

## 6 The Refugee Issue

The question of whether to stay or leave was central among the Palestinians. A debate had taken root in various circles: between adults and youths, men and women, refugees and residents. There was also pressure on the individual from the extended family in this respect. These arguments arose during the war and in the weeks following in Palestinian communities in the West Bank, refugee camps and Jordan.

The debate began between the younger and older generations during the war. The older generation did not want to leave their homes, saying they would rather die in their homes than be a refugee. Some of the younger people who worked in Jordan fled there. Sabha, 89 years old at the time of the interview, from the area of Yata, near Hebron, was working the fields at the outbreak of the war. She lived in her husband's family home, which included her brother, sister, sister-in-law, and husband's father and mother. Sabha was only 13 years old when she married, and found it difficult to work in a big house and take care of all of the needs: cooking, laundry, cleaning, baking, taking care of the sheep and cattle, including cleaning and milking them. Approximately thirty people lived in the extended family home. She explained, "They ate together, drank together, and slept together in one large room."<sup>36</sup> She stressed that women also had roles outside the home. She stated, "I, like other women, walked great distances without ever being hurt. Sometimes, we would live in caves in the area to seek pasture for the sheep."<sup>37</sup>

The interview with Sabah illustrated that rural women enjoyed freedom of movement, as they were free to roam in nature for their work without interruption. They were partners in the construction of the family unit and maintaining the extended family unit. Sabha's life changed drastically after the 1967 war. She said there were rumors of Jews entering the area but there was no accurate information. Sabha emphasized that most people were simple people whose main concern was supporting their families.<sup>38</sup> She said that the Palestinian peasants at that time were not prepared for war. They were busy with economic survival and ensuring a livelihood for their families. It was not clear to them whether to stay or leave.

In contrast to Sabha's story, the narrative presented by Scharia illustrates the experience of escape to Jordan and the dilemma presented by her family members contemplating refugee life versus the dangers of returning to the homeland. Scharia was born in the village of Halhul (abutting Hebron) in 1952 and was a student at the High School in the village at the outbreak of the war. On the eve of the war, she was preparing for final exams. She studied in the vineyard among the trees in the

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<sup>36</sup> Sabha, March 17, 2018, Hebron.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Sabha.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Sabha.

morning. Her parents' home was on the main street. Scharia recalled those moments: "I saw people fleeing across from my house. They knew what had happened in Deir Yassin, we were told to flee."<sup>39</sup> According to Scharia's description, people were shocked, frightened and ran away in all directions, to nearby villages, caves and fields.

Her family included her mother, five daughters and one son, who together fled with the rest of the village to Jordan:

My mother, who was removing furniture from the house, in the end, limited herself to taking the flour, as there was no possibility of taking anything else. There were no cars. My mother rushed to flee to Jordan and did not wait for our father. Our father was at work, when he came home, he put the furniture back in the house and slept there. When the Jews came upon him in the middle of the night, they asked, "Where is your family?" He told them they were not here. They mockingly responded, "Did they go to Hussein?"<sup>40</sup>

Scharia's family moved toward the East Bank of Jordan, where the Jordanian Legion was stationed. According to her description, Israeli aircraft were circling and the Palestinians were very terrified and feared that the Jews would kill them. Some of them began to curse the royal family in Jordan and accused them of treason, hinting at Jordan's betrayal of Palestinians in the 1948 War.

The flight experience was difficult for Scharia's family. According to her description, they barely made it to Jordan, where they were sent to a school (which was transformed into a makeshift refugee camp). The food was meager and there were no kitchens. The United Nations distributed processed food and milk to children. Scharia remembers how Palestinians were registered as refugees in UN institutions in order to receive aid. Some were not actually refugees of the 1967 War but wanted to benefit from the allocation of aid. The UN gave each family a box containing basic food products such as flour, rice and olive oil. Some of the refugees sold these products.

The situation for the family in Jordan was difficult. Scharia explained, "We started to beg for change in Jordan. One of the women, a refugee from Jaffa of the 1948 War, started crying and told us that she keeps the keys from her home in Jaffa, in hope of returning there at some point."<sup>41</sup>

Scharia, similar to other interviewees, had vivid memories of family debates regarding whether or not to return to the homeland. When her father arrived in Jordan a month after the rest of the family, the question of whether to remain as refugees in Jordan or return to the homeland arose. Her father insisted on returning at all costs. She explained:

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<sup>39</sup> Scharia, November 18, 2018, Halhoul, Hebron.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Scharia. It is clear from her words that the soldiers mocked the Palestinians who fled to Jordan.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Scharia.

My father did not want to receive the refugee certificate, saying he was not prepared to eat, drink and live like a refugee. Members of his family, especially his brother, attempted to convince him otherwise. In one discussion, my uncle managed to convince my father to leave me in Jordan. I could study there and marry his son. My father was convinced. After a period, my family attempted to return home. I climbed on the roof of the school where we lived and looked toward the road on which they had left and began to cry bitterly. Their attempt was unsuccessful. I then decided that I wanted to return together with them and did not want to be a refugee in Jordan.<sup>42</sup>

Scharia's family attempted unsuccessfully on three separate occasions to return to their village. Each time soldiers sent them back to Jordan:

The way back was very difficult. There was a man who, for a sum of money would accompany them [the returnees]. We walked in the mountains at night to reach the border, and we didn't know how to swim. We held each other [...]. When we saw the Jews, we ran away from them and hid. On one of these occasions, the Jews caught us at the border. We were loaded into the army car and reached the Jericho police station. We were seated under a tree. And they asked my father if we had arrived from Hussein? They asked us and they were sure we had crossed the border illegally because our clothes were very dirty. My mother answered, "We did not come from Hussein." Then the soldier took out his weapon and threatened her: "Either go back to Hussein or I will kill you!" When they put our mother in the car, I thought they were going to kill her, and I started screaming, "Mama don't go!" Then they took us back to Jordan again. In Jordan, we returned to the same refugee camp at the school.

After several attempts, Scharia and her family returned successfully to the West Bank. She recalls:

The last time that we succeeded in reaching our home, they shot at us. A relative of ours was injured in her hand. She was 15 then. A relative helped her. We fled from the Jews and were able to get home. Until today, whenever I meet that relative, I can see her injured arm.<sup>43</sup>

Scharias sister was separated from her during the war. She said her sister lost two children, a daughter and a son, when returning to the homeland, due to the heat. They met again only after a long period of time.<sup>44</sup> Scharias stories illustrate the difficulty of returning home. The choice against being a refugee in Jordan or another location had a steep price. The use of the name "Hussein," King of Jordan, has

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with Scharia.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Scharia.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Scharia.

importance: Scharia indicated that the Jewish soldiers ridiculed him, and Palestinians believed that he had betrayed them.

Scharia's narrative is reminiscent of similar situations following the 1948 War. Within this context, we can ask whether the Palestinians learned a lesson from the refugee experience of the 1948 War? I assume, in losing the 1967 War, the Palestinians understood that the refugee problem is not temporary, and there is no guarantee that they would be legally permitted to return to their lands. Thus, some insisted on returning at all costs (Gh'anem 2018: 52–77; Kabha 2011). Usually, the men were those who decided whether the family would remain in the refugee camp or risk returning to their land. However, during the war, it was often the women who decided whether to flee to the fields, to the caves or to leave the land toward Jordan.

As mentioned, the debate over the return to the homeland exposed various familial tensions and pressures in several spheres: between the adults, who preferred to remain, and the youths, who often preferred to attempt a return, between the extended family and the individual, and between men and women. Ultimately, the decision to stay or leave was that of the individual. Scharia's father acted individually. As a woman, Scharia had to settle for the hope that she would eventually return rather than remain in Jordan.

A second circle in which the debate took place was between the men and women in the family. In many Palestinian families, mothers took a clear stance regarding whether to stay or leave the homeland. One such case was that of Maha's mother. Maha was born in 1961 in Beit Leed, near Tulkarm. She moved to Nablus after the war. Maha had vivid memories of the war due to the significant impact it had on her and her family's lives. Maha's father was a schoolteacher, and their economic situation was excellent. They had a radio in their house, which was listened to by the family, especially her father and grandfather, as well as the head of the village. When the war broke out, an argument began in the house, as her father insisted that the family members stay at home and resist leaving for any destination. Conversely, her mother wanted to flee for the caves, where the village residents were hiding. The children stayed with their father, while their mother joined those hiding in the caves. Such cases of splits within families occurred among other interviewees as well. This is indicative of a social phenomenon of confusion and the inability to make an agreed-upon decision for the whole family. In such cases, one can assume that power relationships within families changed as a result of the war; that is, the war shook the family unit, such that the decision to stay or flee was not exclusively the man's decision alone, as women had a say in this fateful matter. Maha was six years old at the time, and her brother was five. They continued to live at home with their father and a grandfather. Maha explained:

We were the only people in the village who remained in their home. The soldiers occupied our house because it had a well. My father and grandfather refused to flee the house so that the disaster of the '48 War would not repeat itself.<sup>45</sup>

When the soldiers took over the house, they allowed the family to continue living there. Maha and her brother visited the cave dwellers daily, bringing them food:

The soldiers used one of the houses and turned it into a food warehouse. My brother and I climbed the warehouse each day before visiting the caves, we would pass through the house, and collect food such as bread and cucumbers, and we would feed the residents. The soldiers saw us but didn't do anything about it.<sup>46</sup>

After the war ended, the soldiers remained in Maha's house, and used it as an observation post, as she describes:

Every morning, the soldiers woke us up with loud bangs at the door. I would bring them water from the well for coffee and tea. My mother had anxiety attacks. Since then, she has suffered from mental illness.<sup>47</sup>

Life returned to normal only days after the war, but the life of the Maha family never returned to normalcy. Maha's story indicates that women were vulnerable during the war, as their emotions and fears resulting from the war continued to accompany them and impact their functioning and ability to raise children. Maha's mother was an extreme example of such a phenomenon as she could no longer function at all. However, most of the interviews illustrate that the majority of the women continued to function as mothers and wives after the war, despite its difficult emotional impact.

War blurred the distinction between the generations of daughters and mothers due to the tasks that each undertook. The main task was to safeguard the family following either the temporary or permanent loss of the home. In many cases, the eldest daughter served as a kind of 'second mother' in the family. Women took over command in the emergency situation of war.

The case of Amal's mother illustrates another occasion in which the mother refused to flee, confronting the pressures of the extended family. Amal was five years old during the war. She still recalls her uncles' visit, her mother's brothers. They arrived at her house shortly before the war. They spoke to Amal's mother and asked her to emigrate with them to Syria. According to Amal, "My mother refused to leave the village. The uncles left, and she began to clean and organize a nearby cave, after which we moved our belongings there."<sup>48</sup> According to Amal's

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<sup>45</sup> Maha, August 14, 2018, Beit Leed, Tulkarem.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Maha.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Maha.

<sup>48</sup> Amal, December 3, 2018, Qalqilya.

description, distinct caves were assigned to women and to men. In the cave where she stayed, there were three women along with their children. She recalls:

We hid in the cave during the bombings. When the bombings ended, my mother risked her life and went to get water. The people ate from a fruit tree beside the cave. At first, we only ate bread, then the women started preparing the bread themselves.<sup>49</sup>

This situation lasted approximately three weeks, after which the residents returned to their houses and started to connect with their relatives in the land and abroad. According to Amal, the refugees who had been living in refugee camps since 1948 regretted ever leaving their homes. Amal's story illustrates a situation in which the mother was dominant and led the family. It is unclear from her story where her father was and what his role was during the war. Her story relates to the dynamics of two spheres of identity: refugee and gender. The refugees of the 1948 War, who had already experienced the frustration and humiliation of a refugee status, preferred to remain in their homes, as the previous refugee experience often resulted in their insistence to remain.

The story of Rahma, hailing from the Hebron area, was more complex. Rahma herself could not make a decision and implement it as she was dependent on both her father and her husband. Rahma got married just before the war began when she was 20 years old to a man who worked in Jordan (the East Bank), but she continued to live with her family in Hebron. During the war she stayed with her parents while her husband was in Jordan.

Rahma recalled an argument between her father and a family friend regarding how to respond to the war. She explained:

A friend of the family came to our house. My father collected belongings in order to escape. The friend told him he did not want to flee because he did not know where to go. After this statement, Dad decided to stay, saying he would rather raise the flag of surrender than flee.

Rahma decided that she did not want to flee, although some members of her family had fled. She said "I have a sister who fled with her four children and wandered the fields far from their homes fearing for the fate of her children. She was very scared and tired."<sup>50</sup>

After the war, Rahma's husband requested that she join him and live with him in the Vahadat refugee camp in Jordan, but her father refused. Her husband threatened to return for her and bring her to Jordan, causing her father to agree to her move to Jordan. Rahma was unhappy in the refugee camp in Jordan, as she had no

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with Amal.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Rahma.

connections there. The feeling of being foreign accompanied her even after she returned to Israel, as she stated, “I felt foreign and cried a lot.”<sup>51</sup>

Rahma did not want to continue living in the refugee camp due to her husband’s tough economic situation and her difficulty living at a distance from her family. After a few years of living in the camp, Rahma left her husband in Jordan and joined her family in the West Bank. She preferred to follow her family over a life alone with no extended family, even if she was married in the refugee camp. Rahma’s descriptions illustrate the experience of alienation from the extended family that refugees in refugee camps tend to feel, which augments the psychological pain and sense of loss, not only of the homeland, but also of family roots.

The third sphere within which the discourse of flight versus remaining occurred was between the refugees from the 1948 War and the Palestinian residents who remained in their homes during this war in the West Bank and Gaza. According to Sachira, “We had a neighbor, a refugee. The refugees in the village were experiencing rejection. And so she told us: ‘You deserve it. Now you have a taste of being a refugee.’”<sup>52</sup> Sachira noted that the woman had also left the village and that they had not met since.

Tensions between refugees from the 1948 War and the indigenous Palestinian residents of West Bank had existed since 1948 and created a rift within Palestinian society between the local residents, mostly owners of land and a home, and the strangers (*A’rib*) who arrived as refugees, without property or even honor. The prevailing perception at the time was that whoever left their home and land due to war was weak and a burden on Palestinian society (Alinat 2009).

The stories of the interviewees and dilemmas regarding whether to remain or flee illustrates the bitterness of the refugee situation: the sense of alienation in the refugee camps, the dismantling of families due to war, the sense of uncertainty about the future, in addition to the harsh living conditions of the refugee camps contrasted to the expected mortal danger of attempts to return to their homes in the West Bank.

## 7 The Image of Jews in the Eyes of the Women

The interviewees spoke of “the Jews” collectively when referring to Israeli soldiers. The vast majority of the interviewees had had no contact with Jews before the war, as the war was the first setting in which they interacted with Jews. Amana, from the Qalqilya area, described the first meeting with Jews immediately after the war: “They were people. I thought they were shaped differently, different than ours, from the extent that they were depicted as evil.”<sup>53</sup> She explained that women and children gathered at the home of the *Mukhtar*. The little children started screaming out of fear and hunger. She recalls:

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with Rahma.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Sachira, November 18, 2018, Hebron-Halhol.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Amna, December 15, 2018, Qalqilya.

The Jews brought us food from the town Nabi Elias and asked the women to prepare food for the children. After three days, the soldiers asked each of us to give them our gold and the money we had. They threatened anyone on whom they would find money or gold after searching. My mother had a gold necklace, she threw it out, she was afraid and did not want to hand it over to the soldiers.<sup>54</sup>

Amana's story of the soldiers' attempts to extort money from them is unique, as the other interviewees did not narrate similar incidents. Amana's words indicate the fear and distrust of the soldiers. However, she did describe moments in which the soldiers took into consideration the needs of women and children regarding basic needs, such as food. However, these moments are few. She generally portrays the women as resembling hostages in the hands of the soldiers. Amana recalls another experience with the soldiers when they were at the *Mukhtar's* home:

The soldiers loaded us onto trucks and told us to go to Jordan, "Hussein sold you for a dime." My mother held my little sister and said to one of the soldiers that her daughter is young and would die of starvation and exposure. The soldier brought her a blanket from the car. We were in the refugee camp for two weeks. Afterwards, we returned to Qalqilya. My mother heard the sounds of the airplanes and started screaming that she didn't want to stay in Qalqilya, but my father told her that our home was here, and we wouldn't leave it. The neighborhood was devastated by bombings and trenches. We found our house untouched, but all the blankets and mattresses were with the Jews. The Jews took them and used them in the nearby military base they set up.<sup>55</sup>

Amana's mother's response, in contrast to that of her father, indicates that for some Palestinians, the *Nakba* (catastrophe) of the 1948 War had been repeated in 1967. There was a significant fear of Jews' reprisal acts and death threats, especially among women. Palestinian culture does not dictate that women should restrain themselves, as they are granted license to express their fears through crying and even screaming. By contrast, men are expected to be restrained and refrain from expressing their fears.

Several of the interviewees feared the Jews due to the stories they heard about the 1948 War. According to Maha, "The women were very scared of the Jewish soldiers, so they blackened their faces out of fear. Women who previously wore short dresses, began to dress modestly and traditionally."<sup>56</sup>

Sachira, who was 17 years old during the war, also remembers, "I was scared of the Jews. I imagined them as wolves and as monkeys with a tail. My mother laughed at this image and told me they were human beings like us."<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Amna.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Amna.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Amal.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Sachira, November 18, 2018, Hebron-Halhol.



The descriptions of Maha and Sachira also illustrate the fear of being raped by Israeli soldiers. This fear stemmed from rumors circulating in Palestinian society, and the awakening of the traumatic memory of the 1948 War, in particular, the rumors of the rapes in the village of Deir Yassin. In order to protect themselves, women attempted to hide their bodies, so as not to attract the attention of the soldiers. They sought to be active and to defend themselves by themselves, choosing not to rely on protection by the men in their society. This indicates that collective memory does not always present the details as they actually transpired, but, instead, presents to people what appears to have occurred.

In an interview with Rahma, she spoke of the rumors that circulated in Hebron following the war and explained the background of the panic when facing Israeli soldiers. One of the rumors was about soldiers raping the beautiful girls:

It was not true, the story relates to a home in which seven beautiful girls with long hair lived. The father spoke Hebrew and hosted soldiers who raped his daughters. Although the story was not true, it scared people terribly, there were rumors of soldiers that murdered.<sup>58</sup>

Rahma described an incident with Israeli soldiers a few weeks after the war:

Once, we sat at the house's entrance and drank coffee. Soldiers passed by and asked us to enter the house because we were violating the curfew. I told them we were in our house and were not violating any curfew. My brother, who was next to me, was holding my hand in anger. I whispered to him that there was nothing to fear and offered the soldiers coffee. They refused. I offered them coffee as a courtesy.

Rahma said these words with laughter, but her slight embarrassment indicated that she had done something unacceptable in her society. That is, it was not acceptable for a woman to develop a social conversation with the soldiers. Rahma was the only one of the interviewees who had prior knowledge of Jews before the war, as she explained:

I had heard about the Jews. My father had returned to Israel to buy things. Relatives had been shot dead when they crossed into Israel to retrieve their flock. Four people from our town had been shot dead in one year. Therefore, with the declaration of the end of the war and the Israeli army's occupation of the area and the declaration of a curfew, the residents were in a really bad situation and experienced a decline in morale. Some people started running away.<sup>59</sup>

Direct contact with the Jews had an impact on prejudices toward them. In fact, many Palestinians did not really know Jews. They were influenced by the stories and

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<sup>58</sup> Interview with Rahma.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Rahma.

rumors broadcast on the radio. It is likely that they listened to *Sawt al-Arab* (the Voice of the Arabs) broadcast from Cairo, identified with the Nasser regime, which spread the ideas of Pan-Arabism and resistance against Israel. Everyone listened to the radio regardless of their level of education or involvement in politics. Radios were located in the homes of wealthy people, such as the *Mukhtar* and other educated people, who invited the general public to come to their homes to tune in. Thus, the radio became an important source of information for illiterate groups, such as women and farmers.

Three types of encounters between West Bank Palestinians and Jews during the 1967 War arose from the interviews with the women. The first was the imagined encounter, based on previous negative knowledge and the memory of the 1948 War. The interviews gave voice to the prevailing opinions of Jews in Palestinian society and the fear of meeting them. Jews were viewed as cruel, harsh, ready to rape women, and ready to kill and destroy. As has been mentioned above, stories from the 1948 War reinforced this negative perception.

The second type was a traumatic military encounter. It took place during and immediately after the war when soldiers conducted searches for Palestinian men and youths in their homes and towns.<sup>60</sup> This type of encounter added to the experience of the need to escape and take refuge, the fear of aircraft bombing, death and destruction.

The third type of contact was cultural, which occurred following the 1967 War during the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. The interviewees spoke of the consequences of the 1967 War on Palestinian society and accused Israel of destroying it. They made comparisons with the period before the 1948 War, describing it as a Golden Age, and expressed a longing for the land and the home to which they no longer had access. All interviewees viewed the past as preferable to the present, supporting the values and customs that perpetuated the Palestinian family unit. By contrast, they viewed the post-1967 period as an era defined by the loss of values and solidarity in Palestinian society, as a result of employment in Israel and the influence of Israeli culture on the men who worked there. Rahma, one of the interviewees, described harmonious relationships among Palestinian residents before the 1967 War, when her father was a well-known public figure in the area who frequently hosted people at his *Divan*. She related that, "Men gathered at the *Divan*, a large guest house adjacent to the *Mukhtar's* home, relationships between people were good, both the houses and the spirits were close."<sup>61</sup>

The interviewees reported that work in Israel caused the Palestinians to abandon working the land, which, in turn, resulted in them breaking away from their religion and traditions. According to Zinab, "Following contact with Israel, people changed,

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<sup>60</sup> Interview with Zinab.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Rahma.

they became cynical, did not take care of one another. There is no longer solidarity in the family, people just wanted to build houses and buy land.”<sup>62</sup>

At the same time, interviewees pointed out that the economic situation of Palestinian residents improved after the war, due to their working in Israel. Palestinian workers built apartments and houses, left the refugee camps, and bought assets and land. In addition, Maha was the only interviewee to state that Jews possessed positive values such as responsibility and loyalty to their country.<sup>63</sup>

The interviewees spoke of the ‘Jews’ on two levels: firstly, they used the term ‘Jews’ to refer to soldiers. To them, the central conflict with the soldiers did not occur during the war but after it, and specifically following the 1976 Land Day and during the First Intifada of 1987. The second level was the socioeconomic level: they spoke of employment in Israel, the distancing of Palestinians from their lands and their amalgamation of Israeli values, such as consumerism, a desire for money and more.

This seems like a contradiction: on the one hand, the Palestinians fought Israel through their national struggle, but, on the other hand, they identified with Israeli values, as working in Israel exposed them to the modern and individualistic lifestyle, which many adopted, even if it came at the expense of Palestinian social values, such as solidarity, reflected by neighborly involvement in one another’s celebrations and mourning, as well as friendly visits among neighbors.

This contradiction, indicated by interviewees, does not reflect the national narrative that shaped the PLO after the 1967 War which combined the following concepts: the independence of the Palestinian decision-making, the guerrilla struggle against Israel to restore the Arab dignity which was lost following the 1967 War, mass mobilization of Palestinians from the refugee camps for the purpose of the armed national struggle, and the strengthening of the unique identity.

## 8 The Attitude of Women to Jordanian Rule

Most interviewees did not mention the Jordanian regime as a central or influential element in their lives. This could be because they worked in agriculture and, therefore, did not have contact with the authorities. One of them was searched by a Jordanian soldier, as she was involved in smuggling Israeli currency into the territories with her husband’s assistance.

Women described the Jordanian soldiers during the war with ridicule, calling them “the army of chicks” (*G’ish Abu Sisan*). They criticized Jordan for its lack of preparation for war, for refusing to provide weapons to the Palestinians and suppressing Palestinian demonstrations. Amana, an interviewee from Qalqilya, said that during the 1967 War, there was tension between the Palestinians and the Jordanians

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<sup>62</sup> Interview with Zinab.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Amna.

over the issue of weapons. She explained that Palestinian residents demonstrated and called for the ousting of the Jordanian government, calling it a “cardboard regime” (*Arash HaCarton*). She said, “The Jordanian army beat us with sticks and clubs because we went out to demonstrate and demanded weapons to protect ourselves.”<sup>64</sup>

The interviewees said that during the war, some of the Jordanian soldiers asked the residents for clothes, to change out of their military uniforms. They described situations in which the soldiers fled the battlefields and left the people unprotected. It is worth noting that this information cannot be found in the official materials written about Qalqilya during the war. Various Arab, Palestinian and Israeli historians did not cover events regarding Palestinian society during the war in detail, or write of how the war was managed in various areas, preferring to focus on general issues, such as the states’ governments, their military preparedness, combat methods and the reasons for the failure of Arab armies.<sup>65</sup> In this context, oral history gains importance, as the interviews conducted with such women adds essential understanding to the details of specific events during the war.

The interviewees’ accounts of the 1967 War touched on burning issues in their lives, not only during the war but also dealing with the implications of the war on their personal lives and Palestinian society as a whole. According to the interviewees, the breakout of war was no surprise to them. At the same time, they were plagued with fear for their lives and fear of being raped by Israeli soldiers. The traumatic memory of the 1948 War was resurrected, and women were more vulnerable than men, and expressed their fears. The 1967 War sparked a debate about Palestinian identity regarding Palestinian willingness to be defined as refugees who are excluded from their host society. During the war, women were active and contributed to the defense of their families. In addition, one of the consequences of the war was the blurring of boundaries between the roles of mothers and daughters, as the latter often took the role of a second mother in the family.

## 9 Summary

The interviews analyzed in this study illustrate that the daily life of rural Palestinian families in the West Bank during the 1950s and 1960s was rather similar to their lives before the 1948 War. They were engaged in working the land and shepherding from early morning until sunset. In the evenings, they would rest and engage in social gathering. The family’s livelihood depended on manpower, which included women and children. In addition to their roles in the field, women were also engaged in housework, which was divided among the women.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Amna.

<sup>65</sup> Numerous studies and books have been written about the 1967 War from Arab, Israeli and international perspectives; see, for example: Jamal 2017; Kh’ladi 2009; Kurz, Kobi and Siboni (2018); Laqueur 1968; Oren 2002; Sayigh 2002.

Women were given responsibility for household maintenance from an early age, both as daughters and wives. This work included cleaning, keeping order, maintenance, food preparation and baking bread. It is likely that with such a busy schedule, these women were less concerned with politics and ideologies than urban, educated women. These women were exposed to the ideas of Palestinian nationalism and Pan-Arabism when listening to the radio, but not as active participants in conversations and debates. Their participation in such discussions was not significant, due to the separation of men and women in social gatherings. The men would meet at the *Diwan* (guest house) or at the homes of the head of the clan or *Mukhtar*. The women met separately, generally to discuss family life.

It is difficult to detach the interviewees' daily life from the personal narrative they designed for themselves. To a great extent, their collective memory was dependent upon their daily lives as women and from their position in society. Their depiction of daily life in the interviews illustrates how their personal narrative differed from the official narrative. In contrast to the official narrative, the interviewees did not talk about grand ideologies, did not speak in terms of nationalism or Pan-Arabism, or the armed struggle, and did not blame Arab states and Western colonial powers. They did not relate to political movements directly or indirectly. Only one of the interviewees indicated that she had two brothers, members of the PLO, who were living in Jordan and could not return to the land.

In a sense, the collective memory of the women is based on the official collective memory of the 1948 War. The 1967 narrative sparked anew the powerful feelings of defeat, loss and pain felt by the Palestinians following the 1948 War. The interviewees, especially those who experienced the 1948 War as children or were told about the difficult experiences of that war, spoke of loss, pain and fear. Another thread common to the two narratives was the negative image of the Jews. The women viewed Jews as potential rapists who would probably harm them and, therefore, chose to hide their bodies. The Palestinian national narrative related to the Jews as occupiers who should be expelled in a national struggle. In other words, the conquest of the land and the Palestinian woman's body intersect in this narrative.

In contrast to the official national narrative, which did not refer to the phenomenon of Palestinian men working in Israel, as it conflicts with the image of the Palestinian warrior image which was perpetuated, women criticized the consequences of men working in Israel. The interviews illustrated that they preferred to criticize the present situation rather than the past. Thus, the interviewees did not express criticism about their lives before the 1948 War or about the post-1948 period until 1967. Most did not criticize their lives under the British mandate or under the Jordanian regime. Life was good before the 1948 War and even before the 1967 War for both rural and urban women, who did not have the refugee experience beforehand. They did not talk about the problems and the difficulties they had at the time. They tended to accuse Israel of altering their lives for the worse. This is reflected by their attitude towards the post-1967 period. They expressed criticism for changes in Palestinian society following the contact between the Palestinian men who worked

in Israel and their Jewish employers. They spoke of the devastating consequences of the war on the quality of life and interpersonal relationships within Palestinian society. Unlike the official narrative, they spoke openly about the “occupation of Palestinian values” and related infrequently to “the occupation of lands.”

These women’s collective memory is uniquely rich, with a wealth of details from their personal lives. The political situation is intertwined with the story of their personal lives, work, home, marriage, children, and the striving for values, solidarity and a better future. Unlike the official narrative, they did not talk in terms of self-sacrifice and heroism but addressed a variety of dilemmas and tensions regarding the decision-making during the war, for example, whether to remain in their homes or to flee. They discussed the issue of refugee status, not as a political issue that required a decision, but as a daily experience that affects one’s identity, daily life and future.

In some ways, the women ‘took advantage’ of their interviews to examine the entirety of their lives. Some claimed that their lives were difficult and bitter, some were reconciled with their realities and some were proud of what they had done with their lives. The interviews opened a window through which they could evaluate their personal lives, viewing themselves at the center, and look at their lives through the passing of time. They jumped around temporally, returning to their childhood, their lives in the family home, the War of 1967 and the experience of fear and being a refugee, to survival experiences in refugee camps in the West Bank or Jordan, and the sense of foreignness that accompanied them in their homes and homeland.

These women experienced the changes that Palestinian society underwent after the 1967 War, including changes in economic, political and ideological values. They saw changes in customs regarding weddings and mourning rituals, and in intergenerational relationships. They experienced the First Intifada as a formative event in their lives. The narrative of personal and collective memory portrayed contributes to deepening our understanding of the general impact of the 1967 War on Palestinian society. These women’s narratives shed light on the lives of the weaker classes among the Palestinians (refugees, farmers and women), such that these stories can no longer be ignored in the context of the official Palestinian national narrative, which is still in the process of being designed and constructed. The female narrative attaches importance to the family construction, and the relationships within it, which sometimes overrides the importance of nation-building and the establishment of a state.

The research literature illustrates that the working class’s experience was given little expression in the shaping and institutionalization of the Palestinian narrative. At the same time, collective memory had a major function for these social strata. In this study, we saw that Palestinian women, mostly rural and uneducated, utilized their personal memories of the War of 1967 to build their personal narrative. They established a kind of alternative memory that can both complement and contradict the official narrative. One example of this phenomenon are hero and victim images, which are common in the relevant literature. In interviews with the women, there was less emphasis on the image of the Palestinian hero during and before the war.

They spoke of experiencing fear, escaping to Jordan and the attempts to cross back into the country, but without describing themselves as heroines or even victims of the realities of war. For the most part, they did not blame the Arab states for defeat in the war.

In her youth in the 1960s, Rahma was considered to be an educated girl, as she had a high school education. She proudly recalled going to school and never being beaten by the teacher. Most of the women of her class worked in agriculture during that period. Rahma described two classes of women during that period: rural and urban. The differences between these two classes were also described by other interviewees. Rahma's father married two women, the first from a rural village, the second from Hebron. According to Rahma, the two women were in constant competition regarding dress and interior design. Rahma's mother, for example, who worked in agriculture, took pride in maintaining traditional attire, as a way of competing with the other woman, who was apparently drifting away from tradition. Rahma's account attests to the class differences in Palestinian society between urban and rural residents, while the refugees from the 1948 War were considered to be at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder.

The interviewees described their marriages as experiences as relevant as the 1948 War and 1967 War, illustrating that women often view starting and maintaining a family as no less important, if not more important, than nation-building and establishing a state. This finding challenges the approach of the Palestinian national narrative, which views Palestinian women (and women in general) as fertility and land symbols, and defending women is equivalent to defending the homeland. Palestinian folklore emphasizes this motif. It becomes clear from the women's interviews that by taking the roles of storytellers, they take on the important function of 'giving birth to' and 'safeguarding' collective memory. However, their stories emphasize primarily their experiences as women, and only on a secondary level, as Palestinians.

In summary, the depiction of memories of women from the West Bank emphasizes the need to view women as a valuable historical source, through which we can disclose essential information about society in general. Personal, female and collective memory established by these Palestinian women intersects with official collective memory regarding the trauma of the 1948 War and its implications for Palestinian society. Furthermore, women's memory uniquely discloses a range of voices and experiences, combining personal and family narratives with the general collective situation. The women did not focus on ideology or grand ideas of nation or peoplehood, but on personal experiences and their families, which were the center of their attention.

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## **INTERVIEW WITH B.L. (FEMALE), JOINED BY HER SON D.L. HALFWAY THROUGH THE INTERVIEW**

MAY 2017

INTERVIEWER:

HAGAR SALAMON (H.). ALSO PRESENT AND OCCASIONALLY CONTRIBUTING: IVANA SARIC (I.)

Hagar Salamon was put into contact with B.L. through a colleague who noted that B. – who was over 90 years old at the time of the interview — might be helpful to the project. She and her husband had immigrated from the United States shortly before Israel was founded and hence they also experienced the War of Independence. From the start, B. expressed an enthusiasm for the project, and was keen to share her story. The interview took place in B.'s small but well-furnished apartment, whose walls are covered with many old photographs and paintings, some of them of Jerusalem. She lives in Beit Hakerem, in a housing facility intended for the elderly. B. was seated comfortably in a chair in her living room, with Hagar and Ivana sharing the sofa. Her son D. also pulled up a chair across from the sofa when he arrived. This provided the opportunity to also hear about some of the events as remembered by D.

B. narrated confidently and, for the most part, appeared very comfortable in English, though she at times defaulted to Hebrew. The same was the case for her son D. She showed her interviewers the pieces of shrapnel she'd kept from the war of 1967, as well as a book of colored photographs her husband took during the War of Independence.

H.: And what about you, when did you come to Jerusalem?

B.: I came '47 [...]

H.: Really? How old were you then? If I may ask [...]

B.: I was in my twenties, no, I was in my twenties already. We got married – M. and me, we got married – and we left six weeks later for Isr – for Palestine. [...]. So we were here for all the wars.

H.: And you came directly to Jerusalem?

B.: To Jerusalem. But we came as students because that was the only way you could come at that time, because you needed certificates. And my husband served in the American army, so they were allowed to study wherever they wanted to. So that was a good excuse. He said he wanted to study at [...] the Hebrew University.

H.: So he did study.

B.: Well he registered, we registered but we didn't really – the war broke out soon after.

H.: Wow. So you were here [...] And where did you live?

B.: In Jerusalem. [...] In the first twenty years – in the first three years we moved twenty times. Because we didn't have money, we were just married. And so we rented a furnished apartment. When somebody went abroad we just rented the apartment. And then we decided that we better borrow some money. See, Americans didn't know about borrowing. So we didn't have the money to pay [...] at that time. [...] And then we moved to Kiryat Shmuel. And then we came here.

H.: Ok, so from Nayot you came here and so if we're talking now about the '67 war, this is where you'd be.

B.: We were in Nayot during the Six-Day War. Where do you want me to begin?

H.: Let me tell you a little bit about this research. It's [...] we're doing, you know, personal stories around the '67 war. So the days before, the feelings just before, and the war itself, and then things that happened later. And just telling you, that we're recording the stories and we're using them for the research.

B.: Alright, just that my voice isn't very good.

H.: Yeah, it's very good. it's clear.

**THE *BAR MITZVAH* BEFORE THE WAR BEGAN**

B.: Well, we had a special experience, because my son was *bar mitzva*<sup>1</sup> the *Shabbat* before the Six-Day War began. And we had planned a party, we had everything all ready for it. But everybody was going into [military] service because they had the, all the men were disappearing. All that were left were the women. My husband wasn't, didn't have to go to the army, because he was a journalist, so he had to cover the news. So we planned the *bar mitzva*, and everything was fine, but things were getting very bad and we said, "Oh we just can't have the people coming, there would be no men, this [...]" So we had an idea. We had the *totbanim* [artillery], the *totbanim* were stationed near us. So we said, well maybe we should call off the big party and we'll just get the soldiers, we'll invite the soldiers who were stationed there. So I went down and spoke to the officer and he said, oh, he was so glad because he wanted [...], some of the soldiers had excelled and he doesn't know how to pay them. I said ok, fine. Send me seventy. Seventy soldiers. Well we had a big garden so it was no problem. Then we saw – I called up the caterer and I told her I'm calling off the reception. And she says, "I was just gonna call you to tell you that I can't make it. It's no time to make it." But she says, "Since you're inviting the soldiers, I'll come."

[laughter]

B.: So when they first started coming, it was in the afternoon, about five o'clock.

H.: And what day was it, do you remember?

B.: This was a *Shabbat*, the *bar mitzva*.

H.: The *Shabbat*, but do you know the date?

B.: Two days before.

H.: Really?? The very! The *Shabbat* two days before.

B.: And there was nobody around. Everybody was [...]

[...]

B.: Anyway, the soldiers, there was a hill. We lived, Nayot is in the middle of the mountains, and all of a sudden the soldiers started coming down. And the neighbors were frightened because they were sure the war had started, because the soldiers were all jumping down. [Laughter]. Anyways, they came and it was all very nice. And Teddy Kollek was supposed to come too, but he was building trenches so he came late when they were gone already. Teddy

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<sup>1</sup> Jewish religious ritual and family celebration commemorating the religious adulthood of a boy on his 13th birthday.

Kolleck was the mayor. He was the mayor of Jerusalem for many years. After '67, and of course, just, he was just, since when was he the mayor, do you remember? Maybe '65 or so? Oh I don't know. He was a wonderful mayor and a very friendly man. Anyway, I was gonna something –

H.: So he was about to come –

B.: But there were some guests when the soldiers were there, some Americans, and they were amazed. Because you know we had wine and liquor and the only thing the soldiers wanted was the orange juice and cold drinks. They were surprised because soldiers you know; anyway, then came *Shabbat*. *Shabbat* was gonna be in the synagogue near Talbiya. The speaker who was to read the *parashat ha'Shavua* [portion of the Torah] was to be Y.H. And that Thursday he said to my husband that he's coming. We come to *shul* [synagogue], he's not there. So one of our friends, he was knowledgeable, he gave the *parashat ha'Shavua*. Another friend of ours, who was in the chemical department of the Haganah [the core of the Israeli Defense Forces, IDF], he came to *shul* [synagogue] –

H.: Of the Haganah or Tsahal [special forces]? Of the IDF do you mean?

B.: Well it was Tsahal.

H.: Yeah, right, IDF. [...]

B.: So he, all of a sudden I see he's not going to stay. He came to *shul* and all of a sudden he's not there. What happened was they called his wife, and they call them up, because they needed him. And she says he's at a *bar mitzva*. And they say, "*Geveret* [lady]! There's a war on!"

H.: There is a war!

B.: I mean it hadn't started yet but you know, everybody was mobilized. So he says you better go to *shul* and tell him to leave immediately. And she did. And that's why he wasn't there.

H.: [Chuckles] Ok.

B.: Then, we did have a reception in the morning, for the people who came to the synagogue. They came for lunch. And then in the afternoon the woman [caterer] came. When she was riding home there was shooting at us.

H.: *Shabbat*?

B.: They were shooting at us. Probably a sniper. And that made a hole in the table cloth. Now that type of cloth, [the caterer] kept it, and she used it when my younger son was *bar mitzva*!

H.: [chuckles] With the hole.

**THE WAR BEGINS**

B.: Anyway, Monday morning came along. [...] Monday morning some friends were leaving for Tel Aviv and they wanted my husband to pick up their daughter from school. I turn on the radio, it's 8 o'clock in the morning, and the war had started. I called my friends immediately, they were on their way to their car, they were going to Tel Aviv, so that was changed. And at 8 o'clock it had already started. Then we decided to go to the shelter, at our neighbors. And I left the shelter for a while because somebody had to make a call and just then my husband calls me and he says, "Don't worry, we just shot 104 airplanes. Out of commission, in Egypt."

H.: He already knew it?

B.: He was a journalist.

H.: Right. Because nobody knew it.

B.: He was a journalist. So I didn't believe him! I thought he was joking. He says, "No it's true. You can tell them that they can quiet down." Our son was in second grade at the time, and he says to the teacher – oh, they didn't know whether to send people home from school. But then they did, parents were coming and taking out their children. My little son was then in second grade, said to the teacher, "But my father can't come because he's a journalist and he has to work." But he did. He came, he even took the teacher home. So I told the people in the shelter and we all felt much better. But I still have shrapnel here. I have some. Did you ever see shrapnel?

H.: Not in real life.

B.: It fell in our garden, and it went in our neighbor's house, right through the refrigerator. And also, in shelter, it fell between two people.

H.: Wow.

B.: Didn't hurt them.

H.: That's good. You keep it here? (*Rustling sounds in the background*)

B.: If I can find it –

H.: Oh! Wow!

B.: That's what gets into people's bodies.

[B. hands H. a piece of Shrapnel]

H.: Wow. This is from '67. It's so heavy.

[Interruption due to a phone call]

B.: Then, oh, and our daughter had to stay with a friend of hers after school because she couldn't get home. Oh, and you know, we were, Egypt told Jordan that, you know, they should get into Tel Aviv and they should get into the fray. Abba Eban<sup>2</sup> sent a telegram to Jordan to tell them not to shoot, but they did. And we told our soldiers not to shoot back, because we were still trying not to have a war with Jordan. But they, their mortars.

This is history.

And then they, they call us occupiers. They started the war!

H.: Yeah of course, but you know, yeah [...] Anyway, do you remember the weeks before, after *Yom Ha'atzmaut*<sup>3</sup> and the [...]?

B.: Oh sure, it was terrible. Everybody was being called up and there were no men around. We women organized to work in the grocery shop because the owner was mobilized. So we took turns in going to the shop and helping his wife there, to sell the produce. And there was nothing to buy. Because we couldn't get the stuff in.

#### **THE TIME IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE WAR**

H.: How early did the mobilization start before the war began?

B.: Oh I don't know. At least a month before I think. I don't know, that I don't know. But I know that everybody was disappearing. And that's why we called it off because there'd be no point.

H.: Do you remember what you felt during these weeks before the war?

B.: That we would win.

H.: Really?

B.: Oh yeah, we always felt that, we always felt that. The only thing I feel bad about being here was that if anything happened to me, my parents would be, you know [...] it would be a tragedy for my parents. But otherwise we weren't scared really. And we all ran home because the, what's-his-name Herzog, Chaim Herzog<sup>4</sup> appeared on television. And he was wonderful. He gave us all such courage. And they were saying, the song [...]. Something *Lo Mefahed Mi Nasser*.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Abba Eban served as Israel's Foreign Minister at the time.

<sup>3</sup> *Yom Ha'atzmaut* – Israel's Independence Day. In 1967, it was in the middle of the military parade of the day that news about Egypt moving army forces towards Israel's borders reached Prime Minister Eshkol.

<sup>4</sup> Chaim Herzog, later a president of Israel, was a military commentator on Kol Israel radio during the Six-Day War.

<sup>5</sup> B. is referring here (although not accurately) to the Hebrew song: *Nasser Mechake leRabin* (Nasser is awaiting Rabin), which became very popular after the war as a victory song.



H.: Ahh! (Sings in Hebrew).

B.: Yeah, something like that. [...] No, we all felt very confident, he was wonderful, Chaim Herzog.

H.: That's interesting. So you felt secure.

B.: No, I don't know. [...] We continued. And everybody was helping out, and you know, neighbors, some people were putting sandbags at the windows.

H.: Sandbags. So this was just before the war and then the war [...]?

### VISITING THE WESTERN WALL

B.: Yeah, and [...] then on *Shavuot*,<sup>6</sup> this was very exciting, everybody went up to the wall. And you saw people mingling. And you have the *haredim* [ultra-Orthodox] and the *bilonim* [secular], and the girls half-dressed, and those, and everybody was together.

H.: Going to the Wall [Western Wall]?

B.: We had walked up; there was a new path made. They had built a new road.

H.: Do you remember where it was?

B.: Well it led up – was it up to Har Zion [Mount Zion]? I think it led up to Har Zion.

H.: Like from Jaffa Gate up to Har Zion?

B.: And they had cleared up the *kotel* [Western Wall] already.

H.: Already? By *Shavuot*?

B.: Sure. It was [...] it was really exciting. And my husband went immediately because he had a pass. So he was up to [...] he was there [...]

H.: But this is the first time you had visited the wall? On *Shavuot*?

B.: Yeah. [...] It was very exciting. I mean everybody together. The women with the men, and everybody was mixing, it was really something. In a way, though, I felt a little sad, because so many people had been killed. And I wondered if it really would make a difference.

H.: Then? You remember yourself thinking that?

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<sup>6</sup> *Shavuot*, a Jewish festival (Feast of Weeks) commemorates the revelation of the Torah on Mt. Sinai to the Israelites, held on the 6th (and usually the 7th) of *Sivan*, fifty days after the second day of Passover. It is one of the three biblically based pilgrimage holidays also associated with the grain harvest in the Torah.

B.: Yeah, I remember thinking that.

H.: And what did you see when you went there, other than these people.

B.: We had been to the wall once before. Because when we came in '47 the British were here. And it was just a little *simta* [alley], a little alley. And the Jews weren't allowed to even blow the *shofar* [ram's horn] there, but they did. They used to hide the *shofar* when the British were there, and blow it, and the British would look around for whom to arrest, but they would pass it on immediately. It was just a very narrow alley. By then, the whole thing was cleared already.

H.: So when you went back, it wasn't the same, it was different. So did you feel something about the new site that was in front of you now? I mean it wasn't the same, it looked different.

B.: It was different. The wall was there but – well yeah, but can you imagine, we were all surprised because there was this big *rachava* [courtyard], this big square now. And there [had been earlier] just a small alley. No, it was really thrilling. It was something unbelievable. I mean, I don't think you can even express the feeling. The same thing when they announced the state. I mean, to think that I've lived to say. You're brought up as a child all the time, you know, somebody spoke here once, and she said, "You know I envy you people." Because we're all people. She said, "When I hear you talk about the days when it began," she said, "We don't have that feeling. I was born into it."

H.: You're right.

B.: It's an amazing feeling, because you're brought up all your life, about going to the wall, going to Jerusalem, and all of a sudden – there it is.

[...]

#### **REMEMBERING ENCOUNTERS WITH ARAB PEOPLE – BEFORE INDEPENDENCE AND LATER**

H.: And do you remember talking to people in America about it, people were coming [...] to help? Do you remember people?

B.: [...] A lot of volunteers came. And they were terribly disappointed. There was nothing for them to do anymore. The whole war was six days. And they [...] they said to Rabin. In fact they were almost angry. And Rabin said, "Unless you live here, you'll always miss it."

H.: [Chuckles] You remember him saying this?

B.: Oh yeah. [...]

H.: And did you see, like, people who lived there, Arabs? Do you remember them or [...]?

B.: Well we lived in Talbiya<sup>7</sup> when we first came –

H.: Ah ok.

B.: And we had an Arab landlord, who was a very fine man, he was a doctor. In fact we didn't have any food – this was just before the War of Independence – we didn't have any food, we were cut off. We had nothing to eat, we were hungry. And he'd go to the market in the Old City and buy food. Well one day he came with eighty eggs for us, and we went around and distributed to all our friends. Especially one woman, she was pregnant so she had to lie in bed. And then one day I meet him and he's carrying tomatoes. He says, "I would have brought you tomatoes but Americans don't like tomatoes." [Chuckles] I didn't say anything to him. But we lived in Talbiya, we lived very nicely with the Arabs, they were Christian Arabs. And in fact, when they blew up the Jerusalem Post, my husband was there, my Arab landlord was the first one to run over at 7 o'clock in the morning in pajamas to find out what happened.

H.: Because your husband worked in the Jerusalem Post?

B.: Yeah, it was the Palestine Post then. And it was blown up.

H.: But he ran to your apartment to find out or to the office to find out?

B.: He lived near us, and he ran in and – first he sent his wife [...]

H.: To see if everything is ok, right?

B.: Yeah, and the Arabs ran away from Talbiya because they were told that we were going to do something to them, which wasn't so. We lived very nicely with them. They were Christian Arabs. And he was warned by the *Mufti* [Islamic jurist] too. He told him, he was, he was afraid of the *Mufti*.

[Conversation shifts to B.'s husband's photography and a memorial booklet with photos taken by him at the time of independence-]

### THE RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN *SHAVUOT* 1967 AND WINNING THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE IN 1948

H.: Ok. So going back to this event in *Shavuot*, which I hear so many people talking about, this [...]

B.: It was something [...] an experience you couldn't [...]

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<sup>7</sup> Talbiah is an upscale neighborhood; before 1948, most of its houses were owned by upper class, mostly Christian Arab families.

H.: I'm trying to, to get closer to this experience, so [...]

B.: Well you're just very excited and you don't believe it.

H.: Yeah but –

B.: A miracle.

H.: It is a miracle.

B.: Absolutely. Absolutely. And the War of Independence was even more of a miracle. We had 24 guns in Jerusalem, and one of our friends had a gun, and he said to himself (28), “But it doesn't shoot.” He says, “I know, but would you feel safer not having anything in your hand?” That was really a miracle. The War of Independence, when all the Arab countries around us were surrounding us.

[B.'s son D.L. arrives, the conversation turns to his memories of 1967.]

#### **THE BEGINNING OF THE SIX-DAY WAR AS EXPERIENCED BY A THEN EIGHT-YEAR-OLD BOY**

H. to D.: What do you remember of [...]

D.: The war?

H.: Yeah of the '67 war. When you were eight.

D.: I was eight. Yeah, I remember when I went to school that same morning, and all the parents were coming, picking the kids from school. And when the war started 10 o'clock, around ten o'clock –

B.: 8 o'clock. 8 o'clock in the morning was the first shot.

D.: No.

B.: I called the Staffers (neighbor's family name) not to leave.

D.: I remember parents taking their children before the sirens. [...] We didn't have radio, but the siren was about 10 o'clock I think. So when the siren came on, we went to the shelter – wasn't exactly a shelter it was like a cave, something like that. I remember, like a [...] cave. It was a big hole under the ground, something like that. Still, parents were coming and picking up the kids, and I was left there and I started crying because [...] the teacher asked me, “Why are you crying? Your parents are going to come.” I said my father is a correspondent so he went to the war, so no one would come and pick me up until the war ends. But after a while my father came, he couldn't come because there was bombing [...] and *pagazim* [cannon balls] and borders, all kinds of stuff. So he picked us up and he took the teacher home and he left us.

[...]

So we came back home and we went to the shelter –

B.: And he took the teacher home.

H.: Yeah, he even took the teacher home.

B.: Abba [Aramaic word for father] continued with the teacher, he left us [...] we had to climb the mountain.

H.: Oh.

D.: And I remember we were in the shelter at night, and we would hear – we have the armory next to us [...] – and they were going, “One two, three, fire!” Boom. Boom. We would say, “This is ours, this is coming in. This is going out.” All night you could hear, “One, two, three, boom. One, two, three, fire.” And at night, one of the nights, mortar [...]

H.: Who? What? [The shrapnel] This is it. You have the [...] she kept it.

D.: Yeah it fell –

B.: That was in our garden.

D.: It fell right exactly in our neighbor’s garden and it was a big “boom!” And I was feeling like everything –

B.: Like everything was falling apart.

D.: Falling apart and becoming a net, like a net of, that was my –

B.: Yeah I felt that way too, as if where we were sitting was like a net separating –

D.: And the guy in the other shelter, he woke up and he had this under his ear. [Gestures toward shrapnel]

H.: [Exclaiming] Ouch, really.

B.: And it went through the refrigerator.

D.: [...] I remember Abba taking me out to the toilet, we didn’t have toilets in the [shelter], so he took me up to the toilet. And I could see the fire, *pshev!*

H.: Wow. Do you remember how many days you stayed at the shelter?

D.: Three days I think.

H.: Three days. And then?

D.: Because on the third day we captured the Old City and everything, and I remember seeing planes in the sky – mirage in the sky – went out once in a while to see what’s happening. [...] We saw a mirage!

H.: Do you also remember the first time that you went to the Old City? I think you went together right?

D.: Yeah.

H.: All of you.

B.: It was on *Shavuot*.

D.: We didn't walk through. A lot of people walked, I don't remember us walking on *Shavuot* in the Old City.

B.: We went.

[Slight laughter]

D.: But I remember going to the *Har Habait* [Temple Mount], to the mountain [...] *Har Habait*.

H.: When? When? Like [...]

D.: Several days afterwards and it was easy to go up.

H.: Yeah so it's the wall and the Mount of Olives. [Murmurs].

D.: Yes. We went to the Mosque of –

H.: You went up to the Dome? It was open?

D.: We went into the Dome.

H.: Nobody told you that it's not allowed, it is allowed [...]?

I.: You went inside?

[Cacophony of voices]

B.: No they didn't [...]. Into the Dome of Omar.

I.: You went inside?

D.: We were inside the mosque.

I.: Oh.

H.: I think that in the beginning –

I.: You were allowed in?

H.: Even me, I remember myself –

[B. and D. go on to remember how they visited Palestinian cities right after the Six-Day War.]

**NOTHING HAS CHANGED**

H.: But when you look at these times, do you think that you were just naïve, or [...] How do you [...]

D.: We were in a – how do you say in English? – Euphoria.

B.: Euphoria.

D.: Euphoria, from the victory.

B.: Oh yeah, it was a feeling –

D.: We thought we could do everything. Some people would say we did some mistakes [...]. Leftists would say this type of mistakes, rightists would say this type of mistakes.

B.: [...] I just read an article, that the Lubavicher Rabbi was against the Bar-Lev line<sup>8</sup>. Building, to build it, the Bar-Lev line. He thought it was a bad idea. And we thought we were so strong, with the Bar-Lev line, nothing could penetrate. And I used to say, “Don’t say that.”

H.: No, but the thing is that not, I mean, a few months later you had bombing in Jerusalem. You remember that?

D.: Bombing of Jerusalem we had even before.

H.: Yeah, before and then after. I mean, nothing was [...]

B.: We had a lot of mortars in Jerusalem.

H.: Right.

B.: The War of Independence, I remember we were coming back from the post. As the car passed the mortar fell there. And once I went to get our ration of two slices of bread, and my husband didn’t want me to go, and I went. And just half a block away a mortar fell.

H.: No I’m saying, nothing has changed. Nothing has changed after the 1967 war.

B.: I just found a letter I wrote in 1947, two months after we arrived.

H.: Okay.

B.: I could have written it today. I read the letter, I could have written it today.

H.: So what does this mean?

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<sup>8</sup> The Bar-Lev line was a chain of fortifications built along the Suez Canal by the Israelis right after the Six-Day War.

B.: The people have changed but nothing has changed.

H.: But right after the '67 war, I think people thought that things have changed, no? I mean you had this feeling that something is –

D.: It was a good feeling, everyone was happy, we are strong, we could do everything. In six days we destroyed the armies of three states. Egypt, Syria and Jordan.

B.: Look, even in the War of Independence, we had nothing, we didn't even have ammunition. We didn't have shelters. In the War of Independence.

D.: And the rightists would say we could take all the Palestinians and throw them back to Jordan and have no problems anymore. And the Leftists would say we should have given everything back again and then we would have peace.

B.: Well Ben-Gurion then wanted to give back, he wanted to give back. So we gave back.

H.: But still going back to these days, I'm trying to [...] maybe about your feelings [gestures to son], because Ima [Aramaic word for mother] – Ima, can I? – just told me that she felt as if it was a miracle, and just going back to the wall.

B.: I felt a little sad because I didn't know what would happen.

H.: Yeah, you felt? After '67? That's interesting.

B.: Yeah, because so many people were killed [...]. [Indiscernible] for that matter Ammunition Hill. Because we didn't want to bomb the holy places, we lost how many boys there? Seventy?

[...]. So many boys were killed. Because we didn't want to bomb the holy place. And look at what Syria's doing to their own country.

[...] Look, it's even a miracle that the Jewish people existed this long, because everybody else has disappeared. Except the Jewish people.

H.: Yeah [...] I'm trying to see what is unique about the '67 war. Is there something unique?

[...]

D.: Yeah you could see it was kind of a miracle. [...] I mean the religious people would say, "Yes it's a miracle," and that's why on *Kaftet beEayar* (29th of Eayar) which is the day that we captured the Old City, we say, "*shebechyanu*" [Jewish thanksgiving prayer]. It's like a miracle day. Like *Hanukkah*, same thing.



[The conversation turns to visits to archeological sites with foreign guests, marketing encounters with Arabs in markets and traces of knowledge regarding where Arab neighbors from before 1948 moved to.]

### PEACHES FOR CATCHING A GLIMPSE OF TV

B.: Do you want to add something about the '67 war, about you? Maybe you want to [add] something important that we should know?

D.: Did you tell them about Oren's Bar Mitzvah?

B.: Yeah, this was how we began. Because it was something [...] wow. Ok, so [...]

D.: We had – right after the war – there was the first television broadcast. And it was black and white, and it was just – we could receive Jordan. Jordan already had televisions so we could receive Jordan in Arabic. After the Six-Day War they had a song called *Biladi*. *Biladi* is “my country.” My city, my country. And it goes [sings], “*Biladi, biladi, biladi, biladi biladi biladi*.” For hours. They were just singing *Biladi* – that Jerusalem was taken from them, and *biladi biladi* they would take it back, and *biladi biladi*. That's the song we saw, all day long we were listening to *Biladi*. And the first Israeli broadcast started in '68, with Haim Yavin<sup>9</sup> – which just finished last week – and I remember we didn't have a TV, only our neighbor had a TV. And he would ask people to bring him things – presents – so we could see TV. So he would tell me, “You want to see broadcast? Bring me a peach from your tree in the garden.”

B.: I didn't know that.

H.: [Chuckles] See! Interesting.

D.: I wanted to see TV and I sat, and there was no broadcast. All I could see was this round thing, do you remember that?

H.: Yeah of course.

D.: The round thing. I would sit and look at the round thing for a peach. That was our TV.

B.: What did you see?

D.: When they don't have a broadcast they have this kind of picture.

H.: I think that [broadcast] only a few hours a day, so most of the day.

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<sup>9</sup> Haim Yavin is one of Israel's leading news presenters, associated with TV news since its beginning and for many decades.

D.: Yeah so most of the time I would give him peaches and see this round thing on TV.

B.: No wonder we didn't have enough peaches!

D.: No, no, only maybe once or twice. Sorry but I [have to leave].

[D. has to take leave. Goodbyes are exchanged.]

B.: The things you learn [...] I didn't know! I thought the neighbors were being very nice! [Laughs]

H.: But it's interesting, really, that television also started just after '67. Did you feel that something was opening up for us here in Israel after '67?

B.: I don't know because I always felt that you don't predict about what happens here. You can't predict in the Middle East. I mean who would predict that we would win the war? I'm even more amazed now that we exist. And the connection that Jews have with each other all around the world, there's no other people like that. [...] It's amazing, it's a miracle.

## **INTERVIEW WITH A.Mf. (MALE)**

NOVEMBER 2018

INTERVIEWERS: REGINA F. BENDIX (R) AND SARAH ABU ARAFE (S)

At the time of the interview, A.Mf. was 64. He is a Christian Palestinian living in Ramallah. A. welcomed the two interviewers into the living room of the family's apartment in a quiet, pleasant neighborhood of Ramallah, having given final instructions on how to find the location via telephone as Sarah drove. A.'s wife also greets us and brings tea and cookies; the couple's youngest daughter – through whom Sarah had been able to establish the contact – says hello and later leaves. Neither of the two women stays to listen in. A little white dog calms down after the initial welcome barking and stays with A. on the couch to be cuddled for almost the whole interview; a white cat visits as well. We sit on sofas in a room leading out to a small balcony, the TV gets turned off once we start recording.

A. remembers his youth in Ramallah before the 1967 war in a quite well-to-do business family. The first sign of the imminence of war stands out acutely: the Jordanian military vehicles in a place where he and his friends used to go to play had vanished. Other incidents of the flight that he experienced when he was thirteen have edged themselves into his memory, even though the war remains to him a non-war. From his present vantage point as a successful business owner who travels with ease to the USA and elsewhere, his reasons for staying in Ramallah are stated clearly: it is his home and, while not politically active otherwise, staying is his act of resistance. Increasing difficulties, up to the Second Intifada, to maintain his flower shop led him to close it after a particularly harrowing effort to get fresh flowers for

a wedding across the border. As of the date of the interview, he remained a firm believer in a two-state solution.

After familiarizing ourselves with one another, the interview begins. A. speaks excellent English and hence the interview was conducted in English.

A.: My name is A.Mf. Born and raised in Palestine.

R.: What year were you born?

A.: I was born 1954. So I'm pretty old. Went to French school.

R.: Here in Ramallah?

A.: Yeah, and that's about it.

R.: So you did all your schooling up to the end of High School in the French school?

A.: Yeah, in the French school. I was supposed to go to the States. You know to finish college. But my father, at that time, he never wanted me to go, because he knew if I left I wouldn't come back. So I stayed here, I helped him. We had a flower shop. And I was more interested in landscaping. And I started doing landscaping. For quite a bit of time. I did beautiful gardens. [He mentions one of them which still is the site of his major business].

R.: Ah, your business.

A.: Yeah, and I have had so many opportunity to go to the States. My wife is an American. Or I could have left – in 1977. But I didn't feel like going.

R.: Aha, how did you the two of you meet?

A.: I was friends with her. And she used to travel a lot. And [both laugh].

R.: One thing led to another. So that means you didn't go to college, you went right into the business and trained on the job.

A.: Yes, yes, yes. Unfortunately. You know. Though I did have a scholarship. Full scholarship. In the States. But as I told, you, my father was a bit – kind of strict in a way.

R.: Were you an only child?

A.: No, I have a younger brother as well. And I have three sisters. Two older than me and one is the youngest. The oldest lives in Cambridge, England. The second one, she lives in Nazareth. And the youngest, she's here. In Ramallah. And my brother in Jerusalem.

R.: And did your brother get to go to America?

A.: Yeah, actually he did go to the States with my parents. When they decided to go back in 1980. Still, I refused to go. So they went, they didn't like it. They came back. [A. and R. both laugh] Actually, I've been going back and forth to the States since 1998. I decided to go to the States, as an immigrant – applied for it.

R.: A visa.

A.: I did get it; I went to the States, I think, for only six months. I couldn't wait to come back.

R.: Seriously?

A.: Yeah, so I came back.

R.: Can you express what it was?

A.: Up until now I just came back. Like a week ago. From the States. I was there for a month. It's beautiful, it's nice, it's well organized, it's clean, it's – everything is perfect. That's what I don't like about it [everyone laughs]. On top of that, you're just a number over there. Basically. Really. I was in Houston for a while. And never got to meet anybody. Everybody – they leave their homes out of their garages! You know, they come back into their garages. It's so hard. In the winter it's so cold. New York, it was different. I felt – I could manage to live in New York. [. . .] You know it's livelier. [...] California is something else. If you can afford it. It's nice. I have a daughter who lives now in San José. I have another daughter who works in an Air BnB. In San Francisco. And as I told you. I just came back [from visiting] them. I have a son who lives in Colorado. Colorado is beautiful – it's amazing. But it's nothing like here. I don't know what it is. But I feel here, you know, everybody knows me. [...]. It's small. You [run your] errands, you know, quite easily and all. In the States it's like a project. Even going shopping.

R.: [laughs] That's true. You shop for the whole week because it's such a bother to go.

A.: On top of that. It happened, my son, he lives up in the mountains. So he's like an hour's drive away from the nearest city. Far. [...]. Up in the mountains and snow. [...]. It's such a beautiful place. Ok to spend a week, two weeks. A month it's nice, but I wouldn't live there.

R.: Yeah. It gets very cold in the winter, too. So, you have three children? Or do you have more?

A.: I have four. Three girls and a boy. D., she's here with us [...]. She's here, she's helping me. Hopefully, I convinced my son to come back.

R.: The one in Colorado?

A.: Yeah, I think he's really thinking about it – considering it.

R.: And entering the business also?

A.: Yeah, the business is excellent. It's – I'm doing good. I only work six months. I am hoping, when he comes back, I'm gonna do something for the winter. But I couldn't keep it running also in the winter time. [...]. We're doing fine.

### 1967

R.: So, let us go to that time that is the focus of our project. Which is the 1967 war. So, if you were born '54 you were 13.

A.: Yeah, I was 13. I recall very clearly what was going on. It was –

R.: Can you take us through it?

A.: Yeah, of course. It wasn't really a war. You know, there was a withdrawal from the West Bank. Way before the war started. In our old house there was a military camp. Inside our house. Now, it's the headquarters for the water campaign. Yeah, and that was military or the army base. They had a camp, you know, tents and stuff like that.

R.: The Jordanians?

A.: The Jordanians. And [the withdrawing] was very very clearly [happening], because like two weeks before the war started, we used to take our bicycles and go around and ride our bicycles in the compound. Where it was tracked, you know. Then [our] pathways, we had stones and vines and stuff like that [which made bicycling difficult]. And we were just playing around. And I have an aunt who lives in Jordan now. And she is the one who actually delivered King Hussein and Hasan. She was the midwife. She was very close to the Hashemite court.<sup>1</sup> And she did tell us – way before the war – there was something going on or there's gonna be a kind of change. And then, two weeks before the war – they were clearing that compound, everything was gone, no police, no soldiers, no army at all. And it was Monday, I never forget that, it was Monday when the war started in 1967. We stayed for another two to three days before my grandma came from town. We were on the outskirts of town. And my grandma, she came and she was, you know, hysterical! [...]. There were rumors that all the Israelis [were] there in Betunia, which is like a few miles away from Ramallah. And they were killing the men and they were raping the women. And they were burying houses and blablabla, you know. We could hear them – [...] the rumors. My father, at that moment, he decided on

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<sup>1</sup> The Royal Hashemite Court is the primary body regulating the relationship between the King of Jordan and the Jordanian people.

our house. Let's just get out. And so, my father, he used to work for the Near East Christian Society (NECC),<sup>2</sup> and it was the base, it was in Jerusalem but they had a lot of projects in Jenin and [...] even in Jerash.<sup>3</sup> All over. And we had two cars, so we packed, whatever, the necessary, basically important documents and papers and stuff like that. And we just left.

R.: Where to?

A.: To Amman. And, of course, we [were] gonna take the main roads. Which actually everybody [tried].

R: Ah!

A.: And that was hard. So, my Dad, because he was with the British air force back in the 50s, he knew all of the tactics and stuff like that. So, he decided to go [a different route], which is what they call the winding road. And we took that road. And boy, what happened on that road! The brakes of the car that my Mom was driving just [...] there were no brakes [laughs]. So she, it was going uuh – and it was going pretty steep, so she had to – to do that – to drive in first gear on the way down. Doing that you know, [creates a] lot of stress on the motor, the [...] belt just broke. And so, the car overheated as well. And then my father – he was quite a mechanic as well, you know. He took my Mom's – what you call – eh underpants?

R.: [laughs] The stockings?

A.: The stockings. And he wrapped them around and tied them to build a belt. And it worked. And we got to [relative safety]. The time we got there, it was a dark [and we had to] wait. So, we got out of the cars and we hid in the bushes. For maybe half an hour, until everything was ok. And then we kept on driving to Amman. On the way, there were two roads. One is the south road that you go towards the south and then to Amman. And the other road was the road [we took]. Which is now the main road when you cross the bridge and you leave to Amman. And that road, it's in bad surroundings. There are no trees, actually – if nobody was on that road, everybody was taking cover on the other road. And every single car that went on that road, it was bombed. Napalm. And we reached Amman, it was pretty dark. And we stayed at my aunt's house.

R.: The midwife?

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<sup>2</sup> A.Mf. probably means the Near East Council of Churches, founded in 1952, which launched a humanitarian program to assist Palestinian refugees.

<sup>3</sup> Jerash is a city where a refugee camp for Palestinians was established; a large number of refugees came from Gaza. At the time of this writing, it still registers more than 29,000 Palestinian refugees (<https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan/jerash-camp>, accessed March 22, 2020).

A.: Yeah, you know. Eh [...], I remember, we weren't allowed to listen to the Israeli radio. My father [tried] to listen to news and what's happening. Anyway, because my father used to work with the NECC, he decided we [had to go to a] house in one of the projects that we could go to. It was in Jerash. So the next day, he decided let's go to Jerash. And on the way we got to Suela, it's like a small town on the outskirts of Amman. By the time we got there, there was another air raid. So we did – actually we were ushered, you know this way that way and then we were like in a police station. And we hid in one the trenches. We could see the planes coming. They did shoot the plane down. Or, after maybe 10–15 minutes, it was calm, we wanted to hit the road again. There was this old man coming, blood coming down out of his head and face. What's wrong, what's wrong? You know [we] started treating him, you know. It seems he had a fight with his wife and she hit him with a shoe [everyone laughs], or something, because he wanted to go out and she didn't want him to go out, you know. We thought it was from the air raid! [laughter]. [...]. So we got into the cars and we were heading towards Jerash. But on the way there, it was amazing how many military vehicles there were on the road. There were Syrians, Iraqi and Jordanians. You could tell from [...] the flags. And they were actually leaving. They weren't coming back. They were leaving their positions and heading to Daraa, all the way up to the north and Syria and Jordan. It's the border between Jordan and Syria.

R.: So we're talking day three?

A.: Day three, four. And we stayed in Amman or in Jerash for like a week. It was nice, nothing over there because it's out nowhere. There was a nice, I would say stream [...]. We used to go down there for fishing. There was no war in that particular area. Sometimes you heard a plane passing by, but you know. We stayed for like a week and then we came back to Amman, 'cause the head of the NECC, he was a foreigner.

[...].

A.: So we stayed in this house. It was the boss's house. For quite a bit of time. And then of course we started hearing a lot of rumors about what's going on in the West Bank. And all the Israelis come into the empty houses. And they are actually [...] occupying the empty houses, using them for their, eeh [own] activities. So, my father, he tried to get us back to Ramallah. And the only way to get back, was to cross the river. And there is a place where the water is shallow. But at that time, the water, it was up my neck! You know I was 13, I don't know how tall I was

R.: It was deep.

A.: It was deep. At that time the Israelis didn't steal the river. They didn't block the water. So there was quite a bit of water. We managed to cross



R.: But left the cars [...]?

A.: And left the cars and my dad he stayed over. Thinking he'd come back in. Which he tried, I'll get to that. He came back with his friends. But us coming in we had to cross a certain area in a certain period of time, because the patrol car just passed. And we have to make it in 10 to 15 minutes up the steep hill. That's the time this patrol car would come back. So, during that time –

R.: [...] you had to make it.

A.: [...] make this short trip, really fast. And we did. We were really exhausted. But quite a steep hill, I remember. Then we had to walk for a few hours until we got to Al-Auja. It's – now not there. Beside Jericho. There was of course fresh water, we cleaned ourselves, stuff like that. Then we managed to grab a taxi from Jericho to Jerusalem. They wouldn't come to Ramallah because of checkpoints and stuff like that. So we managed to get on a bus to come to Ramallah. And –

R.: And your house was still?

A.: My house it was, intact it was – nobody – nothing broken. Of course we had chickens, we had pigeons, we had goats, you know. The chickens, the neighbors, they [laughs] took a couple here, a couple there. I think they were barbecued [everyone laughs]. The goats the same. Except for my dog. I had a dog. When I was one year old, my father, he got the dog. He was like one month. And he stayed with us for a long time. And oh boy, the dog. When coming back – the first thing I was [...]

R.: [...] to look for the dog.

A.: Yeah, he went crazy. He was just running around, jumping and back and forth. He couldn't believe [we were back]. Two months.

R.: That's a long time. Long time.

#### **AFTER THE RETURN**

A.: That was the end of that. And then, we settled, and then there was the census going on. That's when my father needed to come back. So he came back with his friend, the pharmacist. And they crossed the river and they were going ahead. And then, all of the sudden, there was this Israeli patrol car that came. His friend, he turned around as if he wanted to go back to Amman. So [my father] started screaming at him, "Come back, come back." And they see him. So they got him in. My father, he was going into Ramallah, you know. They took my father back out. So my father, he went back to Amman [...]. All of the sudden, after a few days, my father meets one of his friends from Jericho in Amman. He was stuck in Amman, he wanted to come back. And,

“What you doing here, how’s the family?” [the friend asked]. “They’re already in Ramallah. I’m stuck here with two cars.” “That’s what we want, two cars!” They had some other people with them, seems they arranged a whole thing. And they took a case of whiskey. So, because once they get across, there would be a case of whiskey – go ahead! That’s what they did. So [my father] came back with the two cars and he was just thankful, you know. Oh that’s it – the few months after the war.

R.: That’s it. So it was two and a half months until he came. And then there was the census.

A.: About two and a half months, maybe three month later they had the census going on. We were lucky. We came back. My cousins, you know, they were scared to come across the river and walk all of that. Unfortunately, [...] they couldn’t make it. And like them hundreds and thousands, you know [...]

R.: [...] are still outside.

A.: Amman, when I was there, there was no school. It was, you know: What are you gonna do? So my Dad, he put me to work in one of the garages. Exhaust pipes. Getting paid, it was like shillings – I don’t know how much that is now. You needed twenty of them to make one shekel.

R.: So, but there was no danger to lose your property because you were coming back?

A.: We could have, yeah. Because a lot of people, up until now in Ramallah, there are so many homes that were occupied by the military forces. Who never expect – now after they left in ’94 that they hand them out, you know, back to their [...]

R.: [...] to their owners.

A.: The military house in Ramallah up until just recently, it was in the compound where Abu Masan is living now. You know it was right there, [...] not ours, but for his relatives. They’re in the States. It was also [houses of] people who were in Kuwait or the States. It was a lot of [...] houses that were occupied. By the Israelis. Because they say [...]

S.: It’s article 51, if you know it. That Israel imposed when – if someone is not here they take the [...]

A.: They protect [with irony]. They are the protectors. Of the property. Because there are absentees.

R.: But they are not protecting it for the absentees?

A.: No, no. On the contrary. [both laugh] Well, it seems that all of Palestine is absentees.

R.: Yeah, anger. So, you're back, you're still thirteen, the war is over. So there is no school yet, you're helping with work. When did things begin to normalize?

A.: To settle down. You know it took a while because people weren't, you know, happy with what's going on.

R.: Of course.

A.: A lot of people, relatives, are away, a lot of people who couldn't make it back, it was pretty chaotic the first six months I would say. Even the first winter. But slowly, slowly we got used to it. Or we got sucked into the new situation. The Israelis, they flooded the market. With a lot of products. [Stuff that] wasn't there, like during the Jordanian time. From cloth, even vegetables, to a lot of things. For people, they got more into becoming [consumers] – and using the situation for their own benefit. They accepted the Israelis as commercial business [partners]. But up until now, of course, nobody accepts them as a legal status. My Mom's house! Imagine, after '67 [Palestinians] were deported or they fled in 1948. After '67, in like three months, four months later, you know, we could go in and out. [My Mom] wanted to go and visit her old house. And there was a Jewish lady.

R.: Living there.

A.: Living there. And she told her. "No." "I just wanna go in and have a look at the house." She wouldn't let her in.

R.: She wouldn't let her in.

A.: She wouldn't let her in. It's [...]

R.: Painful.

A.: Yeah, it's really sad. Yes, this is.

R.: Where does she live now, your Mom?

A.: In Ramallah, here. Yeah.

R.: She is still well?

A.: Yeah, yesterday she came and she had lunch with us.

**FROM THE POST 1967 OPENING TO THE SECOND INTIFADA**

R.: Superb. So you're noting that the Israelis began bringing in goods and that shows up in a number of interviews as a sort of, ehm, positive thing, that was quite good, some say. We suddenly had access to various things then.

A.: Yeah, and you know, access. We had never been to a beach before, that was.

R.: Oh, you could actually go to the beach?

A.: We could go to the beach. And before 1967, we couldn't go to Gaza. Because – unless you have special permission. You used to go from Dhabi [...], they used to call it, in Jerusalem, behind the American consulate. That was the barrier. That was East Jerusalem and West Jerusalem. It was the only access in and out. And once a year they used to allow the Israeli Arabs to come and visit. You know, a special permit and I remember, they used to bring these plastic bags or baskets. It was made out of plastic. And in the middle of that there is the Star of David. They wouldn't let it in the Jordanian zone unless they cut the Star of David out.

R.: And everything fell out.

A.: As if it will be alright then. And then the Six-Day War happened and it all opened.

R.: So you could go to Gaza, you could go to Tel Aviv. Or anywhere.

A.: Yeah, it was – it was – people felt as if the war had opened up – which it did, in a way. Poor people, others who were left behind the river, that's a different story. Then in the earlier – in the 70s up until maybe the beginning of the 80s. You know, the whole West Bank was thriving. Because a lot of Israelis, they used to come [...] and spend a lot of money here. Because it's cheaper [...] than buying the same stuff on their side. Because they paid more taxes. Restaurants here, they used to work a lot, you know these vegetable places, the meat places, all of these had, you know, [plenty of business]. I don't know about cloth and stuff – on the contrary, we used to buy cloth from the other side. But the Israelis themselves, they used to come to – to Ramallah, Jenin, for the vegetables. Because our produce, it's more organic, it's more down to earth than what the Israelis produce you know. Up until now, you know, I know it for Nazareth, because my sister lives there – Once a week they go down to Jenin [...], it's quite close to them and they buy the vegetables and the eggs and the meat – you know, for the whole week.

R.: So that in a way that commercial exchange stayed [...]

A.: Yeah, even, even it stayed like this I think until I would say 2000. Then [came] the start of the Second Intifada. The second and I believe it wasn't

genuine, it wasn't an intifada. It was all orchestrated by the Israelis, you know. They created the whole mess. They imprisoned us for quite a bit of time. They did a lot of changes during that time, and route structure, how we go and where we go, all of that, you know. The First Intifada, it was something different. The First Intifada, it was genuine. It was out of the soul. People, they were really together. They looked for each other. Eh, find a stranger, you know, with his car broken down, you don't know him, you know you stop and help, you know. People, they opened their homes for other people, for giving classes, because universities were closed, schools were closed, it was different. The Second Intifada, I think, it was all orchestrated by the Israelis –

R.: In order to put more, more hindrances in the way?

A.: Exactly. And they succeeded, they succeeded unfortunately. Or how we're suffering. My resistance is just being here. I don't have to go and throw a stone or – I'm not capable, it's not gonna change a thing. But what will change you know – if I leave and she leaves and they leave and everybody leaves that's – that's where we go back. You know [...] Just being here is a resistance by itself.

R.: So that would tie to what you said in the beginning, that you know it's nice to hang around California but somehow you need to be here?

A.: Yeah, I was there for a month you know. I mean everyday going here and there and even sailing I went, you know. It was beautiful, I love it. But I would live, no I wouldn't live. And a lot of people "Ah, ah, what brings you back? You know I thought you go to the States, so I thought you won't come back." Of course I come back! [laughs] Because I belong here, that's how I feel. I don't belong over there. You know, I enjoy my time, I spend my money, I buy cloth, whatever you know. Fine. But I'm not, I'm not, you know. I can't see myself living in the States.

R.: When you fly, do you have to fly out of Amman?

A.: Yeah. Going to the States is much easier than going to Jerusalem.

R. & S.: [laugh]

A.: I'm willing to cross the bridge. I'm willing to being searched etc., etc. Spend ten hours in the plane or eleven hours in the plane. It's fine with me. But you know what, I haven't been to Jerusalem since 2005. Because the last time I was down there, the humiliation you go through, there, in the checkpoint – the Calandia checkpoint in particular – you know. You know I wouldn't do it. I have a permit, they give me a permit until, I don't know, next year some time. I wouldn't choose it, I wouldn't. I have a permit with which I could even stay in Jerusalem [unfolds a piece of paper], I could go all over except for Eilat.

R.: Except for Eilat?

A.: For Eilat. Time zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero. Yeah, it's open. You know, but I'm not gonna, I'm not willing to use it. A lot of times, I did go down to the other side. To Jaffa, to Herzliya, to Haifa whatever. Usually, I don't mind. I don't mind. Or even I don't have a permit, you know, but I do sneak in. It's no big deal. Now I have a permit, I wouldn't go through Calandia.

R.: You'd rather keep sneaking [laughs].

A.: Yep, [laughs] true.

R.: When you, when you, I mean you sort of have a contrast now, where you talked about until you were 13, this was the Jordanian time. And now you have this – the occupation, what do you remember of the Jordanian time? How did that feel in terms of liberties, in terms of –

A.: Well, the Jordan time, you know, to me, it wasn't bad. Because my father, he used to work with an NGO, you know. And he used to travel a lot or I used to go with him to Jerash, to Amman, I used to go even to Lebanon. We used to go to Syria, it's all, you know, in the car. We used to go to Turkey. You know, at that time. Of course, there was a border control, but it was ok. Passport. Easy, it isn't like that now. But here, life was simpler. During the Jordanian time, you know, it wasn't really this rush, rush, rush.

R.: Yeah, I mean this is a very busy town now, isn't it?

A.: Yeah, I mean it's going crazy, you know. I remember the street, it was all potholes [everyone laughs], from the beginning until the end, you know. There was nobody, nobody at the end of the street. [...] I have pictures of Ramallah, yalla, I should have them back there now, unbelievable. You know where [my business] is?

R.: I haven't been there.

A.: Ok. You haven't been. That was our place, our old house is there. You know. And then there is the main road all the way up there. Anybody coming down that road either he was coming to the slaughterhouse in front – opposite our house or to our house. There was nobody. Nobody. When we lived there, that was in '73. People used to tell us, you're living there with walls [words drowned in laughter]

R.: It was so isolated.

A.: Yeah, now we are in the middle of town.

R.: It has really exploded. And that happened when, where do you put the surge?

A.: The surge, I tell you, it was basically after the PA [Palestinian Authority] came which was in 1994. It started picking up basically '95/'96, that's when things started settling down and the boom era, I would say, started to pick up. And it stayed like this until 2000, then it slowed down, then it picked up actually 2005, 2006, it was after Arafat passed away. It was still really slow, icky, sketchy you know. 2005/2006 I think that's when it really picked up, you know. And I went to the States 2005. I stayed three months, I came back, I couldn't believe it. There were houses that were not empty anymore, all of the sudden people were living in them. You know and it –

R.: Incredible speed.

A.: It's becoming, pff, I hated, you know, all of these big buildings coming up, you know, all of the old houses. The municipality said they were not supposed to build there. People are going around it, whatever. For example, there is this small house, you are not supposed to knock it down. And they get a license to build around a house another house. So the [small] house stays inside – after that they knock it down. That's what is happening. A lot of the houses in Ramallah, they were built in like 1880/1890. You know, the Old City, you know. Ramallah more than Bireh. Ramallah was richer. You know, than the Bireh side.

R.: But who is behind all the building? I mean is there just a very strong drive to have more apartments here or – ?

A.: Ehm, no people, I tell you, there is, they don't like to keep cash. So they put it [...]

R.: In real estate.

A.: In real estate, yeah. And the latest census they did in Ramallah and its buildings, there are 40,000 empty apartments. I mean here, there is a new building coming up here you know it like 60 apartments. It's all empty.

[Further conversation about building and empty real estate]

R.: We talked about how it felt during the Jordanian Time and it, it was ok. And 1967 as a sort of brief boom opening, when you got to go to the beach or to visit the cities. We talked about resistance as staying but are there other emotional reasons for being here?!

A.: Yeah, of course. You know, I myself, I was born and raised here. This stays quite a big fact. Besides what's happening and what's going on. Still, I see it more [...] as a place where I belong. You know, though I, as I mentioned I don't like what's going on you know, all of these buildings, the tearing down the old buildings, replacing them with modern ones. But Ramallah, especially Ramallah, I mean, I don't know about other cities, but Ramallah to

me it's different. You know, maybe because I had a flower shop and it was the only flower shop until eh 1982. All of the weddings, all of the engagements, all of that, I was doing it.

R.: You had good business.

A.: Half of the town I married! [everyone laughs]

R.: That is a beautiful thing to do. So, the flowers and landscaping you don't do anymore, right?

A.: Not anymore.

R.: Because you have the [other business].

A.: Yeah. Well I, after, I tell you, after 19 – no after the First Intifada actually, I closed the shop. That's when we had eh the border control, that's when they started that you have to have a permit to go to Jerusalem and to get the flowers. Eh, a friend of mine, he wanted to get married and I wanted to get the flowers. And all of the weddings here, of course, they are on Sunday. And I got the flowers on Friday, 'cause the Jews they close on Saturday. So I ordered the flowers on the phone, 'cause we couldn't go to Jerusalem. I want this color, this etc., etc. Then I had to go to Calandia and get in touch with a guy on the phone, how to get the flowers across and on the cards and whatever. When I got the flowers, it wasn't the right color. That's not the color I wanted. So I couldn't get in touch with the guy 'cause I got the flowers Friday night and he was closed. So Saturday I couldn't do anything, but it was not the right order for these people. They want the different colors. So Sunday I had to call, they don't open early, so I had to call and the wedding of course is at 3:30 or at 4:00, you know. So I had to have all of these things ready before that time. The bridal bouquet and the bridesmaids, and the car and the church and all of that. It takes a lot of time to prepare. For hours, just battling for time, you know. And that was it, that was the last wedding I did.

R.: Did you manage?

A.: I did manage. Exactly, I finished the church, I had to get in from the side door, because you know people were coming in. And I said that's it, I closed the shop, I – I had the shop closed from September, that was the Intifada, or as they claim the Second Intifada, until 2012 I had the shop closed. But every day, of course, I go up to open the [...]

R.: [...] the shutters.

A.: The shutters. Or a lot of times I forgot to close them. I did change a lot of. Lot to do with our life. Not just me, a lot of people as well you know. I had a flower shop, but a lot of people, you know, they used to go and buy cloth or to buy whatever, you know, merchandise. Some people have the



yellow plates, that they can go in and out [into Israel], not like us. We have green cards. [...] You have to have a permit. As I showed you. It's –

R.: So your business is internationally known, I mean one finds you on the internet. The people with whom you do your business, where are they from?

A.: They are from all over, from all over. People are coming from Europa, the States, from Africa, it's quite divers. The beauty of what I do you know, we look at people the same, we even have Israelis who do come.

R.: Really?

A.: Yes, yes.

R.: And they sneak in or [laughs]

S.: Some of them have passports.

R.: That allow them to –

A.: No, no, I don't know, maybe you just have a look at the signs.

R.: The red signs?

A.: Yeah.

R.: I've seen those signs.

A.: They are all over. Wherever you go. If you really want to feel the sense of what the Israelis did with us now, you know, now actually, the settlers. You know. Before, it was a small settlement here, small settlement here, small settlement here, etc. Ramallah is a small settlement! One minute they could close the whole area. The same with the villages. If you go west of Ramallah or north of Ramallah – all of these villages, every single village, there is a huge yellow gate. And there is an outpost.

R.: Yeah, it's devastating.

A.: I don't believe in all the Israelis, they are really sincere about having peace. Probably because they spell it differently. They want the piece of Jordan, a piece of Lebanon, a piece of Syria. They already got the whole piece of Palestine.

[Everyone laughs]

R.: You have experienced so much, have you ever considered being politically active or is that just not your cup of tea?

A.: No, it's not my cup of tea. I don't know. I'm active in, in my own way, you know. If you check my Facebook, sometimes I get tense crossing the

bridge or coming back or [unclear] look what you did, look what you mentioned, look what you commented. Look what you share [everyone laughs].

[Discussion of a recent book]

R.: So you don't believe in a two-state solution. You see one state, with everybody having the same rights.

A.: Exactly, yeah. This is the only solution.

[Description of experiences in the USA]

R.: Well there is this little thing called religion.

A.: They should scrap it. I think, people, they need to understand, you know, life is short, seriously. It only takes a few words to have the love and the acceptance of each other. It's not the color, it's not the race, it's not the religion. It's the human being itself. I hope, and the people they put, as you said, religion aside. And treat each other as human beings. And that's all it takes.

[Description of the importance of family and of belonging]

A.: Exactly. And I, on top of what's happening and what's going on, I just love it here. No, seriously. I love it here. All, as I told you it's resistance. Just being here. No, I tell you I love the States. I drove from Harrisburg to Colorado, drove from [unclear] to San José. Beautiful, I tell you. But I wouldn't sell it for my home. Palestine is my home.

# Hallowed Hollows: Life Stories of Bereaved Women from the Six-Day War – From Personal Commemoration to Commemorative Shrines

*Bosmat Ibi Hardy*

## 1 Introduction

I can tell you that going to the Western Wall after the war was the most powerful thing, I felt euphoric and supreme joy, as well as grief and agony for our loss [...] It was very powerful. I remember feeling such extreme contrasts [...] that is one of the most vivid things I remember. (Widowed interviewee)

A total of 781 Israeli soldiers fell during the Six-Day War (Golan 1971). This paper focuses on what these deaths meant within the initial time after the war, which was characterized by feelings of national pride, joy and euphoria. The war and its aftermath continue to be at the center of public debate; its influence is still evident in politics, geography, economy and society both in Israel and the Arab world (Folman 2004; Tzameret and Yablonka 2000). The research in this article is based on the life stories and commemoration in words and material artifacts by women who lost a loved one (father, son, husband or brother) during this war. With the environment of general euphoria that prevailed in Israeli society immediately following the Six-Day War, the tension between national victory and personal loss was at its height, and, to a large extent, it is that tension which structures these stories of tragic loss and attempts to mitigate them.

After discussing the interpretive framework chosen, I will briefly describe the nature of the research and then examine how the work of grief and memorialization

unfolded for the women interviewed. I begin with the moment of actual loss, turn to the problematic funerals and then discuss how these individual women, each in their own way, created memorial practices involving objects and images in their homes to grieve for their loss.

## 2 Commemoration and Memory – Between the Collective and the Personal

Collective memory that focuses on the heroism of war is a powerful mechanism for forging a national identity. The young state of Israel, feeling its existence constantly threatened, views this collective memory of the heroism of war as a primary objective (Schuman, Vinitzky-Seroussi and Vinokur 2003). One of the main focuses in the creation of a collective memory, and particularly in Israel, is the commemoration of war casualties. This is manifested in a variety of ways: naming streets and sites after the fallen soldiers (Zerubavel 2016), writing poems about the fallen, erecting monuments and setting special dates on the calendar dedicated to the memory of fallen soldiers. Public commemoration emphasizes the heroism of self-sacrifice and how victory was achieved through that sacrifice (Azaryahu 1995; Shamir 1996).

After the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the national-military ethos began to disintegrate, and public debates ensued, led by bereaved parents demanding change regarding national commemoration of the fallen (Shamir 1996). However, the State of Israel agreed to only minor changes. A long and turbulent debate, for example, took place regarding the families' desire to personalize the tombstones of their fallen by adding personal texts or pictures. This practice was finally approved in 1995.<sup>1</sup> State law had stipulated that the purpose of commemoration is to create uniform criteria for national commemoration, as well as regulating the state's commemorative activities through the Council for Commemoration. This law, enacted in 1986, has yet to be changed, except for a few small adjustments that were made (The State Comptroller and Ombudsman of Israel 2013). The law prevents families from deviating from accepted commemoration activities in the public sphere. The bereaved families have submitted requests to the army and the Defense Ministry to be able to add a picture or personal words to the tombstones, but the state, via the Commemoration Department in the Ministry of Defense, refused these requests, stating uniformity of the fallen as a national rationale that must be adhered to. This refusal hinders the ability of bereaved families to express their grief in the public arena, assert private beliefs or otherwise communicate their story of personal grief (Guilat and Waksman 2014).

Bar-On explains the institutionalized attempt to disallow personal commemoration as a process of nationalist construction (2000). It accentuates the use of manipulation by the government and elites to legitimize their dominant status and establish

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<sup>1</sup> Bilu and Witztum (1999), Doron and Lebel (2006), Ivdozin, Almog and Paz (2008), Rosental (2001).

power in the future. In other words, in order to construct a hegemonic narrative, the events of the past are manipulated in the present to create the illusion of uniformity.

We have witnessed a break in the unanimity in recent decades, and the concept of military heroism has begun to be abandoned. This, in its turn, has led to changes in the ways of commemoration. As the myth of military heroism begins to disintegrate, the importance of national commemoration is decreasing and the importance of personal commemoration is increasing (Bilu and Witztum 1999; Ohana 1998; Rosental 2001). Guilat and Waksman (2014) looked at the physical appearance of military cemeteries, and found that there has been a change in the form of commemoration in the last few decades. It has taken on a less national dimension and become more personal-familial. These changes appear in the form of added personal inscriptions on the tombstones, or leaving personal objects or planting flowers near the graves. Many bereaved families also erect private memorials in their homes, commemorative shrines dedicated to their departed. The private memorials are a physical spot in the home, usually created by women (mothers, widows and orphans) who lost their loved ones during military service. These commemorative shrines contain pictures and personal belongings connected to both the life and death of the fallen family member.

### 3 Interview Contexts

My research is based on interviews conducted between 2016 to 2018. I carried out 13 in-depth interviews with family members of soldiers killed in the Six-Day War (five widows, three sisters and five orphans). The interviewees ranged in age from their early 80s to mid-50s. All the interviews were conducted in the homes of the family members. The interviews focused on the story of women's bereavement, from the moment they learned of the death until the present day. During the interviews, the women were asked whether they kept artifacts or commemorative objects connected to the fallen soldier in a space or a corner of their home. I used a broad definition of commemorative shrines, and included any commemorative sites in their home that contain physical objects symbolizing the fallen dead or their relationship with him. All the interviewees had private memorials or commemorative shrines, and they all agreed to show them to me. I was allowed to photograph their commemorative shrines<sup>2</sup>, and we discussed the meanings of the objects contained there. The interviews were highly emotional, characterized by intense grief for men who had died over fifty years ago, equally intense anger at the state authorities, and pride for the fallen's act of heroism. Due to the centrality of commemorative shrines, I attached great importance towards conducting the interviews in the women's homes. This allowed intimate conversations as we stood together in front of their personal commemorative shrines.

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<sup>2</sup> I have opted not to include such photographs so as to honor the intimacy encoded within them.

My own biography proved a sad yet helpful connection to the interviews. I am an orphan of the Yom Kippur War, a war that took place six years after the Six-Day War. My own experiences are what led me to explore the stories of bereaved families, hear the stories from other bereaved women, and understand how the void created by the death of a family member is then filled in the most intimate of places – the home. The two aspects, which are intertwined, involve observing the complexity of commemoration at home, and looking at the cultural characteristics and the dynamics which accompany them. To illustrate, I first present my own story and my connection to objects belonging to my belated father.

My mother's room contains a treasure. This information has been ingrained in me for as long as I can remember. From a very young age, I knew that our mother was hiding something important: "These are Daddy's things. Mommy won't let us touch them," my older brother explained to me. In one of the wooden cabinets, in a closed drawer, there was a box. I was always drawn to that box. I had a tremendous impulse to touch, feel, hug and smell that box. Without her knowledge, I used to regularly sneak into her room, trying to get to that box. I did not always succeed. When I had enough time, usually when no one was home, I would lock the front door, quickly sneak into her room, open the cupboard drawer and be alone with my father's belongings. These were powerful moments of sensory disorientation, as I closed my eyes and stroked the soft velvet. I imagined my father. Sometimes I could even feel him. That elegant velvet box was where my mother kept "Yehuda's things." She would not allow anyone access, not even her own children, ferociously guarding what was left of her late husband. In her own words, "Nobody else understands [...]." To this day, even though more than 40 years have passed, I dare not tell her of my familiarity with her treasure. Even now, long grown up, I dare not tell her of my actions. In those moments, when I had reached this Holy of Holies, I would open the box. The few objects within lay in silence on a bed of velvet. Military decorations. Several photographs, a penknife, a few faded pages with typed text, several colored stones and handwritten letters in my father's handwriting. I would arrange the objects on my mother's bed and lie there, surrounded by them. I would grasp the penknife, trying to imagine my father. These objects could not replace my father and did not fill the void that his death left in my soul. All they allowed me was to have an alternative relationship with the imaginary figure of my father. Since his death, I have forged a different kind of relationship with him: a transformation, a changing and developing relationship. The few objects and images that I have created provide me with a connection, and enable me to build a reality of my own, not dependent on my father's life but rather on the commemoration thereof.

This auto-ethnographic assessment is echoed – even to the point of using identical terms – time and time again in the interviews I conducted. My own experience opened my way into the homes and hearts of the interviewees. During the interviews, many women emphasized that only because the researcher is part of the "family of the bereaved," were they willing to be interviewed and were confident that their story would be presented in a way that respects them and honors the dead.

In the following, I examine how women tell their own experiences of bereavement. My focus, in addition to the experience of bereavement with learning of their loved one's death, is on the nature of these private memorials, the visual landscapes of the commemorative shrines, and the significance that the women interviewed attribute to the "memorial objects."

## 4 The Complexity of Personal Stories of War Bereavement

The stories that emerge from the interviews chronicle a complex narrative. The journey of bereavement began with the death of a loved one, described in great detail. As they narrate, the women call to the past at different points in the interviews; the topic changes, and then the past emerges again, creating a bridge between the past and present, a connection between the dead and the bereaved. The story is also a performance – it includes body language, facial expressions, intonation, silences. These stories unfold in varied structures and units: fragments of narration, as well as parts of speech that function as closed units of meaning. There are women who begin their story in the living room and end it sitting on the bed in the bedroom, surrounded by albums, diaries and various objects.

These personal stories reflect the autobiographical "self" (Lomsky-Feder 2004; Sarbin 1986), which is always rooted in a concrete sociocultural context (Halbwachs 1992). Coping with the new status imposed on them occurs not only within the mind or home, but also in relation to the existing social structures and society's view of them.

A widow describes the following:

We were walking down the street, it was unbearable at home. I remember buying ice cream for myself and my child, and everyone looked at me like "what is she doing" [...] as if I wasn't allowed to eat ice cream [...] people kept looking at me. As if I was a performing monkey.

Another widowed women narrates:

[...] the first time I went out for a walk, I was wearing clothes that were big on me, I was walking around and people were shocked, [...] everybody was looking at me, shocked at what I looked like [...], I was skinny [...] [whispers] post-trauma. There was no support back then. I realized then that strength and [...] [silence] [...] Rami [her late husband] would be ashamed of me if he were alive. I understood that. I was walking around on the streets of Kfar Saba, everybody saw me, and some people saw me and crossed to the other side of the street [...].

Another widow says: "So, we got home, to Neve Sha'anon [...] Everyone started crying, hugging me [...] My brother Aharon had gotten back first [...] Even then I could sense that everyone felt sorry for me [...] looking at me [...]."

These women's stories take place within the unique context that is the Six-Day War. This period was characterized by a peaking of heroism, on the backdrop of the existential threat preceding it, and followed by the exultant victory accompanied by a sense of national intoxication (Folman 2004; Tzameret and Yablonka 2000). The fallen were characterized as heroes, and their deaths were granted national and even religious significance. Incorporating these deaths as part of a national myth illustrates the collective commitment to commemorate the fallen in recognition of their deeds for the safety of the nation.

The fallen soldiers are referred to as 'sons.' They were fathers and husbands, but the public rhetoric claims them for the nation, creating a familial relationship between the nation and her fallen (Azaryahu 1995). Choosing this wording ignores the age of the dead, and renders them 'equal' in age, glossing over their individuality and personal relationships. The dead soldier is forcibly transformed into a national hero, thereby contributing to the patriotic process that works to mobilize civilians to war. Individual bereavement is nationalized and becomes collective. The memory is based on a dialogue between the individual and society, but, despite this dialogue, the most influential voices are those that dominate within society (Halbwachs 1992). Hegemonic circumstances are such that the voice of women in wartime is that of a voiceless victim, secondary to the voices of male soldiers (Lachover 2008).

## 5 The Missing Funeral

A unique element in the experience of bereaved families of the Six-Day War is that their loved one was buried by the army. The family was not present at the funeral. The fact that there was no family funeral is repeated in the interviews with tones of surprise, shock and anger. The funeral of a loved one is a central rite of passage (Van Gennep 1960), and has inherent importance in creating a support system for the mourners. Firstly, it contributes to a sense of order in a world that seems to have been overcome by chaos and disorder. At the funeral, the members of the family stand face to face with the reality of loss: death is irreversible, and the dead will not return. During the funeral service, the rite of burial is an important part of the process of "proper grief," which here manifests in separation from the deceased, enabling the mourners and their community the continued ability to live and function (Witztum 2004). These women were denied this important ritual: they were not present at the burial of their loved ones, affecting the process of mourning that is already fraught with vulnerabilities. The women interviewed describe confusion and harsh sentiments, some of which manifest in a constant search for their loved ones. In these stories, the women remember many details of what happened, but these are but fragments of scenarios. They remember and do not remember.

The performance during the interviews reflects the confusion and helplessness which is still felt, even fifty years after the war. As they describe the burial and the terrible waiting time, certain words and phrases repeat over and over: "It was a



terrible feeling [...] terrible [...]” In addition, the speech patterns become much simpler, almost child-like, with broken sentence structuring the utterances, which did not happen at all during other points in the interviews: “Look [...] I don’t know [...] I know that [...] I do not understand it [...] I’m sure I [...]” When they describe the funeral, or the lack of funeral, the women’s voices become almost a whisper, which is then interspersed with almost shouting. A still-open wound for over fifty years.

One bereaved sister describes the following:

It was a terrible feeling [...] terrible [...] I [...] for a while I was [...] I kept looking around, like, maybe there was a mistake, maybe he’s still alive? There was no funeral, we didn’t see him buried. I kept looking for him, I’m still looking for him [...]. Nobody knows, but you know [...] I look. Nothing. And my mother and my father, you can’t explain it to them, this pain, you can’t [...].

A widow says:

Look, I always had hope, maybe he’s alive [...] I know it’s [...]. You know, my cousin, he would run up the stairs [points at the door]. For months after, as if I felt like maybe it was someone else, maybe they didn’t find [...] I kept hoping, there was no funeral, nothing was definite [...].

The funeral is paramount for the surviving family, as it provides a renewed sense of community and social solidarity. The family and friends are committed to the continuation of life, despite their intense sorrow. After the burial there is a clear separation: the dead remains in the cemetery, while the family goes to sit *shiva* (Witztum 2004; Witztum and Melkinson 1993). The women in my interviews express shock that they have been denied something so elementary, the chance to say goodbye to their loved ones:

They told us a week later [counts the days on her fingers] [...] Do you get that? I think that that’s disgusting behavior, both for the army and the country [...] How could they have a funeral without his family? [raises her voice in anger] He had a mother [...] two sisters [...] a wife and children [...]

The women’s ability to cope with the already painful reality of death is made even more difficult by the feeling that the basic conditions for mourning have not been met. They then go on to describe their first encounter with the grave on Mount Herzl. There were no headstones on the gravesites at that point, and what the women witnessed were mounds of dirt with their loved ones’ names written on a stick in the ground. As many dead were buried simultaneously, the ‘fresh’ graves had not yet been given headstones.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, accompanying the stories, is the

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<sup>3</sup> In keeping with Jewish tradition, which dictates that a headstone only be set 30 days after the burial.

memory of the cemetery's smell – the smell of rotting flesh, the flesh of one of their family member's bodies.

The women describe this moment in great detail and in a highly emotional manner. The description of the smell is markedly noticeable. During the interviews, it almost appears as if the women return to the moment of burial; their bodies appear to crumple, they become withdrawn, whisper, wrinkle their faces in disgust, as they tell of the unbearable sights and smells.

One widow says: "I'll never forget it, there was a terrible stench, the smell of corpses, a terrible smell in the air."

Another widow adds:

[...] We got there and saw tons of people, families, mothers, children, [...] My whole body felt weak [...]. His mother was standing next to me, so there was nothing [...] nothing [silence] [...] just the smell [...] I couldn't breathe [...] the stench of death.

There was also a sense of chaos, as one widow puts it:

Dear God, I almost fainted. My mother-in-law, poor woman, almost threw up. [...] They hadn't made the tombstone yet. They asked us if we wanted to move the grave [...] There were so many families, so much shouting, it was a mess. Like they were crazy [...] We were the quietest ones. We don't shout. My mother in law, may she rest in peace, was also a quiet woman, she kept everything inside, everything inside. We went home.

Considering the traumatic encounter between the women and the graves, and the feeling that the state had "nationalized" the funerals by burying their loved ones without their presence, it is not surprising that women describe a feeling of emotional detachment when they first see the grave. This sense of detachment is striking in its detail:

I felt no connection with that grave, really, nothing [...] It was really [...] I found a dress to wear, and sandals, they told me I had to cover my hair, there was all this advice [...]. They took me [...] There was one point when my mother said, "Why aren't you crying?" I couldn't cry. I had no connection to it. Why was there a grave there? [...] But then I saw some widow crying, she was flinging herself over a grave, and I cried, for her. I remember that. I even remember what she was wearing. Isn't that incredible?

The stories narrate a series of grievous failures: first the nerve-racking uncertainty, waiting for news; then the announcement of death (which did not always arrive in an orderly fashion); the funeral held in the family's absence; and, finally, their first encounter with the mound of dirt. This chain of defects is not coincidental, it is the result of the fact that the dead person is a soldier who 'belongs' to the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). The stories reveal hostility and accusations towards the IDF and the state.

Only after the Yom Kippur War would the IDF's status begin to be undermined (Sasson Levy 2006), but the roots thereof can be seen clearly in the interviews conducted some 50 years later. The women concur that the war was necessary and that the death of their loved one was not in vain, in keeping with the national ethos of the Six-Day War. However, beyond that, the interplay between the societal and the personal is characterized by dissonance, frustration and rage. The stories from the women's point of view reveals that their loved ones have been nationalized by the army and the state, thus violating the unwritten contract between state, army and families. During the war, individuals become soldiers with military service numbers, and men rescind their personal identities for the good of the country, but at the time of their deaths, they are returned to their family, becoming once again individuals. The term "nationalization of the fallen" (Azaryahu 1995) is given a cruel interpretation here, with the expropriation of the basic right to mourn the soldier as an individual – a son, a father, a brother – who had a family and private life.

## 6 Dissonances

According to the women's descriptions, this dissonance continued even after the end of the war. After the Six-Day War, the general atmosphere was one of celebration and euphoria (Liebman 1993; Segev 2005). This was unique to the Six-Day War, with the national sentiment also containing feelings of the miraculous.<sup>4</sup> The bereaved women were aware of that feeling, but, at the same time, describe the intolerable gap between the general atmosphere in the country and their own personal experience.

A bereaved sister says: "My mother told me that everyone was so happy, they were waving flags in the streets, Jerusalem was liberated [...] and such an uproar. She said we couldn't be happy, not until Mordi got back. It was very difficult."

Sometimes the dissonance even becomes grotesque, as in the following description by one bereaved sister:

It was a holiday [Shavuot] [...] I heard that there were trucks constantly driving down Jaffa Street, covered with flags. I remember people clapping because they thought it was the spoils of war, but then we realized it was the bodies of our soldiers.

Her description is full of biting sarcasm, due to the enormous gap between the initial interpretation given to the passing convoy and then subsequent comprehension.

There is, thus, a discrepancy between the national feelings of euphoria after the Six-Day War and what the bereaved experienced at home. Their loss left the bereaved families stunned and wounded. Even the normative process of grieving was marred by the war: the families only got the news of the death long after their fallen

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<sup>4</sup> See the contributions by Yiftah Levin and by Hagar Salamon in this volume.

were dead, sometimes days after the war ended.<sup>5</sup> This undermined women's feelings of solidarity with the state and army. Their absence from the funerals fueled a sense of emotional detachment. Every woman I interviewed discussed the family's absence from the funeral and their first encounter with the mound of dirt. The private and personal experiences of these women is closely linked to the social and political reality during the Six-Day War.

## 7 Memorial Shrines and Objects of Memory

One central relationship is repeated during the interviews: objects belonging to the deceased and commemorative shrines function as a replacement for the grave of the deceased. Many of the women feel estranged from the actual grave, given their non-involvement in the funerary rites and the emphasis on soldiers having died for the nation. The personal, home-based commemoration has to be understood against the national backdrop. Commemorative shrines are, of course, an important element of grieving processes worldwide, yet, the linkage between them and the alienation of the bereaved from soldiers has not been discussed for the Israeli case. In the context of the Six-Day War, the tension between the expropriation of the deceased from his family and the family as part of the Israeli public appears to have led to an emphasis on shrines located in the privacy of the home

I witnessed the complexity of memory and its central place in the lives of my interviewees in the privacy of their own homes. When describing the connection to their late loved ones, a relationship that has developed over the years, they touched on stories and objects alike, one intertwined with the other. They unfold stories of pain with the searing memory of trauma. One could even say that the psychoanalytical concept of displacement is here given concrete expression. Coping with loss is expressed and dealt with by designing a corner of the home dedicated to commemorating their loved one. The shrine allows them to offload their pain and live with the solace of comfort.

Objects have been a part of funerary culture and grieving throughout documented human history (Grajetski 2003; Hallam and Hockey 2001). Objects constitute physical evidence, are replete with meaning from the life of the deceased, and embody individual achievements and personality traits (Wall 2013). The preservation of a person's objects connects the past and the present. The object acts to prolong the life of the deceased through memorialization; it becomes a tool that transcends the physical and temporal limits of life (Miller 2007).

Upon death, one's belongings function as material display of one's life. As Marcel Mauss (2002) argues in his classic work on gifts, the connection is imbued with magic. In the cases examined here, the objects imbue a spiritual connection between the women and their loved one. Gibson (2004) discussed the emotional effects of

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<sup>5</sup> According to the interviews, the longest period of time between a death and the news of the death was over six days.

these objects and defined them as “melancholy objects,” i.e. objects that were central to the experience of sorrow and grief, harnessing memory.

The objects, in fact, come to represent an alternative to the lost relationship. They served the deceased during his life and were touching his body; for the women left behind they, thus, embody his thoughts and ideas, the essence of his existence, and allow them to maintain a relationship in the present with the deceased. Volkan coined the term “linking objects” for this phenomenon (1979). Linking objects are personal belongings of the deceased, often an item of clothing from the deceased’s wardrobe, a wristwatch, gifts given before his death, or letters written by the soldier just before death on the battlefield. All of these constitute a symbolic connection between the family and the deceased. The linking objects stemming from the Six-Day War are often military objects, such as military rank insignia and medals of excellence, creating a kind of national object linking the family to the deceased. The connection, constructed in accordance with the heroic context of death in battle during a defensive war, creates a triangular connection between the deceased, the family and the nation.

Gibson distinguished between two types of objects related to grief and bereavement: emotionally affecting objects and emotional transitions. The first type of object holds “magic powers” that have the ability to protect against danger (2004: 288). These objects are not only intermediaries between the deceased and the living, they have a physical presence while trying to fill the void. Gibson observes that these objects while symbolizing the memory of grief also perpetuate grief.

The objects selected are carefully curated in these shrines and also create the selective narrative that accompanies the story of commemoration. These exhibits mirror the women’s personal memories and their stories are revealed through them. The choice of objects, the way they are arranged and to what extent they are on display or hidden away, all tell of both the personal and unique narrative that the women seek to present and, on the other hand, the national narrative.

## 8 Objects as remnants of the deceased

One finds in the interviews with the women that these melancholy objects contain a vestige of the physical and spiritual essence of the departed, because of their physical connection to the body of the deceased or the deceased had a deep emotional connection to it (for example, an object that the deceased had particularly loved or made himself).

A woman who had lost her brother was hiding a box in her bedroom with a piece of soap that belonged to him. She pulls it out and holds it like a treasure, and says: “You know, I keep his soap? His body soap [stands with arms crossed]. The soap he used, I have it. I have his DNA, I took it from his house, I took it and kept it.”

A widow shows me a hairbrush and a mirror and says: “[...] It’s the closest thing I have, it’s from him [...] He gave it to me just before the war [...] I keep it in the bedside table [...] I don’t like people handling it [...].”

An orphan tells me:

I have his ring, I have a few personal things, not many. There’s his pipe, that’s the most [...] He used to smoke a pipe, it was always in his pocket, they gave it to me, it was very emotional. There’s the ring [...] [she shows me a ring on her finger] I also have his wedding ring. Mom, you used to wear his watch, right? I remember how she used to take care of it, she wouldn’t let me touch it [...] [whispers] You see, these things were the closest to him, to his body.

Each bereaved individual, thus, focuses the physical reminder of the deceased slightly differently. When the women hold or look at the melancholy objects, they feel that the connection with the deceased still exists. By holding on to these objects, they can maintain an ongoing connections with the departed, as demonstrated by the following:

An orphan states:

[Laughing], my father is everywhere, he’s everywhere in this house [...] in every room [...] he is with me all the time [...] here’s a picture of him, another picture [...] [gets up and goes to a different room], he’s everywhere, just everywhere [showing books], there’s this in the bedroom [shows me a silver mirror and brush set that she received from her mother], there’s albums [...] He’s everywhere here [...] [walks to another room and opens a closet full of personal belongings]. Because it is very important to me to commemorate him. I walk around my home and I feel him here, and he is with me.

A bereaved sister says:

I have pictures, of course I have pictures. I don’t display them on a shelf because I do not think I’m a nice person at all hours of the day [...] I’m [...] There are days when I really don’t [...] I don’t want him to see me. I don’t want him to look at me, that is, it feels like he’s looking at me. His look. [...] in many ways I don’t admire myself, I’m not proud of a lot of things I do [...] That is, I’m not a bad person, I’m not a thief, I’m not a murderer, I’m just not always proud of myself and I don’t want the person I love most of all to see me all the time [...] It really bothers me. It would never occur to me, it would never occur to me to hang his picture up, no way, I think that [...] I wouldn’t want him looking at me at all hours of every day [...].

The speaker is unable to look at his picture, and does not want to put it in her room – not because she does not attach importance to his picture, but precisely because she feels that the photo is alive, and serves as the dead’s living view of the world. She cannot bear her brother’s piercing gaze. Therefore, she does not place the picture in a visible place, but she still speaks of it as if it were placed on the dresser – even

though it isn't. By contrast, another bereaved woman who lost her husband to the Six-Day War frequently speaks with the photo: "I talk to him, I tell him what's been happening with the children [...] at home [...] Before every family wedding, before every event [...] I stand here in front of this picture and I am with him [...] I wake him up every morning [...]"

As diverse as these women may be, the objects of memory permit a deep emotional connection with the memory of the deceased. Furthermore, the melancholy objects serve as a receptacle of the lost individual and hold a promise that the memory of the deceased will not fade. Some women describe the objects as "memory keys" with which they can access their personal box of memories. When the women look at the objects, 50-year-old memories of their loved ones arise and offer a near real presence. As both a trigger for and a receptacle for memory, it appears that with the passage of time, the physicality of objects is vital in order to reach the amorphous dimension of memory. One widow formulates this as follows:

I have a picture of Giora. Every day when I exercise I look at him, I look him in the eyes for concentration. You need a spot to look at for concentration. When I balance on one foot I focus on him and concentrate. I have an area dedicated to him, but more so, I remember the tree where we kissed, the hill where we held each other, places we were. I close my eyes and I can remember him, it's still alive. It's more than pictures. It's far more important than the grave [...].

It would appear that the interviewees fear that the memory will fade as the years pass. By setting up a commemorative shrine, they ensure the continuity of personal memory and the transmission of memory of the deceased to future generations, some of whom never even knew him at all.

## 9 Commemorative Shrines

The word *balal* in Hebrew has several meanings, three of which are relevant to the field of bereavement. Firstly, the word means emptiness, void, an empty physical area. Another meaning is a fallen soldier who has been killed in battle, and the third meaning is space or universe – an area beyond our reach, beyond here and now. When discussing the women's life stories and the memorial objects that they keep in their homes, the discussion was charged with the various meanings of *balal* – dealing with bereavement, contexts of space and the physical construct of the memory of deceased, all while trying to reach that which is beyond our reach.

When it comes to commemorative shrines (in Hebrew lit. a memorial 'corner'), we do not necessarily mean a specific corner of the home. On the contrary, there are different and varied memorial spaces, in different locations, made up of a wide range of objects. Vinitzky-Seroussi (1999) discussed the fragmentary model of collective commemoration. In certain cases, memory consists of a divided and

fragmented narrative. In Israel, this can be compared to the commemoration of Ben-Gurion's heritage, which is scattered among various sites, such as the airport, his private home and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev – each site representing another part of the chosen narrative. I found that a similar case can be made for commemorative shrines on the part of bereaved Six-Day War women. In some homes the shrine is in a defined and 'orderly' space, such as the living room or a dedicated room, while in other homes, the objects are scattered throughout the house.

In addition to objects relating to military service, there are objects focused on representations of the deceased's civilian life – such as childhood pictures, travel photos, diaries and personal letters. Some of the shrines are quite modest, such as one that is composed of a candle and a single picture. But many commemorative shrines are substantial, and occupy a large amount of space in the home – a kind of personal museum. With the authentic remnants of the past at her disposal, a woman has the freedom to construct a personal memory, to choose the narrative that she wants to foreground and present, thereby using her power as curator. The choice of what items to keep and how to keep them, what to reveal and what to conceal, produces a unique and personal story.

## 10 Spatial Arrangement

Where to install a shrine or how to distribute the objects beyond a single location turns into an expression of the level of intimacy or more public sharing of remembrance. A widow tells me:

Some things are always kept in the closet [...] You know, I do not want everyone to see, touch. It's personal [...] Why would I put those things in the living room? It's not appropriate, I'm keeping them safe. In the living room I have his photo and his military insignia. Those I have no problem with. [...].

A bereaved sister shows less decisive handling of the objects:

[...] this is the dead people's trunk. [...] it's my brother's trunk [...] a trunk of the dead [...] there's his stuff, I have no idea what to do with all this [...] That, I really like. It was always on my mother's writing desk [shows me a wooden box] [...] there are all sorts of things here [...] there's that too [...] [shows me a hand gun that she took out of the drawer] [...]

An orphaned daughter recalls:

[She takes out all the photo albums] the living room was very open, all of my father's albums were in the living room. We could always look at them. I remember that for many years she had his stuff in the drawer, even his slippers. His entire life was contained in that drawer. I would open the drawer and see my father's slippers. For years and years. I really remember that, sometimes I



would touch them [...] [with emotion] [...] I have lots more of these things, degrees and notebooks, those I put somewhere else.

The dispersion of objects in the home shrouds an additional meaning, that of the desire and need of women to be understood, as well as the ability to contain and demonstrate emotions (Beckstead et al. 2011). The location and distribution of the deceased's belongings are attributed to the emotional connection that the object has and the meaning given to it. Some objects tell a complete story, while others are far less formal and more scattered throughout the home.

The memorial areas are usually set up either in the living room or right at the entrance to the house, usually in a place that is visible to all. The women are accustomed to conveying their general story as they go over each object in the shrine and interweave the objects with the story they tell. The stories emphasize the basic fact that the departed was an IDF soldier, with photos and insignia proving that he was in the army – confirming that the family is a bereaved military family. But it is also possible to find shrines that contain both a personal and national aspects located in hidden corners of the house, usually those found in bedrooms, drawers and attics. Here, the women keep objects that are more emotive. One of the interviewees who remarried a man she describes as “the jealous type,” was compelled to hide the pictures and objects from her new husband, and consequently moved the memorial objects to hidden spots that only she knew about.

As she got up to go upstairs to bring back pictures, she says:

There's one picture I don't have anymore, one of the three of us together [...] [her, her late husband and son]. We don't have any more pictures of the three of us, Alon took them, he has them [...] I don't hang these pictures up anymore [shows the pictures she has in her closet], it bothers Oded [her second husband]. He never said so explicitly but that's the feeling I get. He had a very hard time with it. It's like something he has no part in. I think, you know, not everything always has to be said explicitly, he's jealous.

Choosing the objects, and the manner in which they are arranged in the home, requires almost daily care, a kind of ritual. This enables continuous contact for the bereaved, allowing her to develop a continuous relationship with the departed, in as much as that is possible. One widow told me: “I clean the commemorative shrine every week. It's important to me. I buy new flowers every Friday, like we liked to do. [...] That way I'm not alone, he's still with me, I can't hide the feeling that [...] I have someone to talk to.”

“I tell him what's happening with the kids [...] every time one of them gets married, before every event [...] I stand here in front of this picture and I am with him [...] I wake him up every morning,” says one widow, who's been practicing this ritual with the memorial of her dead husband for years, ever since he fell.

Another bereaved individual stresses a need for ownership of the deceased when she says: “At these times I have him to myself. [...] Sometimes I have my morning

coffee with him [...] these are the best parts of the day.” For another interviewee, it is the imagined intimacy that is central: “I close my eyes here and I’m with him [...] I close the door, and then he comes to me, I feel like he’s here, with me.”

## 11 Between National Bereavement and Personal Space

The manner in which the shrine is arranged and the distribution of these objects in the home also touches on the tension between personal and collective memory. Halbwachs (1992) argued that there is no memory that can be fully perceived as internal or personal, since any personal memory exists within a social, cultural and political context and is influenced by the existing system of symbols in society. Salamon (2017) invokes the notion of heterotopic spaces that is applicable to the ways in which the individual and the national also coexist in the cases examined here. The shrines often reflect the wishes of the bereaved family to denote their belonging to the family of the military bereaved. The nationalistic objects represent the connection between the deceased family, the army and nation. The personal belongings stress, by contrast, the women’s effort to show the uniqueness of the departed

Some shrines display only military and national symbols, such as military insignia, military decorations, the flag, a military beret, the official IDF photo of the deceased, or even his personal weapons. The state of Israel dedicates a place of honor to its patriotic fallen, a figurative pantheon. Those who die outside of war or active service, i.e. from disease or accident, are considered “families with no rights” or “hidden sorrow” (Bento 1994) and are of lesser importance. The state frames the bereaved families and elevates them to a place of importance and holiness as part of national policy. In erecting memorials and museums to commemorate the fallen and holding national ceremonies and commemorative activities, the bereaved families are put in a place of honor. Their activities, and particularly their losses, are perceived to be worthy of public recognition in Israel, and, consequently, they earn a high social status (Lebel 2012). This public commemoration is a product of who is mourned and who is forgotten in the public sphere – whose pain will remain private and whose will be public and become a national memory. This collective memory is political and planned, and rationally supports the social order desired. In the context of Israeli militaristic society, those who fell in battle are accorded a central place in national history (Mosse 1990).

The commemorative shrines epitomize the fact that the bereaved family received this aura of honorable bereavement, enveloping their loved ones who have passed away. The manifest objects in the neatly arranged shrines purposely acknowledge the deceased as an IDF soldier and the family as a bereaved family (Moscovici 1984) The IDF is a ‘framing institution’ with profound social symbolic significance. In addition to being a defensive military force, the IDF also acts as a moral and symbolic cultural agent, providing an acceptable establishment shapes “social thinking” (Moscovici, 1984).

One can state with Kimmerling (1993) that, in Israeli culture, the closer areas are identified with “security,” the closer they will be to sanctity. Indeed, those identified with the military institution, its fighters, commanders, soldiers’ families, and especially the families of the bereaved, are considered to have the ultimate civilian status. In other words, some of the commemorative shrines represent the personal deceased as part of the national collective.

The bereaved families desire a comforting hug, national honor, and empowering words. These commemorative shrines give daily validation to those needs. Every time one glances at the memorial, with all its belongings, the family gets confirmation and is defined as a bereaved family. When they place the memorial corner in the living room or at the entrance to the family’s home, the women wish to inform their guests of the loss they experienced. “I must tell you, he was in the cavalry,” one bereaved individual told me proudly, showing me her brother’s picture in IDF uniform. “He was a fighter in the Jerusalem unit. Look at him in uniform.”

Women reported in interviews that the personal belongings are tenfold more important to them. They emphasize the individuality of the departed. Among these objects are rings, pictures of civilian life, photos of trips around the world, and even objects from their childhood, such as diaries, musical instruments and clothes. All of these objects are presented in different ways. They reflect the idea that the departed was not just another soldier, another rank and ID that has been erased from this unit’s inventory. Along with the pain regarding everything that the deceased did not get to do in his life, there is here also a confirmation that he led a full personal life.

The choice of women to inject personal content to these shrines reinforces their strong desire to ‘bring him home,’ and it rails against the nationalization of the military fallen, as accepted in Israel. Thus, the memorial corners have a distinctly subversive potential that must be suppressed and held within the boundaries of the social consensus.

## 12 Summary

The voice of bereaved women was silenced in the face of state commemoration. This chapter sought to bring the stories of women who lost their family members during the Six-Day War to the forefront, and discuss their private memory practices. Their personal stories, developing with time, are woven and expressed through commemorative shrines. Personal and feminine, these memorials are physical spaces created to compensate for the loss of a loved one. The object, originally owned by the deceased, receives an added aura of sentimentalism which increases over the years.

These objects of memory – through the reification of memory (Winnicott 1986) – contain ever-increasing meanings and reverberate the memories. The objects become treasure objects in the women’s lives: “This is what’s left,” they testify. The passing years and life events give volume and flesh to the crystallizing memory. The

objects play an important role in women's memory – “materializing the memory” (Ryan et al. 1999).

Objects that belonged to the deceased symbolize continued contact with the dead for the women, and these objects become an integral part of the memory of the deceased (Pointon 1999). Through the stories woven around the objects, a sensitive connection is maintained between the departed – existing in the past and no longer – to the actions of the present and thoughts of the future. Stories of the past live on in eternally present objects. Every story I heard is a construct, a conscious or unconscious constructed reality, always immersed in the context of social reality, a dynamic collective reality.

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# **The War through the Eyes of Those Who Lived It. Staying or Leaving: The Influence of the Past on the Decision to Migrate or to Stay.**

*Sereen Abumeizer*

## **1 Introduction**

This article focuses on personal memories of Palestinians relating to the days before and during the War of 1967. I draw primarily on the stories of Palestinian people who live in Jordan and Jerusalem today. The presentation, thus, intends to archive [and analyze?] their valuable stories and contribute to perceiving reality through their eyes, far from the political assessment about the event, even though politics is a part of every Palestinian family.

The paper is divided into three main parts, as they are covered in the interviews. The months before the war are described in the first part. I then turn to how the beginning of the war is remembered. Thirdly, elements of how the war itself and its immediate impact are recalled are described. The detailed, personal memories featured in these stories are highly significant in my aim to understand the impact of this war better. The paper explores the role of events to give the war the power of shaping individuals' lives and, in the case of this specific war, the central dilemma: should they stay in their homeland or leave and emigrate regardless of the circumstances. Was the decision enforced or was it a choice for the narrators? The contribution, thus, follows several aims: to see the war through individual eyes and keep the memory of these narrators alive so it may pass on to future generations; to explain the decisions that people made during the war, by trying to understand their

personal experiences, how they felt, what they remember, what events are important to them in hindsight, as well as the circumstances of their decisions and why they made them. In a concluding section I hope to be able to show how this war changed and impacted personal lives, and what agency they had in making momentous decisions – staying at their home even if they might die or to emigrate into an uncertain livelihood.

At the center of the paper are excerpts of eight stories told by Palestinians living in Jordan and Jerusalem today. Their stories should be heard and known both in their sheer individuality and as a platform to rewrite and rebuild the collective memory of the events for future generations. The War of 1967 has not changed the course of a single generation's life, but it has had a far-reaching impact on all future generations.

I will argue, in this article, that the previous events engraved in the Palestinian memory, such as the catastrophe and massacres that occurred involving the Palestinians<sup>1</sup> were fertile ground for spreading rumors, which greatly affected the individuals' decisions to leave out of fear of repeating what happened in the past. On the other hand, the difficulties experienced by the Palestinian refugees in 1948 and the state of displacement from which they suffered were strong motivations for some Palestinians to stay in their homes despite the danger of war and death; thus, they preferred to stay in their country rather than leave and be displaced, as they did not want to repeat what happened with emigrants previously in 1948.

Stories are generally told in different styles of narration from one person to another, and there are many stories that have been told and that must be told and passed down through generations. They preserve the collective memory of a particular people or group, and help one to grasp and analyze the events experienced by individuals separately and collectively, and understand the extent of their impact. In this research, stories outline the extent to which events affected the decisions of the interviewees to stay or emigrate from their home during the war. They shed light on what they went through during that war. The personal narratives afford an opportunity to narrate these events and reveal what individuals went through, apart from the well-known and reported political narratives about the war in general.

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<sup>1</sup> The Palestinians went through several massacres in the previous war in 1948 and after, such as the massacre of Deir Yassin – a Palestinian village east of Jerusalem – in April 1948, where the Irgun and Stern Zionist groups carried out a massacre inside the village. Most of the victims were civilians, including children, women and the elderly; according to Arab and Palestinian media, 254 Palestinians were killed (Morris 2005). This massacre is considered one of the most symbolic massacres against the Palestinians, which has a great and far-reaching impact on the Arab-Israeli conflict and on events later on, and remained a cause for fear and intimidation of the Palestinians subsequently. Moreover, the Kafr Qasem massacre was carried out by Israeli border guards on October 29, 1956, against unarmed Palestinian citizens, and claimed the lives of 49 Arab civilians: twenty-three of them children under the age of 18. And other events that remained in the Palestinian memory.

## 2 Materials

Regarding this article, I was provided with fifty interviews with Palestinians conducted within the trilateral research project. These were individuals who had migrated to Jordan. From this corpus, I selected four interviews that talked in more detail about the events during the war and the reasons for the individuals' emigration. Among the fifty interviews, there were a large number of interviews that talked more about the lifestyle before the war and how it differed afterwards. I searched for interviews that dealt with the events of the war in more detail and which recounted the events in a sequential and clear manner.<sup>2</sup> I also conducted four interviews myself with Palestinians who still live in the Palestinian part of Jerusalem. The paper is, thus, based on eight interviews, half of which are Palestinians living in Jordan, and the rest are still living in their country. It is worth exploring the feelings I had when I did the interviews and the special experience I went through as I heard their personal stories.

Their words and the expressions on their faces and eyes touched a part inside me: the way a person sits down in front of you to describe an experience that has probably left them with pain and suffering inside, and all you can do is listen and try to empathize with them while the flood of memories and emotions pass by. It is a quite special experience that I am grateful to have had them share with me. It was difficult as some people got very emotional when they mentioned the days of the war, for example, R.Z., one of the interviewees, which I will expand upon later, started crying when she mentioned her father. The latter was forced out of his home during the *Nakba* of 1948, and he could not visit his home for political reasons for twenty years.<sup>3</sup> When it he was finally permitted to visit his home in 1967, he came to stand in front of his old home and started looking at the roof he built, the balcony he created for him and his wife and the structure he once called home, her father stood crying at the doorstep of his old home, unable to move, to bear the idea of someone else living in that house. She remembers going home afterwards with her dad choking back the tears, and, a few days later, her father passed away, with all the anguish in the world filling his heart.

The way that R.Z. described her father and their house that was taken from them, with eyes filled with tears, was a very emotional moment for me because I share similar memories of my grandfather telling me how they took his land with the chickens that he cared for. This is the aim of this research: to relate stories from all over the country that pour into a collective memory of the Palestinian nation.

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<sup>2</sup> Most of the interviewees in this corpus spoke more about prewar life and centered on events such as weddings, *Ramadan* and the *Haji*—topics that may well be valuable for an archive of Palestinian memory culture.

<sup>3</sup> After the War of 1948, the country was divided into two parts, and among them was the city of Jerusalem, where between 1948 and 1967, the western part of the city was under Israeli control, while the eastern part was under Jordanian control.

These stories remind me of Suad Al-Amiri's book *Golda Slept Here* which discusses the events of the *Nakba* in 1948 and the stories of the Palestinians who were displaced from their homes and unable to return to them. She mentioned their stories in the moments of abandonment and loss of their homes at the hands of the Zionist gangs (Amiry, 2013). Al-Amiri also wrote about their hopes and dreams of returning to their homes, and attempts to not allow the world to forget about what happened at the time of the *Nakba* and the forced displacement of the Palestinians. The book constitutes an effort to preserve Palestinian memory of what the Palestinian people suffered and the personal stories of some of the families mentioned in the book.

Dealing with this type of material generated somewhat contradictory feelings. On the one hand, I felt responsible and guilty for making people remember the perhaps most difficult part of their life, to ask them to tell stories that left a big wound inside them, memories that they might have tried hard to forget; who among us wants to remember the war?!

On the other hand, I also felt their eagerness to talk about their old days, the days before the war, which they described as simple, beautiful days that were full of gatherings with relatives and neighbors. And despite their pain during the war period, they shared their memories with me and started to talk about what they passed through during those difficult days. It was as if they were waiting for someone to ask them about those sad days and share their pain as it is expressed in extremely detailed stories, and experience the directions they chose for their own stories, which were often different from the questions asked by the interviewers. Thus, in many cases, they remained tenacious to the part that means a lot to them. Everyone has a different story in its details, and what brings them together is their inclusive framework of the 1967 War.

It is worth mentioning that there are several Palestinians in the interview corpus who suffered from the flight and emigration of the 1948 war and who migrated again in the War of 1967. The Palestinian land had already been divided then due to the war of 1948. The latter will not be addressed in this paper as the focus of the present volume is the 1967 War.

### 3 The Present Past

We live different lives in biographical details between the past, present and future. Despite these differences, there are major events that bring about points of convergence and similarities between individuals. The past has a great influence on the present in which we live, it lives in us, and it is what constitutes our present life; therefore, if an event happened or a decision was taken in the past, then, in some way, it shapes our present and will have an impact on our future as well. This overlap between the past, the present and the future did not affect one generation of Palestinians, but rather several successive generations; so, what our ancestors and fathers

suffered and the circumstances they went through paints our present today, thus, their stories are part of us and must be passed on from generation to generation.

The influence of the *Nakba* and the massacres against the Palestinians in its aftermath had a great role in shaping the course of events and decisions taken by many Palestinians during the “The Setback” (another name for the 1967 War), which, in turn, affected their future and the future of their children, as it guided their decision of fleeing and confronting displacement or staying in their home. This reflects the ideology of *Sumud* (literally translated, ‘steadfastness’), which emerged among the Palestinian people during The Setback. It holds that existence in itself is resistance; the Palestinians’ survival and preservation of their land reflects steadfastness and resistance. The olive tree has become linked to the concept of steadfastness among the Palestinians, as it symbolizes the concept of rooting and holding on to the land.

This awareness of steadfastness among the Palestinian people during the War of 1967 was an urgent and existential, dialectical issue. The memories of fleeing the land in 1948 appeared in front of their eyes. Here, they were again facing the decision whether to stay or leave, but this time they had become aware that if they left this land, they would not be able to return to it, as happened with those who preceded them. So they chose not to become refugees for the second time and stay in their homes and lands, even if they might pay for this steadfastness with their lives. They did not want to lose everything as had happened with those who preceded them and left their homes to the Israeli occupation (Rijke and van Teeffelen 2014). The 1948 war, the Palestinian people’s search for asylum during it and their vision of the suffering of the refugees in the camps were a lesson on the importance of steadfastness.

This becomes evident in most of the interviews conducted with individuals who chose to leave their homeland. They relate to what they had heard about the 1948 *Nakba* and reacted to rumors that what happened then would also happen in 1967, reinforcing their fear of losing their honor, endangering children’s lives and that massacres might repeat themselves. Most commonly mentioned in the interviews is the massacres of Deir Yassin, which took place during the *Nakba* in April 1948, and Kafr Qasim, which happened in October 1956.

The other group, those who chose to stay at home, is similarly connected to the gravity of the memory of the 1948 war and its aftermath, but from a different perspective: they saw what happened to those who emigrated in 1948 and the difficult life of the refugees. Moreover, those whose parents were still alive and had been displaced from their homes due to the *Nakba*, made the decision to stay and not leave even if that meant risking their lives as they did not want to repeat the harsh migration experience.

A war is not only the result of a political conflict and not just between two sides. During a war, individuals go through several stages and have to make decisions that will affect them and their future. Such decisions are of two types, namely, those inflicted by the circumstances of war, and those one can make oneself, such as the decision to leave one’s city for the time being, perhaps with the intention to return, as in this corpus of interviews. In analyzing the interviews, I seek to focus on the

decisive moments and the reasons that made individuals take the risk to stay in their home or to emigrate. How do individuals relate to these moments in their narration?

The war through the eyes of those who lived it has multiple names; the '67 war, the Six-Day War and the *Naksa* or The Setback; some of the interviewees even call it the six-hours war. A war has multiple results: defeat for one people and victory for another. However, suffering and fear are common in all wars of the world. Individuals did not have the choice whether they wanted to have a war, but they lived this war in more detail than the warlords themselves. More than fifty years since the '67 War, its details still live on in the memory of the individuals who lived at that period in time. Most of them pass on their stories by telling what happened to them to their children and grandchildren, which keeps the memory of the war events alive in the younger generations. This, in turn, helps to create a collective memory for Palestinians of the past events, where most of the history of the Palestinians is based on the oral history and the stories that passed from one generation to another.

Rafi Nets-Zehngut in his study "The History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Comparing Documented Israeli Sources to Palestinian Oral Sources," discussed how the narration on the Palestinian and Israeli sides related differently to the 1948 war. He compared the oral narration of the Palestinians, for which he chose 38 Palestinians who were displaced during that period, with a previous study of the Israeli view, which relied primarily on Israeli Jewish documents. His study raises the possibility that future Israeli historians will treat the oral Palestinian history, which is the main source for the Palestinians to research the past, with greater confidence, contrary to the current Israeli attitude towards it, which is usually characterized by suspicion and distrust (Nets-Zehngut 2013).<sup>4</sup>

Another study dealt with the circulation of Palestinian stories among children. After interviewing twelve Palestinian children, research showed that children have active roles in integrating previous collective memory into their own experiences and how a strongly restructured collective memory is a prerequisite for passing it on to the next generation (Habashi 2012). Palestinian children are, thus, authors of collective memory, as the oral history of Palestinian children does not only clarify past events, but it also provides a tool for understanding the present and traversing into the future. My own effort in this contribution can be seen, similarly, as a means to keep past Palestinian experiences and their memory in circulation.

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<sup>4</sup> Rafi argues at the end of his work that Israeli and Palestinian accounts of the refugee problem are largely consistent. Oral Palestinian history is not biased and distorted as expected in literary research and studies. That is, if the research sample finds a great similarity between oral and historical textual history, there are no indications of biases. The present research provides support for the use of oral history as an important source of research, particularly also for the War of 1967.

## 4 The Life of the Palestinians before 1967

The Arab Palestinians' conflict with the Zionists extends over a hundred years. It passed through several stages, the most prominent of which were the wars of the *Nakba* in 1948 and the *Naksa* in 1967. Most of the interviewees in this project described their life before 1967 in a similar way: it was filled with simple and beautiful days, full of social and family relationships, a bad economic situation, but one that was acceptable to them. Most of them had not interacted with the Israeli side before. There were Palestinians who lived next to Jews before and after 1948, however, after the division of control over the lands between 1948 and 1967, the friction between the Palestinians living in the '67 lands and the Jews was relatively minor. Therefore, some of those interviewed described their first encounter with the Jews during The Setback or after it. They had, however, heard a lot of rumors that turned out to play a large role at the moment of war and even before the war started. The radio especially held central stage among the media. It gave the listeners initially, before the war had started, a euphoric feeling of an approaching victory.

I do not think that a person's story begins with a specific event; we always have to know the roots of the story, we also have to know some of the person's life and how life was before the war; that will help us to understand the conditions that the Palestinians were suffering from before the 1967 War began. But, of course, these stories, as stories, 'came to life' in a dialogic context, and usually as a reply to a certain invitation and a set of questions.

The story of the displacement of Palestinians can be dated back to twenty years before The Setback; Abu Mohammad, for example, a Palestinian interviewee, was originally from Haifa, but after the 1967 war, he ended up in Jordan. His family had migrated from Haifa in 1948; his mother was pregnant and gave birth to him during the migration. Later, they moved from Haifa to Fara'a camp, which is located in the West Bank near Tubas. He and his family lived firstly in tents, then they moved to a small house; they were six to seven people in one room in poverty and under difficult conditions. Despite these hard circumstances, he described those days positively; he said, "They were beautiful days, when we were young, we played beautiful games, that we miss today."<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps the description of these days as beautiful is owed to the social connectedness that characterized the time. "Despite our simple life in the West Bank, we have a great memory. We had a great community with our relatives and neighbors. We used to stay together at night under the lights. My aunt was bringing the *Khubazi* and cooking it," recalls Abu Mohammad.

This strong nostalgia that Abu Muhammad has for his simple old life before the war was able to affect his children permeates his talk about those simple days. It created inside his children a yearning for a life they did not live and a homeland they did not visit but through the words of their father.

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<sup>5</sup> For a list of all eight interviews relied on in this chapter, see Primary Sources listed at the end.

I keep telling my children about those days. How my mother used to fill the gas jar at a place half a kilometer distance away and carry the water on her head despite her illness. And how we sat under the trees. How we went fishing from the spring. Even our children miss this life. I hope those days will come back. Now they told me it's all forest; may God allow us to visit it again and walk under the trees.

Nostalgia has emerged for these family gatherings and the connection between the people of the neighborhood, as is evident in several interviews; one of them was Foad, a Palestinian interviewee from Atteel Village in Tol Karem, who now lives in Jordan. Born in 1951, he also describes the life before the war in a way signifying the longing for those days and describing the strong social connectedness at that time:

Our traditions and customs back then were known for having a spirit of humanity, of visiting relatives. People were on hand, so they would know when the planting time is, harvest time or fruit picking time for their neighbors and friends, and they started helping each other, and the ones who finished harvest would go and help the ones who hadn't started yet. People gathered at night and started chatting and having pleasant conversations, though they didn't stay up very late, but they used to stay after the *Al-Isbaa* prayer, they drank tea or coffee and talked with each other and discussed their problems.

Foad continued to describe the social life, emphasizing that from his point of view, the community cohesion back then was better than these days. He also attributed this to the fact that the number of people was smaller, all lived in the same village and knew each other and knew who was poor and would help them due to the cohesion and brotherhood present in each village.

The social life before the war also needs to be understood within the economic situation, which was the reason for the difficulty of life at that time. The West Bank and East Jerusalem were under Jordanian rule, so the salary was in dinar – the Jordanian currency.<sup>6</sup> Some Palestinians also worked for Jordan or joined the Jordanian army.

N.N. was born in 1946, in the Old City in Jerusalem and still lives there. In 1966, he started to work as a civil policeman in the Municipality of Jerusalem, Jordan. He stayed at this position until the War of 1967 started. He described the life before as beautiful, but the income was low.

Life was beautiful, but the money was little, an employee in a good position did not take ten to fifteen dinars a month. I started to work a year before the war. My salary was 15 dinars; I spent 5 dinars on myself, for my food and drinks, 5 dinars for home supplies, and the last 5 dinars I kept for a time of need.

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<sup>6</sup> The price of the dinar is generally fixed in exchange for the dollar, the value of which (at the time of writing) is 1.41 dollars for 1 Jordanian dinar.



From another perspective, Ahmad Riziq was born in Jerusalem 1949. His family emigrated from Ramleh at the time of the Nakbah in 1948 and moved to live in the Old City in Jerusalem. He still lives in the house in which he was born in the Old City. When relating to life before 1967, he says: “Life was simple and easy, we did not need to pay much, it was simple enough that you only provided food, an easy and comfortable life.”

An example of the simple life that Ahmad mentioned can be gleaned from the following. His father got sick when he was 14 years old, so Ahmad left school and went to work, but because he was young and did not have any professional training, and because the economic situation before 1967 was poor, he decided to go to Kuwait for work. He took the bus from Sultan Suleiman Street in Jerusalem to Kuwait, the trip at that time cost no more than two dinars. He slept on the first night in Baghdad, Iraq, and then arrived in Kuwait. After one year, his father’s condition improved, and Ahmad returned to Jerusalem and worked in the building industry. Mobility was much easier then than these days, and its cost was much lower.

Despite the bad economic situation, people believed that they had simple, uncomplicated lives. Many interviewees described their previous lives, similarly to the last one’s quotes, in words filled with longing for those days, with good social relationships and family meetings.

Individuals interviewed in Jordan emphasized the good life remembered before 1967. This may be attributable to the passage of time and the ways in which memory turns positive. Their phrasing also suggests that despite hard work and simplicity, social and religious events meant a lot to them which, in turn, was reinforced by neighborhood or village life and the strong social relationships among a relatively small number of people.

However, as the war approached, these features of a simple life characterized by social cohesion began to change.

## 5 When the War Started

War was an unpredictable thing for many people. But before the war unfolded, in a brief time, many elements played a fundamental role in shaping the events and the decisions people took during the war. The media were important, as most people were listening to Ahmad Said on Sawt al-Arab – the voice of the Arabs radio channel and Gamal Abdel Nasser’s speeches. Rumors before and during the war, and previous events that remained in the collective memory of the Palestinians, such as the *Nakba*, the tripartite aggression\1956 war, played a large role in describing the events of the 1967 war.

Z.Z., whom I interviewed, was born in 1940 in Al-Eizariya, one of the villages attached to Jerusalem, which later became a town, where he still lives. Before the ’67 war, he was an employee of the Palestinian Ministry of the Interior, the head of the passport office in Jerusalem; he stayed at his work until the first day of the war.

On the morning of June 5, 1967, Z.Z. went to his work as any other day, without expecting that it would become the first day of the war:

On June 5, 1967, I was at my office in Jerusalem. It was a normal morning until 10 o'clock. Then someone came to me and shouted, "The war has begun!" I went outside to see what was happening. At the counter at the entrance of the building was standing one of the Jordanian intelligence service men named Abu Hashem. I asked him, "What is happening, Abu Hashem?" He answered that they (Egyptian and Jordanian forces) were dropping planes like birds.

The men of Jerusalem began to arrive at the building where Z.Z. worked, and started to yell, "We want weapons, we want weapons, we want to defend ourselves." According to Z.Z., the Governor Anwar El Khatib told them, "We are a civil department and we do not have weapons. If you want a weapon, go to the police headquarters." Z.Z.'s friend was working with him and suggested going with the men. They went to Wadi Eljoz. A Jordanian army jeep came, and the men surrounded it and yelled, "We want weapons," but one of the Jordanian soldiers said:

Listen, guys, I don't want to tell you that we have reached Tel Aviv. The situation is excellent and better than you can imagine. Please let the army do its work, and every one of you must go home. Do not bother us, let us do our work.

Z.Z. and his friend did not believe what he said, but there was nothing they could do, and each of them went to his home. Transportation was not working on that day; this meant Z.Z. had to walk to his home, all the way from Jerusalem to Al-Eizariya. The road was full of people and everyone was walking and did not know what was happening.

Z.Z. is one of the politically educated people who had a good awareness of what was going on around him. When I asked him if he knew that the war would take place before it happened, he answered:

In the period prior to June 5, 1967, many political developments took place; within less than a month we started to expect things that we never imagined could happen. We can say that until May 1, 1967, everything was normal, no one thought that the war could start or anything. Suddenly, when the Russians said to Syria that Israel could strike Syria, and when Abdel Nasser closed the Straits of Tiran, things started to worsen and develop, and we quickly found ourselves with the possibility of war.

Z.Z. is not the only one who thinks that Russia had a role in this war. For A.R. Russia was the reason behind everything:

It is not Nasser who did the whole thing, it is Russia, because if Nasser wanted to have a war with Israel because of 1956, it is a peace or a war. Why wait until 1967? So, Russia said to him that Israel wants to attack Syria, so what could he do; he was a good person but the people around him were not. They said to him, we close the sea and Bab-el-Mandeb<sup>7</sup> and everything; Nasser closed everything, but he wasn't ready for a war. So, America and Russia laid a trap for him, that Israel would not do anything, "You just take your people."

We can conclude from Z.Z.'s words that despite his political knowledge, the war was really surprising to everyone, and that with the beginning of the war and during it, some had faith in the ability of the Arabs to defeat Israel, and that this loss was also surprising to them. However, he was aware of what was happening on the ground during the war, and of the migrations and displacement of the Palestinians that followed the *Nakba* War, which was a strong reason for him to stick to and stay in his land.

The element of surprise at the beginning of the war and the political awareness of what was happening had an impact in some way on the decision to stay or emigrate. A.R. also pointed to the king of Jordan as a reason for not believing in a war: "We didn't think that there would be a war with Israel, because of the King of Jordan, who has always been seeking peace; he is a pragmatic person who has estimated that it is not necessary to be at war with Israel."

At the moment the war started, A.R. was in the Old City without any thoughts that there would be a war. He did not know what was really happening because there was no television at that time; they were only listening to the transistor radio, to Sawt al-Arab.

On Monday the war started. I was on Salah El Den Street, I wanted to go to Jordan then to Saudi Arabia for work on the same day, but I heard that the war had started from the people in the street at nine o'clock, so I went back home.

As for I.Z. El Zain, born in 1952, and her sister R.Z., born in 1949, two Palestinian interviewees living at Al-Tori at the time of the war, which was on the border between East and West Jerusalem, the war was an unexpected event for both of them. They were listening to the radio and heard that there would be a war, but did not expect it to be that early. On the first day of the war, the army and command that were close to the house told them that the war would begin and people on the border had to leave. I.Z. said, "Even if we had wanted to leave on the same day to our uncle's home in El Ram, we couldn't have," and R.Z. added, "My mother gave me a dessert tray in order to deliver it to my brother's house, who lives next to us, I was walking up the stairs, and I heard a sudden sound of bullets, I fell with the tray. This was a declaration of war for me."

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<sup>7</sup> A strait between Yemen on the Arabian Peninsula, and Djibouti and Eritrea in the Horn of Africa. It connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden.

N.N. had plans to complete his studies; he was registered to study law at Beirut Arab University at the time. There were signs that there would be a war a week before June 5, 1967. Three or five days before the war, he was ready to go to Beirut to do his exam, but his mother took his passport and prevented him from going and said, "You cannot go because you will not be able to come back; each one of us will be on another side." But unfortunately, this was not enough to keep N.N. next to his family when the war started.

When the war began, N.N. was at his workplace in the Jerusalem municipality; at 9:10 a.m., one of the bosses came and told N.N. and his coworkers to leave what they have been doing and start working in the fire department, which is also subordinated to the municipality, since they were previously trained to work as firemen.

N.N. and his team started to receive calls that reported various fires, including a gas station and a fire in the Al-Aqsa Mosque. After doing their work and returning to the firefighting center, the communications were cut and they were crammed into a firefighting warehouse. So, despite his mother's attempts to keep him by her side, he disappeared on the first day of the war.

Foad remembers the first moments of the war as follows:

When the war started or before it started, I was with my cousin, loading almonds into a big car and leaving from Jenin to Amman. When we returned from Amman to the West Bank, when we arrived at Anebta field, there was a police station, and they said the war had started, so they told us to hurry back home. We arrived at Tol Karem and there was a police station called Nour Shames [sunlight], they said the same thing. We arrived at the village and there were warnings that the war had started. People left their homes, some people were very scared, so they left their homes to go to other places as immigrants.

Before the war began, most of the interviewees were in the middle of their routine, unaware of the dramatic events, even though when the war had started, they had the euphoria of winning the war, which can be directly linked to what they started to hear in the news, especially on the radio.

## 6 Media

The dominant medium at the time was the radio; most of the news was known through it, and most people were listening to Sawt al-Arab and its broadcaster Ahmed Saeed. People were gathering around the radio at certain times of day to hear the news and speeches, especially Abdel Nasser's speeches. Obviously, the radio was not limited to news alone, but series, songs and other genres were broadcast as well. Some interviewees mentioned that it was forbidden to listen to the Egyptian station during the Jordanian rule, but that they were listening to it anyway.

The media played a role in building up the feelings of optimism of many Palestinians and deluded them into believing in a guaranteed victory of a war that had not yet started. Hence, the radio also played a role in disappointing many people, as the reality was not what was described in the news, and the outcome of the war was not what many expected.

The following excerpt from Foad's interview describes how he remembers gathering around the radio at that time:

The media before the war was only the radio and was in only three houses of the village – the houses of the chiefs. The town was only three neighborhoods: eastern, middle and western, and each neighborhood had a chief. When they started to listen to the radio that the war was coming and the borders and airports were closed, people used to gather at their chief's house, and we listened to people saying that, "We are ready for the war, our army is ready and we'll throw the Israelis into the sea," until the war started.

Z.Z. said about the radio news during the first moments of the war: "They were saying that we had destroyed the enemy's air force, we hit hundreds of planes, which means the story is over." However, the news was completely contrary to reality.

N.N. said almost the same: "Ahmed Sa'id – he was one of the most destructive people to us during the '67 War! He used to say, "Planes are falling like flies!!" Which planes? In fact we were the ones who were falling, not the planes."

The speeches of Gamal Abdel Nasser also made the Palestinians feel the euphoria of victory. He promised them that he would free Palestine and that the Arab League would win the war in 24 hours. The people were waiting for Abdel Nasser to win it and to return to their houses. The timing of the war was not known at that time, and many were surprised at the moment it started. Most of the Palestinians had great respect and love for Abdel Nasser, but after their disappointment, due to the results of the war, they have been divided into supporters and opponents until this day. Z.Z. recalls:

There was a popular saying that two things create a curfew in the Arab world: Umm Kulthum and Jamal Abdel Nasser. Umm Kulthum had a party every first week of the month, when the party started, the streets looked as if there was a curfew, not just us, in the entire Arab world. And a day before an Abdel Nasser speech, whoever didn't have a battery for the radio, went to get the battery just to hear Gamal Abdel Nasser."

I.Z., by contrast, remembers the disappointment and holds on to his criticism:

"We'll get there, we'll get there!", but everything was a lie. Israel took the entire region. It is all a conspiracy against the Palestinian people. Gamal Abdel Nasser seemed to be a patriotic person, but the patriot remains awake, he does not go out of his mind and allow traitors around him to destroy

everything. They didn't care about a war or a homeland, they handed the country over.<sup>8</sup>

R.Z. pointed in his recollection: "Abdel Nasser gave the leadership to one who was not qualified, to Abed Elhalem Amer, who was at a party for Wardeh Elzjaerieh at the night of war!" However, A.R. was more measured in his judgement: "I thought a person like Abdel Nasser can at least deter Israel or make peace after that. I thought he could win, but he didn't."

The people were shocked by the reality that was exactly the opposite of what they had heard on the radio. They were also surprised when Abdel Nasser withdrew his troops from Sinai in 1967, as is evident in this part of Abu Mohammad's interview:

We were thinking of how we were going to be saved. We heard that Abdel Nasser would free our country with his rockets (ALQaher and Althafer<sup>9</sup>) and his Airplanes. We loved to hear Nassers speeches. We were waiting for that day when Abdel Nasser could achieve that. We were carrying our concerns and our worries and kept talking about our return to our country and we considered that the only solution. We were surprised when he withdrew his troops from Sinai in 1967. When we were in secondary school halls, we were surprised by the Israeli military aircrafts' attack on June 5, 1967. We had a physics exam in Nablus, and we heard the young people saying that the war had started. We heard that Israeli military aircraft had destroyed the Egyptian aircraft and Israel dominated in the area. Abdel Nasser ordered the troops in Sinai to withdraw and leave the weapons until the Jordanian army was defeated. Even the Egyptian army lost!! It was a sad situation. There was a great hope in Nasser, but we were disappointed.

This disappointment experienced by the Palestinians during the war, as their previous statements made clear, in addition to the rumors that spread, caused some of them to leave their homeland, fearing what would happen to them after this defeat.

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<sup>8</sup> This is also discussed in Plotkin (in this volume) and in Salamon and Bendix (2020).

<sup>9</sup> These are the names of missiles made during the time of the late Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Althafer means 'the victor of the war' and ALQaher means 'omnipotent.' They were said to be able to reach deep into Israel. President Abdel Nasser used to talk about the reach of these rockets in all his public speeches. There are many who doubt the accuracy of the missiles' ability to reach the heart of Israel, since they were never used in the war. Talking about these missiles, even if they did not really exist, gave the Arabs a sense of their definite, impending victory against Israel.

## 7 Previous Events and Rumors

Other elements that played a big role at the time of the war and before it were stories regarding past events that remained in the minds of the Palestinians. These elements also had an important role in making the decision either to stay or to emigrate.

The memory of the Palestinians was a field of suffering and sadness from wars, from the time of the British mandate until today. 1967 was not their first war with the Israelis, the events of 1945 and 1956 remained in their memories and imaginations; it was a fertile background for rumors circulating, the people heard what the Israelis did, such as the massacres of Deir Yassin and Kafr Kassem, past events congealed into a shared history among the Palestinians, which fostered the fear of a recurrence of such events, one of the main causes of panic which made many people to choose to emigrate rather than stay in their homes. I.Z. el Zain stated: "We used to hear about what they did in Deir Yassin in 1948, what they did to the women and girls, so we were afraid, and that's why we left."

On the other hand, some Palestinians saw what had happened to those who had emigrated in 1945, and how their conditions had changed, and how they suffered in their new lives. This strengthened their will not to migrate away from their country. "I was against the idea of leaving my home, even if something happens," N.N. recalled, and continued:

We heard about the massacres that happened before, they [the Palestinian people] were talking about it. But what was I saying? I said we will die in our country; whatever happens, we will stay, even if they [the Israelis] slaughter us and our children. To die is better than living in tents, or to live as a homeless person in other countries.

Z.Z. echoed such sentiments. He said that he knows some people who have emigrated and their situation is good, but most are in a difficult and tragic situation. and this led him to conclude and decide that, "Personally, I have no willingness to leave and suffer, [it is] either to die or to live here."

Besides the fear of repeating the events of the past, the rumors themselves played a huge role in intimidating the population. The fear for their honor was their biggest fear, which was a correspondingly big factor in their flight from home. Due to the importance of rumors and their great impact on the population, one can add the name of 'the war of rumors' to the many names that this war possesses. But rumors do not always come out of the blue, they may have a root from which they grow, such as earlier events passed on in collective memory. Thus, Z.Z. stated: "The rumor has its basis, and it is what happened in the 48s, there were massacres, such as the impact of the Deir Yassin massacre. It affected all the other villages. When they heard about what happened in Deir Yassin, they fled." And Abu Mohammad from Haifa recalls:

After four days, people heard that the Israeli forces were advancing in the West Bank. We heard that the Israeli forces started killing young Palestinians. My father said we should go to Jordan and most people started leaving because of these rumors.

This was repeated in a lot of the interviews of those who left their homes; they had been afraid for their wives and daughters. A.B. lived in el Fasayel village, one of the population centers belonging to the Jericho Governorate. He and his family were surprised by the war. He is also one of the people who left his home and emigrated to Jordan at the time of the war because of the rumors and the fear of losing honor. He later became aware that he should not have left, but it was too late. After the war, the people who left recognized their mistake and that they could have stayed at home. In A.B.'s words:

Israel in the war of 1948 did horrible things, especially in Deir Yassin. People were afraid and scared from what happened at that time in Deir Yassin and they were afraid regarding their honor and the honor of their families, but if they had stayed in their homes, nothing would have happened to them [...] if I had known that there wouldn't be an invasion, for our honor I wouldn't have left my homeland.

There are also many people who stayed home and considered leaving as a form of treason. A.B. narrates:

On the third day of the war, we were sitting in our houses around four o'clock; we were sitting in the shade, drinking tea, then we saw an old man passing with four to five girls coming from Toulkarm. He stopped and told us, "I see that you are still staying here: I come from Toulkarm. If you want to protect yourselves, your families and your honor, leave from here, all of Palestine has fallen." We had an old man among us – God rest his soul in peace – who shouted at him and said, "You are a cheater," and that old man refused to drink the tea and left with his daughters.

There is also a portion of families that were divided, part of the family stayed and the other part emigrated, such as the family of R.Z. and I.Z. The rumors frightened them; the important point in the story of R.Z. and I.Z. is that they emigrated from Jerusalem to Jordan because of the request from their father; the mother went with the sons and daughters to Jordan, but they decided to return within a short period. They returned to Jerusalem through smuggling (an illegal way) and continued their lives in Jerusalem. They saw the suffering in a life far from home and decided that, despite the odds, they would return to their home and their father, who stayed in Jerusalem and did not leave his home; their father, who does not want to lose his home for the second time. On the third day of the war, the mother took all her sons and daughters to emigrate, but the father refused to leave, he said to their mother,



“Take the daughters and leave, I am an old man, me and my brother will stay, they cannot do anything to us.”

R.Z. explained why her father refused to leave his home: “Because my father emigrated in 1948, he did not want to leave, he didn’t want to repeat the story again, he and my poor uncle refused to leave.” R.Z. and her family stayed in Jordan for two to three months, then they decided to come back to Palestine:

My brothers said, “What are we doing here? We don’t have jobs here or any kind of work, or anything! Why would we stay here? What are we going to do? We feel that we are strangers here with nothing to do.” They rented a home with no furniture or anything, they just bought some mattresses and sleep covers.

For the same reason that the father of R.Z. and I.Z. chose to stay, A.R.’s father, who had emigrated in 1948, did not want to repeat that cruel experience, and chose to stay with his family and not leave to anywhere again.

During the war, A.R.’s father told his family they should not leave the house. He was afraid because in his memory, the events of the previous massacres weighed heavily. His father said, “You have to stay inside the house, if they come [the Israeli soldiers]. I will go outside. If they want to kill people, I will be the first. I can’t stand to see you being killed in front of my eyes, I will be the first!” Fortunately, no one was killed from A.R.’s family. Despite all this fear about being killed, and remembering the previous massacres, A.R.’s father chose to stay with his family at their home, the new home that they made after being displaced to Jerusalem from El-Ramleh in 1948: they did not want to repeat the suffering of emigration again in 1967 even though there was a chance of being killed.

## 8 The War Itself and Its Immediate Impact

Many people were surprised when the war started; yet many other Palestinians had already left their houses in the early period of the war and beyond due to the fears incited by rumors. As a result of the war, many families were separated, people disappeared, many bodies were on the roads, the Israeli forces were deployed, people were shocked by the loss of the Egyptian forces, and the irregular and incomplete arrival of Jordanian and Iraqi forces.

A lot of unexpected events happened during the war, and each person has a different story. The war changed and impacted their lives and made a big change for the Palestinians. Before the war, there had been a great emphasis on the social cohesion and family relationships, but the war forced many families to disintegrate. Some families sought to emigrate after the war to catch up with their families, or to return to the homeland and the family that had remained. In many cases, however, the family remained disjointed between homeland and exile. One such examples is what happened to Umm Zuhair. She is from the Jenin district, and is now living in

Jordan. She recalled a beautiful and stable life with her family, despite the physical fatigue from hard work, until the war began in 1967. She had a brother in the military in Al-Bireh whom she went to visit shortly before the war began, and stayed for nine days. Her brother did not allow her to go back to Jenin because the circumstances were turbulent and there were preparations for war, and after that, the war really started. She recalls during her interview:

The war was cruel, there were a lot of tanks, planes and bullets being shot in the streets, villages and cities. People were hiding in houses in that period. I hid in my brother's house for a day and a half. When the sound of bullets stopped, we went out into the streets to find hundreds of dead bodies everywhere. They collected the dead bodies in trucks and buried each group of 40 men in a large hole dug by soldiers in the graveyard. After a while, my brother Ahmed disappeared, and I used to go every day to the graveyard to look for his body among the bodies of the dead. After several days of looking for Ahmad, I was told that my brother had escaped to Jordan.

Ahmed was the first to flee to Jordan from this family, so his sister's fate was to catch up with him later.

Um Zuhair's brother was not the only one that his family believed dead only to later find out that he was not. The family of N.N. also thought that he had died when he disappeared at the time the war started. N.N.'s story shows us the difficult circumstances he went through, but despite everything that happened to him, he decided to stay in his homeland.

The reader will recall how N.N. was crammed into a firefighting warehouse for from the first day of the war – for no less than five days. Telephone lines were cut off and there was no contact either with family members or the outside world. Planes began dropping paratroopers next to the firefighting warehouses, and when N.N. and his 23 coworkers realized that this was the Israeli forces, they knew that they could not go out. They remained among the fire extinguishing materials in the store houses without food, there was nothing but barley intended for the municipal donkeys used by the cleaning workers, and a small amount of water! That is what they ate according to N.N.

The Israelis were sitting in front of the storehouse door. N.N. and his coworkers were looking at them from the door openings with no idea what was really happening outside. One of them was an old man around 50 years old, so he knew the Jews from before 1948 and knew how to speak Hebrew. N.N. remembers:

[The old man] put his scarf on a stick, hung it out from the window, and shouted in Hebrew that we were firemen. One of the Jews outside answered in Arabic! And asked, "How many are you?" and then he required us to go out one by one. When we saw him, we realized that he was one of the workers in the municipality!

This was the first meeting between N.N. and Jews: “We had the idea that Jews are not humans. We didn’t know what they were; there was a barrier between us [...] between east and west Jerusalem.”

This first meeting between N.N. and an Israeli was filled with fear and the sound of bullets, and the 23 coworkers with their faces to the wall. The Israelis made them work as prisoners for some days and then they let them go free. So, N.N. went back to his family, who had thought he had died since his disappearance at the beginning of the war

We weren’t able to look at them, to be honest we were afraid. I was one of those who thought that the Jews were monsters, when he [the Israeli soldier] shot his gun we looked at the wall. I thought he had shot one of us, so I started to look around; we were all alive.

But when N.N. was returning to his home, he saw the signs of war and death everywhere in Jerusalem; he did return from death but he saw death in the corners of Jerusalem. Despite the pervasive stench of death, as described by N.N., this was also not a sufficient reason for him to leave his homeland. “My colleague and I were on the way back. We entered from Herod’s Gate. There were the dead on the ground on the streets. The Qadisiyah school was destroyed, and the cars were burned.”

Foad also went into hiding during the first days of the war, but differently from N.N. There were lands filled with trees next to his village in Tol Karem, so he, his family and some of the other people from the village went to hide between the trees because of the rumors they had heard. They stayed there for six days until they declared that the war was almost over. According to Foad, the Jordanian soldiers fought valiantly, protecting his village from the Jews, and they upheld good resistance. This troop kept fighting till there were no men to fight; such an intense resistance that the Jews could not enter the village from the area where the Jordanian army was located.

Foad’s first meeting with Jews occurred on the eighth day of the war, when Israelis entered Atteel Village in five jeeps and asked the chiefs to call all men older than 18 years to go to Atteel school:

People went to Atteel school with two desires. Some were afraid of them [Jews] and others wanted to see what they were like, if they were normal, regular people?! Around 25 Israelis, some soldiers and some regular people, stood on the platform and asked what the village needed. It was known what we needed. The chiefs requested diesel so they could [power the hoses to] water the plants, and flour so we could eat. Of course, it’s an obvious request; diesel was provided and the weirdest thing was that within 8 hours – that was 8am – 20 tanks came with flour. They weren’t from the West Bank because we knew there was a lack of flour there; the flour was from the 48 mills. When they asked us to go to the school, they also asked for all the cars to go down too. The cars of the visitors who came from Kuwait which were new and

expensive, they put on each car, on every side, ten bags of flour and the Israelis drove these cars, and they distributed these bags in a way that each door in the village had a bag in front of it. This policy was known and clear; the policy of invitation. People started talking about what's happening and their policy and thought it was weird that an enemy would do that, and life came back to normal and we didn't see an Israeli since that time.

Foad ended up in Jordan, but he did not leave at the time of the war, he stayed and graduated from Attel school. His brothers and sisters were helping his mother with farming, but he did not choose to join this field and went to Kuwait to study in 1974. He was moving between the university and the West Bank, two years after his graduation, he got work in Jordan and lived in Zarqa.

According to Foad, people who emigrated to Jordan at the time of the war, did it of their own free will, but they went out of fear, thinking that they would flee for some days and did not know that they would become displaced later. The Israelis tried to use the affection policy instead of the intimidation policy; they provided free buses for the Palestinian people to go to Jordan, and this was mentioned in several interviews, not only in Foad's interview, and not only in his village, the buses were made available also at the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem and in many other places (Segev 2008: 531–542). People boarded the buses out of fear; most of them were carrying a few things because they thought that they were going for only a few days, but, in reality, they were unable to return to their country. Subsequently, the Israeli forces broke down the bridges between Jordan and Palestine to prevent them from returning, and then conducted a census, in order to restrict the people from coming back (Segev 2008: 468–469):

A few days later, the Israeli army took over the police stations that existed in the times of the Jordanian army and opened the way for people who wanted to go to Jordan. They didn't force anyone to go to Jordan; people went by themselves of their own free will. The emigration started from the places which were near Jordan; people emigrated and then the bridges were destroyed. They didn't force anyone to go to Jordan, but the people left out of fear and thinking that they are going for two days and will return. After 8 months, the census process started. Israel started to do this process to see who is still in the West Bank, and it happened quickly because some people came back to the West Bank. The ones who stayed during the process stayed in the West Bank and the ones who were out, stayed out and couldn't return. After one year, they built a wooden bridge between the West and East Banks and started making *Tasreeh* [passes] and made identification cards for us with the Israeli army written on them. the ID cards stayed with us until the Palestinian Authority came, then, the name of the cards changed from the IDF to the Palestinian National Authority, which we have now.

Abu Ratib was one of the people who went to Jordan in the first days of the war. His fear was mixed with disappointment when he saw the Jordanian forces withdrawing defeated. "We saw [...] about 70–80 soldiers of the Jordanian army with no cars. When we saw the army we became afraid. The army told us to stay by saying, 'Stay, stay.' We said to the army, 'If you leave, where should we stay?'" Abu Ratib, his family and his cousins collected seven or eight tractors and wagons, onto which they put some items, blankets, and wheat and left their homeland. "When I left, I was hoping to be back; nothing is like a homeland."

Another kind of hiding at the time of the war is contained in the story of Z.Z. During the first night of the war, Z.Z. was at home with his family. It was not a normal night for them:

There were shells, some of them hit behind our house, and some hit the neighbors' house. We gathered in the corridor; it is located between the rooms; we thought that it would be the safest place at home. It was a night of terror, I mean, as you heard many shells falling around you, it wasn't just one or two.

They waited until the morning, and then they went to hide at the Greek Orthodox monastery next to their house; they thought that it would be safe from the Israelis because it is a monastery.

We all went to the monastery. Then I went out onto the street. People were fleeing from Jerusalem. I was trying to influence anyone walking by and persuade them to enter the monastery; the number of people in the monastery grew to more than 600. I used to ask them, "Where are you going? The one who is going to die will die and the one who is going to live will live. The monastery is safe, nothing will happen to you. Do not act like the refugees from 1948; do not destroy yourselves and become like others, come inside." There were people who were convinced, but there were also people who were lying and spreading rumors. There were people who believed the rumors; there was a woman from El Thori who claimed that dozens of young men were standing next to a wall and the Jews killed all of them. Those who heard her and heard about Deir Yassin before, fled.

Z.Z. is the oldest of three brothers; his middle brother tried to persuade him to leave the country. He put all of Z.Z.'s clothes in a bag in order to convince him to leave.

He tried to put pressure on me, took my clothes with him, but I did not intend to leave. I told him, "My clothes will benefit you, take them and put them on." He stood in the street for three hours and when he despaired that I would not go with him, he went home, returned the bag and stayed with us. Me and my father, our position was very clear, either we die here in our house or we live in our house. The idea of emigration was not negotiable to us.

When the ceasefire stopped, Z.Z. and his family returned to their home, but unfortunately only a few families remained. However, over time, other families began to gradually return to their homes.

Z.Z. managed to survive during the war and to convince many families to stay in their homeland as well. He tried hard to convince many that the stories of killing and death were just rumors and that they had to stay in their homeland. Z.Z. visited Jerusalem during the first opportunities of the abolition of the curfew, the city in which he lived a large part of his life; death and war could be smelled from the city that Z.Z. sees as more than a home. "The first time I entered the Saadia neighborhood, the smell of the bodies was still there, the smell of the dead, it was a stench like meat or the smell of dead bodies."

A war that changed everything, a war that made the smell of a homeland into a smell of death, which separated many families, including those who disappeared into an unknown fate, including those who were displaced from their country, and some who returned from death, and some who saw death with their eyes. It is a war remembered with many details, but what can be said is that it left in the heart of everyone who lived through it memories that accompany them forever, memories that will be passed on from generation to generation. During the interviews that I have conducted, I saw the suffering in the eyes of those who lived this war. They became different people after this war, and many were forbidden to return to their homeland.

## 9 Conclusions

Working on this essay has not been easy, not for the author nor for the interviewees who opened their memories, feelings and experiences. War always has many faces and many stories; the war ended, but its effects remain in those who lived through it; we always must try to listen to them and preserve their stories and understand what they went through.

The War of 1967, with its many faces and sad stories, affected the Palestinian people and disappointed them greatly. The war that started surprisingly to many people, and ended with unexpected results; the media had a great role in spreading the spirit of victory and safety before the war began, and even at its beginning, the news was deceptive to the Palestinian people, claiming the victory of the Arab forces and the crushing of the Israeli forces in great contrast to what was actually happening on the ground.

This contribution dealt with small details that should not be forgotten, and the experiences of those who lived the suffering of war, including those who emigrated and those who stayed home. In that regard, rumors and previous events took a huge role in shaping the decision of the Palestinians to emigrate or to stay home.

Rumors played an important and significant role in this war; it was a strong reason for the displacement of many Palestinians even before the arrival of the Israeli forces, but these rumors were based on previous events and massacres that the

Palestinian people had experienced. The tragedies that the Palestinian people went through especially in 1948 played a major role in motivating flight, but also, embracing the notion of *Sumud*, to stay home. Despite the fear of massacres recurring and the fear of losing their honor, many preferred not to repeat emigration and suffer from the humiliation of leaving the country and living as displaced people. *Sumud* was thus one of the most important strategies of resistance that emerged during the 1967 war.

### **Primary Sources (interviews, in alphabetic order according to first name)**

**A.R.** – Male, aged 71 when interviewed by Sreen Abumeizer and Hagar Salamon in Jerusalem on November 14, 2019.

**I.Z.**  
and

**R.Z.** – Females, aged 68 and 71, respectively, when interviewed by Sreen Abumeizer in Jerusalem on February 19, 2020.

**N.N.** – Male, aged 76, when interviewed by Sreen Abumeizer in Jerusalem on February 16, 2020.

**Z.Z.** – Male, aged 80 when interviewed by Sreen Abumeizer in Jerusalem on February 12, 2020.

The other four interviews of those who emigrated were conducted by Aziz Haidar's team in Jordan.

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## INTERVIEW WITH Z.Z. (MALE)

FEBRUARY 2020

INTERVIEWER: SEREEN ABUMEIZER (S.) IN ARABIC

Z.Z. is a Palestinian lawyer, born in 1940. His narration captures beautifully how men in their twenties were surprised by the war, and how his plans for what he hoped to do in life kept changing, not least due to the Israeli occupation post 1967. Through the reencounter between his father and a (Jewish) friend, still from the time of the British mandate, Z.Z. and his group of Palestinian friends gain an opportunity to learn Hebrew, wavering between the purposes for which this skill will serve them. His keen memories of the economic situation before the war and after, as well as of first encounters with Jewish soldiers and the impact this had on his sense of self are poignant.

Z.Z.: I was 27 years old during that period, I mean, I lived that period in all its details. Before 1967, I was an employee of the Jordanian Ministry of Interior. I was the head of the passport office in Jerusalem, and my office was in the building where the Israeli Ministry of Justice is located now, which is in Salah al-Din Street (in East Jerusalem). Before 1967, this building was the complex for the Jordanian government departments [...] This was the situation until the day of 5.6.1967.

In the period before June 5, many political developments took place in less than a month [...] One came to expect something, but we never thought that this might happen. I mean, let's say that before May 1, 1967, everything was normal and natural, no one could have thought that there would be a war or that something would happen. But suddenly, when the Russians said to Syria that Israel could strike Syria, and when Abdel Nasser closed the Tiran

Straits, things began to deteriorate and develop very quickly, and we found out that most likely we are facing a war.

### THE SUDDEN WAR ON A REGULAR OFFICE DAY

The reactions of people can be characterized as emotional, I mean, people did not understand what war means, they did not experience a war before, and they did not know what the war might entail.

On the day of June 5, I was in my office in the department, and a colleague came and said to me: "There's war, there's war!" [...] It was 10 in the morning. [...] I went outside of my office. There was a counter at the entrance to the building, and there was a guy there working in the Jordanian intelligence, his name was Abu Hashem, I asked him, "Abu Hashem, what is going on?" He said, "They are sending planes like birds." "Ooh, what are you taking about 'planes like birds'?" So he told me, "Listen," and opened the radio on the Cairo channel Sawt al-Arab [the Voice of Arab(s)].

S.: Was the news contradicting reality?

Z.Z.: One hundred percent, meaning that what we used to hear in the news was one hundred per hundred different from the truth. They were saying that we had destroyed the enemy's planes and landed hundreds of planes, so the story was over. During this time, the youth in Jerusalem began to come to the building because there was the governor's office. [...] I remember about 100 young men were chanting and shouting, "We want weapons, we want weapons, we want to defend ourselves." So, the governor, Anwar al-Khatib, came up and gave a speech. He told them that, "I am here as a governorate and this is a civil department which means we have no weapons. If you want weapons, go to the 'area.'" [...] the area is the police command [...] There used to be the department of the Jordanian police, and the governor told them to go there, there they have weapons. And as we say in vernacular language, "*sarafa shilling*" [...] meaning he wanted to get rid of them. [...]

I had a friend who worked with me in the department [he was] from Wadi al-Jouz [a neighborhood in East Jerusalem]. He said: "How about we go with them and see what the situation is?"

At that time, there had been kind of a confusion. No department head was able to tell the employees whether to stay at work, or to leave.

I said to Salah, "Yalla [...] let's go." So we went and followed them to Wadi al-Jouz, to the area. The area was full with young men shouting: "We want weapons." A Jordanian army car came, a jeep. The man who was driving the car had one crown and two stars. The man besides him had one crown and one star. The young men surrounded the car, shouting.

He said, "Listen, guys. I don't want to tell you we reached Tel Aviv. The situation is excellent and better than you can imagine. Please let the army

work, and every one of you should go home and don't bother us anymore, let us work."

I looked at Salah and asked him, "What do you think? I do not believe this!"

S.: Were you aware of what was happening?

Z.Z.: Yes, I mean, I studied in a university and have a law degree, the same for Salah, he is a university graduate, and we have a lot of experience in life [...]

Salah told me, the best thing to do is to go home. We pulled out and left. He went to Wadi al-Jouz, and I went to the Damascus Gate to take the bus. I found no buses.

I lived in Al-Azariya.<sup>1</sup> All my life in Al-Azariya. I was born in Al-Azariya, and until this day in Al-Azariya [...] so I went to the Damascus gate and found there were no buses, so I pulled myself out and continued walking to the Al-Rashidiya school, Bab Al-Sahira. The road was full of people walking. And no one knew what was happening. I mean, everyone was lost. The important thing is that I arrived in Al-Azariya. That night in Al-Azariya, between June 5 and June 6, there was shelling. There were Israeli bombs, some of which fell behind our house and hit the house of our neighbors. We sat in the corridor, since the corridor is the place between two rooms, it should be safe. [...] We gathered in the corridor, but it was a night full of terror, meaning we could hear many bombs coming down around us, not one or two.

#### **SHELTERING AT A MONASTERY**

[...] We spent the night waiting nervously for the daylight. As soon as the sun appeared, we all went and sat in the monastery. There was a Roman orthodox monastery near our house. We thought since there are monks in the monastery the Jews wouldn't hurt us. After that I stood on the street, and saw people fleeing from Jerusalem. I tried to influence and persuade as many people as I could not to flee towards Jericho and enter the monastery [instead].

S.: Those who were on the run, where were they going, and did you succeed in persuading them?

Z.Z.: Runaways, they didn't know where to go, we had more than 600 people in the monastery.

[...] I was asking them where do they want to go? Death is death, whoever was meant to die, he will die no matter where he is, and whoever was meant to live, he will live. The monastery is a safe place and nothing would happen

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Azariya is the Arabic name of Bethany ("place of Lazarus"); it is a Palestinian town adjacent to Jerusalem.

to you, stuff like that [...] and I reminded them of what happened with the refugees in 1948 [...] and why they should not destroy themselves by fleeing and repeat the same situation and become like others.

There were people who were convinced, but there were also liars. I mean, one of the situations that I saw with my own eyes and heard in my ears. No one told me. A woman who came dressed in house wear, not young in age, said, "I am from Al-Toury, and it happened in front of me. They lined ten young men on the wall, sniped them and killed them."

S.: Was the story a rumor?

Z.Z.: Liar, liar! Many people who heard this [false] story and similar stories ran away. The rumors also have a basis. You should look at what happened in 1948. In 1948, there were massacres, for example, the Deir Yassin massacre in Jerusalem. The effect of spreading that story was that all the other villages, when they heard what happened in Deir Yassin, fled. There is nothing in international law that obligates a civilian to stray in a battlefield. This is one of the axioms. Civilians have the right to escape from the battlefields, and they have the right to return when military operations stop. When you see that they are coming to slaughter or cut or slash your stomach and I don't know what, you have the right to flee. There are many people when they heard this story, like this woman from Al-Toury who started telling us, yes, there were people who believed this story, whoever heard it and heard about Deir Yassin from before, fled. This story is from June 6. We got into the monastery with a number of people, but the people were like the river. I mean, can you imagine the street? Imagine people like a rope walking behind each other. Stories, tales and things, I mean, it was unreasonable.

The second night, which is between June 6 and 7. The monastery was so full [...] and many people came to me and begged for blankets because it was so cold at night. I went to the monks and brought two blankets to cover them, but there were many people and it was cold, I mean, during this period, it was unnaturally cold. [...] We were sitting in the monastery on the 6th, and on the 7th, it was a Wednesday. In the morning, a Jordanian soldier came. Imagine how simple and gullible people were. He had his weapon with him and was trying to bring down an airplane by shooting it, a bomb hit him and came on his side, all the shrapnel entered his back. This soldier came to us. One of the guys with us from the house of my brother-in-law, his name is G.S., God bless his soul. He said that he was a nurse or I don't know what. And this soldier came and entered. And using a tweezers, we burned it first to sanitize it, and put alcohol on it, and G. pulled all the shrapnel from his back. There were six or seven pieces of shrapnel. [The soldier then] dressed up and said, "I want to join my unit." We told him "Where is your unit? there are no army units left, sit down." He said, "I will shoot you!" We said no, don't do that,

and he said, "Tell me, where is the shortest way to Al-Ram?" We said, "You go through this mountain in a straight line to reach Al-Ram." He said, "Okay, but I have been without any food for two days, do you have food? Can you feed me?" We asked the people there, there was a woman that had *Mujadara* [a traditional dish of rice and lentil] [...] We gave him *Mujadara* with yogurt, and he left us and went in search of his unit.

S.: Was someone getting food for the monastery?

Z.Z.: No one had the time for others [...] like the Day of Resurrection [...] everyone managed himself, and the monks used to give what they had in the monastery. Anyway, we gave the soldier a plate of *Mujadara* to eat, and he went to join his unit in Al-Ram. God only knows if he died or lived or what happened to him, but that only shows that it is also true that the soldiers were left alone at the front. There were individual heroic acts [on the part of] many members of the Jordanian army. What we later understood was that orders were issued from the Jordanian army for the soldiers to withdraw. This story was an implementation of Glubb Pasha's<sup>2</sup> plan to defend the East Bank in the event of a war with Israel. This is found in the book of Glubb Pasha's memoirs, and also in a book by King Hussein titled: *Uneasy Lies the Head*, published in London in 1962. It says that the theory for Glubb Pasha was that if there is a war with Israel, we will withdraw and be stationed along the Jordan River from the East Bank in order to defend the East Bank. In fact, what they did in 1967 was as such, they issued orders to the army and they left the army alone. Even during this period, many soldiers went to the houses asking for civilian clothes, and there were people who asked for women's clothes to wear in order to escape, and they laid down their weapons! We would find weapons in the fields and agricultural lands; the weapons were thrown away and we were left alone.

### **RETURNING TO JERUSALEM ONCE THE CURFEW WAS LIFTED**

[...] Immediately after the war, they began to lift the curfew. The first day two hours, the second day three, four hours. I have been in Jerusalem all my life, I mean, I knew Al-Azariya only for bedtime, so even today there are many people in Al-Azariya that I don't know. I studied in AL-Rashdia, and after I graduated from the university, I worked in Jerusalem. All my friends are from Jerusalem, and we were a group of friends, I used to stay in Jerusalem until night and go to Al-Azariya to sleep. When they lifted the curfew, I immediately went to Jerusalem, walking or if possible, take a ride.

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<sup>2</sup> John Bagot Glubb was a British soldier who trained the Transjordanian army; he was known as Glubb Pasha.

The first time I entered Al-Sa'adiya neighborhood, the smell of the corpses was still present, the smell of the dead. The stench. It's similar to the smell of rotten meat.

S.: Were there any frictions? Did you see any Jews? Had you ever met a Jew?

Z.Z.: Not before 1967. If you wanted to see Jews, you had to go to the Freer School, get on the roof and see over the wall. Into the Mamilla area. Sometimes we would go there, just to see from afar that there were Jews. There used to be a wall from Bab al-Amoud to Al-Musrara Street, and continued straight to the north. Do you know where the American Consulate is? There was a gate called the Mandelbaum Gate, and this gate had international forces on it, and on Christian holidays, Israel used to allow Christians to visit the Resurrection church, so Christians used to come from there through the Mandelbaum gate, and, of course, foreign tourists who came to Jordan and who wanted to go to Israel entered through that gate. For example, on Christian holidays, we used to stop at this gate in order to watch the Arabs who wanted to leave Israel, how they looked. The economic situation in Israel was very bad, but as bad as it was, when they traveled, poverty and misery was shown to them, and many Christian people, when they came to visit their relatives, they would give them money and buy them clothes and other things.

After 1967, when the Jews occupied us, the Jews flocked to the city of Jerusalem, when the government allowed them to enter, they flocked like crazy. The people of Jerusalem welcomed the Jews who came as tourists, I mean, there was no kind of hatred or hatred against the Jews. The Jews were starving. Jordan was implementing a free market policy, and the country was full of imported foreign goods. [The Jews] looted the markets! They left nothing, bought like tramps, hungry like ogres, they did not leave any canned food, they did not leave any clothes, buying, buying, buying [...] Because for them, everything was peculiar.

### **FIRST EXPERIENCES WITH THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION**

Israel was monitoring the currency, kind of a socialist method. People were very stressed, there were many theories that say that Israel went to the 1967 war to get out of the economic hardship that it was in, I mean, yes, one of the direct reasons for the war was the closure of the Tiran Straits, but the economic situation in Israel was also bad, and also what is called a 'reverse immigration' had begun, meaning that Jews began to return from Israel to Europe and America. When they came to us [after the war], they left nothing, even this scarf that you are wearing, they used to see it as something strange and wondrous, they didn't leave anything, anything! Now, the people of Jerusalem were happy. They were selling, but they did not understand that after

they sold these goods, when it finishes, they don't have any way to bring any [more] goods!

I mean, they plundered the country, they took everything that was in the country, the country became empty, and then we started taking from them! I mean, in the days when Jordan ruled, there was prosperity, there were only two things: don't get near the Jordanian security and do whatever you want. As long as you are far away from politics and the security, do whatever you want, and the country was open and the trade market was free, but the Jews came and plundered everything as if they were hungry. All traders would call out: "Lira" [...] "Lira" [...] "Lira" [Israel's currency at the time] and sell.

There were people who started learning Hebrew, I personally told you that we went to the monastery. When we went to the monastery, we stayed for three nights. Then we decided to go back home. The first time we came out of the monastery, I was walking and the soldiers were standing, and it was the first time I met a Jewish soldier, one of them was standing with anger in his eyes and shouted at us in Hebrew, "*lekeh, lekeh*" (meaning: "go, go"). We didn't talk or do anything; he was terrified and he wanted to shoot us. This was the first moment that I saw a soldier, and at this moment I started to understand what the military occupation is.

Now, we were only a few families that stayed in Al-Azariya. In such circumstances, a person who you had never said hello to becomes closer than a relative, you feel that he is your family. So, we used to go sit in the Al-Azariya council every day, it was a village council. Every morning we went there and we met there. We used to stay in the council all day long. This was after the cease-fire took place, and we were allowed to leave the houses, all day sitting; we became like one single family.

One day I was going to the council and an [Israeli] army jeep stopped me. The Jordanian army camp had been located in Al-Azariya. Where the housing of the Orthodox charitable shelter was. The important thing is that there was an army camp. I was going, they stood up and called me, an officer and a guard were sitting there. Then he asked me, "Do you speak English?" I said, "Yes." They asked me, "Where is the camp that belongs to the Jordanian army?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "It is here on the map. Where is this?" I told him, "I don't know." He looked at me in anger and shouted at me, "You don't know." I told him, "I don't know," and left, of course, he turned the jeep around and left. This is another experience that stayed with me. It shows that the situation was not the same as before; before I had self-value and respect, now a nobody soldier terrified you! Makes you afraid, you become afraid for your life. This was the first time I dealt with a soldier.

### THE IMPACT OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS FROM BEFORE 1967

I will tell you another story. One day I was sitting at home, my father, may God have mercy on him, did not care about them, and we used to say that he is overwhelmed. There was a curfew. He came out of the house door and they shouted at him, and we were shouting at him from inside, we were telling him to enter. One day I was standing at the window, soldiers came out, and they stood at the door of the house, they were talking to my dad, and then suddenly I saw the soldier, opening the door of the house and entering while he was hugging my father, from the side! I saw this sight, and was astonished, so I came down and asked, "What is going on?" He said, "This is Shamoun," I asked, "Who is Shamoun?" He said: "Shimon Spiegel. He and I worked in the municipality in the days of the British." You know the Jews have the reserve army service, in the war they recruited everyone, so this guy turned out to have been working with my father in the municipal survey department in the days of the British, and now he was a reservist soldier because he was old. He was passing, saw my father, and recognized him.

God, this is Shimon, an old man, not a child. He said, "Oh my uncle, what do you want? What do you want me to bring you?" We said, "Nothing, uncle, may God ease your way." The next day, when we saw him, he brought a cylinder of gas and said, "I know that you use a Piper,<sup>3</sup> which needs gas." Then, he came, he told me, "This is my phone number, [and he said] "When they open Jerusalem and you can come to Jerusalem, call me and I will show you Jerusalem" [he meant West Jerusalem].

After a while, the bulldozers began to demolish the wall [the separation wall] in the Notre Dame area, where Bab Al-Jadeed is, it was closed, and there was a wall in this whole forbidden area from Bab Al-Amoud, Al-Musrara to the municipality today. The important thing is, I walked on the beginning of the prophet's street, I remembered Shamoun, so I entered a shop. I asked the trader to use the phone and call his number, the trader did. Shamoun asked me, "Where are you?" I told him, "I don't know," he told me, "Give me the owner." He talked to him, and told me to stay with him, "I am coming." He came and took me and toured me all over Jerusalem, meaning all of West Jerusalem, so we looked at Jerusalem, what a world! Before 1967, we did not see anything and did not know anything. For us, Bab Al-Amoud was the end of the world. Even in our imagination, I was surprised!

I mean, when I walked on Jaffa Street, I imagined myself walking in Damascus or Beirut, a huge city! Now, after many days, I called Shamoun, his secretary answered me. She didn't know a word of English, and I didn't know a word of Hebrew. She spoke Hebrew and I spoke English and Arabic. The only thing I remember she said: "*Lo ba*" [(he) hasn't come]. When I saw him

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<sup>3</sup> A British brand of oven.



after that, I told him what happened, he told me, “You must learn Hebrew.” I said, “Yes, I want to learn Hebrew.” He took me to Beit Ha’am. I was the first Arab student to study Hebrew in Beit Ha’am.

### LEARNING HEBREW

S.: Was there any criticism from people when they saw you with Shimon or that you were going to study Hebrew?

Z.Z.: No, I had a group of friends, we always met in Zaatara cafe, or Siam Cafe, which is in Bab Al-Amoud. We would sit and play cards and eat [...] There was no work or money. I was happy that I registered at the institute and went to the cafe at noon. They were mad at me. We all belonged to the movement of Arab nationalists. [...] They said, “You are going to study by yourself?! We want to go with you.” We used to study Hebrew on the basis of learning the language of a people that we wanted to keep ourselves safe from! They went with me, our class in the end, about thirty people in Beit Ha’am. The first thing that happened, one of us accomplished an operation to split Abu Ghosh, and his name was Kamal al-Nimri<sup>4</sup> [...]. They blew up and demolished his house and the insurrection took place because there was a UN group living in the area there. Then Israel decided not to use explosives, it used bulldozers to demolish homes. [...] After completing two three weeks, Ibrahim Al-Fatiani [...], Ibrahim fled to Jordan, they looked everywhere for him but he ran away.

The director of the institute came to me, and she said to me, “Ziad, what is this? Are all your friends like that?” I told her, “No. [...] They were going to study with conviction, and we have a reason.” We didn’t lie. We wanted to learn their language.

I stayed at the institution and I learned. At that time, the director said, “There is nothing left for you to learn.” I mean, now Hebrew became better for me than English and the same as Arabic, I mean, rarely would I hear a word in Hebrew that I didn’t know, and the thing that made me maintain the language was practice. Today I read, write, do lectures, and deal in Hebrew, so language is a queen. If you practice it, it will gain strength, and if you don’t practice it, it will fade away.

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<sup>4</sup> The complex story of al-Nimri was published in a newspaper article in Israel, see the translation of the text following this interview.

### THE IMPACT OF 1967 ON THE PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHY

S.: How has your lifestyle changed? Let's talk not only in the days before the war, I mean let's talk, for example, from the beginning of the year 1967.

Z.Z.: Look, I have never thought of working in politics. My only wish was that I would either work in the judiciary, or I work in the foreign ministry. Even when I was working in the Interior Ministry, my ambition was no longer to stay in the Interior. I always played with the things that were possible to achieve, but I never gave up on my ambitions. I am a self-made person, meaning that my parents, may Allah have mercy on them, led me to the matriculation [high school], in our days people used to call high school matriculation.

My father worked for a while in the army, he left the army and worked on the agricultural land that we owned, so we were okay, we were not rich. Our economic situation was not the best, so I reached high school but I could not go to university. I mean, my parents did not have the capabilities to send me to university, so I worked and went to university. Finished university through personal diligence. I built myself from myself.

I finished university through my relations and found a job through my hard work. I worked as a teacher for three years in AL-Omaria school then as a vice-principal and after that became the principal. Then, when I was still in Al-Omaria, I found a job in the Ministry of Interior. My only concern was that I don't belong here and wanted to be working in the judiciary. I wanted to go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I had my ambitions and didn't want to work in politics.

The war and the occupation became a reality and we were dismissed from our jobs. I mean, Jordan kept paying salaries, we were employees in Jordan, they started paying us our salaries, and the salary gives you a kind of security, meaning you won't need anyone. But I wasn't walking in a straight line in my life, I kept scribbling. [...] I mean, through all the situations I had gone through I was somewhat tactful. God protected me.

Little by little I found myself diving into politics and resistance. We have a cause, we are people, I found myself in the whirlpool of political action. This was not the plan. The 1967 war changed the course of most people's lives. We planned for something and found ourselves someplace else. I consciously planned for some things but did the opposite of what I planned. All my life changed! I mean, let me tell you something, the issue of marriage was not in my mind. After the war my mother kept whining, we don't know what is going to happen to us and I don't know what, but marriage was not on my mind, I had plans! I was working on the program that I wanted to build. I built it, but when I built it, I took loans and had debts that I wanted to pay off. I was not free and ready to get married, but the circumstances of the war [...]

Okay, when I got married, my wedding was like a funeral! We went to my uncle's house, brought the bride and came home. What is the value of a wedding when we are under occupation? While people are dying? Martyrs and deaths, how could you have a wedding! I mean, this is one of the negative effects it had on people. There is always something missing in life after the war.

[...] The desperation and frustration that exists today did not exist at that time. Plus, people could not imagine that the occupation would continue for that long. You learn from history, in '56 Israel occupied Gaza Strip to the Suez Canal, and then after six months, Eisenhower gave a warning to Ben-Gurion and said you should withdraw, Israel withdrew. Now, in 1967. We thought that what happened in the '56 will happen in '67, only a few months, so we said we can bear them.

S.: When did you start to feel that it would be more than a few months and not like '56, but rather years?

Z.Z.: We stayed probably until the 70s. I mean, for example, in the 70s, when my brother got arrested, I told my mother, maximum he is going to be away for a year. My mother shouted, I tried to convince her that the Jews will withdraw and let all the prisoners out.

Until that time, I was thinking that this situation is not permanent. Of course, he spent ten years in prison and came out and the Jews are still here! He got married and had kids and the Jews are still here! We started to understand that it was all empty talk. Perhaps until the 70s, people may have thought that this was a temporary situation. After the 70s, people seemed to feel that this is a long story. People had hope, but today, unfortunately, people have lost hope that there will be a political solution, in the traditional sense of the old times.



## ***THE CASE OF KAMAL AL NIMRI***

Editors' note: In the preceding interview, Z.Z. recalled a fellow student in his Hebrew class taken after the War of 1967 who turned out to have committed a terrorist attack. The case found an echo in the press at the time. The following newspaper article, translated from Hebrew, appeared in the newspaper *Ha'olam Ha'Zeh* (no longer published) in issue 1594 on March 20, 1968 (published with permission of the Yediot Aharonot Group). The article is followed by a brief biographical contextualization by Ronni Shaked. The newspaper article offers evidence of the difficulty of interfaith marriage in the Israel-Palestine region, with blame placed on Jewish women falling in love with Arab men and, thus, passing on membership of the Jewish community to individuals such as al Nimri. Simultaneously, the burden of living between two nations, including the prejudice and supernatural beliefs carried by both sides, finds reflection in this sensationalizing news story.

**“THE LEADER OF THE FATAH CLAIMS: ‘A MINISTER IN THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT IS MY UNCLE!’”**

### **THE JEWISH COMMANDER OF THE FATAH**

*He sang Israeli folk songs, spent time with the best of Jerusalem's girls and boasted that his uncle is a minister in Israel.*

“Do you know who murdered the Druze guard in Abu Ghosh?,” the teacher, Tamar Ben Vered, asked the Hebrew Ulpan students whom she instructs in Jerusalem. “One of the students in our class did it!”

The students – all adults studying Hebrew in Bet Ha'Am in Jerusalem – sat with their mouths agape. Kamal al Nimri, the accused in the murder of the guard of the Mekorot parking lot adjacent to Abu Ghosh, was well-known to them all, and beloved by most. Especially among the girls in the class.

Kamal (28), a handsome man, with a pleasant nature and blue-eyed, managed to befriend the students and the teachers. He was revealed to be an agent and high-ranking commander in the Fatah organization when he was caught preparing a report to the organization's headquarters, in which he communicated regarding the murder in Abu Ghosh.

Since then, two weeks have gone by, Kamal al Nimri is sitting in jail, and faces trial.

As he is being judged, Israeli citizens will see that before them is not just an episode in the life of one of the high-ranking commanders in the Fatah terrorist organization, but also the tragic fate of a man torn between two nations, between two loyalties.

Because Kamal, the man who indirectly caused an international uproar in Jerusalem when his family home located in the upscale eastern neighborhood of Wadi Joz was blown up, is the son of an Arab father and a Jewish mother.

As such, Kamal was the first among the Arab underground fighters that attempted, with caution and care, to blend into the Israeli community, in order to commit extreme terrorist actions from within.

## BETWEEN TWO NATIONS

Immediately upon his capture at the hands of the security forces, Kamal al Nimri claimed that a man recognized as an Israeli public figure of the first level is his uncle, his mother's brother.

The declaration of the blue-eyed terrorist raised a wave of rumors. *HaOlam HaZeh* brings here, for the first time, the full story of al Nimri – which is also a story that characterizes the tragedy of two nations that live side by side in the Land of Israel.

The story begins in the early 1930s in the ultra-Orthodox neighborhood of Me'ah She'arim in Jerusalem. It was a short time after Hitler's rise to power in the German government when the family of Rabbi Yaakov Kleiner immigrated to Israel from that country. The ultra-Orthodox family selected for their home a completely religious environment in which the special atmosphere of the Jewish ghetto, which they knew in the Diaspora, was maintained.

Yaakov Kleiner had three sons and three daughters. The eldest among them, Moshe, was a prodigy: born in Strasbourg, France, completed high school in Karlsruhe, Germany – where the family lived – and studied in the yeshivas of Heidelberg and Frankfurt am Main.

The younger brothers did not particularly follow in the direction of Torah study, and were drawn, especially following their move to Israel, to a secular lifestyle. Kleiner's eldest daughter more than all the others.

It was a rather common spectacle within the religious neighborhoods of Jerusalem at that period that the Arabs who came into commercial contact with the residents of these neighborhoods would court the daughters of the

ultra-Orthodox. In many cases, these courtships resulted in marriage between the children of the two nations.

One in a thousand, specifically the daughters of the ultra-Orthodox who immigrated from Germany, were those who were attracted to the Arabs and married them. Thus, it also happened with the daughter of the Kleiner family. She was drawn to an Arab youth named Salah al Din al Nimri, and informed her family that she was going to marry him. The religious family reacted harshly initially and, of course, attempted to prevent the girl from marriage with an Arab – despite the fact that it was the son of one of the most honorable and wealthiest families in Jerusalem.

### CHILDREN WITH TAILS

The al Nimri clan is one of the largest dynasties among the Arab Palestinians. Their name was publicized less than the Husseins and Nashashibis because their children were not involved in politics; they dedicated all of their energies to one matter: the accrument of property.

Tens of thousands of dunam of agricultural lands in what is now known as the Jerusalem corridor, and hundreds more dunam of urban lands in Jerusalem itself were concentrated in the hands of the 800 families of the al Nimri clan in those days. Aside from that, they owned dozens of buildings. Many of the buildings on HaYehudim St. in the Old City belonged to the al Nimris.

Despite this honorable status, the Kleiner family did not come to terms with the marriage of their ultra-Orthodox daughter to an Arab youth, who began his career in the Tabu office in Jerusalem, and subsequently became a land agent. Following her marriage, they sat in mourning: she was considered dead to the father and sons.

This was not the only rift within the Kleiner family. Eventually, the young boys abandoned the religious lifestyle and became completely secular. As a result, a deep, harsh rift grew between the members of the family. The religious and the secular cut off any contact between them. Although they live together in the same city, there is no contact, and there has not been even one meeting between the religious and secular siblings in thirty years.

Thus, it happened that while the religious family members continued to maintain the ban against the daughter who wed an Arab, the secular members recognized her and even remained in contact. Even the family matriarch, the wife of Yaakov Kleiner, would sneak secretly to see her daughter after she had given birth to four boys, one after the other.

One of Kamal's early memories is connected to a visit of his Jewish grandmother in the home of his Arab family. Kamal said:

I was about six years old when Grandmother came to visit us. We washed in the bath, all the children together. Suddenly we felt that

Grandmother was peeking from behind the door, through the hole in the lock, into the bathroom. Afterwards she told that she peeked in order to see whether we had been born with tails. She believed that children that were born of a wedding between an Arab and a Jewess had to have tails.

### **EDUCATION IN THE CAPITAL OF EGYPT**

The War of Independence cut off the connection between Kamal and his family with their Jewish relatives. The Al Namri family lost a large portion of its property in this war.

The entire vicinity between the German colony in Jerusalem and Katamonim, which had belonged to the clan, remained in Israeli hands. This property also included eighteen buildings – one of which subsequently became a synagogue.

Another urban territory belonging to the family, which stretched from the Sheikh Jerrach neighborhood to Waqf al Tambura, became the demilitarized zone, which could not be used. Kamal's father took his wife and children and fled with them to Jordan. After a few years, he sold part of his property in Jerusalem and settled in Kuwait. However, he provided his sons with the very best education: high school in St. Joseph's in East Jerusalem, and university education in the universities of Cairo.

Thus, Kamal studied structural engineering in Cairo; while his brothers studied electrical engineering and medicine.

Kamal's mother maintained the connection despite the distance between her and her Jewish family. She would write to one of her sisters, who emigrated to Australia, and the sister would pass the letters along to the siblings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Kamal himself learned to speak flawless German, a few sentences and songs in Yiddish, all from his mother. He grew up and became a handsome man, with blue eyes and light hair, so, at first glance, there is no similarity between him and the traditional Arab type.

He also gained status for himself in Jerusalem, to which he returned as a structural engineer and a member of the Rotary Club, and planned his wedding to his cousin, Suhad, who was studying literature at Beirut University. They were already engaged, and even wrote out a wedding contract: according to the plan a few years back, the wedding between the two was meant to take place in March, 1968.

The Six-Day War came, disrupted all of the plans, and destroyed the world of Kamal al Nimri.



### THE GIRLS HOSTED KAMAL.

Immediately following the war, Kamal found himself out of work, cut off from his family and his fiancée. 2,400 dunam of land in the area of Latrun, belonging to his family, were expropriated at the hands of Israel.

On the other hand, he was given access to his Jewish family. He knew exactly the names and addresses of his uncles – and went out in search of them throughout the land.

The one uncle, Moshe Kleiner, who serves today as the CEO of the Miz-rachi Bank of Jerusalem, did not want to see him at all. In his eyes, Kamal's mother never existed at all. His son, the prodigy, still belongs to the most extreme among the Agudath Israel. Therefore, it is natural that he was unwilling to recognize Kamal.

This week, Moshe Kleiner said to an *Ha'olam Ha'Zeh* reporter, "Yes, they told me that I once had a sister who married an Arab. Beyond that I know nothing."

On the other hand, the second uncle who was in Jerusalem – the secular one – was prepared to become acquainted with Kamal, and even to accept him. This uncle was Avraham Kleiner, who Hebreicized his name to Kidron, a seasoned Histadrut politico from Jerusalem, who serves today as one of the high-ranking managers of the Histadrut housing company, Shikun Ovdim.

Avraham Kidron has two young daughters: 23-year-old Rina and 20-year-old Yehudit; they had never met Kamal. But they both accepted him as a member of the family, they hosted him in their home on Bustenai Street in Jerusalem, toured with him through the land and tried to help him. Kamal would proudly present his uncle to his friends in East Jerusalem – and Kidron even promised to find him a job as an engineer in one of the Histadrut companies.

When the relationship drew closer, Kamal would even take his two cousins on trips throughout the country in his car.

### "WILD LIFE"

All of the family members of the East Jerusalem al Nimris looked at Kamal with a degree of jealousy. His Jewish pedigree<sup>1</sup> promised him success in the new situation that was created. Kamal would tell his friends and family, with pride, that three of his uncles held prime positions in the public life of the State of Israel: the one is a bank manager; the second – the manager of a housing company; the third – a minister in the government.

Within a brief period, it appeared as though Kamal was making efforts to acclimate to the new status, to be absorbed into Israeli society. This found expression on two planes: He registered for the Hebrew language Ulpan in

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Jewish law, as a son to a Jewish mother, he remains Jewish according to his religion.

the Bet Ha'Am building, and he began to go out and spend time with Israeli girls.

His Israeli teachers said of him when they met him in the Ulpan:

There is no doubt that he was handsome. The most handsome among all of the Ulpan students. He also didn't have an Arab mentality. All of the teachers and female students were especially fond of him.

Together with his Arab friend, the lawyer Abd al Ziad, who also studied in the Ulpan, Kamal lived what appeared to be "a wild life" in the eyes of his friends. Ziad began going out in the company of one of the women students in the Ulpan, the wife of a Reform rabbi, though Kamal al Nimri would every so often switch between Jewish girls.

The legends and tales of Kamal's conquests, among the Jewesses of Jerusalem, became a household story throughout East Jerusalem.

### **SOMETHING MYSTERIOUS**

Instead, something happened to Kamal in this process of integration. There is no doubt that he was torn between the Jew within him and the Arab within him. His teacher, Tamar Ben Vered, the ex-wife of *Haaretz* reporter, Amos Ben Vered, who taught him for two and a half months, said of him:

He was a restrained student, introverted, as though wrapped in an armor of ice. While for the other Arab students the ice broke as time went on, he remained cold and didn't get close to anyone. There was something mysterious about him, and, thus, intriguing.

All of the students would come to the director of the Ulpan, Rachel Ayalon, and tell her of their problems. A number of times he walked around in the vicinity of her door but never dared to enter. He expected her to summon him. When she did not, his friend, Ziad, wrote a letter in his name, in which he told the director of Kamal's Jewish family, and his uncle the minister.

### **TO MARRY A JEWISH WOMAN**

He did not hide his opinions. Each student had to offer a lecture within the framework of the studies. He chose to speak about Cairo, drew a map on the board, and spoke in praise of Cairo, Egypt and Nasser. Throughout his lecture there was not one word of criticism or negation.

We held a field trip for the students to Rechovot, Rishon, Caesarea and Zichron Yaakov. In each place we visited monuments. At the end of the trip Kamal asked, 'What's this? All of Israel is a great big cemetery?' We answered him: 'In a place where there is life, there is also death.'

Kamal's singing teacher, Hadassah Sigalov, said:

He always sat in the back row of the class, gazed upon everyone from above, and maintained a barrier. In the singing lessons he would sing, indeed, Israeli homeland songs and Hassidic songs; but he was different from the other students even from the first days.

Another teacher attended an Israeli-Arab student gathering which was held by an Anglican priest on Jabotinsky Street in Jerusalem. Kamal expressed his views regarding the Israeli-Arab problem. The teacher was left aghast. "He said that we must return all the Jews who immigrated to Israel since 1948 to their countries of origin. The remainder will merit all of their rights under the Arab rule."

After two and a half months of study in the Ulpan, Kamal discontinued his studies. He went to Jordan and from there to Kuwait, to meet his parents. In Rabat Amon, he met his fiancée who came from Beirut. In East Jerusalem, his Arab relatives said that he informed her that he was cancelling his marriage to her since he would be marrying a Jewish woman.

#### **ELI COHEN OF THE FATAH**

Since Kamal returned from his trip beyond the border, he had changed to an extreme. Suddenly, he became social and warm towards all of his Israeli friends. Despite leaving the Ulpan, he asked to join the student trip that was taken to Eilat. On this trip, he began to approach the teachers and emphasize for them his Jewish origins. Similarly, he often photographed and was photographed.

He also visited the Kidron family with increased frequency, after he brought them regards from his mother. The residents of Abu Ghosh would often see him as he parked his car in the forests around the village, in the company of one of his cousins.

All of the signs point to the fact that al Nimri received new action instructions from the Fatah on his last visit across the border. It seems that the organization plotted to take advantage of his family and social connections in order to plant him in the heart of Israeli society. For this purpose, he even concocted a story regarding his upcoming marriage to a Jewish woman. His commanders hoped that Kamal al Nimri would be the Eli Cohen<sup>2</sup> of the Fatah organization.

Except that Kamal was caught. And the very first action that was conducted at his command was the murder of the Druze guard near Abu Ghosh and the explosion of the heavy mechanical equipment there.

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<sup>2</sup> Eli Cohen served as an Israeli spy in Syria under the name Kamel Amin Thaabet. He was eventually caught, aged 40, and executed by hanging in Damascus in 1965.

### TRAGIC STORY

With his apprehension, a tremendous blow struck the Kidron family who took him in. The uncle and the girls – who were exploited for cover in the early reconnaissance trips that he took to Abu Ghosh before the attack – were struck with shock; they denied the whole episode of their acquaintance with him and refused to open it up.

But the entire tragic tale was apparent. The only mystery that remained open was: Who is the uncle who Kamal claimed served as a minister in the Israeli government?

It turns out that Kamal spoke of his uncle the minister not just to his Arab relatives but also to his Jewish friends. Some of them even knew to relate that the minister is none other than the Minister of Religion, Dr. Zerach Werhaptig. The investigation of *Ha'Olam HaZeh* has proven that there is no truth to this story.

Kamal said that the wife of the minister, Naomi Werhaptig, was one of the daughters of Yaakov Kleiner, his Jewish grandfather. It is difficult to know from whence this story came to him, as Naomi Werhaptig is the daughter of Yaakov Klein and not Kleiner, and she has no connection whatever to the Kleiner family, and certainly not to Kamal.

Did Kamal invent the story purely to deepen his penetration into Israeli society? Or perhaps there is some family relationship between him and another of the ministers?

The answer to this may only be disclosed when Kamal sits at the defendant's stand to stand trial for the murder of the Druze guard, which was committed under his command.

## KAMAL NASSER A-DIN NIMRI [KNOWN AS KAMAL AL NIMRI] A BIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION

RONNI SHAKED

Born in September, 1942, in Jerusalem to a Jewish mother and a Palestinian father, who was heir to one of the most prominent Palestinian families in Jerusalem. According to the Jewish ritual law he was fully Jewish. He lived with his family in Jerusalem until 1948. Following the Nakba, they emigrated to Egypt where he was educated, and completed his education as an electrical engineer. While studying at university he joined the Arab nationalist group, Al Commune el-Arab, which espoused a pan-Arab nationalism inspired by the teachings of then Egyptian president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and blended with Marxism. The Popular Front for the Liberation of

Palestine (PFLP) headed by George Habash grew out of this movement. Kamal al Nimri was among the founders of the PFLP.<sup>3</sup>

Following the completion of his studies, he returned to live in East Jerusalem in the Wadi Joz neighborhood, and, at the end of 1967, he travelled to Jordan for a number of weeks. The assumption is that while in Jordan, he met with the leaders of the PFLP who tasked him with serving as the commander of the organization in Jerusalem. William Nasser, a Christian resident of East Jerusalem and member of the Fatah movement, was appointed as his deputy. William Nasser's mother was also a Jewish woman who moved to Israel from Lebanon and she met William's father in Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup>

William Nasser had already joined the Fatah organization prior to 1967. He was sent to China for military training, returned to Jordan, and infiltrated from Jordan to Israel on January 1, 1968, and began to direct the guerilla actions against Israel together with Kamal al Nimri. Nimri's home in the Wadi Joz neighborhood served as a command center. Mines, rifles and explosive materials were all hidden in his house.

At the order of the commander of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Jordan, the two were tasked with the murder of Ahmad Abdallah Khattar, an Arab inhabitant of the village of Kalonia located to the west of Jerusalem which was destroyed during the Nakba. In 1929, during violent riots between the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine, some Jewish inhabitants of Upper Motza, a village located just outside Jerusalem and adjacent to Calonia, were murdered. Abdallah Khattar offered refuge and saved two children of the Maklef family, whose parents, brothers and two sisters were murdered in the riots at the hands of their Arab neighbors. One of those two children who were saved, Mordechai Maklef, would become the Israeli Defense Force's third Chief of Staff in 1952.

According to the Palestinian narrative, Ahmed Khattar is the one who killed Abd al-Khader al-Husseini.<sup>5</sup> Ahmed was recruited to the Israeli intelligence following the Nakba and acted as a spy in a number of Arab countries. In 1962 he was exposed and, along with his wife and three children, was extricated and brought back to Israel. Upon his arrival to Israel, Ahmed Khtar converted to Judaism and became Shlomo Amir. As a token of gratitude for his service, the Israeli government granted him the gas station at Neve Ilan, located beside the village of Abu Ghosh. From 1967, Shlomo Amir became a target for assassination among the Palestinian organizations.

Kamal al Nimri, as the commander of the PFLP in Jerusalem, received the order to assassinate Shlomo Amir. After a lot of scouting and surveillance, he went out, together with his deputy, on February 28, 1968, to Shlomo Amir's gas station to murder him. Three trucks and a diesel tank were parked that night at the gas station.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://hadfnews.ps/post/73328> (accessed December 28, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.sahat-altahreer.com/?p=64577> (accessed December 28, 2021).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

After the two realized that the guard was not Shlomo Amir but instead a Druze man named Abdallah Hamdan, they bound him, ignited the supplies which he had been guarding and ran. William Nasser returned to Ramallah while Kamal al Nimri went to the home of his Jewish uncle in Tel Aviv.<sup>6</sup>

Kamal al Nimri and William Nasser were apprehended and each condemned to a life sentence. Following al Nimri's arrest, while conducting a search of his home in Wadi Joz, police uncovered a weapons cache which hid firearms and explosives, including mortars, rifles and ammunition. His home in Wadi Joz was the first to be destroyed post-1967 by the Israeli authorities in Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup>

Kamal al Nimri, together with his deputy, William Nasser, was released from Israeli prison on March 14, 1979, within the framework of a prisoner-trade with the Palestine Liberation Organization.<sup>8</sup> Israel released 76 terrorists to Lebanon in return for an Israeli prisoner of war who was captured in 1978. Following his release, al Nimri was elected as a member of the Central Council of the PFLP, as a member of the Palestinian National Council, and as a member of the General Union of Palestinian Writers and Journalists. He moved to Jordan in 1990 where he was among the founders of the Jordanian Democratic Popular Unity Party, considered one of the workers parties bearing a socialist-Marxist orientation, and served as a member of the policy office of the party for many years. Alongside his political involvement in the Jordanian party, he continued his activity in the PFLP.

Kamal al Nimri died in Jordan on October 9, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.inforum-jollanar.tn/%D9%85%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%83%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%8A/> (accessed Dec. 28, 2021).

<sup>8</sup> <https://ammannet.net/%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1/%D9%83%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D8%B4%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B5%D8%BA%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%84%D9%86-%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%A7> (accessed December 28, 2021).

## INTERVIEW WITH A.C. (MALE)

AUGUST 2016

INTERVIEWERS: HAGAR SALAMON (H.) AND RONNI SHAKED (R.)

*The interview was conducted in Hebrew and translated into English*

Hagar Salamon met A.C. at a shoemaker's shop in Jerusalem's Old City and he was enthusiastic to tell his story. He works as a translator for Palestinian patients at Hadassah-Mount Scopus hospital and speaks excellent Hebrew; hence he refers to places generally with their Hebrew names throughout the interview. He was glad that Salamon invited him to the library of the Truman Institute at the Hebrew University, quite close to his work place. Ronni Shaked, a Truman colleague of Salamon, joined and A.C. told them his highly detailed story about the war in Issawiya, the Palestinian village right below Mount Scopus. The interview setting, thus, actually overlooks Issawiya. The interview location turned out to also be part of A.C.'s story. Nonetheless, the atmosphere between interviewee and interviewers was very friendly and A.C. appreciated the opportunity to tell his remembrances to two enthusiastic interviewers.

A.C. recalled a lot of detail regarding the course of the war in Issawiya which was similarly told, if with less detail, by other interviewees from this village. Before the interview started properly, Ronni and A. clarified that during the Jordanian administration, a small enclave of Israelis was on Mount Scopus, and Ronni reveals that in 1965, he was one of the soldiers stationed there. A.C. recalled the beginning of the war, the three days during which he and his family found refuge in a cave, as

well as details about the first days back in the village, encountering Israeli soldiers, as well as how most everyone in his village opted to stay. His narrative also captured the change in the atmosphere during and after the war.

### **BEFORE THE WAR**

R.: So, you're from Issawiya?

A.C.: Yes.

H.: Tell me, do you have memories from before the war? How was it for you? How did you look at Jerusalem?

A.C.: Everything I remember about Issawiya, about Jerusalem, about Hadasah and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, is part and parcel of my day-to-day life. The university and the hospital is in front of our eyes every day. Open your eyes in the morning, and you see the hospital in the west, the university in the south. Our village is a little lower than the university and the hospital. We knew that there're Israeli soldiers there, that we definitely had nothing to do with them, and only see them during patrol.

[...].

A.C.: I was 14 years old. I was in school. The patrol would pass right under our house, where there's a hotel under the ambassador hotel. We would sit in school and look out at the patrol [...]

R.: And throw rocks [laughing].

A.C.: No, no, no, I'm talking about the Jordanian patrol, accompanied by representatives from the UN. Now, there wasn't glass, but there was this opening we could look through. Now back then, there weren't any transportations from Issawiya to Damascus Gate.

H.: There wasn't any transportation?

A.C.: There wasn't any transportation. There was a path. Without which there wasn't any road really. Only a path where we would pass right next to Hadasah Hospital.

H.: From where?

A.C.: From our village towards the western side. Right next to the entrance to the hospital, where there's a cemetery we would pass, and walk around next to the hospital. We would see the Israeli guard in the western corner, if I remember [...]

H.: What did you think about them when you passed?



A.C.: There was an electricity pole, with a rope, as kids we would hang around it and play with the rope. We were only fifty meters away from the soldiers. But we didn't hurt them and they didn't pay attention to us. Kids passing by, nothing more.

R.: But what did you think about these Jewish soldiers at the time?

A.C.: See, as a child you don't know any difference between someone who's Jewish and what's Israel. We had no information. We would study geography in school. The western boarder in the Mediterranean Sea. I don't remember any Palestine or Israel. In the north, there's Syria, from the east Iraq and Saudi Arabia, something like that. We had no real knowledge or information about what was happening in Israel. Either it was intentional or they just didn't know.

R.: What did you study about Zionism and Jews?

A.C.: Nothing.

H.: And about '48?

A.C.: That Jews conquered Palestine in '48.

H.: So that you did study. And you're saying Palestine and not Jordan? [...]

R.: Jordan also conquered Palestine [...]

A.C.: That's what we learned. That's how we were educated. We were little kids, but in school they didn't mention Palestine, it was Jordan.

H.: And at home?

A.C.: At home, I'll tell you, the level of knowledge by people was not too advanced. It was limited. There was no TV. No media. Nothing. Nothing.

R.: Did you listen to the radio?

A.C.: There was a radio at my uncle's, and as a child, I'd walk around 400–500 meters with my grandmother to my uncle's house. We would listen to this broadcast called "*Abu Tapasb*" with Abdullah Zohabi. It was most popular on the "Kol Israel" [Voice of Israel] station.

H.: And you listened to Kol Israel?

A.C.: We would listen to Kol Israel in Arabic. Also the news. See, as simple people, to bring the radio and listen alone would just make me happy.

H.: From where did you bring the radio?

A.C.: From my uncle. It worked with a battery.

R.: And in school they didn't teach anything about the Jews? Anything?

A.C.: They hoped that Palestine would be freed from its conquerors. That's what we learned. We would look at Jews like enemies. And they would encourage us by saying that one day Israel would be destroyed. See, we're simple people, like you educate your four-year-old son. He believes anything you say. There were no media, and the only media we'd get our hand on was newspapers. But there wasn't any free press. Till today, in the entire Arab world there's no free press – besides Lebanon maybe. All the press belongs to the authorities. And what could you 'know' from a press that's controlled by the authorities?!

H.: So you do remember that 'they' would not stay here?

A.C.: Yes, that was the feeling.

H.: And what did you think? How would that happen?

A.C.: See, as a child we had no idea [...] I'll tell you the truth, we weren't developed or aware like we are now. No electricity, no radio, no TV no press [...] I'm talking about myself as someone who lives in Issawiya, and I'm one of the first who learned and finished high school there, and back then, whoever finished high school, they would make a big party for him and fire shots into the air [...]

High School, maybe one or two a year would finish, and sometimes no one would graduate. Me, when I was a student in 10th grade, many people in Issawiya would come to me and ask me to read the contents of a letter from Saudi Arabia or America for them, and write a response for them. Understand?

H.: Of course.

A.C.: And also if people would want to write for one another [...] That's something I experienced. I'd write for them an agreement for a purchase or something.

R.: I have a question. In '65–'66, Hussein established the national guard partly out of Palestinians from the villages. Do you remember that?

A.C.: No, absolutely not. We were in school. There was a military drill. But what's military? There weren't any arms. Only, right left marches.

H.: Did you have uniforms?

A.C.: No, no, just regular clothes. The Jordanian military specializes in discipline. Very strict. I'll tell, the Israeli military isn't.

R.: And what did you do during the drills?

A.C.: A sergeant would come to our high school, and would teach us how to stand in formation. How to stand straight. To look like men. We were 15–17 years old.

H.: This was part of the school's curriculum?

A.C.: Yes, once a week.

H.: And what did you think? Did you understand what you're training for?

A.C.: They would train us for one day where we would free Palestine. Also during school there was the idea of freeing Palestine.

H.: They said, "Free Palestine"?

A.C.: *Tachrir* [liberate] Palestine. What was taken by force will be freed by force.

H.: And about Jordan, what did you think?

A.C.: Jordan, like all other Arab authorities, it's controlled by the Shin Beit.<sup>1</sup> All Arab countries are controlled by the Shin Beit. And whoever joins Palestinian movements is in deep trouble. See, the motto was "We're against Israel," but whoever would start some sort of anti-Israel movement would be assassinated.

H.: Wait, I want to understand. Because they didn't let it be some sort of force that would oppose Jordan?

A.C.: No, no, I'll tell you. The entire regime in Jordan has a role to play. And they know their role; the role is to free Palestine. And there's proof for that. The high general of the Jordanian army was Kalub Basha; he was a British officer. And as a Brit, the British themselves helped the Jews in establishing the State of Israel. That's clear, all that we learned. The worst [enemy of] the Palestinians is a Brit. Jews wanted a country, but who helped them, who paved the path for them? [...]. And I personally, and there are many like me, we believe there isn't a conflict. I don't want to mix things up, but I want to mention the following [...] many like me believe, know, that there's no historic conflict between Muslims and Jews; the conflict is political, following the establishment of the State of Israel. That's when the Jews became the enemies. Suddenly, in the eyes of people, Jews just came and took our lands, our country, and expelled the Palestinians and fought against all the Arabs [...] now that's a political conflict. If there wasn't this episode, what's between

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<sup>1</sup> Shin Beit is the Israeli security service – A.C. narrates from the assumptions current during his youth; the statement cannot be verified.

Judaism and Islam? Nothing. Like the relationship between Islam and Christianity.

### **THE FOUNDING OF THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION AND JORDANIAN-ISRAELI RELATIONSHIPS**

R.: I want to take you back to '64, three years prior to the war. Here, on Jabel Ziotun (Mount Olives), they established the Palestinian Liberation Organization. The first time the Palestinian flag [was raised] [...] in May 31 1964. Do you remember that?

A.C.: I remember.

R.: What did you do? How did you feel?

A.C.: Pride. As children. It's occupation [...] but we had less pain than the refugees. We didn't feel, since we're still sitting in our houses, on our lands, we didn't feel.

H.: You didn't have refugees in your village?

A.C.: No.

[...]

A.C.: You probably all know that the Jordanian rule is not an enemy of Israel. That's a point. From then till now.

R.: King Hussein loved Jews. You know what? Tel-Aviv never stopped. It stopped one time when King Hussein came to visit [...]

A.C.: In my view, King Hussein was the most revered and most intelligent. He was tough, but you respect that. He has a good heart. He had an attractive way, and we miss his truth. Now, his son, the same thing. I say, always ask, that his family stays in power, why they are the reason Jordan is united, and they're the hope of Jordan. Meaning, there aren't any problems in Jordan. Jordan and its citizens will live quietly and peacefully. In any case there will be poor people, there are lots of poor people in the whole world, but if their rule will collapse, in Jordan there will be more anarchy than in Syria or Lebanon [...]

R.: Did you learn about the national convention at home?

A.C.: Ah [...] it wasn't so popular. We heard about it only through the Jordanian media in '64. I was 15–16 at the time, but I remember that. I was in the Intercontinental Hotel at the time.

**THE DAYS BEFORE THE WAR – LISTENING TO NASSER’S SPEECHES**

H.: The days before the war, what did you hear? What preparations were there prior to '67?

A.C.: People placed all their hopes in Abdel Nasser [...]

H.: When did you first hear about it? When he started talking about a war, do you remember?

A.C.: See, I, everyone would listen to his speeches when he talked.

H.: In your village?

A.C.: Not only in the village, but in the entire Arab world. Wherever there was a radio in the Arab world, folks would tune in.

H.: What would he talk about aside from about Israel? What did he discuss before the war?

A.C.: Mainly against imperialism, and for the liberation of Palestine, and for the unity of the Arab world. Those were Nasser’s main talking points.

H.: And when he talked about all this, what did they say?

A.C.: I’ll tell you, we would study Abdel Nasser’s speeches in school.

H.: Meaning after he delivered them?

A.C.: In Arabic literature classes.

H.: Ah [...] because of their beauty?

A.C.: Their beauty, their content, it was an enchanting man delivering a speech – everything stopped. We were all with the hope that King Hussein [...] but like I said, the situation then was not like it is today. People were ‘blind,’ not everybody understood. But sometimes it was forbidden to listen to Abdel Nasser here.

H.: Who censored?

A.C.: They didn’t censor. They simply ordered that no one listens.

H.: But who? The Jordanian authorities?

A.C.: Yes. There were incidents regarding this. One elderly man in Issawiya was listening to the radio, and it was Ahmad Said talking, not Abdel Nasser, and he was a charismatic news anchor [...] suddenly two men ran inside and screamed at him, “Why are you listening?!”

R.: Two, three weeks before the war, what did you feel?

A.C.: We felt that victory was near. When Nasser expelled the UN representatives from Tīran, we knew a war was near, and that was the beginning of the end for Israel. That was the general feeling, and people didn't really know the truth that was unfolding.

R.: Were you happy? Did you want a war?

A.C.: We didn't want a war, but we were happy. They thought there would be liberation, would anybody say he's not happy about that?

H.: Of course, of course, there was tremendous happiness. I just want to understand. You said you studied the speeches at school, but on the other hand that it was forbidden to listen to them sometimes, I don't understand [...]

A.C.: I'll tell you. There was a high school in Taojiyah, and we would take the Egyptian exams.

H.: Not the Jordanian one?

A.C.: Some schools in Jerusalem and the West Bank taught the Egyptian one.

H.: And the Jordanians would allow it?

A.C.: Yes, yes. It depended on the relationships. Sometimes they would fight and sometimes Hussein would go to Nasser. See, it's all political gamesmanship. Each player has his role to play. There was an Egyptian high school diploma. The difference was that in the Egyptian system, you only had to succeed in two subjects, whereas in the Jordanian system you had to succeed in four, so some student in 12th grade would pursue the Egyptian exams.

H.: What did you do?

A.C.: The Jordanian system.

H.: And that's why you were allowed to listen to the speeches and analyze them?

A.C.: Yes. Regarding the Jordanian exam systems, one of the subjects you had to pass was Arabic history, focusing on the Israeli Palestinian conflict. It was obligatory. If you would excel in everything else and fail this, you'd fail in general.

H.: And it wasn't like that in the Egyptian system?

A.C.: It wasn't obligatory.

H.: Understood. Now let's go back to the days before '67. What was going on? Did they speak of victory at home? What did you hear before Jordan joined in? Do you remember?

A.C.: I'll tell you the truth, my parents were simple people. They had no knowledge and no idea, they would follow as all of us followed [...]

H.: Everybody was like that?

A.C.: At home there was no politics. No politics at home. No media either.

R.: But after all you were students [...]

A.C.: We would go out to rally, and it would mainly bring us joy to go to a rally and miss school [...]

[...]

H.: Now, you're saying that right before the war there was happiness. They knew, etc. They listened to Nasser's speeches [...] What did people think about Jordan? What do you remember?

A.C.: See, Jordan was in alliance with Egypt and Syria. They all followed Nasser. King Hussein followed Nasser, and there was great hope that victory would come and all would turn out well.

H.: And did they tell you to prepare in any way?

A.C.: No, no. I'll tell you. I'll tell you exactly. I remember they gave out British rifles to those on reserve duty. In Issawiya, they stationed five soldiers with five guns.

H.: Who gave them out, the Jordanians?

A.C.: Yes, yes.

H.: They didn't tell you to do something? Hide in bomb shelters? Nothing?

A.C.: No. It was part of our life that we would be victorious and wouldn't need anything. During the war itself, we would sit in the entrance to our houses and watch the Jordanians' shells.

### **REMEMBERING THE DAYS OF JUNE 1967**

H.: Do you remember what day the war started?

A.C.: Monday.

H.: Monday in the morning? What did you do then? What did you hear?

A.C.: Around 10, we were playing billiards in the village.

H.: On Monday?! Billiards?!

A.C.: On that day. There was a coffee shop, it had billiards, it was new, it had been open only five–six months, and we would order our turn in advance,

and pay in advance too. Suddenly we hear from a radio from a nearby coffee shop that the war had broken out – “Forty-four planes [...]”

R.: Do you remember what they said?

[The conversation expands regarding Ronni’s question]

H.: I’m asking, what would they say to Nasser?

A.C.: See, there were people who said [...] some of the people went home. I’ll tell you, I was one of the people who went. But we were next to our house, no blockade, no shelters, nothing. We were looking at what was going to happen in Hadassah and the University from the French Hill.

H.: Did you go to the French Hill?

A.C.: No, we knew the shooting there was from the Jordanian troops.

H.: So in the beginning you were happy that [...]

A.C.: We said there may be a way, so we should go home [...]

H.: Going home to be happy together with the family?

A.C.: Not to be happy.

H.: So for what?

A.C.: See, there’s a war with Israel, and there’s no reason to be afraid. It did us good, that was the feeling then [...]

H.: This excitement in the heart?

A.C.: Yeah this kind of excitement. So we went home, each one to his house. The following day people started to be more hesitant while talking to one another.

H.: Why hesitant?

A.C.: Let’s leave the village, the Jews are on the bridge, let’s go to Jordan. Some left the village. We left to the new camp outside to the east of Issawiya.

R.: The border patrol camp?

A.C.: Yes [...]

R.: Next to Zaya?

A.C.: No, to the east. The actual camp. It’s on the land belonging to Issawiya. Where the gas station is next to M’aleh Adumin. Its private property belonging to my family. We have a water well there. “Let’s go, there are caves,” each one had lands there, lots of lands. “Let’s hide there.” So we left the village.



R.: What did you take with you? How did you leave?

A.C.: We left with nothing. My uncle had a cow, so we took the cow. We lived in a large cave. Me and my aunt [A.C. explains that his mother died at a young age, so his aunt and grandfather raised him] [...] my grandfather's situation was good, the financial situation was good. He had a large herd, so that allowed me to live a good life.

H.: But one moment, let's go back to the cave; you're saying it was on Tuesday? Or a different day?

A.C.: On Wednesday.

### RECOGNIZING THE TURN OF EVENTS AND HIDING IN CAVES

H.: What happened on Tuesday? That's how it started. Why did you go to the cave?

A.C.: There were rumors that any minute Jews would enter Issawiya. The situation flipped.

H.: Flipped [...] Do you remember that moment when there was a turn of events?

A.C.: Yes, yes.

H.: So tell us about it [...]

A.C.: The following day we realized it was all lies.

H.: How did you find out?

A.C.: From the radio. We also listened to Israeli radio. We would listen to the Israeli radio.

H.: Did you look outside? Did you look at one another?

A.C.: Yes, yes. We saw that the army wasn't so [...] and we knew Armon Hanatziv<sup>2</sup> was conquered, meaning not much time was left.

H.: Do you remember that moment when there was this turning of events? Could you go back to that moment from a psychological point of view?

A.C.: See, every person has feelings in such a situation. There were rumors that spread, that something wasn't going according to plan. A bad sense in the air. Like I said, the general knowledge was limited, knowledge wasn't like it is today, but some people knew what was going on. They said it's a lie, all a lie. Jews will enter any moment, and some rumors saying Jews had entered

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<sup>2</sup> A Palestinian village occupied by Israel during the War of 1967, now called East Talpiot and forming one of Israel's illegal settlements and part of Jerusalem's "ring neighborhoods."

Jerusalem so it's only a question of time before they enter Issawiya. So we left.

R.: Do you remember the planes that bombed Augusta Victoria?

A.C.: No, no. Nothing of that sort here, most of the fighting was focused in Egypt and Syria.

H.: So you're saying, there was some Israeli radio [...] because you know, from what I know, the Israeli radio didn't say anything. In Israel they didn't know.

A.C.: No, but the Israeli radio in Arabic, I remember they denied the fact that 44 planes were brought down in the first stage of the war.

H.: They denied, and you don't know what did happen then [...] you don't remember?

A.C.: Of course, Israel was denying. That's the memories of a 20 or 19.5-year-old. See, 49 years have passed, I don't really remember. But there was a denial.

R.: Let's go back to the cow. Tell us, how did you take her to the cave? You tied a rope around her?

A.C.: No, no, we went out regularly, walked 3 km there [...]

H.: Did you take clothes? Food?

A.C.: Some food, we had simple clothes.

H.: Blankets?

A.C.: We took with us silver, gold, jewelry.

H.: Where did you put it? Do you remember?

A.C.: My aunt put eight thousand [money] in her bra. Do you know what eight thousand is?! I could buy half of Issawiya today with that kind of money! It belonged to me, to my father, but in the 70s my uncle took it [...] my aunt went to do the *Hajj* [annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca], and left the money with him she told me. We were rich with gold. But when she came back, he told her it's all gone.

H.: Gambling?

A.C.: Not gambling, he just took it for himself. It was in the 70s, I was working as a teacher, I told him "Ami, I'm not going to sell you for money, you also took care of me [...]"

H.: That's a story in itself [...] so all that money you took to the cave with you? Everybody went to the caves? All of Issawiya?

A.C.: Three uncles with their wives and a few kids, not too many [...] we were approximately 15–16 people.

H.: Were you the only family or did other families go to the caves?

A.C.: Most of the village, like 98 %, had already left the village. We would go from the cave to fetch water, around one kilometer from the cave there was a well. We would bring the water from the road going up to Mishor Adumim towards Ramallah ‘Tarik Abu George,’ that was the road of the Jordanian army [...].

R.: The old road leading to Jericho.

A.C.: It was a military road. We would see the planes, one day they bombed an armored division of the Jordanian army.

H.: You saw it?

A.C.: It was less than a kilometer away from us.

H.: You actually saw how the planes bombed them?

A.C.: We saw the planes bombing, we saw planes on the way to the cave. But we didn’t see the tanks, only the smoke after the bombing. When we would go to the well, there was a watchman. We saw corpses.

H.: You saw them afterwards.

A.C.: The corpses, yes. We would bring water from the well in a bucket. And we’d milk the cow. My uncle’s wife, she was like my mother. She was a mother to all of us, not only in the cave, during her entire life. She would make [all sorts of different food].

R.: Did you take a donkey with you?

A.C.: Not a donkey, a mule. We had a bag with flour, and there’s lots of wood there, so we could light a fire, and we’d make dough and bake it.

H.: For how many days were you there?

A.C.: Three days. To the end of the war [...] there was a radio with a battery.

H.: Ah, you took a radio with you?

A.C.: No, we took this small transistor. I remember. One of my uncles told me, “Let’s go, we have a friend in Jordan, we have people there, let’s go to him.” It was an idea to go and cross the Jordan river. And then we suddenly heard on the radio, they were saying “The Israeli army is at the bridge.” [...]. So the idea was dropped.

### RETURNING HOME, ENCOUNTERING ISRAELI SOLDIERS AND THE DISAPPEARED

A.C.: An elderly man, I remember him. His house is right next to the Hadasah hospital, a few meters away. He said, "I won't be a refugee twice!" He wasn't allowed to live in his house from '48 to '67.

H.: He was with you in Issawiya from before?

A.C.: Yes, his house is right next to where I live today. He built two rooms. He has a beautiful house, the most beautiful house. He's a contractor, and he said, "At my age, I'm not willing to be a refugee again. I'll go back and die if necessary, but I'll go back to my house." When we saw him going back, everybody followed. There isn't one refugee from Issawiya, everybody's back.

H.: Thanks to him?

A.C.: Thanks to him. He came back to his house, and his son lives there now after he died, and he added another floor.

H.: You're talking about his house here? Next to Hadassah?

A.C.: Yes. He came back, and everybody after him. There were a few houses, seven houses, and their owners were not allowed to enter since the Israeli army was there. But everybody came back to the village, and it was all okay. Following that, we would be hanging around the village. Suddenly, an Israeli border patrol came.

H.: Ok, and what did you see?

A.C.: [They said:] "Stop!"

H.: Ahh [...]

A.C.: I had a Jordanian passport that was certified a year before the war, I was a young man. "Come *Ismak* [how are you]?" There was another dude with me. He told them, "My name is Taleb," so they asked him, "Who are you?" He told them, "My father is the *Mukhtar*" [village chief].

H.: In what language did [the guard] talk to you?

A.C.: In Egyptian Arabic.

H.: And he was an Israeli soldier?

A.C.: He was an Israeli from Egypt. And another guy who spoke great Arabic, I think he was a Druze. But the commander who was with him was an Egyptian. Before we encountered him, he spoke to another dude, also the son of the *Mukhtar*, there were two *Mukhtar*'s in the village. "Where's your certificate?" he asked him. [The guy] told him "There're a few more *Mukhtars* in the

village.” But [the guard] insisted and said, “We already saw the son of the *Mukhtar*, you’re not a son of the *Mukhtar*.” They took him. It was all said in Arabic. I gave them my passport. My house is in the middle of the village. They told me “Take it back, and go home.”

H.: But you had a passport.

A.C.: He gave it back, and told me to go and not to look back.

R.: Were you afraid?

A.C.: Of course I was scared!

H.: That they’re going to shoot you? [...]

A.C.: That they were going to shoot me, of course! It’s natural in a war. Who knows what a soldier is thinking. I was walking towards my house; it felt like ages.

H.: Did you walk slowly or did you run?

A.C.: Normal.

H.: You thought it’s better to just walk normally?

A.C.: Yeah, but I was afraid, like I said, those twenty meters felt like an eternity. Until I made a right turn into a different street.

H.: And then you started running?

A.C.: A minute and I was home.

H.: Meaning you ran home from there.

A.C.: The other dude disappeared, till today.

H.: The one who was with you?

A.C.: Yes.

H.: What, they just took him?!

A.C.: Issawiya lost two men, not in combat. One of them was the son of the *Mukhtar*.

H.: He was with you.

A.C.: And another one, an only child, after he was gone, his entire clan was gone, none of them were left.

H.: And they don’t know anything about him?

A.C.: Nothing, he [must have] died in the Old City.

H.: How do they know? There was a body?

R.: And the other one, the son of the *Mukhtar*?

A.C.: No one knows till today. A few efforts were made all the way up to Teddy Kollek,<sup>3</sup> nothing helped. Not a body, nothing. No trace whatsoever.

H.: So if you hadn't had a passport, you believe they would have taken you, too?

A.C.: That's my luck, I don't know. That's my luck. See, they caught many people without any papers, but because he said he's the son of a *Mukhtar*, they thought he lied to them. Why? The first was the son of *Mukhtar*? The second was the son of *Mukhtar*? I don't know what the soldiers were thinking at the time. It's hard, hard to explain. That's the only time I've witnessed horror. Fear and horror, the first time I met Israeli soldiers.

R.: How did you imagine Israeli soldiers?

A.C.: Killers, not people. Not good. But that's war.

H.: Of course.

A.C.: Usually, the situation is different. An army fighting, but there was a side to them not like they described, there was a humane side. And the army was fighting for something.

H.: But you saw them when they patrolled here, the years before the war.

A.C.: Ah, of course.

H.: From like fifty meters away?

A.C.: Now I'm describing to you, it's very important. I was 11 years old, we were in school in the middle of the village. The patrol would go down from the university. From here [referring to Mount Scopus where the interview is taking place], where the old building is.

R.: Going into the village?

A.C.: No, no. Not into the village. Going down, now when they went down we knew, the patrol included 10–11 soldiers. They would walk [...]

R.: On the path?

A.C.: A narrow path. One after the other, three meters distance between them. Each one of them had weapons. They'd go down into the village. There's a house there right on the fence. And the eastern part, till the base. They'd go around into the eastern part where there's a forest. That was the

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<sup>3</sup> Teddy Kollek was then the mayor of Jerusalem.

daily patrol. It was clear to all the people living in Issawiya – around 1,500–2,000 people. Not too many houses and not too many people. In '58, when I was in 5th grade, if I remember right. We heard that the Jordanian army intended to shoot at the patrol.

H.: Who told you?

A.C.: People, there were rumors. And then, it was real, two or three soldiers entered the eastern part of the village, where there's trees and fences, they were snipers. I heard the first bullet that fired [...] I remember, it will never leave my memory!

H.: And he killed the soldier?

A.C.: Yes, killed him [...]

H.: You saw all this? You saw the soldier fall?

A.C.: See, did I see the first soldier that fell? No. But when the shot was fired, the shooting started. And they started. Now one UN soldier also died when he tried to help. I think two died and a few more Israelis were injured. It lasted for about two hours. Shooting, like a war. I experienced this when I was 11 years old. We were next to the school, and we kept hiding after school; it was the afternoon. We hid in the middle of the village next to the school until it was all over. It was the first time something like this happened. If I remember correctly, the soldiers who fired at the Israelis were tried in Jordan. It hadn't been a government order or an order of the Jordanian army, it was [the soldiers] own decision. That's what I heard.

R.: Let's go back to the war now, to '67. The soldier who speaks like an Egyptian went. What did you do amongst yourselves?

### **SEARCHING FOR GUNS**

A.C.: The next day, it was announced that the Israeli army ruled in the West Bank. They came to the center of the village.

R.: What did you feel when you heard this?

A.C.: What was the feeling? Truly, not much. That there're no more assassinations, no more anarchy, no more killing. It became quiet, calm, as if nothing was happening. No more war, we didn't hear any more shooting. And the Israelis took over the village – didn't kill, no, quietly, no one knew [...] that was the situation. The following day the officer who spoke with the Egyptian accent came back and rounded up all the citizens who were from the age of 16 to 60 in the center of the village. We went out.

H.: Did you have doubts regarding what to do? To come or not to come?

A.C.: See, we're also people. It's an occupation, from our side it's an occupation. Yesterday came the Israelis, the "Jews," not the Israelis, the "Jewish army," what will they do to us? Maybe shoot us? You can't imagine it yourself. It was an order! To come out! We went out, to the center of town next to the coffee shop. We sat next to the wall, all of us. We were 100 people more or less. There were a few soldiers. That Arab-Egyptian speaking one came that I met the day before. Said "I don't want anything from you, I want you to live, and each one will be in his house. But one thing I want, there're weapons in the village and I need them." And each one who had a weapon brought it [...] "Yalla, go bring the weapons," he said. Everybody brought their weapons, why? Because there was hope for a new way of life. It's not worthwhile holding on to something like that when life is available.

H.: Makes sense.

A.C.: Now that same soldier, my age, told Tarak, the son of the *Mukhtar*, Samar's father: "You have a British rifle?" He replied, "No, I have a pistol." He said to him "Okay, go get the pistol." He went and gave him the pistol. He said to him "Tarak, go get the British rifle. I won't let you leave until you bring it."

H.: He knew.

A.C.: There was prior information regarding this.

H.: Of course.

A.C.: My cousin had a pistol with 14 bullets, advanced for the time and expensive, 80 Dinar. Understood? Fired one bullet before the war, for fun. He hid the pistol on the eastern part of the village.

[...]

This other guy brought the second weapon belonging to Tarak, they took him next to the house, where we couldn't see. They beat him, and then fired two bullets in the air so to scare all the people. As a result [...]

H.: You thought they killed him?

A.C.: We said, "That's it, they killed him already for sure." As a result one guy got up and tried to run away. They caught him and gave him a serious beating.

H.: Next to you? You saw it?

A.C.: In front of us. Afterwards they let him and the rest of us go. He fled the same day to Jordan. He was my age, he stayed there till '98 as a Jordanian citizen, came back here for one year and passed away. That was the only man who left Issawiya as a result of a'67.



R.: When the army came and gave these orders and names, did you think like, “From where do they know all this?” what did you think?

A.C.: We thought that there were spies amongst us for sure.

H.: So everybody knew?

A.C.: Everybody knew, it was obvious.

H.: No secrets.

A.C.: No secrets, no secrets.

H.: Where did the Israelis put the rifles? Did they have a box?

A.C.: I don't remember, they had something, some cloth. Everybody placed it there. It was the first day they entered the village.

R.: Do you remember what you were thinking?

A.C.: To come out alive that moment.

R.: To that extent you were afraid?

A.C.: Not fear then, but from the day before as I've told you. The next day I knew they wouldn't shoot us, because if they had intended to shoot us, they'd have already shot us the first day.

R.: Did you speak among yourselves? With your friends? With family?

A.C.: There was great confusion. How are we to live with the Jews? What will they do to us? No one knew.

H.: But you listened to the radio then? You tried to understand what was going on, no?

A.C.: Now, it became clear that Israel had won the war and conquered Sinai and the West Bank. See, what was most interesting to people at the time – that they came out alive and in peace, and that things were stabilizing. We had it the best – the fact that we didn't have to leave our houses, that we stayed in our houses.

H.: Right, because of '48 they thought [...]

A.C.: See, '48 and '67 are different stories. Now when people saw that they're staying in their homes and everything is stable, no more war, no more killing, no mass murder, it was a different feeling, the whole way of Jews changed. I'll tell you another thing honestly: the Jews played it smart. They came with logic, and treated people with common sense in order to [...] they could have expelled them, but they didn't do so. Meaning, they could kill two hundred people from Issawiya, but they didn't do so. Why? Because there wasn't any

serious resistance. The war with Jordan was a joke. Staged. There was no war. It was for the benefit of the people. No real war.

H.: You're saying that the Jordanians also weren't serious?

A.C.: Not serious, in the war they weren't serious. Hussein was [...]

H.: Meaning he only pretended?

H.: Pretended, he couldn't refuse. If the people would really get into the war, I'm telling you with guarantee – no Palestinian would remain in the West Bank. They would have left. The people didn't resist, they opened their eyes – saw Jews. We were there, opened our eyes, the Jews instead of coming from the West came from the East.

#### **THE DAYS AFTER THE WAR – VISITS TO PLACES NEVER SEEN BEFORE**

R.: Let's go a few days forward. What do you remember from the meeting with the Israelis?

A.C.: The following day, a day or two, I don't remember exactly, they said curfew, something like that. They made a population registry.

H.: Who made it?

A.C.: They came from the Ministry of Interior and started to enlist people. According to their age, name, etc. They didn't ask for any papers or birth certificates either, gave us papers to write on. Everyone had a paper to write on. But we didn't understand what's written on it.

H.: Oh, it was all in Hebrew?

A.C.: In Hebrew!

H.: They gave you new numbers from what you had before?

A.C.: No, 080 is the number for families from east Jerusalem. Now, each family is 086, 081, etc.

H.: Ah, interesting.

A.C.: We were asked to go to the Ministry of Interior, they opened a branch in Salah Adin St. We went there and got an ID.

R.: How many days later is that?

A.C.: Ten days. Within ten days we had IDs. I remember that before July '67 I had an ID.

H.: Meaning, you understood things are not going to go back to how they were?

A.C.: The same days we got the ID, that wasn't the end of the story. Then the story with the UN started.

R.: We're already in November, I'm talking beforehand.

H.: Wait, I have another question – to which other places did you go? Did you leave Jerusalem to see what was going on elsewhere?

A.C.: I went out of Jaffa Gate for the first time, and saw what other citizens lived there.

R.: How did it look? Tell us?

A.C.: An experience.

R.: What kind of experience?

A.C.: People. Beautiful woman. All so beautiful. Nice people. Treated you nicely. No radicals, no violent people, people were open to you and came forward.

R.: Did you speak to anybody who was Jewish?

A.C.: Of course! Some of them would speak Arabic, they'd come forward and say "Hi, who are you?" And as children, young men, [we] looked at people, at a modern nation, not like it has been described to us.

R.: You entered Jaffa St.?

A.C.: Of course.

R.: Till where did you reach?

A.C.: Till the city municipality. It was an experience. Just like I would go now and fly to Tokyo for the first time, it's an experience! See, it's all so modern! Different from what we had. People who come to you with respect, gently, all kinds of different things and food. We saw things that we didn't know from before – dairy products, eggs. There was something different, a different atmosphere. After a week, we left Jerusalem and went to Nazareth.

H.: With a bus? How did you go?

R.: Why Nazareth?

A.C.: Nazareth, because there's an Arab population there.

H.: How did you go there?

A.C.: From Jerusalem, I think that we went to Tel-Aviv, and from Tel-Aviv to over there. Me and three other guys. We came back and it was like a dream come true. You understand, Nazareth was in our memory. We knew about it from stories. From people who knew what Nazareth was like. We saw Arabs

and Jews living as if they're in Europe. No war, no fear, nothing, everything is open, whatever you want, you see a beautiful country. You see orchards of oranges, the smell. Not like today, it's all buildings now. Then, when you passed there, it was fun passing by there. Only to breath the scent of citrus. Beautiful country, and slowly, slowly we almost had an integration. Israelis also came to Hebron, Ramallah, to East Jerusalem, they also discovered a new land! It was also an experience for them as well! Also the Israeli-Arabs who were before that time under army rule, that's it! They were released, and there were family reunions, we started going to the different villages, also to Tel-Aviv to have fun, without fear. We felt safe in the Jewish cities as if we were at home.

H.: In terms of money, what money did you use?

A.C.: In the beginning we used Jordanian money.

H.: You were able to use the Dinar to take the bus?

A.C.: Yeah, we would exchange one Dinar for ten Lirot<sup>4</sup>.

H.: With whom?

A.C.: With a money changer. Many things only cost one Lira! Now, people started to work and earned 15 Lira per day. That's good money compared with what I got under the Jordanian rule. Life was changing. The quality of living changed; whoever says otherwise is not attached to reality.

People in my village were detached. In the evening, as of when the Sheikh said "*Allahu Akbar*" in the evening prayer – the roads were blocked, no one could come or enter.

H.: Before '67?

A.C.: Before.

R.: Was there an Israeli checkpoint when going from Issawiya to Jerusalem?

A.C.: Now, according to the Rhodes Accord, here in Issawiya was an Israeli enclave, but officially it was under the UN's responsibility.

H.: Under the UN?

A.C.: Yes, Issawiya. The UN flag was hoisted from the house of our *Mukhtar*. Some of the area belonged to Jordan and some to the UN. There was an agreement between the Jordanians and the Israelis. The Israelis gave up their rights to Jordan and Jordan, on their part, didn't get involved with what was going on.

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<sup>4</sup> Israeli currency of that time.

R.: When was the first time you saw the sea? The sea in Tel-Aviv that is.

A.C.: I saw the sea before '67, I saw it in Aqaba!

H.: Ah [...]

R.: But here, the sea in Tel-Aviv the first time? Because Tel-Aviv is a signal [...]

A.C.: After two weeks we saw Tel-Aviv, Jaffa [...]

H.: So Jaffa, Nazareth, did you also go to Acre?

A.C.: Of course! Wherever there were Arabs, we went. We didn't know much at the time, and we were looking for people who would show us around, especially Arabs, and they would accept us with love and happiness.

H.: Meaning, these were family relatives you went to visit?

A.C.: No, no.

H.: So you just went there and looked for people who spoke Arabic?

A.C.: They would come up to us and ask us if we're from Jerusalem, and when they'd figure that out they'd say to us, "Welcome, welcome!", they'd talk to us, and we'd connect, [they came] to visit us as well and that formed friendships.

H.: Did you also go to Haifa?

A.C.: Haifa as well. Now that same year, in '67, I was born on 16<sup>th</sup> of December '47, and on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December, when I was 20 years old, I received an appointment from the Israeli Ministry of Education to become a teacher as part of the ministry, in a school in Issawiya.

[...]

### **LOOKING BACK WITH A POSITIVE ATTITUDE**

R.: I'll continue that now, you, we're sitting in 2016. Looking back to '67, what do you take out of '67 today?

A.C.: From the '67 war?

H.: Yes.

A.C.: It brought back the Palestinian identity as is. Gave us back our Palestinian identity. At the time of Jordan, no Palestine. The Jordanian border was the Mediterranean Sea. The war of '67 gave back to each Palestinian his identity. Think about that.

H.: That's very interesting. I wouldn't have thought. That's very interesting.

A.C.: I think about it. It is my responsibility.

R.: That's very interesting.

H.: Could you explain why is that exactly?

A.C.: See, now to live under occupation – Israeli, Jewish, Palestinian, Muslim. Give you orders, setting you're daily schedule, treats you like an enemy, doesn't give you respect. Hurts your feelings. I don't say Jews. The occupation is not Jews. I'm not a Palestinian under occupation, I'm a human being, a level underneath. Every minute hurts me. If it's while passing through checkpoints, and the police treat you aggressively, not all of them. Jewish police officers are human beings, give that feeling sometime. A police officer does his job. But the worse is when you encounter a police officer who's a Druze, Ethiopian, or middle eastern Jews, Yemen for example [...] they're not so educated, it's terrible.

H.: Meaning you are differentiating between Jews?

A.C.: Yes [...] Now let me tell you. When I go through a checkpoint and encounter a police officer from Arab origins, he wants to prove to his superiors that he is loyal so he's more aggressive. In all aspects. Same with Bedouin, Druze or Ethiopian. The lower class Jews, it's just terrible, you suffer.

[...]

R.: I want to go back to your emotions in '67. Did you envy the Jews?

A.C.: In many respects. We found out many positive things in the Jewish way. We found out about their terrific quality of life, the order, the discipline, a country with a rule of law all the way. [...] I'll tell you what. Why shouldn't we have a rule of law in our country? Why shouldn't we have such a country, without occupation? Without disturbance? In good neighboring relationships with Jews? We could live with them. We already live together, under occupation, under killings [...] it's possible to live next to them.

# The Jewish Other and the Palestinian Identity: The *Naksa* Redefining the Meaning of the *Nakba*

*Ward Awad*

## 1 Introduction

Interviews were carried out with Palestinian men and women in the Westbank, Gaza, East Jerusalem and other regions during the summer and fall of 2018. For the present essay, I was tasked with working with the transcriptions or, in some cases, reports of interviews from the West Bank, namely Bethlehem, Jenin, Jerusalem, Nablus, Salfit, Tubas and Tulkarm. Reading through and sorting these testimonials, the most pronounced and interrelated issues were the presence of the *Nakba* as a powerful trauma within recollections of June 1967, the loss of land and the impact of both on the individual and Palestinian identity.

The reappearance of the *Nakba* within the context of June 1967 as a trauma that still determines the contours of the Palestinian identity is typically addressed in the academic scholarship. However, while scholars acknowledge the impact of the *Nakba* on Palestinian identity, they leave aside the detailed differences of this impact on those who experienced it directly, the Palestinian refugees, and those who heard about it, the Palestinian non-refugees. As a result, the implicitly engendering appearance of the other, which is a motif also apparent in these studies, as a constitutive element of the self-affirmation and -determination of the Palestinian identity goes unnoticed. In order to understand how this essay engages with and adds to the previous works, I will represent various approaches to the influence of the *Nakba* on the Palestinian identity, its relation to June 1967 and, finally, its implications on the other – the Jews.

Ahlam Mustafa AbuKhoti dwells on definitions of trauma in “Calling the Phoenix: Integrating the Trauma of the Nakba into Palestinian Identity,” to offer new perspectives on its integration into the self as a member of the cultural collective (2018: 49). She argues that

[...] al-Nakba in collective memory became part of cultural identity through processes of recreation and integration. These processes took part in reformulating the perception of identity from individual self-unity and completeness, to a collaboration within members of the collective to preserve a traumatic past attempting to stand in the face of injustice and alienation. (Abu-Khoti 2018: 60)

In this context, the Right to Return is mentioned as a reminder of the injustice done to the refugees, not to speak of its integral part of their collective identity. Lars Erslev Andersen examines in “The Crisis and Palestinian Identity,” for example, how the assertion on the Right to Return played an important role in the Palestinian post-modern identity of the *Nakba* generation. He points to the intricacy of this post-modern identity narrative as one that the *Nakba* generation is struggling to comprehend (Andersen 2016: 29).

The complex of this identity is further examined not only as pertinent for the first, but also for the second exilic generation. Victoria Mason explores in “Children of the ‘Idea of Palestine’: Negotiating Identity, Belonging and Home in the Palestinian Diaspora,” “[...] how the maintenance of Palestinian identity and attachment to the homeland has remained central to the generation that experienced *al nakba* [...], the first generation born into exile [...] and the second generation born into exile [...]” She also aspires to “[...] demonstrate that the means of maintaining relationships with the homeland have shifted for each generation and that this has resulted in contrapuntal notions of identity, home and belonging” (Mason 2007: 272).

Other scholars tried to understand what living in exile – namely in a refugee camp – means socially and culturally. Adam Ramadan explores in “In the Ruins of Nahr al-Barid: Understanding the Meaning of the Camp,” for example, “[...] how Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon act as social, cultural and political refugees from marginalization in exile” (2010:50). Emphasizing the complexity of the idea of the camp, he shows “[...] how the camps draw meaning from a particular Palestinian time-space, which emphasizes displacement and transience, while at the same time becoming meaningful places in themselves” (Ramadan 2010: 50).

Finally, studies conducted in the name of understanding the essence of the influence of the *Nakba* on the Palestinian identity and, thus, the latter’s relationship to the Jewish other reveal further interesting insights. Adel Manna’ writes in “The Palestinian Nakba and Its Continuous Repercussions” that

the [...] intellectual attempt to grasp the full-fledged meaning of the Nakba took place in the aftermath of the June 1967 Arab Naksa (setback). But even this attempt was again short-lived and overpowered by the obsession with



military and political events in the region. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that very little was written in this period about the meaning of the Palestinian catastrophe and its long run implications. (Manna' 2013: 86)

Manna' tries to offer meanings of the *Nakba* and its implications; nonetheless, Manna' study does not, as he puts it, "[...] allow a detailed discussion of all the *Nakba*'s meanings and implications on the Palestinian people. What it attempts to do is to outline some of the different aspects of the *Nakba*, focusing on the collective dimensions" (Manna' 2013: 86). While he left the personal dimensions aside, other scholars tried to address them.

Elias Sanbar goes beyond these collective dimensions drawn by the trauma of the *Nakba* in "Out of Place, Out of Time," additionally discussing the resulting relationship to the other – the Jewish side. He examines what it means to be dislocated from one's familiar space. Palestinians who restore historical time imply that Jews are excluded from that historical time and vice versa. He argues that

from 1948 onwards, each of the two protagonists viewed its history as excluding that of the other. Beyond this, precedence in terms of presence in the land amounted to an exclusive and unshared right to be present in that land. In other words, it legitimized not only one party's current existence but also the absence of the other. (Sanbar 2001: 91–92)

Ahmad Samih Khalidi reasserts Sanbar's conclusion in "Why Can't the Palestinians Recognize the Jewish State?" by maintaining that the Palestinians' past is connected to their present and future, which means that "a 'homeland' cannot merely be a construct of today, with no implications for tomorrow" (2011: 80).

As far as I know, studies especially interested in the direct implications of this trauma on Palestinians' (implicit) relationship to the other and its role in distinguishing rifts within the collective Palestinian identity have not been conducted. While we see scholars trying to define this relationship, it lacks significant aspects due to the undiscerned, nuanced division within the Palestinian identity. Markedly, they all – those who worked on the relationship to the other and those who concentrated on the Palestinian identity after the *Nakba* – treat the Palestinian society as a coherent one, sharing almost one fixed identity, and overlooking the fact that the *Nakba* caused, first and foremost, a split within the Palestinian identity.

I aim to bring to light what other scholars missed in this topic: what June 1967 adds to the prevailing perception of the Palestinian identity as a collective one, and the other as an indispensable determiner, so to speak, of this identity. The *Naksa* does not only reveal an essential difference between the refugees' and non-refugees' perception of being Palestinian, but it also opens up new and different approaches to the Jewish other. Since the *Nakba* is not experienced identically within Palestinian society, namely by those who experienced it directly and those who did not, it does not only affect their self-definition as Palestinians but also determines the role of the Jewish other vis-à-vis this definition. For the non-refugee Palestinian, the Jew is

unrelated to any existential self-affirmation determining self-agency, not to say that the latter enriches such an agency by enlarging the Palestinian definition. Nonetheless, for the Palestinian refugee, the other is an indispensable part of the self-definition that concomitantly and paradoxically supplies and detracts it, that is, deprives it of its independent ontological being by its constant presence in the self-affirmative process. I will elaborate on the differences apparent between witnesses who experienced 1948, briefly the '48ers, and those for whom 1967 was the first major personal upheaval in their existence, by offering close readings of selected interview excerpts. We will understand what the various voices voluntarily try to tell us about the presence of the other physically and psychologically by contrasting these differences.

## 2 Six-Day War Recalling the *Nakba*

Why have the experience of statelessness and the injustice befallen the Palestinian refugees only intensified throughout time,<sup>1</sup> even after the Oslo Accords tried to establish an independent Palestinian country, which was supposed to undo the ramifications of the *Nakba*? Is the answer so obvious? Perhaps it is outwardly so, but our interviewees take us to new untrodden roads leading to this seemingly obvious answer.

“Palestine was removed, and the name ‘refugee’ remained,” says Ibrahim, a refugee in the West Bank since the 1948 War. He constantly reassured himself before the Six-Day War that he would return to Palestine, to his local land, and the loss of this dream influenced his awareness – now full of pain and remorse – of the value of his land: “When we grew older, we started thinking about why we escaped and how. We did not know the value of the land.”

Let us hear how this Palestinian refugee begins his testimony:

When we left [our village] [at the beginning of the 1948 war], people were reading news of when the war would end. People had left all the Palestinian cities. We were reassuring ourselves that we would return to the country, if not this month, it would be the next month. That seemed as futile as extracting water from a dry well regarding the return of the refugees. Then, what was called West Bank, was merged to King Hussein’s control at the Jericho conference in 1953, then it was divided into West Bank and East Bank and the name of Palestine was removed with the name of the refugees.

Is it a coincidence that Ibrahim chooses to open his testimony on June 1967 by relating his present situation to the *Nakba* by associating the removal of the name Palestine as a coherent one covering incessant geography with the split in names

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<sup>1</sup> Adel Manna’ maintains in “The Palestinian Nakba and Its Continuous Repercussions” that “The passing of more than sixty years has done very little to erase the Nakba’s deep direct and indirect repercussions on subsequent Palestinian generations. The experience of statelessness and the injustice which befell the refugees has only intensified” (2013: 86–87).

resulting from the war? Evidently, that experience of the physical dislocation – accompanied with the semantic change – constitutes a major component in this testifier's life, a division in his life, for although it seemed as “futile as extracting water from a dry well regarding the return of the refugees,” they “were reassuring [themselves] that [they] would return to the country.” He is narrating to us, I would assume, a story about the division not only on the spatial level – “[Palestine] was divided into West Bank and East Bank” – but also about a division within his existential identity. What remains from the word “Palestine”? Nothing is left but the word “refugee” – that is, a Palestinian without Palestine.

A new (split) identity can be detected in the ‘new title’ (i.e. refugee) that Ibrahim forcefully and unpleasantly acquired in the new place of residence in the West Bank and his admiration for his left-behind land. Its conflictive psychological force draws on a dichotomy that starts to introduce itself as a fact that cannot be overlooked: Palestinianism, that is, being a Palestinian, goes hand in hand with physical possession over one's local land. The newly imposed state as a refugee, ironically, in the so-called ‘Land of Palestine,’<sup>2</sup> is the opposite of such rootedness in ancestral, familiar land.

The inner conflict of being a Palestinian whose “Palestine was removed” and a “refugee” who was dreaming of repossessing his home during the War of 1967 is at once generative of the testimonial force and destructive of the self-absorbing subject who is trying to define their identity throughout the testimony. The boundaries between physical and psychic exile are blurred. This is starkly apparent in Ibrahim's mention of the word “Palestine”: he mentions this word only twice (“people left all the Palestinian cities” and “the name of Palestine was removed with the names of the refugees”), and each time he mentions this name, he uses the past tense, as if, in the present time, this ‘thing’ that was named Palestine no longer exists. Now, living in psychological exile figured in the word “refugees” rather than “Palestinian refugees,” equals not living in the territory of Palestine, even though he still lives in the territory termed the Palestinian Authority.

This invites us to reconsider the notion of identity based not only on the questions of definitive self-perception, but also in light of the irreversible (as long as in exile) psychological damage that occurred to the Palestinian who has been eternally displaced from his house during the *Nakba*. Scholars make it clear that this trauma is still living in the Palestinians' minds, regardless of their location. AbuKhoti argues that “[...] while the Nakba tends to refer to a specific time frame, it is by no means a singular event. The aftermath of the Nakba which continues to affect the Palestinian lives makes it an ongoing trauma that has not yet ended.” Correspondingly, Manna' maintains that

contrary to what many think, particularly in Israel, the Nakba was not a one-time event connected to the war in Palestine and its immediate catastrophic

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<sup>2</sup> Even the place where this refugee currently lives is considered a part of Palestine according to the Oslo Accords.

repercussions on the Palestinians. Rather, and more correctly, it refers to the accumulated Palestinian experience since the 1948 war up to the present. (2013: 87)

Yehuda Shenhav formulates this idea most clearly:

Today many historians, Jews and Palestinians, provide a revisionist formulation in which *the Nakba is not just the expulsion and displacement of 1948, but especially the ban on return to homes and families immediately after the war and in fact to this date*. According to this interpretation, the sovereign decision of the Israeli government to prevent the return of hundreds of thousands of people to their homes after the war is a formal act of ethnic cleansing. *Thus, the Nakba is not an event that ended in 1948, but a trauma that continues in the present [...]* (Shenhav 2019: 61; emphasis mine).

This trauma is essentially and straightforwardly linked to the question of identity. Casting aside for a moment the fact that scholars do not make a remarkable distinction – and if they do, it is not developed in our context – between the identity of the refugees and non-refugees, their assumptions intersect, albeit perhaps implicitly, on one point: as long as the trauma of the *Nakba* is still going on, the Palestinian identity will always be struggling with affirming itself. AbuKhoti maintains that “[...] a Palestinian identity contains within it the memory of the Nakba on a personal level and a collective one” (2018: 50–51); Manna’ refers to this relationship by maintaining that “the repercussions of the war in 1948 on the Palestinians are analogous to an earthquake which changed the geography, the demography, and the identity of Palestine and its inhabitants” (2013: 91); and Andersen maintains that

Palestinian identity is intimately linked to the idea of Palestine as the homeland of Palestinians, and thus the Palestinian problem cannot be solved before a Palestinian state is established in the area of the former Palestine. The refugee problem is, of course, embedded in this demand for a state to which all Palestinians have the right to return. (2016: 27).

In a word, the *Nakba* is not just the expulsion and displacement of 1948, but is also the ban on returning to one’s self, one’s identity, one’s existence, until this very day. More precisely, the *Nakba* can be reviewed as a trauma of and in identity.

Indeed, this refugee who lives far from his native space is starting to realize, after losing the hope of return, that losing the original physical sphere means losing identity, a loss of being a Palestinian as such, and being rendered different from other Palestinians who have not lost their land throughout the years, different from Palestinians whose physical Palestine is at their disposal. His inability to understand the semantic changes of Palestine becomes audible: for Ibrahim, “[...] the Zionists, or the so-called country of Israel [...]” is “[...] neither a country nor a government, but a group of gangs and thieves [...]” In this context, Khalidi explains that calling the land the “Jewish homeland” means that the Palestinian/Arab presence there

becomes “historically aberrant and contingent” – that is, they become “[...] historic interlopers and trespassers – a transient presence on someone else’s national soil” (2011: 79). This Palestinian refugee reasserts Khalidi’s assumption by showing that he cannot accept that his existence is marginal, for he exclaims: “[...] after all, the Jews have occupied our land and lived in it.” At the same time, he takes Khalidi’s idea to a new level: his unwillingness to accept the other’s existence relates to the very fact that the existence of this ‘other’ constitutes the nonexistence of his ‘I’ on the existential level – not only on the national one – for the national ‘I’ encompasses the existential ‘I.’ The way he chooses to relate to the end of the physical belonging to the national soil enforces this assumption.

Regarding this Palestinian, the occupation of the land and, thus, living in it means the extinction of the ‘Palestinian I’ that is totally unified with the Palestine in social terms. AbuKhoti correctly maintains that losing the land goes hand in hand with losing Palestinian society (2018: 50). Intriguingly, the national/social disintegration surmounts to the existential self-annihilation of the individual. The land after which this refugee is named has undergone a change and transformed into the ‘Jewish I’: his whole narration – starting from the core of the *Nakba*, the moment of losing the land, and then moving in time to the present point, trying to re-express the genealogy of his uprootedness, goes hand in hand with the domination of the Jews over ‘his Palestine.’ Mark the following two paragraphs that Ibrahim narrates right after the first paragraph with which he opened his testimony:

When we left [our] village, we were weak children then. We came to [live] at a neighbor’s house in [a village near Bethlehem] for almost one year. After that, we moved to another house that we rented. We went to [another village], and my mother gave birth to my brother in 1951. In 1952, my father and his friends decided to go to Jericho. We stayed there until 1956, which is the time when I got married to my first wife. I was working in some simple jobs, from one village to another, and I was bringing my wife [along] wherever I went here and in Jordan. We suffered a lot. Then, I returned to [a part of] Jericho. In 1966, I returned to [to the village we had first fled to] and lived in a rented house for two years. Then I built and lived in this house, as of 27 August 1968 and I stayed here.

Is not this a detailed description of the disappearance of the ‘Palestinian I?’ – that is, of the inability to belong to the previous place and any other, future place? The importance of belonging – the feeling that you are secure and that there is a sense of possibility for the future – is tied to the idea of home,<sup>3</sup> and here ‘home’ is the

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<sup>3</sup> Ahmad Samih Khalidi safely assumes that “[...] we cannot sever the thread that connects the past to the present and, necessarily, to the future. A ‘homeland’ cannot merely be a construct of today, with no implications for tomorrow” (2011: 80). Psychologically speaking, “the importance of belonging – of feeling ‘part of something,’ that you are secure and there is a sense of possibility for the future – is intimately tied to ideas of ‘home’” (Mason 2007: 274).

complete world, which puts the Palestinian refugee's existence in an unescapable dialogue with the Jewish side.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is based on and generated from the binary division between Zionism and Palestinianism, that is, the dominance of the 'I' over the 'other' on more than the physical land. Looking at it from the perspective of the Palestinian speaker, the conflict would concern the 'Palestinian I' and the Zionist 'other.' Historically, this conflict reached its zenith in the *Nakba* and the Independence of Israel, respectively. It looms large in the Palestinian national discourse which imposes an existential situation on the Palestinians that reworks this oppositional relationship between the two sides in this conflict repeatedly, as will be shown in the analysis of further testimonials examined in this chapter.

While the fixed limits that are supposed to separate the Palestinian's 'I' from the 'other' have already been subjected to a process of blurring, rewriting and redefining, the decisive moment that reflects such trespassing is the Six-Day War. Here, the traumatic experience of the Palestinian finds itself unable to remain hidden. The *Nakba* superimposes itself on the testifier even when they try to speak about the Six-Day War. We will see how the trauma of losing one's identity – along with losing the land – does not only make Palestinians express their uncertainties about their national, coherent sense of existence, but also makes them express how it superimposes and articulates a new kind of relationship concerning the reciprocal acceptance and understanding between both sides from the Palestinian perspective.

For this study of Palestinian refugees' stories, I make a distinction between the '48 Palestinian' – that is, the 'refugee-Palestinians' who have experienced physical dislocation and displacement since 1948 as they cannot return to their houses due to demolition, repossession or any other cause, and the '67 Palestinians,' who also live in the West Bank but have not experienced the trauma of the *Nakba*. The '48 Palestinian refugees accentuate their suffering refugee-Palestinian 'I.' They shout implicitly that they unconsciously incarcerate the other – the Israeli Jew. The '48 Palestinians try to claim self-sovereignty on an underlying negation of the Zionist other's existence. More importantly, in their insistence to defend their identity on the basis of nationality, the '48 Palestinians constantly rewrite and redetermine the Palestinian and the Zionist, the interlacement of identities, by deconstructing the binary opposition of Palestinian and Jew dominant in both discourses. The relationship between the '48 Palestinian and the Israeli Jew is characterized by the irreversibility generated within the "traumatic Palestinian 'I'" as a result of the other's existence not only on the geographical or territorial level but also in the self-perception of the 'I.' To return to the place that is not charged with and defined by the other's appearance, whether in historical or psychological terms, is itself an illusion, for returning to the pre-traumatized period is a return to the place in which the Jew is found as the other who defined the national 'I' as such.

Studying the ways in which the 1967 War has impacted biographies and everyday arrangements without admitting the underlying force that constantly pulls it back to the starting point of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is made impossible for several

reasons. The mere appearance of the '48 Palestinians within the West Bank<sup>4</sup> reminds us of this supposed to be (at least to the Israeli side) buried past event – the expulsion and displacement of people who were dwelling in more than four hundred villages.<sup>5</sup> The excessive mention of the *Nakba* during the interviewees' reflections on the Six-Day War further points out this preeminence. I do not recollect any interview in which a Palestinian refugee did not mention the origins of their displacement while narrating their own story about the Six-Day War, which is indeed an intriguing fact academically acknowledged.<sup>6</sup>

The trauma of the *Nakba* is alive in the Palestinian's minds so much so that it dictates the decisions even of the Palestinians who have not experienced it. Palestinians who witnessed the Six-Day War could not but mention the 'ghost of the *Nakba*,' referring to the horrors it engendered within their souls by merely remembering what had happened to those Palestinians, each time they tried to explain or justify their abandonment of their houses during the war. This is why we see that the trauma of the 1967 War is embedded in the trauma of the *Nakba*. The Palestinian people have never thought that "something like this [the war] would happen," which made them unprepared for it, says Ziad. All the Palestinians he saw on his way home were not aware of what was happening, and there was "a type of loss" among people.

Ziad remembers the experience of hearing the bombs falling in al-Ezaryah as very frightening: "it was a horrible night, you know, while you are hearing the bombs, not one or two, falling near you." However horrifying the experience of the bombs was, Ziad only dedicates one line in his interview to describe this "horrible night"; what seems to be horrible for Ziad is not the bombs from which, logically, any human wanting to survive would flee. Instead, what appears to be the horrible experience for him is leaving the villages and the houses unattended and unpopulated when, as his recurrent words show, the Jews enter.

Rather than saying, for instance, "I had to flee my village because life is the worthiest of all," which was mostly done by the Palestinians in 1948, Ziad stands for the Palestinians who found themselves in a chaotic situation as they heard of the outbreak of the war, convincing them not to flee. For him, death occurs once, and, from his perspective, one is either to die or live in one's village and house. Ziad himself answers the prompting question that poses itself automatically – what makes a person under such intensive, chaotic and even traumatic circumstances shout to his people to either die or live here? His answer is that people do not want to be in the situation of the '48 refugees: answering the question "I am trying to understand

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<sup>4</sup> Of course, the Palestinians who were made refugees as a result of the 1948 war currently populate different and many places, including Israel and the West Bank. Nonetheless, this paper will focus on those who are currently living in the latter.

<sup>5</sup> Research on these villages has been thorough, with documentation initiated by Sharif Kanaana at Birzeit University (e.g. Kanaana and Zitawi 1987) and continued in various oral history projects up to the present.

<sup>6</sup> "The Arab defeat in June 1967 reawakened memories of the Nakba among Palestinians" (Manaa' 2013: 94).

what made you take this decision [not to leave],” Ziad answers: “’48 is what made me do so. I know how many Palestinian refugees, who were good, respectful, and even wealthy, were insulted in their migration.” What affected Ziad’s decision was the crucial choice between to be or not to be, to have a total nonexistence as a result of no longer belonging to the original physical sphere or to have a total existence. For him and his father, emigration was not even a choice.

The trauma of the *Nakba* is alive in the Palestinians’ minds and hearts so much so that it determines the decisions even of the Palestinians who had not experienced it. Ziad, for instance, was very aware of the repercussions of his decision and his incitation to uphold their places. Although he knew what had happened in the ’48 war, namely the massacres such as the one that had happened in Deir Yassin, he preferred death over being a refugee.<sup>7</sup>

A group of interviews share the same motif: Um Lutfi who witnessed the “difficult” situation of the ’48 Palestinians who took refuge in the West Bank decided not to leave her house, even when she was totally afraid as she saw the Israeli army and the tanks entering her village. Seemingly, what prompted her to remain in her house and close her door in front of the Israeli army was not her patriotism as much as her unwillingness to be like the ’48 Palestinians who, as she had witnessed, were separated socially when they came to live in the West Bank. As much as closing the door is not patriotic, for one is hiding from the danger one fears, it is an unconscious indication of possessing one’s property: this ’67 Palestinian, not fleeing from the army outside the house (and the village), but closing the door of her house on herself, manifests her unwillingness to become like a ’48 Palestinian. This can be detected from her ‘voluntary description’ (e.g. her decision to relate to this story) of the *Nakba* in her interview, which itself attests to her willingness to separate herself from those who left their homes in ’48:

The 1948 War broke out in the villages [...], and it did not affect us in the West Bank. Life continued as usual, and all were going to work and to school, and they continued working on the land. The 1948 War was very hard, the people left their houses and came to dwell here, and then a dividing barrier that separated between us, and the West villages was constructed.

The same anxiety can be detected in the following interview: Amneh says that “people were afraid of the war and believed it, and they feared that their fate would be like the fate of the people in the 1948 war.” Among other witnesses, Isaaf says that people were afraid of the Jews after the war, but they were also afraid of migration, since they thought that what happened in 1948 would happen once again. The same fear reappears in the following testimony: Azzam, who was ten years old at the time of the Six-Day War, *was forced* to leave his village with his mother, but his father and

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<sup>7</sup> Numerous ’67 Palestinians decided during the war not to leave their houses because of their fear of re-experiencing the losses of the *Nakba*. Ziad is used here as the representative of these Palestinians.



grandmother refused to do so, claiming that they “[...] would avoid what happened in 1948.”

Contrary to these Palestinians who were haunted by the trauma of the *Nakba*, or by the fear of turning into the kinds of torn individuals the *Nakba* had left behind, we can detect a very different mentality in the a’48 Palestinians’ interviews. Among all the ’48 Palestinians who lived through the Six-Day War, almost all repeated the idea of preferring to die rather than leaving their current place of residence. This idea barely surfaces in the ’67 Palestinians’ interviews. The aforementioned Ibrahim, for example, who decided to remain in his village rather than re-experiencing the physical dislocation and dispossession, asserts that the ’48 Palestinians were ready to fight with the Jordanian army. The refugees made it clear in the interviews conducted by Ramadan that “[...] the importance of living in a camp is precisely so that they remember Palestine and keep alive the demand to return” (2010: 55). The same idea reappears in our interviews, but more sharpened.

Umm Ali says that although she had seen “[...] wounded and martyrs during the war, [she] was not afraid” of the Jews – regardless of the fact that the latter were destroying and corrupting Palestinians. She literally said that “it does not matter to us.” If death does not matter to this refugee or to the ‘us’ that represents the ’48 Palestinian refugees, then what matters? What matters for her, is to throw stones (which she claims she did) at the soldiers, to wait in the night, bearing an axe, for the Israeli soldiers to appear, to die like the martyrs she saw during the war, to return to the Mosque in Acre to pray there.

Born in 1946 near Haifa, Rahma A., mother to nine boys and five girls, is married and lives in the West Bank. She also remarks that “we were ready to die and lose our lives to return to our lands and country.” Plenty of examples can be detected in the interviews: Imad says that they fought the Jews and lost a lot of people. Similarly, Nimer, who was just two years old during the *Nakba* and did not understand the meaning of belonging and of possessing a physical house, refused to leave Qalqilya during the Six-Day War. He was 22 years old at the time and went to help the Jordanian soldiers in battle. It is not surprising that as a refugee who understood the meaning of belonging to a physical space, quite similarly to Ibrahim introduced earlier, Nimer delivered the following message to Palestinians anywhere: “Stay home and die there. This is better than leaving it or getting insulted [...] such as hearing from people there that we gave up our country.” These interviewees crystalize the idea Ramadan discussed: here, we witness refugees preferring death to the feeling of re-experiencing the dislocation, which means sacrificing existence over moving to a new place.

The Palestinians’ testimonies of the War of 1967 indicate that both the ’48 and ’67 Palestinians are preoccupied with the *Nakba*. It manifests itself in the interviews as a traumatic force that compels them to draw on this past experience.<sup>8</sup> The fear of

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<sup>8</sup> It is crucial to keep in mind that the traumatic force detected in the testimonies is expressed differently and on various levels. For simplicities sake, they can be grouped into two directions: firstly, we can see

ending up like the '48 Palestinians living in camps in the West Bank demonstrates that the *Nakba* became a symbol of facing a serious threat to self-perception, a threat to a firm, unchallenged identity. Many of the '67 Palestinians refused to turn from a "Palestinian" to a "refugee," as did the "'48 refugees," if we are to borrow Ibrahim's terms. If the '67 Palestinians' reaction to the 'other's' appearance within their geographical and home sphere is limited to defending their identity (that is, not to turn into a refugee) even by facing potential death, the '48 Palestinians' reaction to this other's appearance is different: they assert to prefer death not in order to maintain their identity but to defend their lost identity, as they find themselves past the phase in which they can defend what they have; they currently have nothing to lose, but they have something to retrieve, as the next section will discuss.

### 3 In Search of the Lost Identity: *The Palestinian Voice*

In this section I will explore the main difference between the '67 and the '48 Palestinians' perception of the *Nakba*. I claim that while the former's trauma from the *Nakba* is a fear of the future, the latter's trauma relates to the inevitable link of their present and future ontological situation and the unreachable, nonexistent past, that is, the past that apparently rewrites itself for them as a point in their lives to which they cannot return. The recurrent mention of the '48 war tells a lot regarding the traumatic experience of *the Palestinian*, whose experience of belonging we can examine by observing the '48 Palestinians' willingness, as they put it in their own words in the interviews, to die for the sake of returning home in spirit. Putting their return to their villages above their need or will to live testifies to their unique existential situation: *the Palestinian* is the one who belongs to the absence, to what is eternally beyond reach.

This idea is known in the studies of postwar trauma. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub set out to examine the testimonies of people traumatized by the Second World War, especially by the Holocaust, in their book *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*. They make a considerable effort in analyzing the strong relationship among haunting memories, breaking silence and writing. For Felman, a traumatic accident is known when it starts pursuing the traumatized person, and it is when the witness starts, in turn, pursuing it (Felman 1992: 15). M.D. Laub claims that

[testimony] is a dialogical process of exploration and reconciliation of two worlds – the one that was brutally destroyed and the one that is – that are different and will always be so. The testimony is inherently a process of *facing*

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the trauma of death, as some testifiers relate to and justify their abandoning of their houses, that is, to avoid being killed as the '48 Palestinians who resisted during the *Nakba*. The second set of testifiers see the trauma in a different way: they prefer to die rather than sharing the same fate as the '48 refugees who have dwelled far from their homes. In this paper, I will focus only on the second set of Palestinians' testimonies.

*loss* – of going through the pain of the act of witnessing, and of the ending of the act of witnessing – which entails yet another repetition of the experience of *separation and loss*. (Laub 1992: 91; emphasis mine)

The process of exploration and reconciliation of the two worlds is not an easy task; apart from facing loss, it is a mission with uncertain outcome over which the traumatized person has no control, let alone the hope of succeeding in it. An individual turns into the object of this process, facing fleeting memories that resist giving themselves up to the testifier's will. As Felman claims:

[psychoanalysis and literature] will be considered as primarily events of speech, and their testimony, in both cases, will be understood as a mode of *truth's realization beyond what is available as statement, beyond what is available, that is, as a truth transparent to itself and entirely known, given, in advance, prior to the very process of its utterance*. The testimony will thereby be understood, in other words, not as *a mode of statement of*, but rather *as a mode of access to, that truth*. In literature as well as in psychoanalysis [...] the witness might be [...] the one who (in fact) witnesses, but also, *the one who begets, the truth, through the speech process of testimony* (Felman 1992: 15–16; emphasis mine).

Intriguingly, the traumatized person has to fight against annihilation and loss; they both do so in the hope of surviving the overwhelming sense of rupture and the erosion of identity. As Felman teaches us, this task of retrieving, accessing and claiming control over a truth that constantly escapes<sup>9</sup> the traumatized testifier is a task of also claiming back identity, for if one's history is abolished, one's identity ceases to exist as well. Therefore, the loss of the capacity of repossessing the traumatized person's past is the very annihilation of the person's past – their identity (Laub 1992: 82).

As a matter of fact, the '48 Palestinians remembered intensively the fleeting remnants of memories relating to their destroyed villages and the social interactions among its villagers. Before I turn to the examples from the corpus of West Bank interviews, one needs to clarify that the narratives documented invoke an incident that matches the observations of the trauma just reviewed: "In addition to the destruction of an entire society, Al-Nakbah represents an unbridgeable break in the time, place, and consciousness of the Palestinians[.]" for "Al-Nakbah is the violent moment which also created an unbridgeable break between the past and the present. It represents an end to normality; i.e., this split disturbed the 'normal' evolution of history" (Sa'di 2002: 186). Sanbar seems to explain this idea further, adding more details to it that elucidate the time dimensions:

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<sup>9</sup> Psychoanalysis shows that "[...] the speaking subject constantly bears witness to a truth that nonetheless continues to escape him, a truth that is, essentially, not available to its own speaker" (Felman 1992: 15).

by departing from space, the Palestinians, about whom the whole world agreed to say 'they do not exist,' also departed from time. Their history and their past were denied. Their aspirations of their future were forbidden. Hence they found themselves trapped in an ephemeral dimension, and for half a century they would live in limbo, achieving a very special relationship with the concept of duration. Since the present was forbidden to them, they would occupy a temporal space made up of both a past preserved by a memory afflicted by madness and a dreamt-of future which aspired to restore time. And their obsession with places would be accompanied by a fervent desire to reestablish the normality of everyday lives. (2001: 90)

This marks, I conclude, an existential situation, and perhaps the most authentic reflection of it is best mentioned in an interview that, as all the other interviews reviewed for this study, accentuates the interlacing of the territorial with the nostalgic. Although the Palestinian refugees testified to the better life they currently have economically speaking after the Six-Day War, all of them re-emphasized the loss of identity as a result of the lasting seal on the possibility of a physical return to their past. They all offered detailed descriptions of their destroyed towns, the agricultural work and the social interactions among the people with whom they used to live before the *Nakba*.

Sa'di detects this same motif among the Palestinian refugees. Let us read his introduction, which constitutes a tight relationship with my basic thoughts:

The 1948 War resulted in *Al-Nakbah* – the immense catastrophe – for the Palestinian people and changed their life beyond recognition. First and foremost, Al-Nakbah engendered the dispersion [*Shatal*]. Between 77 and 83 percent of the Palestinians who lived in the part of Palestine that later became Israel – i.e., 78 percent of Mandatory Palestine – were turned into refugees. Thus, for Palestinians, Al-Nakbah represents, among many other things, the loss of the homeland, and the disintegration of society, the frustration of national aspirations, and the beginning of a hasty process of destruction of their culture. [...]. (Sa'di 2002: 175)

The interviewees apparently fought against the destruction of their culture and the loss of their homeland by reconstituting their disintegrated society; they attempted repeatedly to interlace the physical land with the spiritual social interactions. Abdul Qader starts narrating first about the social interactions, namely the weddings, sinking into small, extensive details, which is an element present in almost all of the interviews. While this reflects his compassion for the lost times, it testifies to a much deeper point – the attachment between the lost land and the lost self; he shows the communality of belonging to the land, first and foremost, by recalling modes of socializing and generalizing upon that. Mark this for an example:

Life was happy even for those who had nothing to dine, for there were love and respect among people. People had compassion for each other; those who

had money and animal and agricultural products were feeding those who had not. These products were not for sale among the people, for the land is cultivated with vegetables and wheat, on which people have no exclusive right. Everyone had the right to eat from these products and to take what one needs from them, and the owners of these products never got upset.

Not only does Abdul Qader emphasize the relationship between people based on the land, but he also emphasizes the relationship between the self and the land, as if both existed depending on each other:

We were living; we were owners of lands, which we planted with wheat, barley, and all the vegetables and fruits. I used to plant fenugreek and make out of it a drink, which could cure forty diseases. However, these days no one cares about this plant.

Abdul Qader associates living with ownership of land. Even more, curing the self – making it continue to exist, physically speaking – depends on the land. He addresses the lost lands – the general idea of owning land and the personal story of losing these lands – as if he were describing losing himself. The change that the ‘I’ undergoes after the war is manifested in losing the daily relationship with the land: “we used to drink water out of the spring, we didn’t use cups but ceramic bottles. These days we drink water that is full of chlorine.”

The ongoing relationship between land and identity<sup>10</sup> that the ’48 Palestinian acquired after the *Nakba* is also manifested clearly in Abu Jameel’s testimony, as he decides to narrate a story about his father’s response to a Jew who wanted to buy his lost land in his destroyed village. The interviewer asked: “There are sayings that everyone went out for a certain period like a week or ten days when the Jews informed them that everyone would return home and raise the white flag. Did you get scared or hungry at that time when Jews arrived?” To this, Abu Jameel responded:

No. I am going to tell you a story of my father. Once, when I was young, we had seats of straw. I was sitting on one of these seats. One of the known rich<sup>11</sup> people came and asked me: “Is this the al-Dar’awy place?” I said: “No, this is [the place of] al-Sar’awy.” He asked me again about the place, so I told him that his name is Jameel al-Sar’awy. He said: “I want [to speak to] him.” I gave [the rich man] a seat to sit down while my father was [still away], working in barley trade. When he arrived, this person asked my dad: “Are you Jameel?” He said, “Yes, I am Jameel.” He told him that he wanted to talk about something. So my father said, “Yes, how can I help you?” Then my father told me

<sup>10</sup> It is important to illustrate that the identity of the Palestinian refugee has two components: “I think that the local context in both its social and spatial makeup should be considered as a constitutive dimension of identity” (Sa’di 2002: 192).

<sup>11</sup> The exact word used in Arabic is *خواجا* (*Khanaja*), which can be translated into a person with luxurious properties and possessions. This term is used by the Palestinians (today very infrequently) to describe the Jews.

to bring coffee. The rich man told my father that he [the father] had a piece of land in Sar'a and he offered to buy it from my father. My father asked how could I sell it and you have it already? He said to him: "Do, as you want." He offered my father [to pay] the price that he needed in a blank cheque, but my father refused, and he said: "I accept this offer on one condition: that you replace the land with your wife." The rich man was shocked by my father's condition. Then my father asked him [to leave]. There was a friend of ours from the village of Sataf named Taha al-Satafi, who was working in the vegetable trade. The rich man presented Taha al-Satafi with the same request that he had asked of my father, but Taha al-Satafi raised a gun to his face.

One cannot fail to notice that Abu Jameel's response is incompatible with the interviewer's question, for Abu Jameel responds with a mere "no," shifting to narrating a story that instead shows how they did not fear nor even were in need of the Jew's money. Abu Jameel's clinging to his identity is also articulated by the time he corrects the Jew's accent when the latter mentions his family name incorrectly – 'al-Sar'awy', which is the title they acquired after the name of their destroyed village, "al-Sar'a" – or in the Jewish accent, replacing the "S" with the "D." It is no coincidence that Abu Jameel, who clearly appears to understand the Jewish accent and intention by this "innocent question" of his "innocent accent," pronounces his family name, which is named after his lost land, again emphasizing the absolute attachment between the post-refugee state and the lost land. Indeed, when the Jew asks again about the place of Abu Jameel's father, the Palestinian refugee skips this question and decides rather to re-emphasize his father's last name – Jameel *al-Sar'amy*. The testimony illustrates starkly how strongly refugees are situated – one might even stay stuck – within their past.

What is more pronounced here than Abu Jameel's attitude, is his father's, who is still hanging on to the lost land as if it were a part of his identity or existence. The land, even though its owner (the Palestinian refugee) knows that it is not belonging to him physically, still equates it as part of the identity. His father equates the value of the land with the wife, which are two things that complete the speaking subject, and I think he does so to make the Jew (*Khawaja*, a symbol of refusal of the other) feel what it truly means for him. Moreover, Abu Jameel's father wants to show how invaluable the land is by asking the Jew to replace his wife with it. Jameel's friend was much more infuriated by the question than his father, reaching for a weapon and, thus, threatening the Jew who asked him the same question.

Perhaps Hamda's memories of her husband's mother can explain concisely why the people of Sara'a were so furious about the idea of selling their lands. She narrates about her husband and his mother, both from Sara'a village:

One day a man from Kafar Okob offered him [her husband] to take his land [in Kafar Okob] to plant it, but his mother refused the whole idea because she was thinking that she would get back to the village she was displaced from. When my sons were visiting it, they were bringing sage. The same thing for

the ladies who were bringing olives and figs. His facial expression was full of happiness when he was talking about his village of Sara'a.

The mother's refusal to plant a new land outside of the village from which she had been displaced manifests the idea of sticking in the lost past. I interpret this as the inability of continuing through the future without repossessing the past. Apparently, the decision to plant the new land implies for her an absolute conscious absorption of abandoning the land after which they are currently named. If the Palestinians perceive or define the connection to the lands by the act of planting, then accepting to plant new land means a conscious decision (or acceptance) to abandon the past connection. This explains why "firmly believing that they would return to Palestine, in the early years of their exile the majority of Palestinians steadfastly refused to create, or even enable, permanent links or roots in their host countries" (Mason 2007: 273). Interestingly, even the second exilic generations, who have not witnessed the physical uprootedness, felt that the basis of their identity is "[...] not only lost, but never existed, and the dream of 'returning' represents a search for identity as much as for a place [...]" (Mason 2007: 274). The second generations cannot but belong to their native land, too, although they develop roots in the countries in which they live (Mason 2007: 281).

This motif appears in all of the '48 Palestinians' testimonies, as they all chose to express their relationship to their lost land. Azmi and his wife are both refugees, and the former expresses the tight relationship to the land and its role in constituting one's identity:

My wife is a refugee, and she wishes to return to Bir Ma'in [her native village] as she said that the soil of the land is very valuable to us, for it is our hometown. As for the camp, we are only refugees here, and we do not have memories here as we have in the village; we belong to our land. We have not visited our village since 1948, but I can describe it as it is still in my mind, its homes, neighbors, sheep and trees. In the case we returned home, I would be happy. It is my homeland.

The relationship to the past and the idea of the relationship between identity and past is manifested here through the contrast between a refugee and memories. Where there are no memories, one cannot feel at home. Indeed, we can see how, regardless of the physical distance and space, the memories of this refugee's homeland are still vivid in his mind. Memories of the past constitute his homeland, as he puts it, which is interesting since he encompasses the idea of homeland with his native village and land, not the whole of Palestine, where he is currently living.

Similarly, Azmi expresses the relationship between his lost self and the agricultural life, just like Abdul Qader who exposed how losing his self is the equivalent of losing his land. Note Azmi's remark on the land and its products:

Since 1967, I do not remember that something special has happened, but there is a pain in my heart from leaving my village. We live in the village where

my sons and relatives got married and if there is a chance to go home, I will take it. I still remember schools and streets in the village as I was a child at that time. If I return home, I will depend on planting.

Apparently, working the land, depending on its products, is an act of regenerating, of repossessing, one's lost self. Perhaps the example that in its stark detail would best illustrate this point is the following nostalgic description by Umm Ali:

Life in Sindiyana was good. I remember my mom was baking with a *tabun* [oven] and we sat around her by the door, there were oil, ghee and everything available. Vineyards and quince and we went to the mountains to pick *Kharub* [carob beans] and at night we picked oak branches and grilled with them on the *tabun*.

We had a house that had four arches and each one had a storage area to store lentils and wheat. The people were one hand. Every Friday, we went to the valley to bathe our children and wash our laundry. There were no diseases, and there was a blessing in everything.

I got out of my homeland when I was 7 years old and now I am 85. I carried the jar and we went to fill water from the spring. We went twice a day.

The young men gathered in al-Bayader [the place where the hay was gathered waiting to be ground] and when a wedding occurred, we went to collect firewood to set the fire; there was no electricity. Our house was made of mud-brick. I was young when I got out of the house so I don't know how many *durums* of land it had.

I still have the documents and the papers and the key of the house, our work was in agriculture, we grew cucumbers, tomatoes, and we sliced and salted them to let them dry for the winter.

From the outset of her process of remembrance, Umm Ali associated her village with the image of her mother baking on the *tabun*<sup>12</sup> while the family surrounded her. The personal, social and material are all intertwined in her recollection. The mother is generally the first image a child connects to, and, of course, this image has to be as nostalgic as it could be from her posttraumatic consciousness. One can see this as she conjures up this image which includes herself and her siblings. Undoubtedly, this image suggests to her that "everything was available." But Umm Ali carries on in her reflection of the nostalgic consciousness: she completes the first image with walking in the mountains, illustrating how the remembered terrain constitutes an indispensable part of her past which is currently under reconstruction.

Reconstructing the physical level is not a coincidence; it would be careless to claim that this woman has nothing to remember other than this physical description. She surely has many other memories, but it is this testimony she gave when asked to remember 1967. The text then reveals a traumatized person's attempt to remember

<sup>12</sup> A *tabun* oven is a clay oven, traditionally dug in the earth. It is still used today in many regions in the Middle East.



the past; the descriptions she offers appear to be of importance to her self-perception. The “we” of society enters abruptly and tellingly in the memory of the mother and the children. While the role of the particular village in its geographical settings remains unknown, its role in Umm Ali’s remembrance is that of the lost self: if the personal memory ends with the word “*tabun*,” the collective memory also ends with the same word. Her mere remembrance of the *tabun* scene led her, unintentionally, to the collective experience. The association is made evident in the sequence of the narration. She, thus, completed what she left incomplete in the image.

The “we” that enters the image of the self here is an alternative of the “we” of the narrator’s present, which encompasses both the refugees and the new society in which she now lives – a setting in which ’48 refugees were often insulted. Mohammed testifies to this by saying that “[...] the refugee was not welcomed – but hated.” Hence, the “we” of the post-refugee situation can be seen as an attempt to reverse the condition of the current “we” that seems to be unfamiliar with and irreconcilable with Umm Ali’s lost, original ‘I.’ The duality of the “we” in this narration can be understood, therefore, as follows: it is a “we” of the Palestinians who remember living a harmonious life before they were uprooted, and it is the “we” of the society in which this woman was living before being humiliated in the new society in which she is considered a refugee. Sa’di summarizes this idea:

[Pierre] Nora’s concept of “site of memory” is, I believe, an indispensable tool for understanding the way in which Al-Nakbah has become a constitutive element of Palestinian identity. Al-Nakbah is a Palestinian event and a site of Palestinian collective memory; it connects all Palestinians to a specific point in time that has become for them an ‘eternal present.’ (2002: 176–177).

A lot of attention is paid to Nora’s concept by scholars. AbuKhoti, for example, returns to this idea to strengthen her main claim that “the persistence of the catastrophic event in the cases of collective cultural traumas fuels a will to remember instead of a will to forget” (2018: 49). She develops this idea further by maintaining that

The Nakba has become what Pierre Nora terms a “site of memory,” and a constitutive element of Palestinian identity. In this context individual representations of collective memory contribute to the continuity of an established collective identity. The Nakba as a site of memory is not a singular narrative of a specific event, but the sum of all experiences and stories told by those who experienced the initial event, and those who came after. (AbuKhoti 2018: 50).

This “eternal present” would appear to be the same past that constantly haunts the Palestinian refugees, the same past that rewrites itself as an eternal present, depriving these refugees of any possibility of living but in their past. This utterly explains why

even though [Palestinian refugees] do not expect the Right of Return to be realized, they will never give it up but retain it as an integral part of a kind of postmodern identity narrative that can sometimes be difficult for the Nakba generation to comprehend. (Andersen 2016: 29).

Umm Ali suddenly shifts her narrative from the “blessing” to information about her abandonment of the village. Apparently, it is the unblest situation of living the life of a refugee that intruded into her mind when she remembered the very antithesis of her present. This is where the physical level is expressed: to concertize this meaning as well as the existence (albeit in her mind now) of the lost ‘we,’ there is the need to accompany this with physical descriptions of the terrain of the home space; it serves as witness to the authenticity of her memories as well as her lost identity. This is the ‘we’ of the pre-refugee Palestinian.

The village is the opposite of the word refugee. Umm Ali has to repossess – physically – her lost village in order to return to being a Palestinian. However, the nature of the access left to this village belongs only to the abstract sphere: she only has the documents, papers and the key, the concrete evidence of her belonging to this unrestorable life. Memories help Palestinians only as a means of preserving identity as an act of holding on to the right of return (AbuKhoti 2018: 57). Sa’di has commented on the motif of the key in the Palestinian topic as follows:

The absence of home became a constant source of misery. In light of this, the house key has become the last symbol of home, a reminder that, before Al-Nakbah, Palestinians had a different life – a life where the home stood at its center as a haven to which one could return. The house key is also a symbol for the return – the return not only to the house that was left behind but also a return to normality, to a life filled with dignity and warmth. Thus the key has become a material symbol for the refugees’ state of mind. (Sa’di 2002: 181)

It is not a coincidence then that Umm Ali’s description of the physical events and scenes follows after her mention of papers and documents, the access of those vivid memories.<sup>13</sup> The chaotic aspect just discerned in Umm Ali’s process of remembrance testifies to her trauma. She insists on remembering this scene from the past as an act of returning to what is demolished and has moved into the realm of the absence, thus, articulating the inability of belonging but to the unreachable past. Her

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<sup>13</sup> Holding on to this identity is what Palestinian refugees take as their priority; Ramadan argues that the refugee camps have become imbued with meanings and significance over the decades (2010: 49), attempting to undermine Edward W. Said’s argument that the nature of the Palestinian existence is discontinuous. While Ramadan makes some insightful points in the service of his argument, his interviewees seem to take him to the conclusion that “recognizing the camp as a meaningful place need not diminish the importance of the right of return to Palestine as the central aspiration of Palestinian lives. As so many people made clear to me, the importance of living in a camp is precisely so that they remember Palestine and keep alive the demand to return” (2010: 55).

remembrance is incomplete, and this is where we have seen her unable to separate her new state as a refugee who suffers from a trauma and her pre-traumatic identity.

As a result of the traumatic identity, the *Nakba* draws a separating line between the '48 and the '67 Palestinians not only regarding their existential experience but also their self-perception as Palestinians. Whether this is irreversible or not is unclear. Mohammed summarizes this by saying, on the verge of tears, "We will not come back." Apparently, Mohammed knew that the process of returning is not a mere physical return. His short sentence testifies to his awareness of the irreversibility of the historical facts.<sup>14</sup> Taking into consideration that Mohammed is a Palestinian refugee, Sa'di's remark, generalizing all Palestinian refugees' experience, is plausible: "Al-Nakbah is the moment when a part of the Palestinian people became homeless; after which they could never feel at home. These Palestinians have been deprived of everything home signifies and provides" (2002: 181).

It is no coincidence that Abdul Majed, as a refugee who lost his house in the *Nakba*, associates the existence of the Jews with his nonexistence, as he relates what he remembers of the Six-Day War: "The Jews entered the village and destroyed everything so that they would ensure that its people would not return to [their village]." Abdul Majed's interview is three pages long, and the first two pages are only concerned with narrating the genesis of his current situation – that is, the years after the '67 war. He covers a wide range of events, both collective and personal. He opens his testimony with a kind of excuse why the Palestinian people lost the 1948 War, not the 1967 War: "During the reign of the British, there were Jews who were educated; they were also employees at the tax department." He is interested, most probably unconsciously, in showing that the Jewish community was more capable of winning since they were more educated and, thus, more powerful than the Palestinian side. But why does this testifier open his testimony of the Six-Day War with a remark that is not even concerned with the beginning of the 1948 War, but with the prewar social and economic conditions? He is not concerned even with his current condition nor the changes that happened to him on various levels after the War of 1967.

I interpret this remark as a kind of self-consolation that bears within it an effort to convince himself why the Palestinians lost the war. This testimony opens immediately with the shrinking of the Palestinian's 'I,' and what follows in the next two sentences of the testimony illustrates this point: "We lived together but we did not ask them for help. We were depending on the products of our lands." Not only does Abdul Majed draw a very clear separative line between the 'I' and 'the other,' but he also highlights why the Palestinians could independently *be* estranged, economically and socially, from the Jews. It is no coincidence that he mentions the products of the land – the physical sphere is the basic and the potential of the existence of the

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<sup>14</sup> It would be of much benefit to keep in mind Walid Khalidi's *Before Their Diaspora* (1984). "*Before Their Diaspora* is about a vanishing past – something that no longer exists – about people and places that have undergone dramatic changes in such a way that the people (those who appear in the photographs and their descendants) would never inhabit the same places or even live in the same area" (Sa'di 2002: 179).

'Palestinian I.' Hence, losing the land, for this witness implies in effect losing one's independence, or, more precisely, losing the capability of existing without the other, as the interviewer reports in his transcription of the interview:

When the war began, he narrates, the Jewish side started, and this is what he highlights, to assail Palestinian lands to enforce their inhabitants to leave: They practiced injustice against farmers to leave their lands. [...] The Balfour Declaration, which was a public statement, issued by the British government during World War I announcing support for the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine if the allied powers beat Germany. When the declaration ended, Jewish girls were putting bombs at Jaffa Gate. The British had asked some Arab leaders, such as al-Nashashibi and Al Husayni, about giving Palestine to Jews and for another period of reign, but the Arab leaders refused that. Jews began a sedition; they were giving guns to the shepherds. After the withdrawal of Britain, we took the guns. Jews began coming from other countries, such as Egypt and Iraq, and they never stopped killing people, such as in the Deir Yassin massacre where they killed the children and raped the girls.

Finally, he arrives at the following memory:

We ran away and stayed near Deir Elias for two months. We went back to the country in the daytime and took the products of the land to the place where we lived. Nevertheless, the Jews entered the village and destroyed everything, so that they would ensure that its people would not return.

One of the most vivid invocations of the image of the destroyed village comes from Khalil's description of Qalqilya which was destroyed in the War of 1967. When he returned to Qalqilya, he says, there was nothing left undestroyed except the main road. About his own house, he continues to say: "There was nothing at home. Everything was stolen. Nothing was there – no sewing machine, no washing machine, no refrigerator, no chair, nothing. Only the walls were left, and parts of them were destroyed by the bulldozer." Omar, also from Qalqilya, confirms this image:

When we arrived in Qalqilya, I saw an unfamiliar view. I no longer recognized the area, as everything was destroyed. For example, if you wanted to go to the northern area of Ziad's house, you would get mixed up and go to another area. The landmarks in the streets were different.

What the testimonies of the '48 Palestinians shows clearly is that the more the 'other' prevails and dominates territorially, the more the 'I' shrinks. The materialization of the other's existence within space and time goes hand in hand with the dematerialization of the 'I's' existence within space and time. The writing of the other's narrative discourse eliminates the 'I's' discourse as it always redefines the 'I' on the basis of the geographical space. The absence of identity of the Palestinian – this very traumatic loop that rewrites the Palestinian self as an absence of identity (when one has

no home to belong to), as belonging to the non-belongingness – is not only limited to the Palestinian's self-perception as a Palestinian, but also stretches out to reach the question of any type of belongingness, namely, to the collective Arab identity. Therefore, to be a Palestinian, the Six-Day War teaches us, is an experience which draws a very metaphysically and ontologically distinctive line within the collective Palestinian identity.

#### 4 In Search of Belonging: The Palestinian's Entanglement with the Other

The '48 Palestinians fervently cohered and identified with Arabism. As Elias Sanbar puts it, “[the Palestinians’] Arabness constitutes an underlying identity, a core which is common to the peoples of these regions” (2001: 88).<sup>15</sup> This is very evident in the interviewees’ belief in Abdel Nasser, the so-called father of Arabism, and his dream of Pan-Arabism. Unwittingly, Arabism became a medium or a tool through which the Palestinian tries to reconstruct or repossess the absence within their identity. This is a natural response for people whose identity has undergone a de-Arabization: “Al-Nakbah is associated with a rapid de-Arabization of the country. This process has included the destruction of Palestinian villages” (Sa’di 2002: 184). Sanbar’s remark can explain this more precisely:

Driven out of time and space, the Palestinians would ultimately see themselves as deprived of the right to their own name. Driven by an astonishing intuition – they knew that if the name were to be permanently obliterated, their disappearance would be confirmed – they would fight tooth and nail to preserve the existence of the words “Palestine” and “Palestinians.” (2001: 91)

Hence, one can conclude that belonging to Palestine is a precondition to the total belongingness to Arabism.

Such a motif is easily detected in the interviews examined. Karim, for instance, a refugee since the '48 war when he was 12, sings for Palestine as he is being interviewed: “[...] if we do not return you free, shame on us to be Arabs, Oh Haifa and Jaffa, if we do not return you, shame on us to be Arabs.” The same idea returns also with Ibrahim, as he is dreaming of repossessing his lost land: “There will be a day to come when they [the Arab governments] will fight and exclude them [the Jews] from here, since this is an Arab land.”

What makes Karim sing of Arabism after so many years, especially after the discourse of Arabism failed to prove itself capable of freeing “Haifa and Jaffa” in 1967? For a Palestinian refugee, Arabism needs Palestinianism as much as Palestinianism

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<sup>15</sup> Sanbar means by this that a full identification is found between both parties: “binding factors include the use of the same language, the existence of a collective imagination, the claim of a shared history, and the reality of identical social structures” (2001: 88).

needs Arabism. Speaking on behalf of the Palestinian refugees, Lutfi explicitly, but necessarily intentionally, claims that to be an Arab, he needs to return to Palestine, to the place he was traumatically forced to abandon. His cohesion with Arabism – to be an Arab *per se* – is conditional upon reclaiming his Palestinianism, and this testifies, I assume, to the chasm within the '48 Palestinian identity not only with the '67 Palestinians but also with the Arab world in general.

Arabism for the uprooted Palestinian, therefore, does not appear to be a total emancipation from the traumatic identity they acquired after the Six-Day War: the need to belong, coupled with the understanding of the inability of belongingness to everything but to the geographical space, is a driving force in the experience of being a Palestinian refugee.

The Arabic language is the cultural and linguistic reference to all people that belong to the 'Arab world.' Yet, among the other references that constitute Arabism or Arab nationalism, Palestinian people share a special relationship with Arabic since it remains a tool of unification between them and the external Arab world. For the former, the Arabic language, after the sociopolitical and geohistorical changes they went through, plays the most important part in helping them cope with their new existential mode: it is by calling themselves 'Arabs' that they can affirm their belonging to a geographical space that has undergone transformations on the semantic level (change of names) and the physical level (villages that were apparent and turned through their destruction into absences).

It is hard not to notice that the hollowness the Palestinian experience leaves within the speakers collides with their celebration of Arabism. The interviewees' constant references to Abdel Nasser points to the attempt of asserting a total cohesion with the Arab world, an assertion that does not only fail to overcome the Palestinian's sense of loss, but also highlights the moments where the Arabic culture is split by the Palestinian use of the Arabic language to represent a unique existential situation.

The frequent references to the physical roots to the land, particularly when they occur after the reference to Nasserism, show that the speakers' Palestinianism is intertwined with Arabism. Examples from the interviews illustrate this poignantly. Ahmad, born in 1942 in one of the destroyed villages in the Jenin district, testifies to his belief in Abdel Nasser to return Palestine. Ahmad's belief in Abdel Nasser surpasses his disappointment during and after the war: while, he says, all the people were expecting the war, they were all disappointed when the "Naksa happened, [...] especially that Sawt al-Arab radio station was exaggerating the strength of the Egyptian army"; he admits, "we were all optimistic, but later on, they turned out to be false statements." But the most noticeable aspect in Ahmad's testimony is the ongoing loyalty to Abdel Nasser's dream or endeavor: he accuses "all Arab regimes [to be] responsible for the war as they were in cooperation with America against Abdel Nasser." Again, it is not a belief in Arabism as such, instead, his belief is associated with the liberation of Palestine. Rahma also expresses this idea, as she says that "[she

hopes] that the kings and presidents of the Arabs will unite so they can return to [their] country.”

This experience can also be generalized to many other people. Ahmad recalls that most people’s talk was political, especially when they “used to sit together in the courtyard and talk about Gamal Abdel Nasser and his speeches.” The belief in Arabism, which is, to a large degree, symbolized by Nasserism (or people’s great love for Abdel Nasser), thus, circulated among all the villagers at the time. Indeed, in all transcripts examined, I cannot recollect any interviewee who mentioned Abdel Nasser and did not also mention that all the villagers were enthusiastic about hearing his speeches. Ahmad expresses people’s love of Abdel Nasser, describing that “when there was a speech by Abdel Nasser, there was like a curfew in the city, everyone gathered to hear the speech.” Similarly, Rahma re-emphasizes the relationship to Nasser: “We used to gather around the radio to hear the news, and we were happy to hear al-Shuqeri’s news on the radio, and we were excited, and we heard the speeches of Gamal Abdel Nasser.”

This takes us to a new point: the ’48 Palestinian ‘I’ cannot define itself without, and, coincidentally, cannot possess itself without, ‘the other.’ Whereas AbuKhoti maintains that the willful remembering of the Palestinians helps to construct a collective identity “[...] separate from the opponent identity who caused the trauma, and escape the appropriation of one’s culture, history, and existence by the colonizer” (2018: 57), the interviews collected for this study undermine this conclusion mainly because of the nuanced differences among the voices that constitute the collective one, which scholars often decide not to address thoroughly.<sup>16</sup> The discernable differences between the ’48 and the ’67 Palestinians’ testimonies regarding the Six-Day War not only highlight a very startling difference between each unconscious definition of ‘the other,’ but also tells us so much about the interlacement between the ’48 Palestinian ‘I’ with *its* other’ (the Jew) that is generated by the historical imperative.

In order to understand the unique relationship between the ’48 Palestinian ‘I’ and the Jewish ‘other,’ I will turn to a testimony of such a relationship between a ’67 Palestinian and the ‘other.’ Interestingly, the ‘other’ is not one concrete entity perceived as one being among the witnesses of the Six-Day War. For the ’67 Palestinian, the ‘other’ does not necessarily mean the exact opposite of the ‘I’; it apparently is ‘any other,’ not *the other*, on the basis of which the ‘I’ is shaped as the ‘I’ of the postwar era.

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<sup>16</sup> AbuKhoti indeed comments on this point, but she does so curiously and, thus, does not go further in her discussion: “These conflicts within the process of forming a common Palestinian identity make it crucial to adopt the previously mentioned methods of multiple narratives and versions of recollection, to accommodate for the multiplicity of experiences whenever the Palestinian identity is discussed” (2018: 59). She instead decides to overlook such differences: “therefore, highlighting the common suffering and commemorating the Nakba as the source of all suffering is essential to overcome such divisions and unify the collective under this trauma-based constructed cultural identity” (2018: 60).

This first encounter between Ziad and the Jew occurred when Ziad saw the latter in his military uniform. He states that this is when he started to understand what is meant by “the military occupation.” What is interesting here is that he got to know this soldier through the Hebrew words “*lekb, lekb*” (לֵךְ, לֵךְ)<sup>17</sup> that the soldier told Ziad:

Now, I told you [addressing the interviewer] that, personally, I went to the monastery, and we remained for three nights there. Then, we decided to return home. When we had just exited the monastery, I saw some soldiers, and it was the first time I saw a Jewish soldier. One of them was standing, his face was full of evil, and yelling at us in Hebrew, saying “*lekb lekb*.” We did not respond; he appeared horrified and was ready to shoot us. This was the first time I saw a soldier, and in this moment, I started to realize what military occupation means.

Ziad accentuates that this meeting was the first in which he encounters an Israeli soldier (he repeats this twice), and this is inseparable from the following remark: apparently, Ziad associated the word “*lekb*” with the occupation, and this is very understandable since ‘to go’ is to leave the place, and, for him, as we have already noticed earlier in the paper, occupation is where people are forced to leave, to replace their presence in the place to their absence from the place, to cease to belong.

Ziad has encountered a friend named Shimon he knew before the Six-Day War, and this friend was a soldier, too. However, this friend, who offered Ziad a tour in West Jerusalem, was nothing like the other soldier he had met. Ziad’s tendency towards narrating his first exposure to West Jerusalem is optimistic. Rather than hatred or trauma, this meeting is filled with surprise: “It is a world!” he says, referring to it as a new world which he is experiencing with surprise (“we were surprised”).

The attitude of this Jewish friend is not built on the binary oppositions of ‘to be or not to be’ that we saw in the previous soldier’s logic. While Shimon is also a soldier, he does not represent, at least to Ziad, the “military occupation.” Instead, he embodies the opposite – the entrance of the ‘I’ to the ‘other’s world,’ both physically and metaphorically speaking.

Ziad can see beyond the military uniform of Shimon; he can see him not as a soldier, but as an opportunity of reworking his ‘I.’ Ziad’s interest apparently lies in expanding his attachment to the geographical space by entering a new world, which stands in great contrast to the ’48 Palestinian. Ziad says when he walked in Jerusalem’s Jaffa Street for the first time that he “[...] imagined himself walking in Damascus or Beirut.” Ziad is familiarizing himself with East Jerusalem; he is personifying the ‘other’ and, at the same time, expanding his ‘I’ on account of ‘the other,’ that is, transforming it into a domestic entity that cannot be reduced to a mere ‘friendly other.’ He subjects it to the imaginative process of familiarization, embracing and understanding. As a matter of fact, the ’67 Palestinians had, as Ziad testifies, no

<sup>17</sup> The Hebrew word "לֵךְ" means “go.”



problem with dealing with the Jews after the Six-Day War: “The people of Jerusalem welcomed the Jews as tourists; there was no kind of hatred against them.”

To sharpen this idea, it is useful to hear how a '48 Palestinian expresses his attitude toward the Jews after the war, once one encountered them weekly, and I would like to return to the '48 refugee Ahmad. He felt it to be unfortunate that social relationships between both sides were normalized: “*Unfortunately*, we treated them kindly. They used to come every Saturday to shop, and some statements became common just as ‘*lira ya Khawaja*’”<sup>18</sup> (emphasis mine). More precisely, the fact that “Israeli men and women used to come to shop and social relationships happened between them and the people” was “frustrating.” Ahmad cannot even name the Jews, for he reuses the plural pronouns such as “them” and “they” rather than using the word “Jews” as if the dichotomous limit between “them” and “us” had not yet been blurred. This is then the opposite of Ziad’s reflection. Abdul Majed, the Palestinian refugee, cannot accept the growing normalizing relationship between the two sides either: after the war, “*rather than protesting against them so as to show to the world that we refuse their staying among us, when the Jews entered the country, we did not deal with them as enemies*” (emphasis mine). The social relationships got better, for “[Arabs] started selling [Jews] goods like vegetables, clothes, and pottery,” and “some people started learning Hebrew.” Abdul Majed says that “in addition, they were selling lands to Jews and entering cities without restrictions.” Considering the either ‘I’ or ‘other’ formula, no explanation is needed why Abdul Majed’s stance toward the Jewish other is anything but acceptance. Ibrahim even goes further with the rejection, as he says that he did not deal with Jews after he was exposed to them at all: “After 1967, I visited Jerusalem. There were great changes due to the Jews. I did not deal with the Jewish after the war.” Let us not forget how Abu Jameel insists on not only dismissing the Jew as a representative of all rich people, but also to emphasize this richness. Abu Jameel’s attitude toward generalizing the Jewish person, along with his description of him as a rich man, is an indicator of his unwillingness to mention him in further detail. He refuses to accept his existence. The detachment and lack of connection between both sides is deeply pronounced.

What was frustrating for Ziad is the experience of the inability of communicating with this ‘friendly other.’ When he called Shimon’s office to converse with him, his secretary could not communicate with Ziad, either in Arabic or in English. Thus, Ziad wanted – he was not forced – to learn Hebrew in order to enter the other’s world from its ‘wide door.’ Let us hear Ziad’s own narration:

Now, after some days, I called Shimo’on. His secretary answered the phone, and she did not know any English words, and I did not know any Hebrew words. She spoke Hebrew and I, English and Arabic. Everything I remember from her speech was “*lo ba*” [not coming]. When I saw Shimo’on later, I narrated this story to him, and he said that I was supposed to learn Hebrew. I

<sup>18</sup> *Khawaja* is used to describe an honored man with high socioeconomic status, and ‘lira’ was the local name for the currencies then. Hence, “*Lira ya Khawaja’a*” means “One lira, Khawaja.”

said to him that I wanted to learn Hebrew, and he took me to Bet Ha'am. I was the first Arabic student who went to this place to learn Hebrew.

Ziad's inability to communicate with the 'Hebrew other' presented an obstacle. Ziad is not satisfied with the response "*lo ba*" (לא בא) and he wants more – he wants a discussion, a conversation, a path to total understanding. Even his decision to learn Hebrew was motivated by this accident: it was Shimon who, after hearing the story from Ziad, who told him to learn Hebrew, and Ziad accepted this offer. After all, the entrance of the '67 Palestinians into the 'Jewish realm' faced neither significant obstacles nor clear limits: "[...] we were happy as well, as we went to many places in Israel and no one could stop us. In addition, we were loved more than the Arabs of 1948."

For a '67 Palestinian, the 'other' – not figured as the "Israeli soldier" who represents for Ziad the "military occupation" – can be the medium through which the 'I' extends itself. This is not the case for Ibrahim, for example, who is still thinking that the physical place is exclusive either to him or to the Israeli soldier:

There will be a generation that will fight and take them out of here as this is an Arab land. [...] If I walked in Jerusalem next to an Israeli soldier, he would *be afraid and ready to shoot me*. Why is he afraid? Because it is not his land or his father's land. Until now, I walk with high spirit, but in Tel-Aviv the soldier walks with fear.

Ahmad goes even further; he did not only resist the Israeli soldiers – and for this he was arrested and imprisoned for nine months – but he also could not accept the appearance of Jewish Israeli civilians in the Palestinian lands: he highlights the fact that even after the appearance of the resistance movements (Fedayeen), who carried out operations against the Israeli army, "Jews kept coming on Saturdays and after that, the borders with Israel were opened so [they] were able to go [...] whenever they wanted."

In contrast to the '48 Palestinian 'I,' the 'other' for '67 Palestinians does not substitute the 'I' in place and time; rather, it is the road to new places and times. For Ziad, the image of the Jew as an imaginary construct associated with the trauma of the *Nakba* immediately changes after the first meeting. This is understandable, since the other, contrary to the '48 Palestinian's 'other,' does not appear as a danger to the ontological existence. The '67 Palestinian's 'I' has the freedom to create new dialogues with the 'other' since the former can claim total existence without depending on the presence of the 'other' within time and space. The '67 Palestinian can extract self-agency without being crippled in the process of getting rid of its 'other'; they can celebrate selfhood without struggling with a dialectical part that constitutes part of the self.

## Primary Sources

This chapter worked with interviews recorded from men and women born between 1936 and 1958. At the time of the interviews, they lived in Beit Annan, Bethlehem, Marda, Jerusalem, Qalqilya, Ras al-Arquob, Sara'a, Sindiyana, Tabur and the Kalandia refugee camp. Their names were abbreviated to first names for this publication to protect their identity. The full names are known to the author and the editors; the interviews have been archived.

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# “My Father, His Daughter”: A Memoir of the Year 1967 in Hebron as a Metonym for the Relationship between Fathers and Daughters as Told by Five Israeli Women<sup>1</sup>

*Ronit Hemyan*

My father’s hug and tears in ’67, that is my legacy.  
(Rona, from her interview)

## 1 Introduction

Following the Six-Day War, locations of Biblical memorial significance and Jewish holy sites were added to the areas under Israeli control. The most prominent sites were the Western Wall, Rachel’s Tomb and the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, which was conquered by Israel on the third day of the war. The Cave – which serves as a mosque and an active Muslim place of worship – traditionally represents the burial place of biblical patriarchs and matriarchs: Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Leah. Jews had been denied entrance to this holy site since the 13th century, at the time of the Mamluk conquest of the Land of Israel. Following the Six-Day War, the Cave of the Patriarchs stirred great religious yearning and tourist interest among the Jewish public in Israel and abroad. Thus, the city was flooded

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<sup>1</sup> *My Father, His Daughter* is the name of the autobiographical book written by Yael Dayan, the daughter of the Minister of Defense, Moshe Dayan, who is identified with the Israeli victory of 1967. It will be examined in depth in the Discussion of this article.

with Israelis who waited in long lines to enter the Cave of the Patriarchs. Many felt they were taking part in prophesy as they prayed in front of the Tombs (Bar 2007; Feige 2002; Segev 2005).<sup>2</sup> Israelis flocked to Hebron like pilgrims and worshippers, as tourists who crowded the town squares, and purchased the glass items for which the city is famous and other souvenirs. In addition, following the war, the entrance to the Cave of the Patriarchs was transformed into a wedding site, where wedding ceremonies with a Jewish and military character were dominant. Within the context of the personal stories we heard and documented in this project, we were told about these wedding ceremonies from those who had attended.

The five interviews upon which this article is based were selected from a total of eighteen in-depth and open-ended interviews conducted with Israeli and Palestinian women and men in Hebron and within sovereign Israel. All interviews dealt with memories from 1967 and, in some cases, focused on the practices of heritage construction in the Cave of the Patriarchs and its environs and on the work of various heritage agents. From the interview texts, the narrative of a group of women currently between the ages of 60 and 80, who lived within sovereign Israel, became prominent. They understood the memory of the Six-Day War in Hebron through a metonymic mechanism that connects their father figure's specific cultural and ideological biography in relation to Hebron. The ancestors of three of the interviewees were born in Hebron and belong to the oldest Jewish community of the city that lived there until 1929. Their narratives allowed them to express and dynamically describe their affinity and passion for Hebron, while also their distancing and estrangement from the city.

In this chapter, I examine the impact of the various models that emerge from the stories of Hebron's memory representations as a process that reflects the transformations of the storytellers' connection to the city, its Palestinian residents and the Cave of the Patriarchs, 50 years after the war. I argue that Hebron's symbolic status as the city of the ancestors constitutes an arena for intersecting claims of rival religious and ethnic communities' inheritance and heritage rights, binding personal memory and Jewish-national memory in a particularly powerful manner. This relationship is given expression by personal stories that present the various dimensions of cultural and ideological biographies of the father figure, which constitutes simultaneously a source of idealization and identification as well as a source of anger, rebellion and frustration.

The article is divided into four parts: the first part situates the city of Hebron geographically and historically, including the Cave of the Patriarchs and its significance in Israeli culture. In the second part, I discuss the theoretical basis for the article, which draws on feminist research on gender, cultural memory and relationships between daughters and their fathers, and deals with ethical and methodological issues posed by researching the contested city of Hebron. Part three is dedicated to

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<sup>2</sup> For an in-depth discussion of Israeli tourism in the Occupied Territories after the war, see Stein (2008).

presenting the personal stories and discussing the narrative patterns which present the memories of 1967 in Hebron. In part four, I discuss issues related to representing the memories that arise from personal stories and present concluding remarks.

## 2 Hebron – A Geographical and Cultural Historical Perspective

Hebron is a Palestinian city known by its Arabic name Al-Khalil (named after Abraham, known in the Muslim tradition as the friend of God), located on Mount Hebron in the Judean Hills, about 35 km south of Jerusalem. Hebron is one of the oldest cities in the Middle East, populated almost without interruption since ancient times (Karmon and Shmueli 1970: 221–235). In 1967, Hebron’s Palestinian population numbered approximately 35,000 residents.<sup>3</sup> Following the Six-Day War, in 1970, an urban Jewish settlement was established east of the city, named Kiriyat Arba, currently numbering approximately 7,000 residents. In 1979, a Jewish settlement was established in the heart of the Old City of Hebron, now numbering about 500 residents (Klein 2015).

Since 1967, the Cave of the Patriarchs (Arabic: *al-Misḡad al-Ibrahimi*) has served as a place of worship divided between Jews and Muslims, filled with bursts of severe violence and tension. The sacred site is managed by status quo arrangements, enforced by the Israeli army (Reiter 2017). Moshe Dayan, Minister of Defense during the war, described the mass flow of the Israeli public to Hebron following the Six Day War in his autobiography *Milestones*:

Six weeks have passed since Hebron was opened to Jews and the city, and especially the Patriarchs’ Cave, has been flooded with masses of visitors. Tens of thousands, old and young, of all denominations, have flocked to the place, prayed, toured, touched the tombstones, admired the giant stones in the Herodian alters. The military rabbinate has made the place its own, even holding wedding ceremonies, without thinking that the presence of wine within the mosque is a serious violation of the Muslim religion. (Dayan 1976: 501)

The Israeli public who came to Hebron was motivated by tourists’ curiosity and religious longing, but carried with them the memory of the massacre inflicted by Arabs upon Hebron’s Jews in 1929, as well as the memory of the shared life between Arabs and Jews, and that of those heroic Arabs who saved Jews during the massacre (Auron 2017). Michael Feige, when describing Hebron’s place in the Israeli public consciousness following the Six-Day War, noted that the great curiosity aroused by

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<sup>3</sup> According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, The Projected Mid-Year Population for Hebron Governorate by Locality 2017–2021 was estimated at 782,227.

Hebron lasted only a short time.<sup>4</sup> Hebron became the focus of the settlers' identities, as they attempted to settle there in 1968 (Feige 2002).<sup>5</sup> This process resulted in a continuous movement from affinity and longing toward distancing and forgetting, characterizing Israeli public consciousness and cultural memory, which cultivated the personal stories of our narrators.

### 3 Cultural Memory, Gender and Father-daughter Relationships – A Theoretical and Methodological Framework

The cultural memory research that dealt with changes in Israeli identity and public and political thinking during the Six-Day War and thereafter did not deal with the actual experiences, activities and realities of Israeli women during this period but only in the way they were interpreted or given public meaning. Studies dealing with women during the Six-Day War focused mainly on their media representations or, alternatively, on broad sociological descriptions of the transformations in their status (Almog 2002; Brownfield-Stein 2008; Lachover 2008).

The gender and media researcher Einat Lachover (2008), for example, surveyed representations of women during the war in the commercial women's press in Israel. She illustrated how media representations reflected and reproduced the erosion of equality between women and men regarding duties and rights towards the Zionist enterprise that had existed in the pre-state period, and women's political weakness in the public sphere following the increasing militarization of Israeli society.<sup>6</sup> Further

<sup>4</sup> The massacres carried out by the Arabs of Hebron against their Jewish neighbors in August 1929 were carried out as part of the bloody clashes between Jews and Arabs across Mandatory Palestine. The massacre was characterized by the brutal killing of 66 men and women, elderly and children alike. Hillel Cohen, who studied the circumstances of the massacre, notes that the 1920s were characterized by the fast growth of Jewish immigration to Palestine; the Jewish settlement's political ambitions were viewed as being supported by the British, causing the Arabs to feel that they were being disinherited from their land. The Jewish community in Hebron ceased to exist in 1931 and was revitalized only after the Six-Day War (Cohen 2013: 231).

<sup>5</sup> Attempts at initiating a Jewish settlement began in 1968 when Rabbi Moshe Levinger and his other Israelis celebrated the Passover in the Park Hotel in Hebron, and from there were evacuated to the military government building. In 1971, the Jewish settlement of Kiryat Arba was constructed, east of Hebron, and in 1979, a new Jewish settlement was constructed in the heart of ancient Hebron. Women and children took over Beit Hadassah – one of the buildings of the old Jewish community of Hebron. Menachem Klein describes the way of life of the settlers, claiming, "The lack of Zionist history in Hebron and its remoteness from other Israeli cities intensify the isolation felt by the settlers of Kiriyat Arba and Hebron, due to their small numbers, when compared to the Arabs of the city. The settlers in Hebron purport to be resuming the Jewish past of Hebron and, thus, are 'closing accounts' with the Palestinians on behalf of the victims of 1929. The settlers of Hebron are building a narrative of continuous Jewish settlement for thousands of years, as a commemoration of the cruel massacre of 1929" (Klein 2015: 179–280).

<sup>6</sup> The author analyzed the content of the media discourse in women's magazines, which illustrated how women's representation was marginalized, while their active participation in the war was erased. This



discussion of women’s representation in the Six-Day War can be found in the study by Haya Brownfield-Stein (2008), who explored the visual representation of women in the official state memory representations of the war. This study showed that the images of the women that mainly portrayed daily life without making reference to the male-dominated techno-militant aura generally characterized by symbolic photographs were excluded from the official visual memory of the war.

Both articles deal with women’s representations following the Six-Day War as reflecting gender relationships in the second decade of the State of Israel, pointing to mechanisms that reproduce the political weakness of women in the public sphere and link them to the increasing militarism of Israeli society. Both articles point to the exclusion of their actual activities in assessments of the war and their secondary status in the cultural memory of the war. The present article reaches beyond recognizing excluded representation but attempts to enable women who experienced the war to represent themselves and convey their experiences of the encounter with Hebron and interpret it in their own words.

The literature dealing with the Israeli public consciousness after the Six-Day War indicates that the war revealed the depth of the Jewish component of Israeli identity and the deep connection that Israelis feel with Jewish heritage, both regarding affinity to the holy sites and solidarity between the Jewish Diaspora and Israel (Segev 2005; Shilon 2017). Avi Shilon listed a number of factors that refined the Jewish component in the Israeli consciousness:

The sense of existential threat during the waiting period [leading up to the war] resonated with the Jewish tradition the persecution and redemption; the threats of Arab leaders were identified with historic anti-Semitism; following victory, the conquered territories were associated with the Biblical era; return to the sites considered sacred aroused religious and hidden sentiments. (2017: 102).

Numerous newspapers described the hundreds of thousands of Israelis who flocked to the holy places during this period. The Western Wall, the relic of the Temple and site of worship, was a destination for pilgrimage as early as the Pentecost (*Shavuoth*) holiday that took place soon after the end of the war. Rachel’s Tomb, located on the road leading from Jerusalem to Bethlehem and Hebron, was the next destination of the Israelis’ pilgrimage route. The myths associated with the figure of Rachel are ripe with gendered and national meanings. Rachel the Matriarch is a female icon who exists in the nexus of masculine, monotheistic religious tradition, as illustrated by Suzanne Starr Sered (1989, 1995). Following the Six-Day War, the feminization of worship deepened at the site, and since 1967, Rachel’s Tomb has become a

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was accomplished through a discourse that emphasized women’s traditional roles as wives and mothers, their body language and tacit acceptance of gender differentiation in the Israeli army. For the division of gender work in the Israeli army as a formal and explicit principle from 1948 to 2001, see Sassoon-Levy (2006).

pilgrimage site for women, particularly for rituals associated with reproductive and pregnancy problems (Sered 1995). While women's attachment to Rachel's grave before and after the Six-Day War has been extensively described in Sered's research, there is a lack of research dealing with women's connection to Hebron and the Cave of the Patriarchs following the war; the site, according to tradition, considered the place of burial of three of the Matriarchs: Sarah, Rebecca and Leah.

The Cave of the Patriarchs is identified in Biblical and Midrashic Jewish literature with the patriarchal traditions of ownership, inheritance and property rights. In addition, it is considered to have a special mystical role that connects the earthly and heavenly worlds, as a type of opening to heaven (Anon 1992). Hebron is known as the city of the forefathers and identified with the image of the patriarchal founders of the Jewish nation – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The ritual meaning of the site, particularly for women following the Six-Day War, has yet to be studied. The chapter opens a window into the experiences of women's encounters with Hebron and the Cave of the Patriarchs. It attempts to illustrate how women interpret this meeting within the context of their memories of their individual, historical and concrete fathers, both immediately following the war and fifty years later, within the context of military occupation and the intensification of militaristic masculinity, as a story of desire and exclusion.

The gender perspective that I utilize in this article, rather than serving as an essential and universal category, serves as a specific context for examining how women represent themselves and their memory, and how they interpret their life experiences during and following the Six-Day War. This approach follows Mariana Hirsch and Valerie Smith's (2002) claim that cultural memory construction enables the disclosure of gender inequality and the formation of exclusionary power relationships.

The specific gender context that serves as an analytic framework for personal stories about Hebron are the father-daughter relationships described in memory research and feminist cultural criticism.<sup>7</sup> In the following, I examine the biographical representations of the father-daughter relationships that are present in the personal memories about Hebron of 1967 as they emerged within the historical context of the intensification of militaristic culture in Israeli society, and narrated fifty years after the end of the war.

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<sup>7</sup> For a detailed and comprehensive account of the Freudian canonical psychoanalytic approach to the relationships between daughters and fathers in Hebrew poetry, as well as the feminist criticism of it, see Stav (2014).

The prevalent cultural models that depict father-daughter relationships are based on the image of the imagined symbolic father whose physicality is erased. However, the daughter's ability to identify with the father to gain recognition in the world, and the father's ability to identify with his daughter are absent from the cultural and psychoanalytic literature. As a way to disrupt the binary relationships of control between father and daughter, Shira Stav suggests restoring the father his physicality and historical reality. Her metonymic approach suggests combining the private, historically real father with his constructed, ideological impact, which structures relationships between father and daughter (Stav 2014: 64).

#### **4 Researching Hebron: Between the Language of Occupation and the Language of Liberation – Ethical and Methodological Considerations**

Research on Hebron raises ethical issues related to research bias. Specifically, I am a member of the group being studied: I have my own political approach regarding the issue of Jewish settlement in Hebron, a central controversial issue in Israeli society, regarding the future of Israeli control of the Occupied Territories. The issue of bias in the study relates to not only the fact that as a researcher I identify with a particular political perspective but also the chosen terminology used in the study. The terminology chosen by Israelis to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a highly sensitive and controversial issue. For the settler community and their supporters, Hebron is the capital of Judea. They create a conceptual and lexical continuum between the Biblical past and present by anchoring the Occupied Territories within the context of Jewish history. Political opponents of the settlers (which also includes Israelis), conversely, utilize the term ‘Occupied Territories’ to disconnect these areas from Jewish history, conceptually enabling conceding them in peace negotiations. Any terminology chosen is saturated with ideological baggage and, naturally, the choice of terms used in the personal stories utilized in this study reflects this as well.<sup>8</sup> Friedman and Gavriely-Nuri (2018), who analyzed the current discourse employed by both supporters and opponents of continued control of the territories, illustrated how these discourses feed off one another. They illustrate how the current discourse facilitates a continuation of the status quo, as occupation normalization discourses portray the occupation as a normal, banal reality, while occupation estrangement discourses portray the occupation as distant and alien to Israeli reality and identity.

My approach towards dealing with the issue of bias is to clearly state my own perspective and position. I was five years old during the Six-Day War. I remember many details from the war period, and the stories told to me by my informants echoed many of my experiences. For me, the name of the war is the Six-Day War, and I will use this term in this study, as the attempt to use other terminology (for example, the 1967 War) seems artificial to me – it would erase my own personal experience of the war. The territories labelled Judea and Samaria (by those who advocate for their continued control by Israel) were territories occupied in the war, and, thus, I will refer to them as the Occupied Territories. According to international law, the Jewish settlement in Hebron is illegal and Israel must withdraw from the West Bank as part of a diplomatic peace agreement. However, I will present the narrative in the language of the interviewees, which often portrays occupation in terms of liberation.

The analysis of the interviews combines readings of the complete content of the stories presented to understand the narrative framework through which the subjects

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<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of the issue of language and terminology that developed around the territories and their political significance, see Feige (2002); Segev (2005).

conceptualized the memory of Hebron as a story of connection to and estrangement from the image of a deceased father figure. In addition to an interpretation of the overall narrative, a thematic content analysis of the interviews was conducted. This approach was utilized in order to understand and highlight the impact of relationship models that emerged from personal stories of the memory of Hebron in 1967.<sup>9</sup>

## 5 The Memory Encountering Hebron

This section is dedicated to the presentation of personal stories focusing on both the complete stories and their narrative core. This approach stems from a desire to fully present the voices of the narrators and the way they choose to represent their stories. I present the interviewees' relationships with their fathers through the lens of their encounter with Hebron and the Cave of the Patriarchs, as a story of affinity and estrangement. The subjects are presented via pseudonyms, except for Rachel, whose wedding ceremony at the entrance of the Cave of the Patriarchs was published in various media outlets in 1967 and 2017, marking the jubilee of the war. In this section, I will present the stories of Rini (80), Mira (85), Leora (77), Rona (67) and Rachel (77).

### 5.1 Rini: "The Dream and Its Fracture"

Rini is a woman in her 80s. She is a family friend who likes to be interviewed and share her memories. She identifies as a traditional Jew who has a mystical connection to the holy sites, such as the Western Wall, Rachel's Tomb and the Cave of the Patriarchs. She notes her extensive spiritual awareness, as she serves as a teacher according to the Yemima method, an approach to Jewish spirituality, through which she interprets her experiences. I interviewed Rini at her home in a city in the center of the country.

Rini was born in Jerusalem. Her father's family immigrated from Tbilisi, Georgia, in 1903 and settled in the Georgian neighborhood of Jerusalem. The family was involved in the textile business and owned fabric stores in the Old City of Jerusalem until 1948. She lived in the Makor Baruch neighborhood throughout the siege of Jerusalem during the War of Independence, a framework by which she introduced herself both in the telephone conversation in which we arranged our interview, and in the interview itself. "Primarily, I define myself as a survivor of besieged Jerusalem during the War of Independence," she claimed.

In addition, Rini constructs her memory of Hebron's period during the Six-Day War by incorporating spiritual insights into human nature, demonstrating familiarity with the customs and way of thinking of the Arabs she met in Hebron, as a native

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<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of approaches towards the analysis of personal narrative in ethnographic and folklore research, see Schmidt-Lauber (2012); Stahl (1989).

of the land.<sup>10</sup> She explains the failure of coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians, which was aspired to following the war, by making reference to Israeli’s lack of understanding of the local Arabs’ ways of thinking.

Rini initiates speaking of her personal story by referring to her father, the cloth merchant, by the name given to him by their Arab neighbors – Khawaja Raful (Mr. Raful, in Arabic). Rini’s story opens with a kind of exposition, depicting an idyllic life of close neighborly relationships with their Arab neighbors Khadija and Hussein, who live next door to them. She depicts neighborhood life in which Khadija was involved in taking care of and preparing food for her and her siblings, a kind of substitute mother and partner to her father. Khadija plays the role of mediator between her mother and father and served as a substitute homemaker when her mother was absent. The household was conducted in Arabic, and Khadija acted as an assistant to Rini’s father, constituting a kind of metonym for a shared existence between Arabs and Jews, just before this coexistence was shattered by the 1948 War of Independence, never to return.

Rini titled this narrative “The Dream and Its Fracture,” presenting it as a framework for the construction of her memories of Hebron during the period of the Six-Day War. These two oppositional concepts are anchored in temporal and spatial contexts. The aspect of “the dream” is anchored on her first visit to Hebron after the war, marking a yearning for a renewal of coexistence with Arabs that she had known as a child in Jerusalem. The fracture of this dream is anchored in her second and last visit to Hebron which occurred some forty years later, during the last days of the Second Intifada. Rini describes these episodes as “life lessons” regarding the nature of humanity. I asked her about her impression of the lessons of the Six-Day War and she explained:

Rini: First of all, you ask me [what I think] today? Or [what I thought] after the war? So I told myself and that [I define it] as the dream and fracture. So I thought, look, it has happened, we have unified Jerusalem, now we can all live together. We will be equal partners in this. They have Al-Aqsa, we have the Western Wall. They have the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Every group will have its own. We will live together and should strive for that [...] But this was slowly shattered, [what] I was starting to see, what I so wanted and so hoped for, let’s do this thing together and build a common life for Jews and Arabs.

Q: Already, after the war, did you start to see this fracture?

Rini: Not yet. They were talking about the territories and about the Arabs’ property, and they began to talk, and this is something that upset me. I heard that the government, Sebastia and again this Sebastia, and I thought: one

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<sup>10</sup> For a discussion of components of local feminine Israeli identity which combines orientalist, colonialist and traditional male-female gender approaches, based on ethnographic research derived from life experiences, see the life story of Zohar Vilbush in Salamon (2017).

minute, wait just a minute, let's make an arrangement here that will be right, acceptable, that will come from a place of peace, and not from a place of "I am going to take from you." This is an aspect of the "the dream and its fracture," the part that says to me maybe [this time a shared life can be renewed, but it does not happen].

"The Dream and Its Fracture" is a story of longing for a shared life, which Rini seeks to revive and experience in Hebron following the Six-Day War. Ultimately, she experiences estrangement from this dream through the realization that such a shared life is no longer possible. The image of her father is told through the story of fracture and defeat, alongside her attempts to restore his dignity within the context of a joint Jewish-Arab space, both through her father's return to the Old City of Jerusalem after the Six-Day War and through his attempt to revive the economic activity that characterized his life with the Arab neighbors before 1948. Rini, a fashion designer by profession, had business relationships with Palestinian merchants and seamstresses in the West Bank and Jerusalem following the war. This metonymic layer is an additional element in the story of the dream and its fracture. The breakdown of coexistence that began on the eve of the War of Independence is described by Rini:

I remember very well who began the rioting. One of the most difficult memories was the night my father returned from the store at 2 a.m. in a truck belonging to the *Haganah* with everything he could save from the store. The Arab neighbors, who had been his best friends, had torched his store [shouting], "Slaughter the Jews" and that kind of thing, until the men of the *Haganah* arrived, along with an Arab friend who helped remove whatever was left. And he brought it all home to us. And I remember the next day, we woke up in the morning, the entire area was empty. They had fled. Now, they have their own *Nakba*. And I have my *Nakba*.

This narrative sequence stretches between the dream and its fracture. It describes a process of role reversal between father and daughter. As the father becomes weaker, coping abilities in the face of the hardships of war are transferred to the eight-year-old daughter. With resourcefulness and courage, she fed him goat's milk and cared for him when he was sick during the siege of Jerusalem. The victory of the Six-Day War and the return to the Old City, as well as the visit to Hebron and other West Bank sites, served as signs of hope for a renewal of coexistence. Rini describes her father's attempt to restore his position of honor in the commercial space of Jerusalem's Old City, from which he had previously escaped by the skin of his teeth. Here, too, her father is represented as weak, reversing roles between the father and his daughter, who attempts to strengthen him. This experience is represented in the story describing her father getting dressed before returning to the Old City:

Shortly after [the war], I came to Jerusalem. And I tell my father, "Dad, we are going to the Old City." I take my father and tell him to wear a suit and a hat, and we go down to the Old City, we drove to the post office and from

there we begin to descend. Then we ascend towards the Jaffa gate. Hundreds of people are ascending towards the Jaffa gate, and we arrive at the Jaffa gate and see Arabs wearing *jalabiyas*. Suddenly, we see an Arab man running in our direction shouting “Khawaja Raful (Mr. Raful, in Arabic).” I was frightened and thought, “They are going to kill us.” And he keeps running. What is it? They start talking. And I understand Arabic. And he tells my father, “Come with me. I will take you to the shops. [...] My father’s stores were high-end fabrics. My father used to travel to Damascus, Beirut, Rome and Paris to buy fabrics. For wedding dresses for families [...] One of my father’s shops had been transformed into a cheap spice shop. And the second, a souvenir shop [...] and even so, I can’t hate them, [the Arabs] are drowning in my blood.

Rini is a highly dramatic narrator. She understood her memories dialogically, reconstructing and presenting her meetings in Hebron with souvenir sellers, glass blowers and restaurant owners. She recalls most of the conversations in Arabic, then translates them into Hebrew, indicating her love of the language. She often emphasizes her affiliation and connection to the Arab sphere and her deep acquaintance with its culture and customs. She defines herself as a native of the land, reconstructing the meetings and conversations with the people of Hebron, emphasizing that it was important for her to maintain this affinity, as she states, “He [the restaurant owner in Hebron] was amazed to see that I knew him. I knew his life, his culture. I’m not coming from nowhere; I’m coming from here and now.”

The encounter with Hebron is described in her story through the lens of the tradition of welcoming guests, accompanied by a commentary of the well-known Arab hospitality customs. She emphasizes how one should communicate with the people of Hebron in her narrative:

At first, we drove. We also reached Rachel’s Tomb and prayed. And we walked around Hebron and talked to people. It was as if we came to them as guests, in some way I felt I was a guest, and they were hosting me. I am familiar with their way of welcoming. Up until they set us on our way. Because that is their way to welcome guests – you receive them, and you also accompany them on their way out. There was a city square with many businesses and restaurants. We approached and entered a very nice restaurant; there was a woman there, she and her husband owned the place. I could communicate better with her. It was easier for me to communicate with her. Because I did not yet understand how they would receive us. It was not easy and there was a need to understand. Go one step at a time. You need to observe them. I first observed, when you observe, you understand. Observe with wisdom, then you understand better how to behave.

The encounter at the Cave of the Patriarchs was interpreted by Rini as an event of mystical ascension, illustrating her religious connection to the site, based on the deep religious faith that characterized her father’s home. She finds her place there and

feels comfortable among the praying women. The visit to the Cave of the Patriarchs is constructed in Rini's story through a dialogue she had with her husband, through which she brings to life the mystical excitement and transcendence she felt:

First, we arrived at the Cave of the Patriarchs. The first thing was to go to the Cave of the Patriarchs. I told my husband, "This is one of the things that interests me." There was an army unit there that was guarding, we had to be very careful there. Because the crowd was unbearable. There was a line and one had to stand and wait. And walk through the rooms. There was energy there. [...] I stood with them all and prayed. And a religious woman gave me a book. I didn't have one. My husband is an atheist. I was always traditional and prayed and made requests for my parents and for my children. I made requests for all of the people of Israel. These were magical moments. There was some magical feeling in the air. Something sublime. Something unreal.

Rini's story ended twice. The first time, she recounted the recent visit to the Cave of the Patriarchs, which occurred in the final days of the Second Intifada. She told of the atmosphere of fear, trepidation and tension that reminded her of the feelings she had experienced during the waiting period leading up to the Six-Day War. This feeling contradicted the feelings of hospitality that she experienced during her first visit to the Cave of the Patriarchs. On her second and last visit, she said goodbye to the Cave of the Patriarchs and Hebron, knowing that she would never return. And so she concludes:

I talked to myself a lot about it, that you need to know to say goodbye. When we left, I said to myself, "I, to this place, the Tomb of the Patriarchs, will not return." But this feeling, and this place, have accompanied me through a deep crisis. No, I will not return. And it seems there must be something very dramatic, very difficult. So that solution and insight can come about.

The second time she concluded her story occurred after I had already turned off the tape recorder. She recounted an encounter in Hebron during her visit immediately after the Six-Day War, upon visiting the workshop of a glassware merchant. The story again brought forth the figure of her father, as she imagined that she was following his footsteps toward this workshop. She recalled the need to take into account the sensitivities of the residents of Hebron and Arabs in general, but also recounts the sense of betrayal of the possibility of coexistence between Arabs and Jews shattered by the massacres of Jews in the 1929 riots. This narrative is characterized by love for the Arabic language, which embodies for her the lost sense of coexistence and the image of her father, who personified this sense of coexistence. Rini described the conversation between her and the glass merchant:

I remember we went into the store and the merchant explained to me the strength and durability of the Hebron glass. It really interested me because Hebron glass is very renowned. I was interested in understanding how they



create a silhouette of colors. He explained it to me, and I told him that I had heard so much about Hebron glass from my father, and now I finally had an opportunity to come and see. In general, we do not call it "Hebroni" but "Khalili." Every time the term came up, I would say "Khalili." This was very important because "Hebron," according to his connotation, is the Jewish city that is called Hebron. It is very important to understand how you give a person the feeling that you are with him. You understand him, but don't only understand, but respect him. It must be understood that the issue of granting respect is the key term.

She concluded her narrative as follows:

There's something else about Hebron, although it is a minor thing. I talked to this glass man. He was a very nice man. He spoke a little in English and then switched to Arabic, saying, "I know you have memories of what happened here in twenty-nine, when there were riots and people murdered and slaughtered and some said, 'I will slaughter the Jews.' But these were other people." And I told him, "I very much hope that we remember that the people of Al-Halil, the people of Hebron, and more so, the people of the mountain, need to protect their city valiantly, and I very much hope not to be seeing again what happened in 1929." He spoke to me in English, and later switched to Arabic. Because it was very important for me to practice the language. I very much miss having people with whom I can speak Arabic. That is really my childhood language.

The story of Rini, a native of the land, regarding her encounter with Hebron, is a story imbued with emotional ambivalence, characterized by feelings of longing, love, disappointment, abandonment and betrayal. Her memory of 1967 is constructed through a narrative sequence that first originated with a strong sense of affinity and ended with a sense of concession and separation from Hebron and the Cave of the Patriarchs to enable reconciliation between the nations. The father in the story is not affiliated with the patriarchal system embodied by the proprietary claim of the Cave of the Patriarchs, a claim realized through the military occupation and the wielding of power. He is identified with the Arab, the weak and the female, associated with his female, Arab neighbor Khadijah.<sup>11</sup> Rini tries to follow his path by renewing this sense of coexistence through collaborative work and cultural sensitivity. Her hopes are disappointed. And yet, her metonymic connection to the father figure in her narrative reveals a delicate tale of missed opportunities and separation.

Her story, infused with a sense of yearning, reveals the story of the Arab and Jewish communities who, as neighbors during the periods of Ottoman and British Mandatory, rule over Palestine, and who shared a broad multinational identity based on shared daily life in Jerusalem, Jaffa, Hebron and other mixed cities. The Six-Day

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<sup>11</sup> For a feminist critique of language and gender relations, see Kaplan (1990).

War reunited communities that had existed in the Mandatory Palestine borders, but at this juncture, one community controlled the other by means of military occupation. This unique fabric of life, for which Rini yearned, could not be renewed. Historian Menachem Klein, who has explored everyday life in the mixed cities, presents a historical-sociological framework for the process of connection and separation, which emerges from Rini's story:

[...] Jewish-Arab identity was not drafted by ideological writers. This did not detract from its essence [...] When Jewish and Arab nationalism arrived in Palestine, they did not meet people without a group identity or religious affiliation. There was a local community in Palestine in every sense of the word. Daily life created a link between people and between people and the place where they lived – a broad geographical entity whose territory was not considered to be bounded by the limits of the settlement in which someone was born or lived. [...] the nationalist movements not only dealt with nation-building, but also with the destruction and control of an indigenous culture that preceded it. Israel's victory in 1948 was repeated in 1967 with greater fortitude, and determined that force would determine the nature of reality. (Klein 2015: 9)

## 5.2 Mira: “Like a Woman Made to Stand Naked in the Sun in the City Square”

Mira is a woman in her 80s who defines herself as secular but with a deep connection to Jewish sources and knowledge of Biblical, Talmudic and Midrashic literature.<sup>12</sup> I have known her for several years, as Mira is a volunteer at my academic institute's library, where I interviewed her. She is a member of a Kibbutz in the Western Negev, where she also lived during the Six-Day War. Her story of visiting Hebron and the Cave of the Patriarchs is framed in an anti-euphoric discourse of alienation and strangeness. The Cave of the Patriarchs, according to Mira's story, exists in a liminal space, as both the landscape of a biblical past that was renewed before her eyes and arousing intense excitement, and conversely, a religious Jewish mass prayer site, administered by the laws of a governmental, patriarchal, religious establishment, which, as a woman, limits her potential for connectivity and harms the possibility of forming an intimate spiritual connection to the site.

Mira reveals her attitude to the holy sites, such as the Western Wall, Mount Zion, Rachel's Tomb and the Cave of the Patriarchs through chronological narration, describing her acquaintance with the sites before the War of Independence, as a twelve-year-old girl, and the sense of remoteness and alienation that overwhelmed her when returning to these sites following the Six-Day War. The post-1967 memories of these

<sup>12</sup> Mira's attachment to Judaism can be defined as “secular religiosity,” described by Y. H. Brenner (1919–1920) as “yearning and religious excitement without religion.” For a discussion of secular religiosity, see: Hadari (2002).

sites are constructed as anti-euphoric, contradicting the sense of intoxication that overwhelmed the Israeli public who visited these sites at the time. Mira, according to her story, walked these Biblical landscapes, following the footsteps of her dead father, attempting to recreate the paths they walked together. She describes the journey in the footsteps of her father to Jerusalem following the Six-Day War:

A trip to Jerusalem was organized. And I went to Jerusalem to see the Western Wall. Here I have to dwell on the past. Because I came with my past and my memories. As a child, I would often go with my father to the Old City of Jerusalem, while with my mother, I toured the new neighborhoods like Rehavia. I recall I would also walk in the hills with my father, to the Valley of the Cross. We went to the Old City, and I remember descending to the Western Wall. The Wall was in a narrow, dark, damp alley. I remember I was scared to go there down the steps. The road was made from slippery stone steps, soiled from years of being treaded upon, and I was constantly afraid I would slip. I remember it damp everywhere and dim [...] Following the war they conquered the plaza in front of the Wall and destroyed all the houses there. I felt terrible. Like a woman made to stand naked in the sun in the city square.

The sense of desecrated holiness which is described through the terminology of sexual abuse is utilized not only to describe the Western Wall, but also other sites such as Mount Zion and the Tower of David. Mira describes the sites as spaces which have been stripped of their intimate simplicity, overtaken by religious institutions to serve Zionism. She claims:

I don't like this place [the Western Wall]. [I also don't like] Mount Zion. There was the beginning of a Holocaust Museum there, a tiny place, which also, for some reason, I remember in the shadows, not in bright light. I remember a piece of soap that was said to have been made from Jews' fat. But at the entrance, there was a glass box with a child's shoe. It was so humble and Zionist and touching. When I was a girl, we did not know much about the Holocaust. What was the meaning, what was its extent [...] David's Tower today houses a *Yeshiva*, where they tell you how to walk, how to act. You cannot walk freely there, someone took possession of a place that was once mine. I would go to the City of David, which was just excavations, and I would feel that the verses from the Bible speak to me.

Mira's journey to the biblical sites and landscapes is structured in her memory through two trips. The first was the trip to Jericho and the Arava House, which she initiated and guided herself, inspired by her trips with her father. The second trip was an organized trip initiated by her kibbutz and guided by a kibbutz member whom Mira described ironically as “a combat expert.” This tour included the holy sites: The Western Wall, Rachel's Tomb and the Cave of the Patriarchs. Mira describes her feelings of alienation and lack of connection to the most popular sites,

governed by the restrictive rules of the establishment. She describes the feeling of alienation:

I was at the Cave of the Patriarchs, just after the Six-Day War. We had a friend who was on Ammunition Hill who was a combat expert. And we had a trip with the Kibbutz. We went there. I remember we went down there somewhere, we also went to Rachel's tomb – a place I don't connect with other than the Biblical stories I recall. There were soldiers everywhere, there was a flood of people, everyone went to see, there were masses of people, and all you see is small cubicle covered with cloth. From a religious perspective, it didn't speak to me. I do not remember. Rachel's grave was the same thing. It was a small place crowded with many people who wanted to see what it was.

### 5.3 Rona: “My Dad’s Hug and Cry in 1967, That’s My Legacy”

Rona is a woman in her 60s, a peace activist in the past, and a founder of one of the women's organizations that fought for Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon. She defines herself as an atheist. Rona is a member of Hebron's veteran families, the Manny and Hassan families. Together with friends and other members of the veteran Hebron community, she initiated a petition calling for the implementation of the 1996 Hebron Accords, distinguishing the approach of the veteran community of Hebron with that of the settlers. My connection with Rona was formed upon requesting to interview the initiators of this petition. I interviewed her at her home in the center of the country.

Rona's story of Hebron following the Six-Day War is integrated into her father's legacy and family history. During the interview, Rona regards herself, although humorously, as a daughter of a noble family. She sees herself as continuing the legacy of her father, a legacy of coexistence between Jews and Arabs in Hebron. She claimed:

I did not love the fact that my father spoke with an *ayin* and a *chet* [the guttural pronunciation of Hebrew spoken by Jews of Middle Eastern ethnicity]. I wanted to be like everyone, and everyone spoke Yiddish. I did not understand my ethnicity. Today, my daughter is ashamed that I say I came from a noble family. I came from a noble family in the full sense of the word. She does not understand that I say it humorously. My humor today is [in the context of] the debate over who [are] today's elites.

Rona's story is integrated into her father's history, a native of the city. During the interview, she attests to his longing to return to Hebron and her deep affinity for the language and its residents. Rona constructs her memory of Hebron in the context of identity politics and as a bitter dispute with a host of antagonistic actors, who attempt to delete and steal her heritage and family history. She describes her struggle for her father's legacy primarily as a struggle for neighborliness and coexistence

between Jews and Arabs, as it existed in Hebron before the 1948 War, which could have been renewed following the Six-Day War, were it not for the settlement. She portrays the image of her father with his guttural accent, unusual in the mainly Ashkenazi surroundings. She narrates her deep attachment to Hebron, restricting its heritage within terms acceptable and belonging to her. Thus, she debates both with settlers and peace activists. The antagonists in her narrative are the settlers, as well as the people of the Labor movement who constructed her ancestors as members of the “old community,” presented as weak and requiring economic support. Rona presents her memories from the perspective of a peace activist and bereaving mother. The introduction to her story includes both her impressions as a high school student daughter during the “waiting period” leading to the Six-Day War, as well as of her family’s return to Hebron immediately after the war:

Hebron fits into my 1967 experience. My father literally dreamed of returning to Hebron all his life. I don’t remember the waiting period, I was only 16, [I] certainly [don’t remember] the sense of anxiety. Except for the excitement that there would be war. During the war itself, we were recruited to fill sandbags in some community center, which was really fun, we had a break from studies. We saw air battles from a distance. The bombing was no fun, but I don’t think it stifled my uplifted spirit. My uplifted spirit because of the war. It was not for nothing that they educated us that war is interesting. I belong to a generation of high school students who would commit “*bara-kari*” for not recruiting us.

Rona constructs the occupation of Hebron through a hierarchical distinction between the Western Wall, which is unimportant to her, and Hebron, which is the subject of her memory and legacy of family and community. Within Hebron itself, she distinguishes between the city itself, which is dear to her, and the Cave of the Patriarchs. The holy site is not a sought-after destination for her and does not interest her, a feeling which she later relates to the atheism of her parents, who were disciples of Ze’ev Jabotinsky.<sup>13</sup> Thus, she describes her deep sense of emotional identification with her father and the great happiness she felt when she learned of Hebron’s conquest:

So we heard about when, at the place we volunteered. The radio was on and I remember they reported that we had conquered Hebron. I was happy for my father. In our family, we didn’t talk about the past. [...] But once I heard the name of the place that had been conquered, I knew my dad would be happy. For me, it was the conquest of Hebron, and I remember it like it was

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<sup>13</sup> Ze’ev Jabotinsky (1880–1940) was a Zionist leader founder of the Revisionist movement, author, poet, publicist and translator. Jabotinsky’s legacy was carried on by Israel’s Herut party, which merged with other right-wing parties to form the Likud Party in 1973. Revisionist Zionism was an ideology developed by Ze’ev who had a vision of occupying the full territory of Palestine and insisted upon the Jewish right to sovereignty over the whole of Eretz Israel. For further reading, see Halkin (2014).

yesterday. For my personal feelings, the Western Wall did not speak to me. [...] I remember it [the conquest of Hebron] just like it was yesterday, how happy I was.

An emotional encounter between Rona's father and a childhood friend who hugged one another in tears stands at the nexus of her memory of the return to Hebron. Throughout her narrative, she constructs the image of her father as a native of Hebron. She emphasizes the fact that they were the first civilians to arrive in the city before the end of the Six-Day War, before the great flood of visitors, noting that she had seen the refugees fleeing to Jordan. She describes the moving encounter between the father and his childhood friend as follows:

We were really the first citizens to come to Hebron. Of course, we did not go to the Cave of the Patriarchs. We did not enter the Cave of the Patriarchs. We were me, my father, my mother, and my sister. And the only thing I remember was that my dad met an Arab childhood friend. And just as movies depict reunions between separated brothers, they hugged and cried. That is the only memory I have. That left a mark on me. My father was one of those who encouraged the settlers to live there. And when my father got angry with us, he would say, "I'll move back to Hebron." Maybe to live with the Arabs. He had an Arab mentality, he could not escape the Arab mentality, although it was not given expression. But the nostalgia, the yearning, was clearly for Arab society. He spoke to his sisters in Ladino, but Arabic was almost his mother tongue.

Rona did not return to Hebron for about thirty years after the Six-Day War, and she admits that she has forgotten about the city over the years. She returned to Hebron as a political activist with a group consisting of the sons and daughters of the veteran Hebron community who campaigned to implement the Hebron Agreement under the Oslo Accords. Although she was one of the founders of the group, she feels a need to separate herself from it. She does so by describing her attitude toward the 1929 riots as different than that of her friends, who, she says, deny that there was a massacre.

Alongside her attempt to distinguish herself from the other peace activists, she strongly opposes the settlers who she believes distort the personal and community history of their father's family by erasing a past characterized by coexistence with the Arab neighbors of Hebron, representing the community's narrative exclusively through the lens of the 1929 massacre to advance their political needs. I asked her if she had visited the Beit Hadassah Museum, which commemorates the 1929 riots, she replies:

I did not visit the museum. What makes me angry is that every town in Poland has its museum and houses of those who left here, houses of those who left there. And we have been disinherited from our own history. We have taken from hundreds of years, two days, however horrible they were, but erased all

the years of coexistence. To justify their residence there. And their desire for vengeance. For this, I am sure that my father is turning over in his grave [...] They are creating an offensive false representation that there was a glorious community that was completely destroyed in 1929. And from here is the rationale for those who justify them. Nobody knows that there are legal heirs. So really, leave aside the issue of real estate. But to take an amazing family history and turn it into two days of massacre. Because that is the message that serves them, that you will know that the entire community has been annihilated. You will read Menashe Manny’s book *Heroes of Hebron*, and you can see how the [Arab] neighbors would bring bread at the end of Passover [to Jewish neighbors]. My father’s embrace and tears in 1967 – that is my legacy.

#### 5.4 Leora: “We Didn’t Want to Come as Occupiers”

Leora, like Rona, is a daughter of one of the families from the veteran community of Hebron. Her father was born in the city but left several years before the events of 1929. Leora was a member of the group of veteran residents of Hebron (of which Rona was also a member) who strived to promote reconciliation and coexistence in the city. She was also active in organizing tours of the city that emphasized the role of Arabs who rescued Jews during the 1929 riots. I formed a relationship with Leora through the peace activists of this organization. I interviewed her at a Tel-Aviv cafe near her house.

Leora did not visit Hebron after the Six-Day War due to her opposition to the military occupation. Her story is defined by significant feelings of alienation from the Zionist-Israeli collective, ideological identification with her father, who was a founder of the Palestine Communist Party, formed during the British Mandate. At the beginning of the interview, I asked her to tell me about her connection to the city, and she told about the 1929 riots, as related to her by her father.

My father is a native of Hebron, and has stories from here to eternity. And the way he speaks about Palestinians is very different from other people born in Hebron. The whole story about how they lived, I know from him. And how at 16, he joined the Communist Party. They left Hebron before the massacre. My father calls it “the incident,” not the massacre. Because he was a communist, the British threw him in jail, and to mess things up, they put him with some Hebronite, who formed a connection with him. My dad knew fluent Arabic, so he told him the massacre occurred because my father’s uncle Dan Salonim took high interest in the bank. [...] When I come to Hebron today and I hear the soldiers start cursing and saying, “The Arabs killed them all,” I show my identification card, and say, “Here, not everyone.”

I asked her to tell me about her feelings during and after the Six-Day War, and I asked if she had visited the Cave of the Patriarchs on one of her tours. Her story is clearly anti-euphoric.

In 1967, when Israel stole Hebron, the entire family organized a shuttle bus. My father and I did not want to go. We did not want to come as occupiers. That is clear. We did not go anywhere. I remember the period. We did not feel any uplifting of the spirit. And I remember we lived then in Givatayim, and it did not interest me. I saw a man standing with a transistor, shouting, and I asked him, “What happened?” and he said, “We liberated Jerusalem.” I was a child. I remember every victory celebration, it was horrible, horrible. [...] I visited the Cave of the Patriarchs. We entered, yes. I can’t remember who I was with and when it was. I felt no holiness. There is no holiness in an occupied city.

At the end of the interview, I asked Leora to tell me under what circumstances she visited Hebron. She told of her love for Hebron and the special connection she felt towards her father’s hometown. She shared with me the difficulty she felt at seeing the city under curfew, and the sorrow she felt for the Palestinian children, whose future is uncertain. She concluded:

It is very sad for me to see the children. They ask for money, I give, what do I care if it’s colonial or not. I bought the bracelet (with a Palestine flag) and the seller told me, “It’s for my kids, for my kids.” I gave him fifty shekels. And to another I also gave fifty shekels. I couldn’t stand it. I kept looking at the children. And I think: what is waiting for them?

### 5.5 Rachel: The War of Redemption and Peace

Rachel was the first bride to marry at the foot of the Cave of the Patriarchs in 1967. I contacted her following a television show that aired on the anniversary of the war that depicted weddings carried out at the foot of the Cave of the Patriarchs following the capture of Hebron. I interviewed her at her home in the center of the country.<sup>14</sup>

The conquest of Hebron produced three images that represented the event in the victory albums of the war. The first depicts Rabbi Shlomo Goren hanging the Israeli flag over the opening of the Cave of the Patriarchs.<sup>15</sup> In the second, the Minister of Defense, Moshe Dayan is depicted stepping out of the front gate of the Cave of the Patriarchs, surrounded by military personnel. This picture appears as a type of reenactment of the commanders Moshe Dayan, Yitzhak Rabin and Uzi Narkiss marching at the Lion’s Gate shortly after the conquest of the Old City of Jerusalem (Figure 1). The third picture is the wedding of Rachel and Meir Broza at the foot of

<sup>14</sup> I thank Dr. Gershon Bar Kochba from the Hebron seminary who drew my attention to the phenomenon of marriages at the Cave of the Patriarch. Rachel and Meir Broza were biology students at the Hebrew University.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Cornfeld (1967); Hacoheh (1967).



the Cave of the Patriarchs.<sup>16</sup> This event was officially commemorated by the photographers of the Jewish National Fund, and the images were then distributed publicly through the print media (Figure 2).



Figure 1: Defense Minister Moshe Dayan (center) flanked by Aluf Uzi Narkiss and Aluf Rechavam Zeevi in front of the entrance to the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, June 8, 1967. Photographer: Moshe Milner. (Courtesy of The Government Press Office, Israel)

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<sup>16</sup> Exemplarily, there was an article in the newspaper *Davar* that bears the caption “First wedding next to the Cave of the Patriarchs,” published on the second page of the newspaper dated June 16, 1967. A similar article was published in the *Maariv* on page 3 on the same date.



Figure 2: The first wedding at Hebron June 15, 1967. The wedding of Rachel and Meir Broza. Photographer: Martha Helvig. (JNF Archives)

The description of the photograph emphasized the military nature of the wedding and its historical importance as a symbol of the Jewish return to Hebron and the Cave of the Patriarchs. The fact that Rachel's father came from a distinguished family who lived in Hebron until just before the 1929 riots added a historical, symbolic dimension to the event. Rachel's parents and most of her family were killed in a terrorist car bomb just before the War of Independence on Ben Yehuda Street in Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Brigade, the military unit that conquered Hebron, in which Rachel's groom served, led Rachel to the wedding canopy and served as a substitute for her deceased father. The unit was even annotated on the wedding invitation and made the necessary wedding arrangements. Rachel tended to describe her experiences using the first-person plural pronouns, as the war and subsequent wedding experience gave her the feeling of being part of a collective experience, led by the Jerusalem Brigade. The wedding guests, both invited and uninvited, represent an Israeli collective longing to return to Hebron, as Rachel describes in her story.

We published an advertisement in the *Haaretz* newspaper: "Unit sixty-one and Rachel and Meir Broza and the families invite you [to a wedding in Hebron]." We wanted the women and family members of the brigade to come to the wedding. And again, there was a battle, there was a battle on the mountain cliff. The ad stated that we would gather beside the [Jerusalem] Convention Center at a certain hour. We published the ad and then all of Jerusalem arrived. Everyone who saw my car came up and said, "We are relatives of hers,

we are acquaintances of that one.” I could not determine. Everyone gathered at the Convention Center, six hundred cars. Because it was ten days after the war, and it was possible then to go to Hebron. It was a golden opportunity to go to Hebron, people wanted to go to Hebron, and there were many ultra-Orthodox Jews. I had a picture of them dancing. Then they approached Meir and said to him, “You know what? You stand at the exit to Hebron, where the border was beyond Ramat Rachel. Stand on the road and sort out the people. Determine who can come, and who cannot.” Everyone said, “Here, I am a relative of the groom.”

She describes the circumstances of the decision to get married in Hebron as well as her experiences in the occupied city and the Cave of the Patriarchs as follows:

So, because my father was born in Hebron and the brigade captured Hebron, even though there was no combat. Compatriots who were with Meir in the hospital said, “Why don’t you get married in Hebron? You’ve already registered [at rabbinate].” There was such an atmosphere of tremendous excitement. So we said somehow the idea of getting married in Hebron came up. I didn’t even have a dress or anything. Somehow someone came up with the idea and we said yes. We’ll have a military wedding; they wanted to make a big spectacle of it.

I interviewed Rachel in her home 50 years after the wedding. She recounted her story while displaying two albums for me, the first a private family album, and the second, the official Victory album. They were bound together, and even included some of the same pictures. The photographs of the official album, entitled, “The War of Redemption and Peace,” documented the journey of Rachel, her husband and their friends which followed the armed forces in the Northern West Bank, to Jenin and Nablus. The pictures were taken by Rachel’s groom and their friends who also developed and printed the photographs. Later they contributed the photos to the commercial publishing company that published them in a Victory album. Young Rachel can be seen smiling in a white lab coat, registering soldiers’ names and phone numbers, in order to send their wishes to their families. She can be seen surrounded by a Palestinian family holding a child in her arms. The photographs illustrate that Rachel and her friends’ convoy arrived during the war, and hence they were among the first to visit these locations. She illustrated this by pointing to photos in the album that reflect the state of war: refugees fleeing from Nablus, a burnt jeep, an elderly man carrying a white flag. She described the encounters with the Palestinians as friendly and without a sense of threat or danger but noted that the population was probably in a state of shock and feared the Israeli army. She said that on the second day of the trip, she distributed candy to refugees who were leaving.

This is a story characterized by feelings of euphoric intoxication and passion for discovering territories newly accessible. Her emphasis on being the first group to visit the territories granted her a sense of prestige as trailblazers or explorers,

differentiating them from the crowd that followed days later. She also emphasizes the fact that her family was among the first to visit Hebron, before the flood of visitors.

The color white dominates her narrative. As Rachel and her friends were biology students during the war, they present themselves as volunteers in the medical corps, and, thus, were draped in white lab coats. The white flags of surrender were flown by Palestinians. Rachel's white wedding dress marked the end of the journey at the wedding in Hebron. Rachel's album intertwined the personal and the collective in the prevailing gendered framing characterizing photographs representing women during the war: represented as bride, wife, volunteer and nurse. The photographs were an illustration of how private and official bodies sought to determine the representations of war in a way that fits the state narrative regarding the causes of the war, its course and its consequences.

Rona Sela (2007), who studied how the textual and visual content of victory albums constitute collective memory and consciousness, argues that titles of the albums of the Six-Day War indicate two approaches that complement one another. Firstly, the titles glorify Israel's astounding victory. Secondly, the titles emphasize Israel's pursuit of peace, as illustrated in the title of the album "The War of Redemption and Peace." The slogan "peace and security" denotes a basic concept that seeped into the Israeli political discourse for years to come. The albums were printed primarily through private initiatives, yet, textually and visually reproduced messages and narratives disseminated by the establishment, adopted by numerous sectors of society. Thus, the albums contributed to the hegemonic memory of the war as a just war of no choice, ignoring its political implications and justifying the occupation of the territories. Rachel's photographs reveal what Marianne Hirsch (1997) called "the familial gaze" – a gaze replete with ideology and mythology of both the family as an institution and various historical-cultural contexts within which the image was produced.

Rachel builds her narrative of the journey to the Occupied Territories and her wedding in Hebron, using many first person plural pronouns, as she describes collective experiences during the "waiting period," the outbreak of the war and the advance of the Jerusalem Brigades that conquered Hebron. It is clear that she has related the story of her wedding repeatedly in different contexts, and reproduces a similar story pattern in our interview. However, during our interview, different contexts arise – for example, it emerges that she is not privy to many stories about her family's previous life in Hebron, as most of her family was killed in a car bomb. The journey to the open spaces of the newly conquered territories serves as an escape from the enclosed Jerusalem, fraught with difficult memories.

As Rachel leafed through the family album, she stated that certain pictures represented the atmosphere of the wedding:

Here’s a representative picture. It’s near the Cave of the Patriarchs. Here are the brigade’s jeeps. During the waiting period, someone brought them these hats from women’s clothing stores. With white and red or white and blue stripes, to raise morale. They hung the wedding canopy on these cannons. It was in the square of the Cave of the Patriarchs. It was a comfortable place for the soldiers to stand. We congregated at the side. That was the first time I have been in Hebron. It was exciting to come suddenly to Hebron. [...] After us, during the next two weeks, eight couples were married there. Rabbi Goren could not stand the idea that he would not be present at the first one. He presided over a wedding at the Western Wall, so he will miss one at the Cave of the Patriarchs? He got organized and asked for couples to get married there. For us, the whole thing was completely spontaneous. And there was a special reason why. We didn’t just run to Hebron for no reason.

Rachel described her visit to the Cave of the Patriarchs on the wedding day, emphasizing her dual affinity for the cave both as an expression of the Israeli collective’s historical attachment to the land and an expression of her father’s historical connection:

During the wedding preparations, I must have entered the Cave of the Patriarchs. My aunt had told me that they were not allowed to enter the cave. They were only allowed to go up to the seventh step. And I saw there all the tomb structures. Clearly, it was exciting. I am not religious. But in any event, the site is important for us, and it was really moving. Yes, we clearly have a historical connection to this country. Our nation has a connection to this country. Especially, since my father’s family has been in the country for five centuries. I felt a strong connection, that I am returning to the place where my father was born and was there, and I never had, and I was never there before. It was very moving.

Rachel concluded her story describing her recent visit to Hebron during the jubilee of the Six-Day War. The visit was initiated by the settlers who manage Hebron Seminary [Midrashat Hebron], which is located in Kiryat Arba. This is an organization dedicated to revealing historical and archaeological knowledge of the city of Hebron and its surroundings, which also carries out tourist activities in the area. Rachel recounted her family history at the seminary’s conference, describing the difficult impression of Shahada Street in Hebron’s Old City, inhabited by settlers. She noted that her family would certainly oppose their taking over the area:

I was in Hebron twice. I went again to lecture at a conference in Hebron. And we certainly went to Shuhada Street, but also somewhere else. And I told them, “Everything here was once so lively.” I got such a bad impression. Although, here and there Arabs walked around. There are supposedly shops open to tourists. But it’s not something substantial. And I said, “Where’s their entire fabric of life? It is all gone, ruined.” Hebron grapes were well-known.

Grapes that ripen late, really in the autumn. But we did not visit any more. I was shocked last year when I saw how the place looked. After the Six-Day war, we did not visit the city itself much, more in its surroundings. But it was not the same experience.

Rachel's wedding story, similar to the eight weddings that occurred at the entrance to the Cave of the Patriarchs during those two weeks, reveals the deep structures of the myth about the primordial Jewish ownership of the site. This ownership, which according to Jewish tradition is rooted in the heritage of the Forefathers, was realized in the Israeli public consciousness during the war. The weddings, which were attended by masses of Israelis, provided a kind of symbolic seal to the restoration of ownership of both the place and the entire land by virtue of the victory of militaristic masculinity.

In addition, the Jewish experience of soldiers at holy sites expresses a type of physical passion, described by Yona Hadari as to "see, touch, feel, go wild, and cry" (2002: 118). However, in their experience, they did not have access to religious texts or practices, being unfamiliar with Jewish tradition, which could channel and give expression to their ecstatic experience. Rachel's wedding ceremony was organized by the military unit which accompanied her to the wedding canopy and appears to give ceremonial structure to the religious zeal felt.

## **6 Between Metonymic and Symbolic Fathers: Representations of Memories of Hebron and the Cave of the Patriarchs in Personal Stories – Discussion**

In this study, our narrators represent their memories of Hebron and the Cave of the Patriarchs using a metonymic mechanism that connects their personal relationship with their fathers and their historical, ideological and cultural connection to the city with their connection and estrangement from the city following the Six-Day War. The narratives gave rise to complex types of relationships which included identification and affiliation with cultural and ideological principles present in their fathers' biographies. The five cases allowed for an examination of the impact of types of father-daughter relationships on the representation of Hebron and the Cave of the Patriarchs.

The thematic analysis of the complete narratives gave rise to certain common motifs that are linked to biographical elements of the father figure. Among them, the encounter with the Palestinian population in the city; attraction and estrangement from the Cave of the Patriarchs; memories of the massacre of 1929; and the distancing from and forgetting of Hebron.

The present section is devoted to a discussion of these themes, realized through the constructed memory of Hebron and the cultural representations of father-daughter relationships during the period of the Six-Day War.

## 6.1 The Encounter with the Palestinian Population in Hebron – The Language of the Father

Feminist language criticism is based on the assumption that language and its use carry ideological baggage shaped by historical and ideological contexts. This assumption draws its inspiration from Michael Bakhtin’s theory of language that illustrates the ideological nature of resonant expressions within an existing linguistic environment (Stav 2014: 56). The dominant language is the language of the father, which, according to Jacques Lacan, constitutes a symbolic, cultural and social order that transforms the individual into a subject and places her within the patriarchal order of culture (Kaplan 1998: 68).

The language of the father, which is characterized by a deep affinity with Hebron, is generally not the patriarchal language of dominance and occupation. Rini, Rona, Leora and Rachel all identify their fathers with Arabic, the language of the conquered. Arabic is described as the language of their childhood, as spoken by their fathers, whether in Hebron or Jerusalem. Rini, for example, identifies Arabic as the language of her childhood, which, upon her later return to Hebron, allowed her to communicate with residents of Hebron in the market, the restaurant and with the glass vendor. She claims her ability to communicate with them is not only due to her language skills, but also based on her intimate and sensual acquaintance with their customs and communication patterns. In her story, her father is portrayed via his Arabic nickname – Khawaja Raful. Rona, in her story, emphasizes her father’s Arabic accent, with prominent guttural sounds, his Arab mentality, and his feelings of nostalgia for the neighborly relationships he enjoyed with Arabs in Hebron. He is portrayed as having close and intimate relationships with the people of Hebron, in a way, closer than his relationships with the Ashkenazi Jews in his later residence. The central experience of Rona’s encounter with Hebron after the war is through a physical gesture, the intense, tearful embrace between her father and a childhood friend, witnessed by her as a meeting of lost brothers. Rona feels deep identification with her father and adopts his affinity for Hebron. This sense of identification contributes to the development of her political subjectivity and her struggles as a peace activist in which she attempts to preserve the legacy of Jewish-Arab coexistence lived by her father, and to delegitimize the legacy the settlers have established, which she believes to be distorted. Leora also notes the importance to her Hebron-born communist father of fluent Arabic, which allowed him to communicate with an Arab in a British Mandatory prison cell, creating a bridge for communication and new understanding of the events of the 1929 riots. Indeed, her father’s fluent Arabic was a basis of her feelings of ideological affinity towards him.

## 6.2 The Memory of the 1929 Massacre and the 1967 Meeting

Israelis who arrived in Hebron in 1967 carried with them the memory of the massacre of 1929. In the Israeli consciousness, Hebron was viewed as a city of Muslim religious extremism and murderous violence. A textbook devoted to the physical and human geography of the city states, for example:

When in the Six-Day War, the road to Hebron and the Cave of the Patriarchs was re-opened to the Jewish people, visits to Hebron became profound experiences for hundreds of thousands of Israelis. For the vast majority, this was their first visit to “the City of the Forefathers,” not only new immigrants, but also for veterans, as, under the British Mandate, most Jews stayed away from this city, which was intimately connected to the riots. (Karmon and Shmueli 1970: 9)

The memory of the Hebron massacre is present in the personal stories and also emerges from the presence of biographical portrayals of the father figure. Exemplarily, in Rini’s encounter with the glass vendor in his workshop, whom she has approached due to her father’s stories about the quality of Hebron glass, a conversation about the massacre ensued. Rini uses the same words that served as her code for Arab hostilities toward Jews during the massacre: “Slaughter the Jews” (*Etbach al-Yahud*). She utilizes this phrase when describing the Arab neighbors’ betrayal of her father, who fled from the Old City of Jerusalem on the eve of the War of Independence, as well as the betrayal of Arabs of their Jewish neighbors in Hebron during the 1929 riots. Rachel also relies on her father’s biography when describing her relationship with Hebron’s Arabs. She notes their religious extremism, but also acknowledges the Arab neighbors who saved her father’s family during the 1929 riots, neighbors whom she met at her wedding following the war.

Rona also brings up the memory of the 1929 riots when utilizing her father’s memory of Hebron to discredit, in her mind, the distorted history presented by the settlers, who have taken control of the inheritance of both the physical and spiritual assets of her father’s community, recounted in *The Book of Hebron*, a memorial book commemorating the veteran Jewish community. Rona exudes deep anger at the fact that the settlers present the massacres, terrible as they were, as exemplary of Jewish history in Hebron, erasing the centuries of coexistence between Jews and Arabs. However, just as she is critical of the settlers’ distortion of history, she disparages her peace activist friends for denying the very occurrence of a massacre. Rona’s remarks are directed to Leora, among others, her partner in political activity, who claims that her father never called the 1929 events a massacre, but instead called them “the incident.” Leora noted that her family described the events differently than the mainstream Israeli narrative. She stressed that economic factors motivated the massacre, such as the decision of her uncle, a manager at the Anglo-Palestine Bank, to raise interest rates. In addition, she claimed that the riots were a response to the new Ashkenazi Jewish settlement in Hebron, which posed an apparent threat to Arab



residents. While neither Rona nor Leora show an interest in claiming the property assets left behind by their families in Hebron, both claimed that they searched in vain for the homes in which their ancestors lived.

### 6.3 Attraction and Distance from the Cave of the Patriarchs

The depiction of the Cave of the Patriarchs in the personal stories serves as a platform for the presentation of views on issues of identity, religion and tradition, politics and nationalism. As the burial site of the Biblical Patriarchs and Matriarchs, it is imbued with Jewish traditions of proprietary and mystical holiness. The status of the Cave of the Patriarchs is located on a liminal border between a site of Biblical memory shrouded with yearning and deep identification, and as a place of popular worship under the auspices of the religious establishment. This liminality gives rise to ambivalent feelings, as is evident from Mira’s narrative. During their tours of the sites, she attributes her deep attachment to the biblical memorial sites to the education granted by her father. After the Six-Day War, she follows these same footsteps with great anticipation and excitement. The change that took place in Israel regarding the importance of the Bible is described by Yona Hadari in the booklet *The Discourse of Combatants*:

After the war, the Bible became a kind of spiritual-geographical guide that facilitates the realization of moving experiences by visiting various site. The speakers unanimously emphasize the sudden emotional awakening signified by the historical connection of the Jewish people and the sense of their right to the land. They engage in a leap in time that links them directly to the era of Jewish supremacy: The House of David, the Kingdom of Solomon and the Temple. The ability to touch stones of places which, according to Jewish tradition, have religious significance, served as a foundation for a renewed attachment to Judaism. (Hadari 2002: 117).

Mira expresses a kind of secular religiosity that is dissatisfied with the massive popular interest in and the takeover by the rabbinical religious establishment of the sites, whose sanctity, in her eyes, lay in their sense of intimacy, modesty and obscurity. Accordingly, Rachel’s tomb and the Cave of the Patriarchs, although central to the Biblical landscape, do not evoke in her a sense of holiness and emotional affinity. Rini, on the other hand, feels a deep connection to the place and a sense of mystical transcendence. She feels comfortable praying with the women there, as she indicated that she has always been traditional and grew up in a religious home. Rachel also expresses a deep affinity for the Cave of the Patriarchs, which she visited on her wedding day, anchored in the Jewish people’s ongoing historical connection to the site and the land, and in her father’s private history, a native of Hebron whose family has lived in Israel for five centuries. In contrast to Rini, Rachel and Mira’s narratives, Rona and Leora completely dismiss the holiness of the Cave of the Patriarchs, due both to their atheism and rejection of the city’s military occupation. Notably, none

of the speakers mentioned referred to the fact that the Cave of the Patriarchs is and remains a mosque and an active Muslim prayer site, holy, furthermore, also to Christians.

#### **6.4 The Alienation and Forgetting of Hebron**

The alienation and separation from Hebron are constructed in various forms in the narratives. Among the factors contributing to this distancing are: “deletion” based on a lack of awareness and political interest; alienation from and opposition to the Jewish settlement in Hebron; the despair of failed attempts at coexistence; and the atmosphere of danger and threat. Rona and Leora returned to Hebron through political activities towards the implementation of the Hebron agreement under the Oslo Accords. They conveyed messages of peace and reconciliation to Palestinian leaders during their visit in 1996. After 1996, Rona did not return to Hebron as she described the political struggle for peace as a lost struggle.

Rachel’s separation from Hebron was more gradual and associated with the reserve duty of her husband’s Jerusalem Brigades who served in Hebron. She recalled that Rabbi Levinger and the settlers took up residence in the government building. Her visits became less frequent until they stopped altogether due to increasing security risks and a preference for visiting other sites. On the anniversary of the Six-Day War, she was invited to Hebron to lecture at a conference on her personal and family history. She said that this visit illustrated to her the destruction of Palestinian life in the city, which she had come to know at her wedding in 1967.

In various ways, the narrators parted ways with the idea of a shared life between Arabs and Jews in Hebron, as well as the possibility of renewing the deep sense of religiosity, intimacy and affinity for Biblical memorial sites. The concrete, biographical presence of their fathers enabled them to formulate a complex resistance to the intensification of power, military occupation, militarism, and the distancing of the prospect of peace and reconciliation. These narratives were formulated within the context of the euphoric atmosphere of 1967, in which peace and reconciliation were thought to be within reach.

### 6.5 Daughters and Fathers in the Cultural Memory of the Six-Day War – between Identification and Distancing



Figure 3: Defense Minister Moshe Dayan and his daughter, Yael, in the Sinai, June 14, 1967. Photographer: Assaf Kutin. (Courtesy of the Government Press Office, Israel)



Figure 4: Defense Minister Moshe Dayan and his daughter, Yael, in the Sinai, June 14, 1967. Photographer: Assaf Kutin. (Courtesy of the Government Press Office, Israel)

The Six-Day War was not perpetuated in Israeli cultural and visual memory through portraits or events involving women. The exception to this was Yael Dayan, daughter of Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, the man most identified in the public consciousness with the astounding victory. A search of the government press bureau's photo archive led me to three pictures of Yael Dayan with her father on the Sinai Peninsula during the war. In the most famous picture, father and daughter march together. The picture is a full body-shot taken from a profile, diagonal position. They walk in perfect coordination, their left feet stretched forward, their hands over hips, his on his belt, hers in her pockets. They are wearing identical uniforms and sunhats, and he smiles at her (Figure 3). Her physical resemblance to her father is striking, as she appears as a female partner to her father's military greatness. In another picture, she appears bent over at his feet, joining a consultation (Figure 4). This visual image has gained iconic status because it offered a kind of female version of the image of the revered Minister of Defense in a way that replicated and heightened his greatness and glory. The image of the daughter constituted a flawless (she, of course, lacked his iconic eye-patch) female version of the father and became an additional symbol of his power.

Yael Dayan documented her experiences during the Six-Day War in an autobiographical book entitled *My Father, His Daughter*, written and published approximately thirty years after the war. The story that emerges from her memory combines detailed battle descriptions, in which she illustrates a high proficiency in the strategic moves and military objectives of the campaign in Sinai, which include both her own experience as a combat fighter and the military and political decision-making of her father. As part of this narrative, she describes in great detail her experience as a fighter in the breakthrough battle through central Sinai toward the Suez Canal, under the division led by Major General Ariel Sharon. She attributes her military understanding and courage to the tutelage she received from her father:

Nahalal [the agricultural settlement where she was born], my brother, my uncles, my parents' history and geography lessons, my oil lamps and arrow spears – all accompanied me and followed me wherever I went. [...] We progressed quickly sometimes under fire, and I quickly learned to guess where the shell would hit and how to avoid it. Holding a heavy machine gun in the front seat, I heard Arik's [Sharon] voice over the communication device and took solace in the words of Dov [her future husband], I could not feel more secure. All the years with my father must have contributed to this lack of fear, and I could not think of anything more natural or obvious than being in the place where I was – on the dirt road in Sinai facing a hardening mask of dust, surrounded by combat fighters, making my way towards the Suez Canal. (Dayan 1986: 132–133)

This description was written approximately thirty years after the war and five years after the death of her father. She illustrates great solidarity with his path, whose stature and power allowed her to forge her own independent path. Her father directs

her in war with the following words, “‘Make sure they send you to the south,’ as if I were a tourist talking to a travel agent. ‘Sharon’s division is the best, if you can get there’” (Dayan 1986: 133). Her father is presented in her story as the figure who facilitates the actualization of her combat education.

This relationship between a father and daughter who were actually involved in the combat was reproduced within the context of the conquest of Hebron and the Cave of the Patriarchs. The story revolves around Michal Arbel, the 13-year-old daughter of Yehuda Arbel, head of the Jerusalem District of the General Security Services (*Shin Bet*).<sup>17</sup> But while Yael Dayan’s story evokes a great sense of identification with the father’s image and path, Michal Arbel’s story is characterized by anger, alienation and distance from the father and his sphere. Approximately a year after the war, as a tribute to Moshe Dayan, Yehuda Arbel lowered his daughter Michal by rope into the depths of the Cave of the Patriarchs, in a kind of archaeological intelligence mission that was meant to reveal the hidden treasures of the cave. The fact that she was an adventurous girl with a particularly thin body rendered her ready for the task. The purpose of the operation was to examine alternative options for the establishment of a Jewish prayer room in the depths of the cave to avoid friction between Jews and Muslims. This operation, initiated by the father, was called “Operation Patriarchs.” Michal went through a training process in information gathering practices, photography, sketching enclosed spaces and compass-reading. The girl was lowered into the depths of the cave, whose levels of oxygen were unknown, in the middle of the night, in potentially life-threatening conditions. She was asked to photograph and sketch the space and estimate its area. The mission was repeated three times, and during the third, she was even asked to try to move one of the gravestones in the depths of the cave. As early as her first mission, Michal felt she was doing something wrong. During an interview, almost forty years after the war, she describes feelings of anger at her parents’ irresponsibility and a sense of estrangement from her father’s ideological worldview. His image came to symbolize the military occupation and the violation of the feelings of Muslim worshippers. She describes her anger as follows:

I hid it with all my might because I felt guilty. I felt remorse and responsibility, even though I didn’t have a sense of judgement then, and did not choose what I did. It was only after I gave birth to my daughter Naama, at a relatively old age, that I realized what my parents did. I could not imagine lowering my daughter into a cave when I didn’t know what could happen to her down there, and if something were to happen to her, how would I get her out of there? (Karpal 2006)

She described her estrangement from her father’s worldview and her criticism of the military occupation as follows:

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<sup>17</sup> For a description of the story and an interview with Michal Arbel, see Karpel (1978).

I started political activity in leftist circles [...] and cut myself off from my father's world, a world to which I had never belonged [...] Nothing that happens under occupation is legal, because occupation itself is an illegal act. I feel a sense of guilty and regret, first and foremost because it was a violation of the feelings of the worshipers. I feel that I should ask forgiveness from Muslims who believe in that site. As for my parents, they and their generation felt they were masters of the land. (Karpal 2006)

## 7 Summary

The stories of the encounter with Hebron in 1967 from the experiences of this study's narrators are imbued with affinity, passion and estrangement. The five women revealed in their stories the totality of their impressions in the face of the encounter with Hebron and the Cave of the Patriarchs, which symbolize the patriarchal traditions of taking possession of the site and the land through war and occupation. Gendered and feminist readings of the stories reveal a process of separation and formation of the narrators' distinct personal and political subjectivity in light of the ongoing military occupation, the settlement enterprise in Hebron, and missed opportunities for peace and reconciliation.

The process of individuation does not occur in stories that document the fathers' concrete biographies. In fact, the opposite is true: the presence of the private father, physical and fragile at times, serves as a focus of identity and identification, allowing the daughter to consolidate her identity and agency and detach herself from the symbolic father, embodied by the system of patriarchal dominance which opted for conquest, dispossession and control of another people, a symbolic father that had taken the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron as one of its central symbols.

Hebron's symbolic status as an ancestral city, an arena for cross-cutting claims by rival religious and ethnic communities that claim inheritance and inheritance rights, is particularly powerfully linked between personal memory and Jewish-national memory. This connection is reflected in the personal stories that reveal the biographical, cultural and ideological dimensions of the father figure within the context of the memory of encountering Hebron in 1967.

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## **INTERVIEW WITH A.Y. (MALE)**

FEBRUARY 2017

INTERVIEWERS: HAGAR SALAMON (H.) AND RONNI SHAKED (R.);  
REGINA F. BENDIX AND A.Y.'S GRANDDAUGHTER M. WERE ALSO  
PRESENT

The interview was carried out in Hebrew and translated. It took place in the basement recording studio of A.Y.'s private home. The various small rooms were filled to capacity with recording and mixing equipment of different vintage and gave testimony to a still very active life of a retired recording engineer. Interviewee and interviewers sat crowded together under the artificial lights, occasionally A.Y. showed text or image excerpts on two computer screens. The topic of 1967 was close to his present activity, as he was working on a book about his experiences as a radio sound recording technician and editor.

At the time of the interview, A.Y. was 76. His narration was vibrant and lively, and many of the stories embedded in the conversation were well crafted. His granddaughter told us that most of the incidents A.Y. recalled were familiar to her, as he would often tell stories during Friday night family dinners. But even to her, some of his recollections were new. He put his recollections of 1967 constantly in connection with other wars and altercations he experiences in his lifetime, thus also making visible his own shift in evaluating relationships with Palestinians from 1948 onward to the present. As a media professional, he recognizes the power of personal experience, foregrounded particularly in his remembrances of his friendly, if wordless

encounters with an enemy soldier across the canal. There is a strong sense here of missed opportunities and failing to transform hope into lasting peace.

### **MEMORIES ENMESHED WITH CHILDHOOD BEFORE 1967**

A.: [...] for myself, the Six-Day War – '67, is connected mentally with '73 [the Yom Kippur War]. And it's connected. Meaning [...] I think about the outcomes, ramifications and reasons concerning why we arrived at this situation. Meaning, if I'll get to talking about '73 don't tell me – "No, no it's not relevant," because it is [...].

[...] I'll start from my childhood – when I was a child, the city was connected. There was the Old City and Jerusalem, and it was perfectly fine. We lived, and went to the Old City, Arabs came to us and sold things and vegetables [...] all in all it was okay. There was a sense of fear regarding Arabs before '48 because we knew they kill Jews once in a while. They did it [...] I had a family in Gaza, the Y. family. They had a pharmacy and a motel there, and when in '36 when there were pogroms in Hebron, so, in Gaza they also got an appetite for it as well, and started killing Jews in Gaza – and this is while the Brits were still here in Israel. I remember the story of one of my relatives, who was eight months pregnant, and working in the pharmacy. They locked up behind the metal door, and then came an Arab woman pounding on the door saying, "Urgent, urgent, I need medicine for my boy [...]," and then my relative ran to open the door for her. But then Arab men came running in! She lied! So my relative ran up the stairs and poured acid on the stairs, and then the Arabs got it and ran away [...]

H.: From the smell?

A.: Yeah, it didn't hit them in the eyes [...] and then the Brits came quickly to help the Jews. What did they do? Brought trucks, put all the Jews on and took them out of Gaza. That's it. That was the help they gave. Now, the whole pharmacy is in the hands of Hamas. That I know. Meaning, my family are refugees. Refugees from Gaza. Nothing less. I know many people who are refugees from Hebron. Jews who were here hundreds of years. There wasn't any problem, that's my childhood memory, my mom would always say, "Be careful! Be careful of them. They simply hate us regardless of anything." That was before '48. As a child I remembered that story. Now in '48 [...]

H.: Wait, even before '48, even though there was hatred, you say there were those who came to you [...]

A.: Yes, didn't come to my house. I mean, they came to our street, and it was ok. Meaning, we would go regularly to the Old City and buy things for cheap. And Arabs would come to us and sell oil, cheese, olives, and it was ok. All in all [...] Now what's okay? I tell you, as kids we started to like them, we walked

around with *Keffiyehs* [a square of fabric fastened around the crown of the head with a band] like the Palestinians walk around with today [...] we did too! I had this red *Keffiyeh*, like that of the PLO's [Palestine Liberation Organization], that's how it was [...]

So this whole introduction of mine, that's part of my childhood. Now, when the war of '48 took place, the Jews were happy and dancing in the streets. I remember there was *hora* [circle dance] dancing when they announced the declaration of Israel's independence [...]. I remember people went wild! And they knew a war was going to start. Now we were happy, they were not. From here everything started. And then, pretty quickly, the Jordanians started bombarding Jerusalem. The city, not the army. I lived there in the Geulah neighborhood. They bombed the houses, the civilians, many people died. They knew when to bomb. For instance, they knew when water arrived in Jerusalem, and they knew now there's going to be a line of many people waiting for water. That's when they bombarded Jerusalem, and they would hit women, children and elderly people. That for me is '48. And I had a grandmother who came a few years earlier, and she was at a nursing home where now is [...] on Jaffa St [...] And then came an Egyptian bomber and dropped one bomb, and it hit the nursing home where my grandmother was, and she was killed. That's my memory from '48. The Egyptians, with whom we had no quarrel, sent a bomber and bombed Jerusalem. That's the part I remember [...] now from then on we had relative quiet from our point of view. Meaning, we lived, there were walls, fences and large concrete walls that separated the Israeli Jerusalem from the Jordanian Jerusalem. Every now and then you had snipers who would shoot down people [...]; they fired at people from the Old City walls, and we had to be careful. I had family in Yemin Moshe, and it was really dangerous there. On *Shabbat* we walked there on foot, and I remember my parents telling me, "Don't walk there so you don't get shot." They shot all the time. It's them, there. By us it was quiet. Every now and then you had infiltrators and people who tried, but that was a different story, it still wasn't 'a war with the Palestinians,' it was with the Jordanians. You need to remember that. With the Palestinians we had no problem. [...]

H.: During that period, where you say it was relatively quiet, did you try and go see the Western Wall?

A.: Yes, yes. The Western Wall was something. It was very important for my father. We would sometimes go during the *Sabbath* to Mount Zion. We would go to Mount Zion and there was this place where we could see the edge of the Western Wall. No, I don't remember it because they didn't let me see, since they were afraid I'd get shot in the head while looking – since the Jordanians knew people would take a peek, and would shoot.

H.: Specifically there?

A.: They tried to kill people all the time, what do you mean “specifically there?” Wherever there was an opportunity to kill, that’s where they tried to kill. That’s more or less the story of the Western Wall. I remember the Western Wall even from before. Before ’48, I’d walk with my father, and we would look at it. By the way, there were men and women together [praying at the Western Wall]! I remember! I remember that! There wasn’t this crazy separation that exists today. Men and women. No ‘here men and there women,’ but together. One here and one there. They would dress modestly, beautiful and all, but it was mixed. [...]

I only remember one thing. There was a shop there on the way out, and there was a doll there which would close and open its mouth, that I never forget! A child’s memory, till today I remember that doll [...]

H.: It belonged to Arabs, right?

A.: Belonged to Arabs. Yeah, I had something like that. I don’t know if it had a battery, probably no battery [...]

### **RISING TENSIONS AND THE PRESIDENT’S STUTTER**

H.: Ok, so now we’re reaching the days before ’67. [...]

A.: I remember, there was an Egyptian radio station from Cairo called “The Voice of Thunder.” I have recordings, you could hear the [...] and there they would say in good Hebrew, “We will kill you! We will slaughter you! We will throw you into the sea!”

[...] So a little before the war, Nasser understood what was going on and decided to close the Straits of Tiran. He said, “I won’t let you pass. No more Suez Canal.” In short, he wanted to suffocate us, and Israel wasn’t able to tolerate that. Closing the Straits of Tiran meant no ship could come through and reach Eilat through the Red Sea. And Nasser put huge cannons up on the mountains, and that’s it, no one could pass. It wasn’t even a legal international law of any sort. Since ’56 [the Sinai War], there had been UN forces there. We left Sinai on the condition that the UN would be there. And then there were the UN forces there, but he decided to close the straits, and he told the UN forces – “Get out!”

[...] In that time, the stress started, there was stress, people were afraid, the bottom line was we didn’t want a war. We didn’t want a war, we didn’t want territories, we didn’t want Jerusalem, we didn’t want anything. Not including a few fanatics, I’m talking about the entire nation [...]. Ok, we had a small country in ’48, and then there was a war and we made it a little bigger with the Negev and a few more things, ok, finish. Let’s now look for ways of peace. There wasn’t anybody to talk with, they didn’t want to hear! They always looked for ways to kill us and throw us into the sea. Meaning, we had to

build our army so we could defend ourselves from this threat. Because what could be done otherwise? That's more or less how it was.

By the way, in '58, '59, I went to the army, to fight of course, afterwards I went to other positions, meaning there was hope. We [should] keep ourselves safe, and in the end peace will come.

H.: Before '67?

A.: Of course, I was already a soldier, otherwise what would I have done? Now, since the tension rose, they recruited me along with many other people [...]

I was part of "The Unit", doesn't matter now [...]. In the end I was part of the paratroopers, but I wasn't really part of them. In any case, what happened happened. [...] The Six-Day War broke out, I was in Jerusalem. Ah! Before that I'd like to say, before the war broke out, as part of my job and knowledge I'd record Prime Ministers on a regular basis and other important people. I recorded Ben-Gurion for instance, I was his bodyguard in Sde-Boker, I'd go with him on hikes, so I got to know the person from up close. I knew Paula [David Ben Gurion's wife], who would bring me yogurt every morning [...]. [She] was a very special woman. She would call me "*Ingeleb*" [Yiddish: small sweet child] [...]. Afterwards when I became a citizen, I started dealing with recordings, there weren't many people recording in Israel at the time. I was amongst the few, so I'd record all the artists, Yehoram Gaon and others, and I'd also record Levi Eshkol, the Prime Minister, regularly. He would stutter. I'd record all of his speeches, and then do some editing, putting together all of his stutters. I have all of his stutters in one file if you want to hear [...].

R.: You are ruining for us stories told by researchers that claim it wasn't a stutter. Morale'h Bar-On said, for instance, that it was just that they wrote him new words he couldn't pronounce.

A.: That's true, but that's something different, but all of that shouldn't have happened, he shouldn't have read anything. All they needed to do according to the norms in those days, and the agreement I had with the Prime Minister's office, with Adi Yafeh who was his Cabinet secretary, the agreement was that he doesn't give a live speech. That's it. We record him, I cut and do the editing, and then we send him [...] Now I was on reserve duty, Adi Yafeh calls me and asks that I come to record the Prime Minister. I went to my commander and told him I really needed a short break. He asked me "For what reason?" I told him "I need it for the Prime Minister," and he didn't believe me! If I would have told him I miss my wife he would have allowed it, but because he thought I lied to him he didn't let me go. They waited and waited, and in the end he just gave the speech live, though he wasn't supposed to give it live. Now on top of all that nonsense, they also gave him a draft filled with

notes and markings [...] and anyways he couldn't see that well, and that's why he said "and [...] and [...] and [...]" all the time. And it went on air. Since I would always take care of his speeches in advance, no one heard he was actually stuttering the whole time!

R.: His biographer came to speak with you about this?!

A.: No! they didn't know it!

R.: They wrote two biographies [...]

A.: See, what they said was true, he got a draft filled with markings, etc.; that's true. But he wasn't supposed to get the whole paper at all. [...]

[...] See, I once recorded Eshkol, and took it to my small studio in Kiryat Yovel, cut all the stuttering, and all sorts of breathing that I thought was unnecessary. Sometimes Levi Eshkol wanted to hear it when he was in a good mood.

H.: Before it aired or in general?

A.: I didn't air, I would give them the recording and they would [...] by the way I want to say that the editing they didn't do in 'Kol Israel', they didn't want the many workers to know about it. That's why nobody knew. And I had an agreement that I wouldn't speak about it, now I can, after all these years. Once I recorded him, made some editing and came up with a great recording. And Levi Eshkol listened and said, "*Bachurtchik* [young man], tell me, I don't breathe?!" and then he added, "No no no, bring back my breathing!" Now, how could I do that? It's not a computer; once I cut and edit, there's no going back. And then I found a speech I had of Ben-Gurion. And Ben-Gurion would also breathe in between words, so I added that to Eshkol's recording [...]. He heard it, and said, "Oh, oh" [...] he never noticed it was Ben-Gurion's breathing!

R.: If Ben-Gurion knew he's giving air to Eshkol. God forbid!

A.: It's all real!

H.: It's a beautiful story, but we have no choice but to go back to [...]

A.: Ok, so I'm on reserve duty [...] I didn't get a break, I didn't record, he gave the speech, and in the evening I played it on the radio for my commander, I told him "You're to blame, you see?!" Well, afterwards I was on break, and suddenly the war broke out.



**THE WAR BREAKS OUT – HUMANITY AMIDST THE FIGHTING**

H.: You were home at the time?

A.: I was on a break, actually on a break. In Jerusalem. And then I got to see how the war really broke out in Jerusalem, otherwise I wouldn't be in Jerusalem. I was supposed to be in the Camp Bil'u<sup>1</sup> base. Suddenly the war broke out, bombarding started. There weren't even any alarms at first. Shells fell near my house. They intended to bombard Mount Hertzal, and they got to Kiryat Yovel. The Jordanians started to bomb again 20 years after '48, again, bombing the city and the citizens. Not the army, the citizens. And that's it. And I immediately ran, and got a message – “Anybody who's in Jerusalem, shouldn't return to base and stay there to help protect against the Jordanians attack.” The Jordanians breached the lines near the Armon Hanatziv area, with armored vehicles, and for me it was a war to protect my home. Meaning, if the Jordanians manage to breach our lines of defense, they'll be inside the heart of Israel, and start killing civilians. It's that simple. I had a wife and two children. So I ran quickly, I had to run to Armon Hanatziv by myself, without anything.

H.: Did you have any weapon?

A.: I did not! I ran to fight without a gun or anything. In the Talpiyot area, I remember there was a large table with rifles and steel helmets the Brits left behind. So I took a rifle and ran. There were private vehicles and trucks, they all drove to stop the Jordanians. That was the situation. And they bombed, and bombed with everything they had. They fired despite the agreement we signed with them, you need to remember that. They managed to bring them to a halt. I had an encounter with a Jordanian soldier. They wrote a song about that [...]

H.: And what happened during the encounter?

A.: What happened was, that I suddenly said, “I don't hate them, I don't want to shoot them, I have nothing do to with them!” It drove me crazy [...]

H.: This is happening while you're standing in front of a Jordanian soldier?

A.: Yes. Now he hit me and I hit him, we both hit each other and that was it. I was taken to the hospital, and there were many many injured soldiers there already. Many dead soldiers there, Israeli's and Arabs, they didn't know [...] suddenly I see it all and it's just terrible. Somehow, after a short while when I was there, I was able to go. Then I saw the name of my cousin, and I thought I'd need to go and recognize him amongst the dead. Turns out it wasn't him, just another person with the same name. But then I noticed I'm starting to

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<sup>1</sup> Bil'u is an acronym referring to Zionist movement from the 19th century.

recognize some other friends. Some with a wedding ring, some without. Some with red boots [paratroopers boots], some with black boots. That left an enduring effect on me. I thought to myself, poor fellows, just married, his wife doesn't even know he's dead, and I do [...] After a while more wounded soldiers came in, among them were Jordanians who got injured. And there was this Jordanian soldier, needed to be transported to another hospital, and while he was climbing on to the truck, his pants fell off, you know how hospital clothing could be loose.

H.: Oh, he was wearing hospital clothing?

A.: Yes. His hands were tied, and his pants fell off [...]

H.: Why were his hands tied?

A.: Why?! Because he was the enemy! It was in the middle of a war. I could show you pictures of our soldiers with their hands tied that ended up being shot in the head! That's war. And then they were making fun of him the whole way to the hospital. I told them to stop, and helped him put his pants back on. He said to me, "God bless you."

In any case, that left its mark on me. That's a moment that affects you. I was really angry, I had brothers there, it was not okay. Now I want to say another thing about our behavior. Next to Wadi al-Joz, there's a gas station there, there's a mosque there.

R.: Sheikh Jarrah you mean?

A.: Yes yes, Sheikh Jarrah. And there's a mosque there, with a steeple, from which the Jordanians fired on our soldiers. We had to shoot them down. So someone gave an order to bomb the steeple. Uzi Narkiss, I have a recording of him saying, "Don't ruin the holy sites!", and he said "You will not shoot from the tank! Send the soldiers in." Soldiers went in, seven of them died while attempting to conquer it. There's a monument in memory of those paratroopers who died there. They actually died since we didn't shoot the holy sites! Okay? That's another thing that ought to be remembered.

And if we're already talking about our behavior, I had a friend, Yuval, they were in the museum, they conquered that museum. He was inside and needed to pee really badly. They told him, "Just pee here," and he said, "No no, I won't pee in a museum!" He was a civilized man. "There're snipers out there," they told him. He went out, got a bullet in the head. That's it. That was Yuval. Meaning, those are little things, but they prove the point. [...] I won't say any more.

### HOPE AFTER JUNE 1967

A.: Now, I have contrasting stories, I have good stories about them, but that's only during Yom Kippur. That's more or less where I exhaust talking about the Six-Day War. But right after the war began an enormous euphoria. I remember that they started a camp for young Jews and Arabs in the Jerusalem Forest, and they celebrated for a whole week together.

H.: Who organized it?

A.: I don't know. The Jerusalem city council was involved, but I can't tell you who organized it.

R.: If it was in the Jerusalem Forest [...] there's a culture center there, what is it called?

A.: Yes yes. It's there. Now, how do I know this? Because I got some work from the city council for the event. I remember I put speakers in the woods. And there was music. Hebrew and Arabic music. A few of the [Arab] guys invited us to their house. I remember I drove next to the Intercontinental Hotel to their house, on Mount Olive. They hosted us in a very respectful manner, and there was immense hope. We hoped, and they hoped. They said, "We got rid of the Jordanians, rid of them!" They were so happy! Because the Jordanians weren't good to them. They hated them. The Jordanians executed people. In Bethlehem there was a place where they executed and hung people.

So there was euphoria, and happiness. It drives me crazy, that we weren't able to utilize this great euphoria. That's where the problem lies. We didn't use this euphoria. That's the feeling. Afterwards there were the village councils. And there were Arab villages who wanted to cooperate with us. We didn't help them, we left them, and in the end they were considered traitors in the eyes of the Palestinians, and they harmed them. We're good at making mistakes. Now, one of the big problems is that we don't know their mentality. I just want to say another thing. Right after the Yom Kippur War, I decided, after talking to officials in the Foreign Affairs office, to start a movement that will help us explain ourselves better. That movement still exists today. Amongst those who helped me were Yitzhak Navon and Moshe Sasson, Israel's ambassador to Egypt. And Moshe Sasson told me, "You see, the problem is there are people in government who don't understand the Arab mentality. I told them, give me a chair next to the restroom, and every letter and speech you write, just let me give it a look and I'll make the necessary changes. No, they decided to take academics, who don't understand what's okay and what's not okay." And it started with that, that in '48, King Abdullah of Jordan wanted to speak personally with a high ranking Israeli official. He agreed to speak so to prevent the war. Who did they send him? Golda. He came with his king-like clothing, with gold, etc., and he met her and said, "I can't make

deals with her.” That’s all, meaning, there’s just great misunderstandings that started back then. And then we move forward. Again, Golda with her non-sense. I’m not against women to be clear, but you ought to understand their mentality.

[...]

H.: So the euphoria [...] what else do you remember? You came back from the Old City, what was going on?

A.: See, there was one thing there that really annoyed me. Many people died. Many, we are talking about tens and tens of them. Ones that I knew. And they fought to conquer the Western Wall and other holy sites. Pretty fast I realized that all these ‘black dressed fellows’ [referring to ultra-Orthodox Jews who wear black] started making demands. It’s not like this, it’s like that, etc. I even remember I came up to one guy and told him, “Excuse me, you didn’t even fire one bullet for this place. My friends died here! You can’t just come and make demands! I want to come here however I like.” And then they started talking about women, etc. Even back then! It really annoyed me. I had a working relationship with those people, but what I’m saying is that people sacrificed their lives for that place, and they just took it over. They stole it from us.

H.: Did you start going back to the Western Wall?

A.: There was a period where my older daughter bought a horse. She brought a horse to our house! So every Saturday we had to go to the Old City to buy horse food. He wasn’t in our house, he was in our garden [...]

H.: Do you remember what you bought there? Did you start buying things there?

A.: Yes, yes. First of all we started buying cheap rugs from there. Not food.

H.: You didn’t buy food?

A.: No, no. Maybe dried stuff. But food we tried not to buy from there. We bought all sorts of things, cheap clothes, I don’t remember exactly, but we bought a lot. We would do our shopping there. But there was still fear. The euphoria existed. They felt good, we felt good, there was no problem.

H.: I want for a moment, since you’re really one of [...]

A.: Just remind me to speak about the division of Beit-El later [...]

H.: See, everybody is using the word euphoria. Many people know to say “There was euphoria.” Now, I’m trying to crack this term and understand what this ‘euphoria’ actually is [...]

A.: I'll tell you what's this 'euphoria' – they built Beit-El.

H: [Laughing] You're already jumping to that story [...]

A.: Yes. They built Beit-El.<sup>2</sup> And they hired me to come and build a system for an audiovisual platform. It included scenes where Moses spoke this and that [...] and I went there for [...] and I needed to put the speakers far. And then I saw this house, a distant house. I took this large speaker, by myself, without anybody keeping me guard. I went, and met this Palestinian family. [...] They saw me coming from afar, and said, "Hello! [...] Coffee?" and I asked them if I could put my speaker on their roof, with my long cables and all. They said, "Of course!" I installed the speaker, and afterwards I went to another house and made the same arrangements.

R.: What years are we talking about?

A.: After the Six-Day War [...]

R.: Yes, but how many years afterwards [...] you're talking about Beit-El.

A.: I think it's Beit-El, when was Beit-El built?

R.: Only in the 70's...

A.: But before Yom Kippur?

R.: Beit-El was built after Yom Kippur [...] first as a military base [...]

A.: So I think before. I just want to say something. The memory works fine. But since I recorded many stories after Yom Kippur [...] well it turns out everybody remembers the war differently. Now, why am I saying this? [...] The point is people remember different things after the war. So I remember that euphoria I'm referring to, but I don't remember exactly when it started.

H.: But what you're describing is more like euphoria to them.

A.: Also to us! [...] There are good terms. There was hope. They still hoped that now that we conquered, they understood who they had business with. Today, they understood how stupid we are. What's happening now with the new government, it's taking them back in reverse. But there was an opportunity that was missed by the governments then, they needed to do something [...]

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<sup>2</sup> Beit-El (lit. God's House) is an Israeli, Jewish Orthodox settlement located in the West Bank.

### WHY THE EUPHORIA DISSIPATED

H.: But the feeling of hope you say. Euphoria includes what in your opinion? You say hope, a feeling that everything is safe? That all is possible? What do you mean?

A.: See, they had it bad with the Jordanians, let's start with that. They thought and felt that now they'll have it good. Good financially. Maybe also some sort of agreement. But that didn't really interest them so much. They still weren't [...] that's what I think today. They didn't feel like some sort of nation that needs a 'country for itself,' they wanted simply to live. The Arab, Palestinian people who were here wanted to live. Quietly. And they thought that rest would come now, after the war [...] Now, of course, there are those who disagreed, all these Fedayeen [lit. 'self-sacrificers,' military groups] from Gaza, etc. But, all in all, that's what created this sense of euphoria. Because, once I see him and he accepts me and says to me, "Hello, welcome!" I feel good, and I'm not afraid of him and he is not afraid of me, it is terrific.

H.: Sort of paradise?

A.: Yes! See, let's think together for one moment. Let's think what would have happened to us if we would all agree to the foundation of the State of Israel. Say they would agree and would reach some sort of understanding. How good it would be for them and for us. But we didn't manage to rightly maneuver our way towards that. And I think we're still not smart enough to make sure we preserve good relationships with the Arabs who are amongst us here, I'm talking about the Israeli Arabs, the Bedouins who serve in the IDF, the Druze who are being neglected. I have Druze friends, and for them the concept of 'respect' is of immense importance. Much more than it is for us. And we just don't know how to do it. We hurt them. It really annoys me.

Here, I want to say another thing. Something that happened close to the Six-Day War, but I can't remember the exact date. It relates to Yigal Alon.<sup>3</sup> I was in the Jordan Valley on reserve duty. I was the commander of this base somewhere, and there was a checkpoint there. We had an order, that from 5 p.m. onwards there's no passage to Jericho through there. I was there, and then suddenly a bunch of Mercedes approached the checkpoint. "Stop, stop," we said, and then we noticed the mayor of Bethlehem and the mayor of Hebron were there, with their kids. We told them, "No passing." And then they said, "But Yigal Alon invited us to spend time with him in Ginosar, and now we're on our way back home." "Stop, sorry." Now, it wasn't my job, but I couldn't keep quiet. I called up the commander, and he said, "I have orders. Sorry, no one can pass." I started working to try and find the right person to

<sup>3</sup> *Yigal Alon* was an Israeli military commander, statesman and among the leaders of the Labor movement. He lived in kibbutz Ginosar.

clarify this. I spoke with the West Bank command, and told them, “Listen, there’s a whole convoy here, tens of cars, what do you plan to have us do, give them food?!” And then they said, “Okay, let them pass.” And I replied, “Okay, we will let them pass but then someone will stop them again near Jericho, so please send a military escort to take them all the way home.” All that Yigal Alon did wasn’t okay, he had to know there are checkpoints. Couldn’t he send someone with them? Nothing. Had his fun and went home, thank you very much. And Yigal Alon wasn’t just an ordinary man, he was a good man, clever, honest. And still, he didn’t do the right thing. Finally, thanks to my phone calls they got home.

A few days later I was still there. Suddenly this 17-year-old Arab comes holding in his arms a nine-year-old kid with a rock stuck in his head. Terrible. So I saw this, and took my private car, and rushed to Gadi Military Base and brought him to the infirmary [...]

We rushed to the infirmary and got to the entrance of the base. I get to the checkpoint in the entrance, and recognized the soldier who was there, one of ours. “Only the little boy can enter, not the other one,” he says. I told him, “Listen, he may die, there’s a rock stuck in his head, could be it’s in his head, he’s unconscious, let us in!” He didn’t agree. So, I stepped on the gas, and just broke down the entrance gate, luckily that soldier didn’t have the guts to actually shoot me. I brought the kid to the infirmary, the doctor there wasn’t sure whether to take out the rock or not, but he said, “Good thing you got here, I’ll take care of it, a little later and he would be dead.”

So I am telling all of this to show also how much indifference existed in the checkpoints even then!

R.: Today it is the same thing. [...] If you are a paramedic you are allowed in, if you are the sick person and don’t have a permit, ‘stay out.’

A.: This nonsense costs us a lot.

H.: It’s not nonsense it’s complete indifference.

A.: Now, it doesn’t matter what they did to me for breaking down the entrance gate, I was okay in the end.

H.: So all of this started to seep through and bring down the euphoria?

A.: Exactly. Our stupidity, I repeat, our stupidity, our lack of basic education, our lack of recognition to our enemy. You need to know even your enemy, you need to know how to speak, how to approach, how to touch, when to touch. There are laws, there are norms. Now, if we came to this place, and want to live here between them, we need to make sure we are not a thorn in their throat. As little as possible. Amongst ourselves we are a different culture, but not in front of them, we ought to behave differently. When we are good, look at what happens in the hospitals, the Arab nurses are even better than

ours! They are more merciful than ours. I know it, from my parents. The nurses are great, the Arab doctors are excellent, amazing department managers. Meaning, there's room for them to advance, and they realized the potential there! But only a few of them. A large part of them is still humiliated.

H.: Each hour, each day.

A.: Yes, and that's where our gravest mistake lies. And what could one do? Now, I'm jumping for one moment to the Yom Kippur War. When I got there, I jump [...]

### **THE EGYPTIAN SOLDIER ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SUEZ CANAL**

H.: "There" is the Suez Canal?

A.: Yes, I was sent to the canal on reserve duty. I'm jumping forward three days into the Yom Kippur War. I thought, that's it, everybody's dead, we have no chance against the Arabs. I wrote a will (I'll show you the will afterwards). And then I remembered the Six-Day War, and I said, I hope we don't go back to the stupid situation of the post Six-Day War, etc.

When I actually arrived at the canal, about a week and a half before the war, I was at a guard post, and in front of me was an Egyptian soldier.

H.: This is even before they knew a war was about to take place?

A.: Before anybody knew.

H.: And you were there by chance?

A.: Yes, we were there two weeks before, and by chance, I took with me three microphones, since I told myself, maybe something will happen.

I went out on a mission, now in front of me is an Egyptian soldier, and every day at five o'clock he was at his post. For five days I was watching him. We already knew each other, it's only 80 meters out, understand. With my binoculars, I could see the color of his eyes. So we knew one another. And I wrote about him. I wrote about him that he had gloomy eyes, without a mustache, curly hair, a whole description. And on Saturday, a few minutes before the war began, I went out to the post to look out. I like to see not what they tell me to see, but what I understand I need to see. The behavior, the tension.

H.: Did they inform you at that point that something was about to happen?

A.: They did not. [...] We didn't know a thing. I knew, my wife knew, but they didn't tell us a thing. I understood so, but no one told us. That's a big difference. And then I looked in the binoculars and suddenly I see all of them are wearing helmets, the Egyptians. They're all geared up, this was a few moments before the war broke out. And then I look at the post where the Egyptian soldier I was talking about was, and he too was wearing a helmet. And



then he looked at me, straight in the eyes, and he signaled me a long signal [...] He couldn't tell me the war was about to start, because then he'll be a traitor [...] And then he went down from the post, and I did too, and a few minutes later the war broke out. Wait, I still didn't finish the story about the Egyptian soldier. Okay. The war was over, I got back home. And Avraham Perera [song writer and singer] told me – I told him the story. [...] Two weeks later, I was on a break again – we were on reserve duty for half a year after that – and after two weeks into the break Perera tells me “I have a song I want to record.” He wrote a song about the Jordanian soldier, and I have the song about the Egyptian soldier. Joe Amar [a popular Israeli singer] wrote, the Jordanian soldier, I told him about that incident I had with the Jordanian soldier, and Joe wrote a song about it called “God give me the courage to love my enemy” – I could let you listen to the recording later, it's a great recording that no one has heard [...] soon I'll play it for you.

Anyways, Avraham Perera wrote a song about the Egyptian soldier I told you about, the song is called “The Night Fell on the Shores of the Canal.” That's it. A beautiful song. He sang it with Chaim Zur who was on the Guitar. I could play both of these songs for you here now. But I'm not finished with the Egyptian soldier.

After the war, I started recording all those who returned from captivity. [...]

In any case, as part of the recording and research, I was in contact with various officials. They said they found a diary in the pocket of a dead Egyptian soldier. I got the material. It was my soldier! As simple as that.

[...] So he starts like this, wait, one thing before. Exactly on the day I left for reserve duty, on the 23 of September 1973, the Egyptian soldier started his diary, and he wrote: “23 of September, 1973, we boarded the train en route to the Suez Canal, for the war.” He wrote for “the war.” I did not leave on the 23rd for ‘war’ but he did. And then he continued: “I love reading books,” and he would give the names of great novels adding, “I love music, Tchaikovsky, Beethoven,” an intelligent guy. Now, how do I know it's my Egyptian soldier in this whole story? For instance, there was bombing on Monday at 7 p.m. I remembered, and he wrote: “The hour is 7 p.m., the shells are dropping [...] and I remembered Tchaikovsky 1812.”

H.: He doesn't describe you there.

A.: Not yet, He'll get to that point in the end. But he has a hell of a story. Okay, so he continues to tell his story. And then he talks about his girlfriend. And he says, “When I'll return, will she disappoint me, should I let her go? Should I leave her? Shouldn't I leave her? And if I die, my mother wouldn't be able to handle it, and my father will get paralysis [...] I don't want to die,

and I don't even know why we need to kill one another. I reached the conclusion war is despicable and cruel." I have it all translated [...] that's not all.

When we left our post, I left all of my expensive recording equipment behind. It was all on the table well organized. And a few other intelligence personnel brought equipment of their own, and they were all left behind [...] We managed to leave the place during the night, on the fourth day of the war, through the Egyptians. Once we heard they are killing the prisoners, we decided we are leaving. We managed to escape through them, and I left all the equipment playing out loud. With the lights on, and the voice on. It sounded as if someone is speaking there. And the Egyptians were on the border. But they were afraid to enter since everything was turned on, they must have heard the voices [...]. Only in the morning, when we were far off, they entered. And then he wrote: "We entered the Israeli post, and it's deserted. It doesn't look like a regular post, it looks like a laboratory, with lots of devices, that must have cost them a fortune. I don't understand why human beings spend so much money on war and not on peace." He's writing this! He must have seen all this and it annoyed him all the money spent on war. All this is written by an Egyptian soldier. Afterwards, he writes another thing that has to do with me.

When we fled at night, we almost stepped on them. They thought we were Egyptian soldiers, so they didn't pay attention to us walking through. They didn't believe we were just walking through them and we're not Egyptians. And they were half asleep and we almost stepped on them. And we smelled their coffee, and one of my friends said, "Let's take some coffee from them [...]." It's just surrealistic. And then he wrote: "I lay at night, and looked at the stars, and I thought about Nura (his girlfriend), and other beautiful women who are standing on the steps of the university, dressed in the newest fashion." And he's lying there and I'm passing right next to him almost stepping on him! This whole story is just crazy.

Now, when I wrote this will of mine, I also wrote a few more words. I wrote a letter to the Egyptian soldier, saying, "Let's make an agreement, we don't kill you, and you don't kill us, and let the maniacs solve the problems themselves, and we'll go home. I have many things to do at home, and you probably have too." I have this letter, soon I'll show it to you. And then when I sat to write this down, all my friends were sitting quietly and writing. They were all writing wills, or just stared and glanced. They were all sure that next morning they would be all dead. It was clear. We heard what was going on [...] they [the Egyptians] executed our friends. Anybody whom they believed fought in the Six-Day War, they immediately executed.

H.: By age they knew?

A.: Through interrogation, beatings, reserve duty records and other things. And then I sat down to open the radio, I said, "Let's see what's happening in the world." And then, what do we hear while there's bombing? Schubert! Serenade! Silence, serenade and bombarding in the background. Such a contrast between a shell and serenade. I'll play it for you in a moment. [...]

### LOOKING BACK

H.: Do you have more memories? How did it all affect you and your family personally?

A.: See, we'll start like this. Besides the memories of many friends who died, I immediately after the war felt that that's it, that's it. We did what we did, we now have many territories, Egypt, etc. With all of that land we could now come and say to them, "*Yalla*, let's now reach an agreement." And we didn't do that, as I mentioned earlier.

M.: How were the days before the Six-Day War? Did you know it was about to happen? Did they talk about it? Was it on the radio?

A.: Look, little kids were filling sandbags to make shelters from the bombing. Then there weren't many IDF cars, so they took all the private trucks and cars of people and they painted their antennas and lights. Meaning, this country was indeed preparing for war that everybody was afraid of. It was very dangerous. We didn't know exactly [...] we didn't imagine [...] Let's say differently, if we hadn't struck first, the outcomes would have been far more severe than those of the Six-Day War. That simple.

M.: What did you know about the enemy?

A.: First of all, it was Egypt. Only Egypt. There weren't any other enemies, and we didn't think of any others. Only thanks to the immense success the air force had in destroying the Egyptians' planes, which was something out of the ordinary really, and then they suddenly realized [...] and I forgot to mention, of course, that after we did what we did, Nasser called up Hussein – I have the recording here if you want to hear – and lied to him, and told him, "Join the war now, because we are on our way to Tel-Aviv!" And Hussein believed him, and gave the order to start bombing Jerusalem. He didn't intend [...] there's a joke amongst Arabs: An Arab is relaxing beneath a tree, and there are kids there bothering him. So he tells them, "Kids! They are giving out free figs at the other end of the village!" The kids run and leave him in peace. A few moments later, the man thinks to himself, wait a minute, maybe they are really giving out figs for free?! So he starts running [...]. That's exactly what happened to Hussein. Exactly. [...]

H.: Do you remember when they announced that they had bombed all the Egyptian airports, understanding that the situation changed?

A.: I think, Monday morning.

I was in Jerusalem at the time, the bombing was on the houses, and I started running like a mad man, I hitchhiked to the front, without any weapon! [...]

I called [my unit] to ask what was going on. "Run! Just run forward," they told me. See, we didn't have any tanks in Jerusalem, it was prohibited. There weren't any armored vehicles. It was prohibited. Here and there were forces, but nothing significant. The first tanks arrived Tuesday night. And not on trucks, they drove on the road. They destroyed the road. Once you destroy the road, cars can no longer drive on them. A problem. So what I'm saying is that I just ran, by myself, and slowly, slowly, I started meeting people, and, as time went by, we became many. And next to Talpiyot, there was an area where they gave out weapons. Outside. It was very dangerous since they had already started shelling.

M.: And then what did you do? Joined as a group or each fought on his own?

A.: Afterwards, we joined as groups. Whoever could, joined his unit. I wasn't able to join my unit. But it didn't matter. It wasn't for a long time. Pretty quickly it all formed up properly. They conquered Armon Hanatziv. Went in, and that is a different story. But the beginning brought about great panic.

H.: So this is already after you heard they bombed the airports?

A.: No, no. They didn't announce it on the radio. [...] Wait, wait, understand something for a moment. There was a problem. Nasser was startled. And he realized, that if others will join the war, if Jordan will open another front, it could be that they'll make the chances of losing smaller. And then he lied to him [...]

Don't forget, we already got to Friday, and the war was over. And then people came and said, wait, wait, out of this entire battle, the Syrians are the ones that had it the easiest. Let's now strike the Syrians! And then they went up, and the battle for the Golan Heights began, on Friday. Am I right? [...]

M.: When you ran there on Armon Hanatziv, did you already meet people from the neighborhood?

A.: No, I met people that I already know. My age. What really annoyed me, is that my closest friends, I only met when they were dead, beneath the blankets that covered them. That's something that stayed with me for many years after, that sight of seeing them like that. I remember when I was looking for my cousin, I didn't care about soldiers with black shoes, since they weren't from

my unit, I was only looking for soldiers wearing red shoes. One by one I went through. It wasn't easy, to say the least.

M.: When did you return home?

A.: I don't remember. I was hospitalized. I was in the hospital for some time afterwards.

H.: Because of the Jordanian soldier who shot you?

A.: Yes, that's a story I don't want to elaborate about. It annoys me what happened there. By the way, I have the Joe Amar recording if you want to hear [...].

[The interview then segues into a tour of A.Y.'s collection of sounds and memorabilia discussed above.]



# Neither Six Days nor War: Uncertainty, Rumors and Conspiracies in 1967 in the Middle East

*Yuval Plotkin*

## 1 Introduction

Reality is not always probable, or likely. But if you are writing a story, you have to make it as plausible as you can, because if not, the reader's imagination will reject it. (Jorge Luis Borges)<sup>1</sup>

War is, among other things, an event characterized by great uncertainty and tension, both in combat and on the home front. Under such conditions, the demand for information that provides a sense of security increases, but such information is often word-of-mouth, unverified information. A few years after the conclusion of World War I, the historian Marc Bloch, who spent many years of the war on the battle front, both as a combat soldier and an officer, published the article “Reflections of a Historian on the False News of the War,” which explored how stories were spread during the war, while reviewing previous studies on World War I and other wars (Bloch 2013). Building on the insights of earlier scholars, Bloch reached his own conclusions which were innovative for his time: to study history, he argued, one must also consider the mentality of the group being examined, rather than just the “dry” facts. Bloch bridges history with the psychology of testimony, showing how the former can – and even should – rely on the insights and research methods of the

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<sup>1</sup> Borges formulated this statement within a conversation held at the University of Columbia between him and the writer Norman Thomas Di Giovanni. Afterwards, his words were published in the magazine *Columbia University Forum*, and from there were cited in several places, such as Borges (1973: 45).

latter. When listening to people's stories about the war, Bloch argues, the researcher should not merely affirm or reject the facts presented – the researcher must understand what drives people to tell certain stories rather than others. Bloch focuses on word-of-mouth narratives and asks what can be learned from their formation and dissemination. Over the years, the article has become one of the significant milestones in the *Annals* movement in the study of history (Stirling 2007). Furthermore, this article is part of a considerable body of research that has examined the relationship between rumors and wars, and rumors and violence more broadly considered.

Bloch saw the devastating World War, with its catastrophic consequences, as a research opportunity:

The war [...] was an immense experiment in social psychology. To console oneself for its horrors by being pleased with its experimental interest would be to affect a dilettantism of very bad form. But, since it has taken place, it is appropriate to use its lessons for the betterment of our science. Let us hasten to take advantage of an opportunity that we must hope will be unique. (2013: 11)

Unfortunately, the idea of World War I being a 'unique' war was rather naïve. Only two decades passed before another bloody international war broke out, again altering the fate of human history. It did not spell the end of war either. In the century since the end of World War I, humanity has not reformed from its old habit of maintaining armies ready to destroy one another.

The same is true of the Middle East, and within it, the state of Israel, which in its brief and turbulent history has known seven official wars and other violent confrontations known in Israel as 'military operations.' The war focused on in this volume broke out in June 1967 and lasted less than one week, during which Israel fought Egypt, Jordan and Syria. It is viewed as one of the fateful wars of the region, as it resulted in a host of significant problems that have not been resolved until today – regarding the borders of the state, Israel's relationships with neighboring countries and the fate of the Palestinians residing in the territories captured and in part still occupied by the State of Israel. In the long run, it also affected the dynamics within Israel, reshaping and aggravating the political controversy between the Left and the Right, as well as between Jews and Muslim, and Christian Arabs and Druzes. Bloch would probably agree that the June 1967 War can also be viewed as an 'immense experiment,' particularly due to the fact that we are still living this experiment: from the perspective of all of the participants in this project – the researchers, interviewers, interviewees, transcribers, translators and consultants – the 1967 War is not a memory frozen and preserved in time, but a living entity, which is ever-present, penetrating and constructing their existence.

Bloch criticizes laboratory experiments, done at the time, that dealt with memory. He explains those were always cut short before emerging narratives reached their conclusions, and used mainly primary witnesses as sources. These conditions contrast with the improvised, unscripted reality outside of the laboratory, in



which participants in the discourse are also secondary and tertiary sources (Bloch 2013: 2–3). Such an approach includes people who did not witness the actual events, but were given the impression that they knew what was happening at the scene of an incident (e.g. on the combat front), as they were exposed to descriptions and stories whose sources were not always known.

Bloch's groundbreaking article was written before the dust of World War I had settled; the present study began fifty years after the end of the 1967 War, and is based on interviews marking the war's 50th anniversary. It could be argued that narratives that consolidate events might be affected by various influences with the passage of time, resulting with various inconsistencies. Evidently, these conditions present a different kind of challenge and raise new questions.

We must assume that fifty years after 1967, direct witnessing of events, speculations as to what took place and accounts produced by historians about the most dramatic moments intermingle: interviewees recall not only what they witnessed with their own eyes or were told in real time, but also their assumptions and the information snippets to which they were exposed during the war, beforehand or even decades after the events took place. In most cases, the interviewees themselves do not seem to be able to distinguish between these different types of perceptions. Each personal narrative appropriates pieces of information from various sources which become embedded in it. In the narrative situation – that is, the situation in which people tell their stories – the hierarchy between the various types of sources may be blurred. In other words: assumptions, speculation and even conspiracy-like rumors all become integral aspects of personal stories about the 1967 War. More importantly: when interviewees, Palestinians or Jews, meet with interviewers – Jews, Palestinians and outsiders to the Middle East – the events of the 1967 War still impact their present-day relationships and maintain a hold on the situation. Talking about the 1967 War is never only about those six days but also about the present.

One example of the evasiveness of memory occurred in an interview with one of the soldiers from the Paratroopers Brigade who was the first to arrive at the Western Wall during the war, immortalized in a photograph with his two friends. The photograph of these three soldiers has since become one of the icons of that war, as it is one of the most recognized in the shared photographic memories of Israelis. It has been printed in countless books, was part of exhibitions and even placed on a stamp. However, the soldier himself, who was 22 back then, on reserve duty, claims that he does not even remember the moment at which the photograph was taken; he describes it as a kind of a 'blackout.'<sup>2</sup> From his conversations with photographer David Rubinger and the other soldiers, it became apparent that this was a staged photograph. Photography is stronger than memory, and the collective memory of a photograph 'remembers' what personal memory forgets.

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<sup>2</sup> This article builds on the interviews conducted in both the Israeli and the Palestinian part of the project; while I conducted but a few interviews myself, I was given the opportunity to work with the transcriptions.

## 2 The War that Was Not

Nobody in the Middle East was surprised by the outbreak of the regional war on June 5, 1967, although its specific events could not be predicted. The Israeli Defense Forces' (IDF) Deputy Chief of Staff at the time, Haim Bar-Lev's famous (or infamous) promise to the Israeli public is quoted until this day: "We'll screw them hard, fast, and in an elegant manner" (Rosenthal 2019). This quote remains relevant because in comparison with other wars in Israel and around the world, one of the distinct and unique characteristics of this war was its short duration, which lies in reverse proportion to its outcomes. All in all, from the outbreak of fighting on June 5 until its termination on June 10, 132 hours passed, making it one of the shortest wars in documented history. Within less than a week, Israel tripled its territory, 28,000 soldiers from four armies were killed and thousands more remained missing. Many thousands of Palestinians fled Israel to neighboring countries.<sup>3</sup>

The brief duration of the war is reflected in conversations with people who recall it. One Jewish Israeli interviewee, a woman who was in her late thirties in 1967, speaks at great length regarding preparations for the war, and then suddenly states: "Time was very short and [...] suddenly the war was over." The buildup to the war and its aftermath had a greater presence in her narrative than her account of the combat or her experience sitting in the bomb shelter. This is not an exceptional case. While Jews who fought in battle remember in detail the violent clashes with the enemy, those who remained on the home front tend to remember the prolonged waiting period preceding the war and the intense feelings that overwhelmed the public upon the war's conclusion. One interviewee, who was a 21-year-old man in 1967, stated: "The war [...] was terribly [...] short. What I mean is that, for me, I can say that, unlike, for example, the Yom Kippur War [...] it passed by like a game."

Among Israelis, the phrase 'six days' is repeated again and again to emphasize the magnitude of the achievement. "Think [...] Egypt, Jordan, Syria [...] all in six days, finished! Can you believe what this is? Can you understand the nature of this turnaround? It is simply impossible to believe what a miracle it was," said one interviewee, who was born in 1948, representing a widespread assessment. The words of poet Nathan Alterman, written soon after the war, reflect similar wonder at the sudden transformation. In a pathos-rich column published in the newspaper *Maariv* on June 16 approximately a week after the war's conclusion, he praised the speed of the victory:

Do not say "there are no words" to say what has occurred in these days.  
There are words, and words are still our primary tool for expression and

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<sup>3</sup> The main combat took place at a distance from significant concentrations of population, and I was not able to find an official source documenting the number of casualties on the home front. However, the number of refugees was significant. According to various estimates, about 175,000–250,000 Palestinians fled the West Bank for Jordan, while in the Golan Heights, many fled to Syria. See Oren (2002: 328–330).

thought, but the words are still blinking and pinching themselves to check that they are awake and not dreaming. Only slowly they understand that they are describing reality, and are not fantasizing. Their embarrassment is understandable. The one chance only that transformed the danger of failure to incomparable salvation occurred in less than a week. This was an unprecedented quick war, which perhaps contributes to the difficulty to orientate ourselves in the wealth of achievements imparted to Israel, but the speed, as much as it surprised us, was in fact the single element that guaranteed victory. The victory, in order for it to take place, had to happen lightning-fast. The global forces sympathetic to us, unanimously, would not have lifted a finger to help us had we engaged in long, drawn-out combat, while forces hostile to us would have done everything to come to the aid of our enemies. (Alterman 1967; translated from the original Hebrew).

While Israelis have named the war “the Six-Day War,” the Palestinians actually shorten the duration of the war, as for them, the war did not last for six days, but for only two or three.<sup>4</sup> The rest of the time was devoted to “clearing the roads,” one interviewee points out. Another interviewee, the owner of a fabric store in Jerusalem’s Old City who lived in eastern Jerusalem and was 17 years old in 1967, recalls: “They say six or seven days, but I remember one day. On the second day – the Israelis were here. Two days, really!” In fact, and this is perhaps more significant, many Palestinians are outraged at the very use of the term ‘war’; according to them, there was no actual war, but an act of Israeli conquest, which took place almost without resistance or combat from the Arab states. In the firm and concise words of another interviewee, who was in his late twenties when the war broke out, “The war started with Egypt, and later there was, like they said, *‘balagan’* (‘mess’ in Hebrew), and they conquered Jerusalem, the [West] Bank, everything, within six hours. Is this a war? No. This is not a war.” In his version, six days are shortened to six hours.

As can be understood from the examples, whereas the Jews emphasize the short time span of the war to point to the magnitude of the achievement, the Palestinians describe it as even shorter than six days, to argue that using the term ‘war’ is unfair. There were no hard fought, challenging battles but instead, as many Palestinians tell, an easy and cunning act of conquest – a narrative perspective which diminishes the heroism of the winning side and exposes the losing side’s weakness. This logic, which questions the fairness of the battle in order to undermine the achievement of the winning side, is a constant in Palestinian narratives regarding the 1967 War. The quick nature of the war impacts the way in which it is remembered in various testimonies. The stories of soldiers who participated in combat focus mainly on battles. But in others’ stories, the war itself is not the main focus, as Palestinians and Jews

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<sup>4</sup> Thus, Palestinians often call it “the June War” or “*Al-Naksa*” (the setback). The various names of the war appeared in the interviews of this study, each according to the meanings the interviewee attributes to the war.

alike focus on the buildup to the war – their fears and hopes, and the practical preparation for the military attacks; as well as the new reality that followed – for the Jews, feelings of euphoria, and for the Palestinians, feelings of shock and dismay. Several testimonies create the impression that the war “did not occur” or “barely took place”; the battles themselves are portrayed as brief, stolen moments which destabilized the fabric of life, rather than as a prolonged period that continues to impact life.

In the decades since, those feelings have not been compromised, but have been preserved and even made permanent. The Six-Day War has been described as an event that could not be grasped in real time. Although there were stories during the war that attempted to put the events in order, these stories did not last as they were officially confirmed or refuted. This phenomenon was contrary to the way in which rumors from the front to the home front had “legs,” as soldiers wallowed in the mud trenches over many months of waiting during World War I. Regarding the Six-Day War, the need to explain what had happened was structured mainly after the war’s conclusion. Since the results of this war still shape our lives, the need to explain it remains present. Indeed, this is the paradox of the 1967 war: on the one hand, the war was almost ‘not felt’ in real time, while, on the other hand, many people are still living with the reality it created. Consequently, participants in the war still have the need to tell stories about what actually took place during that time, not least to themselves.

### 3 What the Rumor Hides and What It Reveals

A book called *Yalkut Ha-kzavin* (The Bag of Lies) was published in Israel in 1956 and gained enormous popularity. It collects funny, exaggerated and absurd stories soldiers told each other during the days of the Palmach (the brigade of the Haganah, constituting the military defense force of the Zionist movement in Palestine until the establishment of the State of Israel, when the IDF was formed and the Palmach disbanded). To this day, this collection is seen as a representative and foundational document of Israeli life in the 1940s, and of Israeli humor in general. In the introduction, the editors write:

What is the meaning of the word falsehood (KZAV)? If you will, falsehood (KZAV) is a story that is completely, mostly or partly a lie, an exaggeration or a hoax. A lie (SHEKER) is when nobody knows the truth, except the one who tells it. A hoax (METIKHA) is when everyone knows the truth except the victim of it. A falsehood (KZAV) is when everyone knows that the story is nothing but a lie, and yet they are willing to come back and hear it again and again. (Ben Amos and Hefer 1963: 6)<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Original Hebrew terms appears in Latin letters between brackets.

I suggest that a rumor is a story where no one is sure if it is real or not – not the one who tells it nor the one who listens to it. Rumors are deeply connected to feelings of uncertainty.

This essay focuses on rumors and conspiracies from all the pieces of information in the narratives about the events of 1967 which were revealed in this project's interviews. There is no consensus on the definition of these genres in the study of folklore. Contrary to the genres of myth and legend, rumor is still considered a liminal genre. Many scholars emphasize the similarity between rumors and legends, which is commonly defined as a story whose narrators tend to believe that the events recounted actually happened.<sup>6</sup> However, there are researchers who distinguish rumors categorically from legends. Nicholas DiFonzo and Prashant Bordia define a rumor as "Unverified and instrumentally relevant information statements in circulation that arise in the contexts of ambiguity, danger or potential threat, and that function to help people make sense and manage risk" (2007: 212–213). This is one of many definitions, but it is particularly relevant to this essay which deals with war stories.

Gordon Allport and Leo Postman define rumors in their book *The Psychology of the Rumor* as "a specific (or topical) proposition for belief, passed along from person to person, usually by word of mouth, without secure standards of evidence being present" (1947: ix). Patricia Turner defines a rumor as "a brief, oral, nonnarrative statement based on hearsay" (1994: 4). In a book co-authored by Turner and Gary Alan Fine, the two argue that "Many rumors are spawned, but only a few survive" (Fine and Turner 2004: 63). Thus, the spreading of rumors can be described in evolutionary terms – only the rumor that adapts endures over time.<sup>7</sup>

Approaching rumors as a genre relates to the pragmatics and the meta-pragmatics of rumor. Pragmatics focuses on how the speakers present their words and the meaning created by intonation, rhythm, tone, etc. A rumor, for example, may sound hesitant and, thus, deviate slightly from the pace of usual speech. Meta-pragmatics refers to the way in which the speaker themselves frames the story. One may identify, for instance, that a rumor is being presented, when a speaker explicitly states: "there was a rumor that," "according to a rumor" or "I heard that." I was using those two ways to spotted rumors in the many interviews conducted within the project. Sometime, a rumor is not identified in the course of the interview and is apparent only in the analysis of the transcript of it.

Marc Bloch does not use the term 'rumors' but, instead, discusses what he calls "false news" (in the original French *les fausses nouvelles*). He pays particular attention to erroneous stories and asserts that more can be learned from false stories than those that eventually turn out to be true. But we know that many rumors turn out to be true, and several authors argue that the truth of a rumor is not relevant to its definition as such. Aliza Shenhar (1990), for example, argues that the nature of the

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<sup>6</sup> For similarities and differences between the genres, see Astapova (2017).

<sup>7</sup> For background about the evolutionary premise in folklore theory, see Wilson (1976).

rumor genre is unrelated to the objective credibility of the facts narrated, but, instead, relates to how a narrative is presented, and the level of cooperation between the narrator's audience. Nevertheless, talk about rumors is often accompanied by judgmental claims.

Even in 2019, the stories of a war that occurred in the late 1960s are still laden with this type of information. Classifying them within the rumor genre, based on a consensus of research and insight on the subject, can be used as an effective tool for the analysis of the relevant narratives.

A fascinating rumor about the war was revealed by an Israeli interviewee who was about 18 years old in 1967. She lived with her family in Ramat Hasharon, a small town in central Israel, established in the 1920s as an agricultural settlement. In its first decades, it was settled mainly by European immigrants. The interviewee still vividly remembers the days leading up to the outbreak of the fighting, known as the "waiting period." Her family members dug trenches, as did many Israelis during that period, as they heard Jordanian airplanes fly overhead. Until this point, her story is quite similar to those of many Israelis during this period. However, she also provides the following extraordinary account:

I want to tell the story about 'Morasha,' the neighborhood adjacent to us, which was a transit camp at the time. In the 1960s, this neighborhood was populated mainly by immigrants from Middle Eastern countries. They were mostly Yemenis and Iraqis. And they, in contrast to the Jews [this *faux pas* appears in the source; the immigrants from Yemen and Iraq were also Jewish], had televisions, and they would pick up the broadcasts from Jordan regularly. During the war, at some stage – some of them went out into the street carrying a white flag – and they were asked why. So they said, "The Jordanians are here right at the entrance, and we surrender." "How do you know this?" they were asked. They replied, "From the broadcasts on Jordanian television."

When the interviewer asked how the residents of Ramat Hasharon reacted when the residents of Morasha announced their surrender, the interviewee admitted that she did not know, as she and her family did not witness the incident. She said, "It is a story told in the neighborhood [...] Listen, I don't know who told it to me. Maybe it was my mother. Of course, I was not present. And I don't know how reliable it is. But if a story like this exists, maybe it has legs." She insinuates that there is a reason this story continues to be told, illustrating that it probably has a kernel of truth in it.

The story can be defined as a rumor – it includes within it the narrator's own classification as such. But what is behind this story? Bloch offers a guideline for rumor scholars, arguing that rumors are based on a shared imagination that precedes their formation. The rumor begins with a specific incident which ignites the imagination – however, this process only begins because the imagination has been "training" and is secretly effervescing. For Bloch, an event that does not match the patterns of the imagination will only achieve exceptional status in private and will not spread further through "false news." In his poetic language, Bloch claims, "false

news is a mirror wherein the ‘collective consciousness’ contemplates its own features” (2013: 9–10). He argues:

The error propagates itself, grows, and ultimately survives only on one condition – that it finds a favorable cultural broth in the society where it is spreading. Through it, people unconsciously express all their prejudices, hatreds, fears, all their strong emotions. Only great collective states of mind [...] have the power to transform a misperception into a legend. (Bloch 2013: 3)

These insights provide tools for understanding group mentality, and illustrate the great usefulness of researching these kinds of stories. Expanding on Bloch, I consider this approach valid not only for “false news” but for any kind of unverified piece of narrative.

The “white flag” rumor, like every rumor, is short. With only a few sentences, it manages to touch on a number of significant themes. First and foremost, it appears that the fear of defeat lies at the heart of this rumor. Fine and Turner (2004) developed a catalog of rumor types, among which they highlight the “pipe dream rumor,” which fulfills a public wish, and the “bogey rumor,” which gives expression to a world that could be actualized according to a pessimistic outlook. The “white flag” rumor clearly fits this second type.

The general mood among Jews in Israel leading up to the war was revealed in interviews (reflecting, of course, the way in which this mood was captured in retrospect, decades after the fact). On the one hand, there was hope in Israel of achieving a historic victory of the small state defeating all of its enemies – a David versus Goliath-like setup. A Jewish interviewee, for example, who was just a little girl of seven years during the war, attests:

I remember perfectly that we were imbued with a sense that we – that there is no beating us. As if there is no possibility [of defeat], that it is clear that we will win. It is clear that we are the best in the world. It is us, like, the entire myth of David and Goliath. We are David and they are Goliath. They are many and all that, but they are stupid. We are smart. Small, but smart. This was something very, very clear to me, that this was the case. As if it was unequivocal, there was not even a question.

However, in parallel to such testimonies, there was an overwhelming fear of future events and the possibility of a defeat of historic magnitude. These were two sides of the same coin: defeat at the hands of the Arab states could be so scathing that it was difficult to even conceive. The only reasonable alternative was for Israel to win against all odds.

Many Jews in Israel in 1967 had witnessed the events of the 1940s: the horrors of the Holocaust. An interviewee who lived in the US and was about 18 years old in 1967 recalls:

Nowadays the impression of Israel is so strong, Israel is so strong, that people don't remember the feeling that many of us had, particularly people with no competence. In America, and I later found out in Israel also, that this was going to be Israel's worst nightmare. We were going to face all the Arab countries at the same time, which no one thought could happen. [...] And at that time the possibility that Israel could be overrun was not something that we didn't imagine. It could really happen. You know, which meant. I remember thinking about it in those days, what it would mean if Israel was overrun. So being in the States, my thinking was, "Look, if there's going to be a holocaust, and Israel is going to be wiped out, I want to be with my people."

Indeed, this woman immigrated to Israel, and found that many Israelis shared her feelings. This feeling of dread is referenced constantly in interviews with Jews and has numerous manifestations, from the personal to the collective and back: fear of another Holocaust, of grief, exile and rape, fear of being widowed or bereaved and, in one case at least, fear of drowning at sea.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, only two options existed in the superposition: Holocaust or victory.

Not only is it impossible to determine the source of the interviewee's rumor, there is also no way to track when the interviewee heard this rumor for the first time. Was it during the war or after its conclusion? Either way, the story has become an integral part of her war narrative, despite the fact that she only witnessed the telling of the story, rather than the event it describes. However, in her testimony, stories heard and events witnessed are granted equal status. Even today, when she is no longer a child and her critical thinking is more developed (in fact, she is an academic), the interviewee still believes that the story contains a grain of truth, and feels the need to 'protect' the narrative, so as not to dismiss it entirely from her war story.

In addition, although the interviewee is well acquainted with the final results of that war, it is interesting to examine how the rumor encapsulates the same fear of defeat that characterized the war. In retrospect, the Israeli victory would have neutralized such fears, but in practice, it did not. Fear of defeat remains part of the story, and in the narrative tradition, a few decades after the war, this fear is still present. This is probably related to the strong impression that such fears had on the young girl's state of mind at the time and her desire to reflect this terror to interviewers who are distant from this powerful state of consciousness. But her need to reflect this state of fear also contains the fact that while this war indeed ended decades earlier, the conflict itself has not been resolved. In other words, fear is present in the story because the enemy of that war – the Arab states – are still perceived as an enemy, and the threat is still valid, even if differently configured. As long as the situation has not changed dramatically, that is, as long as conflict and hostility

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<sup>8</sup> This derives from the well-known phrase that took root in those years: "The Arabs will throw us into the sea." Both Israelis and Palestinians interviewees suggest it probably originated from Egyptian radio propaganda.



remain, this rumor lives on, under the assumption that present-day audiences can still relate to its underlying logic.

However, it is apparent that fear is not the only motivating factor. Another theme that comes up in the story about Morasha is the loyalty of minority groups or groups that are perceived as marginalized by 'mainstream culture.' When she describes the residents of the Morasha neighborhood, she states, "Unlike their Jewish neighbors, they had televisions," despite the fact that the residents of Morasha were Jewish, just as the residents of Ramat Hasharon were. While the narrator is clearly aware of this fact, when she recalls the rumor that she heard in her youth, she embeds herself in the internal logic of the story and her current perceptions: the Jewish residents who immigrated to Israel from Iraq and Yemen spoke the language of the enemy, Arabic, and because of this, they might have heard and believed the enemy's propaganda. It is possible that this perception moved the tellers of this rumor to question the loyalty of these groups to the Israeli nation. As history teaches, minority groups are frequently viewed with suspicion and have often been the subject of rumors. In this respect, the rumor is twofold: it is framed as a rumor, while, at the same time, it is a story about gullible people who believed in the propaganda or rumors spread by the Arab media.

Sectarian tensions are still central to the current public discourse in Israel, as they were in the early days of the state. Without casting aspersions on the interviewee herself, her story addresses an issue that is still sensitive today: the historical and cultural affinity of Jewish immigrants from Middle Eastern countries to Arab culture, in contrast to Ashkenazi Jews' distance from it. Common language plays a key role in this affinity. A report that examines Israeli Jews' knowledge of Arabic indicates that knowledge of the Arabic language is perceived differently by various groups of the Jewish population in Israel; but generally, it is perceived as the language of the enemy:

As for attitudes toward the language, a majority of the respondents (57.8%) believe that knowledge of Arabic is important. However, an even larger majority of Israelis believe that this is due to security-related reasons (65.4%). (Shenhav et al. 2015: 8).

It is worth noting that there has been a change among those who are closest to the language. Decades after the founding of Israel, descendants of Jews who emigrated from Arab countries hold largely negative attitudes towards the Arabic language. The latter, which represents the enemy in the eyes of many Israeli Jews, evokes emotions among them:

An intra-generational analysis found that first-generation immigrants from Arab countries are more positive about all aspects of the language, whereas the second and third generations have moved away from it and express a more negative attitude toward it. (Shenhav et al. 2015: 8)

## 4 Communication and Confusion

If you tell where they're going [...] They may never get there.

(An American poster, from World War I, advises servicemen and other citizens to avoid careless talk)

An anecdote titled "Information," from *Yalkut Hakeẓavim* amusingly demonstrates the desperate search for information during times of fighting.

One day, Benny stopped one of the guys, who was in a hurry to go the Tel Aviv, and told him: "Listen, go with me later, I've got a lot of information". The situation was very tense, and the guy waited for him nervously. When the Taxi finally moved, after two hours, Benny told him: "Listen, the situation is very bad," and fell asleep until Tel Aviv. (Ben Amos and Hefer 1963: 51)

Indeed, in tense times, the value of any piece of information increases. Much as in the market economy driven by novelty, there is much more demand for it. In such situations, people usually turn to media. But then they find out it does not meet their expectations.

The "white flag" rumor touches on another theme which arises in almost every interview about the Six-Day War: mass communication. In fact, since the emergence of mass-mediated journalism, it is impossible to speak about rumors and conspiracies without relating to mass communications. The relationships between rumors and mass media are complex: rumors and conspiracy theories, often transmitted by word of mouth (and currently via social media) constitute an alternative pipeline for the transmission of information, in parallel to institutional mass communication. However, this is not a binary division: after all, popular information that appears in the mass media is also translated into popular knowledge following its acceptance. This entanglement can result in confusion, or failure to have reliable facts, particularly during periods of warfare. Such uncertainty is nourished by news from the mass media, from information transmitted by word of mouth or from a combination of both.

When speaking about mass communications during wartime, the issue of censorship becomes relevant. Bloch assumes that media censorship plays a crucial role regarding the spreading of rumors, as he argues, "Not only did it gag and paralyze the press during all the years of the war. Its intervention, suspected even when it had not occurred, never ceased to render unbelievable in the eyes of the public even the true reports that it allowed to leak through" (2013: 10). Bloch quotes the French playwright Pierre Chaine, who wittily claims: "The opinion prevailed in the trenches that anything could be true except what was allowed in print" (Bloch 2013: 10). Bloch considered the deep lack of trust in the media, based upon the awareness that it operates under pressures of censorship and propaganda, resulting in a "wonderful renewal of oral tradition, the ancient mother of myths and legends" (Bloch 2013: 10). Within this context, the rumor about Morasha takes on additional layer of meaning: it not only serves as an alternative mode for distributing information, but also

relates to the information referred to in mass communication channels, ridiculing the reliability of such media in times of war.

A witty saying, whose source is unknown, states, “If you don’t read the newspaper, you’re uninformed. If you read the newspaper you are misinformed.”<sup>9</sup> This adage describes the situation before and during the Six-Day War accurately. As with any war, there were feelings of uncertainty on the home front and the battlefield, accompanied by incorrect information. This is illustrated by an interviewee who resided in the Negev, in Southern Israel, in June 1967, and describes the sense of helplessness during the waiting period:

We didn’t know [what was going to happen]. There was uncertainty. They took us out, they sat us down, they prepared us, but nobody knew exactly what would happen. It was really an unpredictable situation. We sat there and waited, and the waiting was not pleasant, you could say.

Another interviewee, who was 15 years old and lived in Jerusalem, uses similar terminology when describing the experience of sitting in the bomb shelter:

There were not many shelters, and nothing was clear – you hear a lot of explosions, you don’t know. You hear airplanes, and you don’t know if these are planes that will bomb you [...] you always live in a lack of certainty, until you go outside.

One more interviewee, who was a mother in her late thirties with small kids, spent the entire war in a bomb shelter because “going out would be life-threatening,” indicates that she was not exposed to any reports about what was happening. When asked, “Did you have any reports of what was going on around?” she replied, “Hardly, the soldiers and the police who came brought us all kinds of news.”

A Jewish woman who was with her husband in the United States in the days leading up to the war, both were in their twenties in 1967, recalls:

At the outbreak of the war – I do not need to remind you, you know – Israel kept its silence in terms of media. That is, in the United States, we did not know at all what was happening, apart from what the Arab states were saying. So, on the first day of the war we knew a war would break out, and we knew the war broke out. We knew that they dug graves in Tel Aviv.

According to her, on the first day of the war, Egyptian media announced that Egypt

[...] attacked, arrived in Tel Aviv, killed all the men, raped all the women, burned everything on its way. On the second day of the war we heard that Syria entered, that Syria attacked from the north, and that Haifa was burning. And that the Syrian army met the Egyptian army in Tel Aviv, and that they conquered everything.

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<sup>9</sup> Many attribute this quotation to Mark Twain, however, this is probably misinformation in itself.

The interviewee says she did not remain indifferent to these harrowing reports. Even during the interview itself, she sobbed slightly when sharing the following:

I remember we sat on the porch of our house, and I remember I told him [her partner] – this is a bit of a Jerusalem story – I told him that it was so soon after the Holocaust, when the world wanted to destroy the entire people of Israel, and here the Arab states are destroying Israel and all the world is sitting on its hands and nobody is doing a thing to help Israel, nobody is helping, nobody is sending an army, sending airplanes, they do not send anything! They aren't doing anything! In that kind of world, I do not want to live. There is no reason to continue.

But a falsity of great magnitude is revealed at the end, as she continued:

At the end of the week, we learned that they were all liars, and all the stories told [...] of course, Jordan said they conquered the new Jerusalem, and nothing was left for Israel, nothing, nothing, and we did not know the truth, because the State of Israel did not announce anything to the world!

The interviewee's story draws a connection between the lack of reliable information, false reports (in this case, reported in the media), and fear – illustrating how they feed upon one another. In the days leading up to and during the fighting, civilians on the home front had no way of receiving a complete or accurate picture of what was happening from radio broadcasts. Jews and Palestinians alike listened to Egyptian President Nasser claiming that the Egyptian air force was invincible, to the propaganda of Egyptian newscaster Ahmed Sa'id, and others. The interviews indicate that as the pressure mounted, the lack of information became more difficult to bear, resulting in a greater need to listen to the enemy's radio broadcasts.

It is possible that in many cases misinformation was intentionally disseminated on the radio to raise morale. It is also possible that various media outlets spread false information for strategic reasons. During wars, armies want to take control of any information that spreads between citizens, both among their own population and the enemies' population. Considering that, commands may distribute incorrect information to deceive the enemy to gain advantage (cf. Handel 1988: 385–430), and, at the same time, states ask soldiers and citizens to keep quiet regarding any military operations, simple and complicated ones. An effective illustration of that can be found in official American posters from World War II. In one of those, about a picture of a soldier training, the title says: "If you tell where they're going [...] they may never get there." In another, a hand dressed in the colors of the USA flag is shutting the mouth of a man. The title warns in bold letters: "Quiet! Loose talk can cost lives." Another version, a more poetic one, says: "Loose Lips Might Sink Ships." In other words, it can be said that in wartime, states have an interest in undermining the dissemination of reliable information while contributing to the dissemination of misleading information.

Shimshon Yitzhaki, in his book *In the Eyes of the Arabs: The Six-Day War and its Aftermath*, describes the relationship between the regime and the media in Egypt as extremely close:

The strategy for Egypt's war against Israel is represented by two figures, who many viewed as representing only a single figure: Abdel Nasser, who during his public speeches took a consistent stand on what is known as "resolving the Palestine problem," in coordination with the progress of events, and Mohammed Hasnin Heikhel, the Editor-in-Chief of "Al-Aharam," the most important Egyptian daily newspaper (Egyptian newspapers were by law under the authority of the only legal party in this state known as "The Socialist Arab Union," and are all, in practice, under the supervision of the regime), who would discuss this strategy in his lengthy weekly column [...]. [These two figures] determined that was the only solution for the eradication of the existence of the State of Israel, and that the war initiative must come from the side of the Arabs. Both of them advanced the principle that the Arabs must determine the timing and location of their future war with Israel. (Yitzhaki 1969: 11–12; translated from the original Hebrew).

The propaganda before and during the war, thus, operated in two directions: Palestinian interviewees listened to radio broadcasts from Arab states (in various interviews, they speak specifically of Egyptian and Jordanian radio stations) and to Israeli radio stations.<sup>10</sup> In parallel, Jewish residents of Israel listened mainly to local radio, but also to the broadcasts of "the Voice of Thunder" from Cairo, where they heard never-ending threats, broadcast also in Hebrew. This was a clear case of psychological warfare being directed towards the residents of Israel. In Egyptian broadcasts, against the backdrop of military march music, the broadcaster sent threats and hatred in both proper and colloquial Hebrew:

The crucial hour is upon us, the time in which your rule must take account. Your rulers will not help you. You are now suffering the consequences of their threats. They have befallen upon you a holocaust due to their policy of threats. They will not be able to save you. Because they have buried you in a trap. Death will be yours, in the morning or the evening. And if night comes, we will clothe you in its black grandeur. Death will be cast upon you from every place. (Hellbuzz 2013. The quote is taken from the record "Kol

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<sup>10</sup> Israeli television was then in its infancy. While broadcasting began in March 1966 with "educational television," the first broadcast of 'Israeli TV' (what became the public 'Channel One') was an IDF military parade on Independence Day, 1968. In subsequent years, there were only broadcasts on certain evenings of the week. In parallel to these partial broadcasts, Israeli television owners, who were few in numbers, also received the broadcasts from Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. For a report on the beginning of Israeli television in 1966, see Avrech (1966). For a report on the broadcast of the IDF military parade and broadcasts from Arab states, see Reicher (1968).

Haraam” [the Voice of Thunder] from Cairo, published in Israel by R. T. A LTD., several weeks after the war ended).

The broadcasts were filled with reports that, in retrospect, were mainly false. Quoting, again, from the Egyptian radio:

The forces of Moshe Dayan retreating in panic under the squashing Arab. The defeat of Dayan on the first day of fighting was embarrassing. He is survived by an infantry division on the Kuntela front, but lost the entire division. (Hellbuzz 2013)

The threats were not always successful. Many Israelis recall the threat by Ahmed Sa’id in colloquial Hebrew. The Hebrew word for fronts, *chaziotot*, is very similar to the term for brassieres, *chaziot*, and Said was heard to have mistakenly announced, “We will attack on all the brassieres.” A careful listening to the recordings of this broadcast reveals that the broadcaster actually said something more similar to ‘fronts,’ but was ridiculed in Israel as having said “brassieres,” a perception that took root. Interviewees claim these statements were thought to be ridiculous even before the battles began, but gained new broad popularity after the victory. This mispronunciation was etched into many Israelis’ memories – it is often brought up in testimonies. It illustrates the great pleasure in poking fun at the enemy, and is – also typical of inimical relationships – an opportunity to feminize the enemy. Emerging victorious or “macho,” Israelis enjoyed and still enjoy the image of an Egyptian army with feminine qualities.

Despite threatening content, among Jews, listening to broadcasts from Arab countries became a kind of national hobby. A Jewish Israeli interviewee, who was then about 30 years old, and now a well-known researcher and writer in Israel, recalled:

We enjoyed hearing the voice and speech and analyzing it afterwards. It was a “happening,” it was a show! [...] this was Nasser. My uncle, my mother’s brother, would listen with us; he was a lawyer and political commentator on the *Voice of Israel* in Arabic, and another expert, who, in my opinion, had greater knowledge and common sense than either of us. So the three of us would sit and then analyze what transpired, and more or less try to predict what would happen next.

The Palestinians were also glued to the radio. A Palestinian interviewee who was 17 years old in July 1967, stated: “There were always songs, always on the radio Ahmed Sa’id would mess with your head and everyone would listen to him [...] He would fill your head, because he would speak seriously and with authority.”

Another Palestinian, who was a teenager back then, heaps praise on the controversial broadcaster:

First of all, he would deliver a speech in a way that subdued the listeners. In addition, the depth of confidence that was in his voice made all the people

[...] who would not listen to him? And you know, that was a period when the relations between Egypt and Jordan were bad, and people would secretly listen to Ahmed Sa'id [...]. Everyone was listening to Ahmed Sa'id, but secretly. At night, they would sit in their homes and close themselves off and listen to Ahmed Sa'id. Apart from that, he was a good speaker and was viewed as very reliable, and would speak to the Egyptian army on the issues of the day at the time.

According to this interviewee, these broadcasts interested the entire Palestinian community:

Often, people would discuss what Ahmed Sa'id had said that night. The discussions were first of all about what Ahmed Sa'id had said, and what benefit could be reaped from this topic. And if Abdel Nasser gave a speech, there would be a week of discussions about what Abdel Nasser said.

It is worth noting that not only civilians suffered from lack of trusted information but also the leadership of various states. Historians claim that among the causes of the 1967 war, lack of reliable information was a significant one. The Israeli army and intelligence failed to understand the tension between Arab states, and leaders of the Arab states failed to figure out how much Israel was ready to preempt that process militarily (Oren 2002: 340–341).<sup>11</sup> The fact is that Israeli files from the period show the unawareness of the power system in the inter-Arab world, whereas Arab sources reveal a degree of misconception about the functioning of the Israeli forces (Oren 2002: 340–341).

The lack of certainty and information operated on two parallel planes: firstly, the lack of understanding of events on a large scale. Secondly, every individual's lack of a sense of security regarding their own fate, as the danger of combat mounted. The partial and false radio reports, claiming to fill this gap, sowed more confusion than reassurance among Israelis, Palestinians, Egyptians and Jordanians alike.

Spanish artist Francisco de Goya stated in the title of one of his etchings in the series "Los Caprichos" (The Whims) that "The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters."<sup>12</sup> In the case of rumors before the Six-Day War, one can replace "reason" with "reliable information," and argue that ignorance becomes widespread in the absence of official reports. This gives rise to hopes with no basis, alongside radical fears, and chaos. All of this served as fertile soil for the spread of stories, which, to paraphrase Borges, were "more credible than reality." Over time, these stories did not disappear, but were assimilated into new contexts.

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Oren is an Israeli Historian, who later became a moderate-right politician. His book, published some years before he got into politics, is one of the most comprehensive and detailed pieces of research about the Six-Day War. It is generally considered to be a trusted, balanced and reliable book, even though, like any other material dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it also met some negative reviews.

<sup>12</sup> In the original: "*El sueño de la razón produce monstruos.*"

## 5 Conspiracy Theories: Rewriting Reality

Conspiracy is a close relative of rumor. If rumors appear quickly in situations of information gaps and harness only temporary validity (until the rumor is verified or refuted), conspiracy is a more elaborate construct. Gary Alan Fine and Bill Ellis argue that:

Conspiracy theories are not precisely rumors, but they are constructed out of rumors, They rely on what scholars call a cultural grammar – a nexus of belief – combining plausible elements into what has been termed a “totalizing discourse” [...] Given accepted public knowledge, these beliefs take disorder and make it orderly by fittings the situation into widely held assumptions of human motivation, in other words, conspiracy theories can explain large swaths of an otherwise ambiguous world; they are transcended explanations. Unlocking a closed world with a cleverly forged key. (2010: 53–54)

Whereas rumor is viewed as a “hasty” genre, that is, one that does not require complicated inventive work, conspiracy requires detailed thought. There are those who claim that conspiracies are often based on the documents that allegedly confirm them (Fine and Ellis 2010). Conspiracies are differentiated from rumors regarding the dimension of time: rumor is perceived as temporary and transient; conspiracy, on the other hand, is adapted for a longer survival time.

One of the most prominent conspiracies that appeared in the various interviews on the events of 1967 relates to President Nasser. The Palestinian owner of a Palestinian laundromat in Jerusalem’s Old City, who was 23 years old in July 1967, referred to this conspiracy when explaining with great patience to a Jewish interviewer why the Arab states lost the war to Israel. The story begins when Hussein, the King of Jordan, who required military backing, turned to Nasser. Nasser assured him that he would “cover Jordan from above” with his planes. However, the interviewee states: “There was someone who was close to Abdel Nasser, an actual relative of his, and he was responsible for the entire Egyptian army. So Israel and America bought this man, [...] he received a million dollars!”

In this story, the interviewee claims that Abed al-Hakim Amer (Nasser’s relative) promised the United States and Israel that he would keep Egypt’s aircraft on the ground, making it possible to bomb them. Afterwards, he went swimming with Nasser in the Red Sea. This suggests that in this conspiracy tale, a million dollars is only a symbolic amount, recalling a typological number. If Axel Olrik’s epic laws of folk narrative (1965[1965]) were applied to this tale, the amount of one million dollars would surely be a typological number.<sup>13</sup>

This conspiracy was found to be widespread among Palestinian interviewees. Some mentioned it indirectly, and some were asked directly about it and claimed

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<sup>13</sup> For an in-depth discussion of this and another interview with this interviewee, see Salamon and Bendix (2020).



they were familiar with it. At the same time, other conspiracies were remembered in the same vein, even if they were less consolidated. A Palestinian interviewee claimed:

The war of '67 was called a war but was not really a war. It was not a war, but was a coordinated, planned event. One hundred percent planned. King Hussein worked with them [the Israelis], Hafez Al-Assad [the Syrian leader] worked for them, and Abdel Nasser worked for them, despite the fact that they were the ones who brought about his death. They killed him, but all the others were working for the Jews. It is a well-known thing.

Another Palestinian interviewee argued that the weapons of the Egyptian army were “fake,” but did not know exactly how to explain this claim. He refused to state from where or why the Egyptian army received fake weapons.

Regarding the “Million Dollar Conspiracy,” further scrutiny of the details may explain why it seems credible to those who tell it. During the months preceding the war, the Egyptians boasted to the Arab world and to the State of Israel about the unbeatable capabilities of its air force, which it claimed could eliminate Israel if it desired. But in real time, Israel succeeded in attacking Egypt’s aircraft while still on the ground in a surprise attack and, in essence, won the war before it began.

The image of Abed al-Hakim Amer clearly contributed to the success of this conspiracy. Nasser was a revered and beloved figure among Arabs, and they had difficulty blaming him for the historic loss. According to this conspiracy, he fell victim to deceit of a cunning member of his family. Indeed, such was the image of Amer in the Arab world as the 1967 War approached: he was viewed as a corrupt, greedy figure who lacked loyalty and integrity (Oren 2002: 40–41).

This impression also resonates with the testimonies given in this project. When hearing the name of Amer, one of the Palestinian interviewees suddenly bursts into laughter. “Abed al-Hakim Amer! The one who made a mess for him [Nasser].” The interviewer asks, “Why a mess?” The interviewee responds, “He and Israel talked that way, and acted that way, acted that way. They say seven days? For two days, there was not even a war.” The interviewer asks for clarification: “But Amer helped Israel?” And the interviewee replies, “Yes! Yes!” The interviewer again attempts to clarify, “On purpose? Did he know? He wanted to help Israel?” The interviewee replies, “Yes, he helped. All Arabs helped the Israelis. The whole world is helping Israel.”<sup>14</sup>

Another Palestinian, who was 20 when the war broke out, refers to relationships between Nasser and Amer, and also claims there was a conspiracy:

I want to tell you about Abdel Nasser. Abdel Nasser, my dear, I’m telling you the truth and do not get angry with me. Abdel Nasser was a 100 % good man, straight, honest, and everyone around him laughed at him. King Hussein

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<sup>14</sup> The interview was conducted in Hebrew, a language that the interviewee does not speak fluently. He switched from past to present tense frequently, drawing the listener into the intensity of the remembered events.

laughed at him and conspired against him, Hafez al-Assad conspired against him, his Minister of Defense, who was a relative of his [...] his sister [...] his sister [...]. Abed al-Hakim Amer. The Jews took him to Tel Aviv before the war, before '67. He was the Minister of Defense, he went on a military tour and they captured him and took him to Tel Aviv, and there reached an agreement with him. The Egyptian army was wiped out from the beginning, within minutes [...]. These are the facts! The facts, meaning that everyone knows them, God is my witness! The Jews never defeated all the Arab armies due to their might, but due to their intelligence. Through their minds! Everyone conspired against Abdel Nasser, and Abdel Nasser was surprised.

One more Palestinian male interviewee, who was 15 years old during the war, refers to the same conspiracy theory:

When the war began, Abed al-Hakim Amer was the deputy of Abdel Nasser. He was at Goldan A-J'azeria with some girls, they drank and drank. What is this? The whole world knows this [...] they drank [alcohol] and danced [...] and nobody from the military, the important ones, were in the army [at their posts]. Israel's army attacked all Arab areas, Egyptians, Syrians, Jordanians. Nobody. Where is Abed al-Hakim Amer? He was [...] drinking. He asked Israel or America to give him permission to leave by air, to go to Sinai. Sinai [...] was finished [...] under the control of the Jews. Now the Palestinian people [...] how do you say, were in shock. They entered a state of bewilderment.

Not only rumors, but also conspiracies tend to flood to the surface, the hidden streams of consciousness. In research about conspiracies on the spread of HIV in Africa – many believed it was a deliberate plot of the western world against black people – anthropologist Dider Fassin concludes that sometimes a “paranoid” way of thinking may also tell us something important: “It can provide some general clues to interpret the current state of the world, to comprehend how inequalities are translated into plots and how anxieties put international relations to the test, revealing profound tensions” (Fassin 2011: 48). According to him, these theories are a “window on the embodiment of memory – the way in which the past is lived in the present” (Fassin 2011: 48).

So we may ask, what does the million dollar conspiracy reveal? The first foundation that facilitated this conspiracy to thrive is probably the disappointment of the Arab states' crushing and unexpected defeat in the war. A conspiracy seeks to explain an inconceivable reality. Fine and Ellis (2010) sketch a model with three phases explaining how a conspiracy is constructed and spread following a disaster. In the first phase, “crisis management,” confused individuals' attempts to understand what happened and what is expected in the future. Upon this backdrop, improvised hypotheses float to the surface. During the next phase, when a measure of stability returns, the focus of rumors changes – as the time comes to cast blame and

to expose the “villains hiding in the shadows.” In the third phase, the rumors become more detailed and nuanced. Emotions become gentler, the narrative becomes more complex, and themes begin to take shape. In this way, conspiracies are born.

In her article on rumors during war, Galit Hasan-Rokem points out the great importance of rumors to the defeated side:

We may view them [rumors] as manipulative machinations of power, taking advantage of products of popular culture, or instead we may consider them as subversive operations undermining power structure, drawing their energy from the vitality of popular or rather folk culture. (2005: 31)

According to her, rumor has an “ideological function”:

to bridge over the cognitive gaps tearing the tissue of normative beliefs and standards [...] the rumors thus reintroduces a new balance into the shaken belief system, a balance that is concretely represented in the tale by the scales. (Hasan-Rokem 2005: 35).

This is also applicable for conspiracies and helps to explain the “million dollar” conspiracy. But we must ask why this narrative specifically was formulated to account for the defeat?

One of the Palestinian interviewees, the owner of the laundromat, proposes two other conspiracies: the first claims that Israelis who crowded the Old City market right after the war’s end bought the entire stock of the shops so that the vendors would have to go to Israeli suppliers and buy goods from them. A second theory holds that the Israeli government encouraged Palestinians to convert Jordanian Dinars into Israeli Lira at a loss. Along with the “million dollar” conspiracy theory, all these narratives have one common topic: trade and money. The narrator describes this act not only as cunning financially but also as a form of humiliation.

It appears that the presence of money in these stories has two bases. Firstly, anti-imperialist thinking casts the United States and its perceived vassal state, Israel, as states that are so strong and rich that they can control the world exclusively through their purchasing power. Alongside American imperialism, such stories are related to a more ancient stereotype: the age-old perception that claims Jews have a good sense for money, in its less offensive version, or that Jews have unbridled greed, in its more offensive, antisemitic version. This theory harkens to *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the infamous antisemitic publication of the early 20th century, still popular today, which details the most successful anti-Semitic conspiracy of all. According to that publication, a group of Jews, “the Elders of Zion,” is planning to take global control through a dispute between various states, distributing weapons and terrorism, forging a disconnection between the global leaders and citizens, and more. For the present study of conspiracy theories surrounding 1967, the chapter dealing with the Jews’ economic program is most important: the *Protocols* argue that Jews intend to accumulate a fortune so massive that the world’s largest bodies will be dependent upon Jews, who will, in the end, lead the global economy to a major

international financial crisis. People around the world will lack basic necessities and will turn to conflict, while the Elders of Zion bring about a political revolution through economic means (Marsden 1925).

This document resonates in one of the stories recorded for this project. A Palestinian who lived on French Hill (North Jerusalem) in 1967, indicated that his father was a very senior member of the High Islamic Council of Jerusalem. He explained that before the war, while his family was still living in Jerusalem, a Muslim man approached his father and informed him of a conference being held at the Hilton Hotel, near the central bus station in the city:

[The Muslim man] told him there was a conference of all the Jewish rabbis from all around the world. For a fee of 50 Dinar, the stranger promised to obtain information about what was transpiring at the conference – probably through infiltration, after which he would update the interviewee’s father about what was going on there. He told the interviewee’s father, “On the day the meeting ends, send me your son, and I will inform you what decisions were made.” The interviewee stated, “He came [...] I think four, four-thirty in the afternoon [...] and said to him: ‘Please sir, here are the secret and public decisions of the conference.’” The interviewee claims that his father’s hair “fell out” [the interviewer thinks that his hair “stood on end”] from astonishment, upon reading the document. According to him, there were certain decisions. The first was that “all leaders of the Zionist movement should search for women who could seduce the leaders and heads of the Arab states.” That is to say, “that these Zionist women will be loyal to them [the Arabs], will get to know them, will operate among them, serving as spies.” The second decision was “the need to act now to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the area around it” within 20 years. The third decision, “The West Bank is an integral part of Israel, and we must end the Jordanian occupation of the West Bank.” The fourth decision was that “West Bank residents who are not Israeli or Jewish should leave the country.”

According to the interviewee, there were ten decisions in total – again a mythic number, perhaps reminiscent of the Ten Commandments. The other decisions, he said, dealt with questions of “how to build the state and the nature of the relationship between religious leaders and the government.” It is hard not to recognize the tremendous similarity between *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and the story of the rabbis coming to Israel from all over the world in order to expand the Jewish state in the Middle East at the expense of the Palestinians, while strengthening the relationship between the state and Jewish religion. This rumor continues to function in the present day, as its various components form a bridge between the war and the reality fifty years later.

On this topic, a Jewish interviewee suggests:

They [the Palestinians] did not exactly show what they saw in us. There were those who saw in us “demons,” they could not believe that we had defeated them [...] and there were those [...] for example, all the vendors and shopkeepers in the market who thanked Allah every day that the Jews were coming because their profits skyrocketed!

The interviewee mentions a conversation with a Palestinian:

I have a friend. I started to buy all kinds of things from the people there. He says to me, “How many Jews are there in the land?” I told him, “We are less than two and a half million.” He says to me, “No way!” I say to him, “Okay, then how many do you think there are?” He says, “Minimum, ten million.” I say to him, “From your mouth to God!” He did not believe me! He said to me, “What’s going on? Every day they storm the Old City [...] they have emptied the markets, the warehouses, the vendors. We import and import, and as much as we import, it is not enough. Do not tell me two and a half million, ten [million], minimum!” And this was not one or two people. They needed to tell themselves that the Jews were much bigger and had many more resources than we had. They would describe us as heroic fighters, foxes, demons, because otherwise how could they [Israel] defeat them [the Arab states], how could they defeat Nasser? How could they defeat the Egyptian army?

The interviewer asked about the use of the term “demons,” and the interviewee explains:

“Demons” in the sense of great bastards, they know how to fight, they know how to achieve [...] otherwise, you could never believe that they defeated us, you need to give them power far beyond what have they really have, otherwise, it is really unfathomable.

If the problems created in 1967 had been resolved, it is possible that these stories would document a fading memory. However, as today’s reality is rooted in the events that took place in 1967, the opposite is occurring: the conspiracies are getting more consolidated. Even today, Israel and the United States, rich and influential Western countries, are perceived as having deep bonds of friendship, while the Arab world seems to remain in conflict with itself. Palestinians continue to feel isolated. Conspiracies do not only explain what happened then, but also the Palestinians’ difficult situation in the present.

Conspiracies are, thus, also associated with the concept of nationhood, in a complicated way. Since the rise of democracies, some scholars argue, conspiracies began to focus less on minority groups and more on political groups, primarily on political elites. Following that, embracing conspiracy theories often implies a commitment to a group of counter-conspirators, who are trying to reveal an organized enemy (Campion Vincent 2005: 104–107).

When an individual tells a conspiracy, his sense of belonging may intensify. The conspiracy theory reaffirms his or her belonging to the group and, in this case, the nation. A study conducted by anthropologists Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff provides some similar insights. The two show how stories – in their case, about crime – are used by individuals to associate themselves with society. People tend to identify with victims of crimes, reminding one that the incidents could have happen at any time and to them too. In these stories about crimes, it is all for each, and each for all. They argue that

the popular calculus of crime also works by magnifying single, epic events into mythostates. These are events that, in their singularity, come to signify collective being and trauma – and, in turn, give rise to the most terrifying statistic for all, namely, that everyone has intimate familiarity with one or more persons who have suffered brutal attack. (Comaroff and Comaroff 2016: 174)

And similarly to conspiracy, the facts in these conversations and stories are flexible and the agenda is stronger than them: to expose the real mechanism of reality. As the Comaroffs write: “Crime statistics, then, count and discount the quality of life, and the state of the nation, in a less-than-legible world. In making the singular into plural and vice versa, they give the lie to the conventional, bloodless sociology of dis/order” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2016: 178). Palestinians may see the war and its results as a big crime of which they are all victims. The conspiracies turn it from a spontaneous happening into a planned and malicious event. The conspiracy mongers mythologize this conception and, thus, strengthen themselves as a part of a nation, and, at the same time, as the only ones who know the truth.

## 6 Victory as a Divine Plan

By somewhat extending the boundaries of the genre, one can identify a conspiratorial dimension, or ‘conspiratorial logic’ in the widespread Jewish thinking that views the victory of the 1967 War as part of a divine plan. Indeed, many highly religious Jews speak about the war in this way – as an event planned in advance, whose results were predetermined. Jewish interviewees stated this belief explicitly. If conspiracies deal with elites, God is the greatest and most powerful elite of them all. This approach is interesting, as it challenges the thinking of conspiracies as necessarily a malicious action.<sup>15</sup> Referring back to Fine and Ellis (2010), this can also be considered as a unique kind of a “pipe dream conspiracy.”

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<sup>15</sup> Despite this, it is worthwhile noting that some interviewees, both religious and secular alike, do not view the war as a miracle or predetermined event but as a problematic, complex and even negative event. An interviewee who defines herself as a woman of faith states, “I believe in God, but I do not think the war was a divine miracle or something. He [God] helped us due to our religious nature. But

Some Israelis found mythical dimensions in the Six-Day War. While legends occur in the past, and tales occur beyond the dimensions of time, myths are seen as having existed at the beginning of time and shaped the logic of the reality in which we live (Honko 1984: 50–51). For societies telling a given myth, it relays a description of events that established the world order and its outcomes (Honko 1984: 50–51). However, other myths actually take place after the creation of the world, but the events they describe are ones that recreated the universe or humanity – usually after a destruction of the previous reality. An example of this can be found in flood myths (Dundes 1997). Reading the end of May, 1967, in mythic terms, the approaching war was assessed as an event that could bring an end to the Jewish state. After the overwhelming victory, the war was suddenly viewed as a historic event which consolidated Israel anew as an unassailable regional power. The war took on two phases, one after the other: from the possibility of annihilation to a renewed sense of creation. Indeed, many felt God's presence during the war: various interviewees, both secular and religious alike, use the word “miracle” when describing the unfathomable victory over the Arab states. One religious Jewish interviewee stated:

There can be no doubt! An event so monumental, a change like this, it can only be the hand of God. Think of it [...] Egypt, Jordan, Syria [...] all in six days, finished! Can you believe what this is? Can you imagine what kind of a turnaround this is? It is simply impossible to understand what kind of a miracle this is. You do not know what state we were in on the eve of the war, what kind of fears we had [...] it is unbelievable what happened and how it happened. Abdel Nasser was frightening to me! That name, when he spoke and appeared in the media, I shook with fear. There was fear of this figure. Suddenly, Israel succeeds in overcoming every force facing it [...] really, a miracle! A miracle!

When this interviewee was asked whether the victory was part of a divine plan, he replies, “I have no doubt about it. Thank God that we have the Holy One, Blessed is He.”

As with many myths, this victory had at least two epic heroes: Moshe Dayan and Yitzhak Rabin. Many still speak with reverence about each of them. A religious Jewish interviewee, who introduces himself as a rabbi, and who was 33 years old in 1967, stated: “We had one miracle. Moshe Dayan, who was Minister of Defense at the time. He was [...] also, not the most righteous man. But I claim one thing, he will receive his reward in heaven.”

Another interviewee, who was a young boy during the war, heaps great praise on Rabin:

The only thing I remember as a child, during this period, which gave me a little bit of self-confidence, was that Rabin who was the IDF Chief of Staff at

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I do not think there was some kind of miracle here. I also do not think that the Land of Israel should be ours [...].”

the time, visited one of the air force camps, and said the sentence, with his slow, secure manner of talking, “An air force like this cannot be defeated.” This gave great confidence, you know, suddenly you hear the Chief of Staff say a sentence like that. I think that it really, in my opinion, as a child, was the sentence when I realized that we will probably continue living, that they will not throw us into the sea so quickly.

Adulation of these Israeli leaders even existed among Palestinians: a Palestinian vendor in the market of Jerusalem’s Old City, for example, expresses a sense of longing for Dayan and Rabin when he spoke to me at the entrance to his store:

[Israeli leaders in the past] really, were great, good, and spoke to us, and would walk by and say hello. But since they killed him [Rabin] until now – nothing [...] previously, they were more powerful, and good! I, you know what? Believe me. Moshe Dayan, every week would walk by here – and say hello to me. Yes, Moshe Dayan would come here? Really! Moshe Dayan.

These are just a few references, for the sake of illustration. Moshe Dayan and Yitzhak Rabin are mentioned hundreds of times in interviews, both by Jews and Palestinians, generally with praise and admiration.

Hypotheses and assumptions, as well as rumors and conspiracy theories – the former more spontaneous and the latter better organized – seek to explain a reality that seems incomprehensible. The results of the 1967 War seemed inexplicable to Israeli Jews, who were preparing for a second Holocaust, and days later found themselves living in a state three times its previous size. Conversely, Palestinians, who were preparing for the great victory of the Arab states, serving to repair the painful blow of 1948, found themselves living under an occupation and abandoned by the very same Arab states. Contrary to rumors, which tend to be fragmentary and deal with individual events, conspiracy theories sketch a complete picture. In the case of 1967, the radical and sweeping results brought about stories beyond the reasonable and the everyday, which explain reality as a series of complex and monumental power struggles that exceed conventional explanations. Sometimes these stories even include God. Over the years, these stories have been embedded in broader narratives, which reinforce them.

## 7 Summary

Stories collected in the study, both rumors and conspiracies, those recalled from the period of the war and those that have developed and been narrated in hindsight, are narrated by interviewees, irrespective of their ethnicity or national affiliation. However, from the materials collected to date, pure conspiracies are more frequently related to by Palestinians than Israelis. I argue that this is mainly due to the need to justify the defeat. For Palestinians, this was not just a temporary defeat, but a failure for which the Palestinian people still pay a steep and bloody price until today. For



them, it was not just a historical, missed opportunity, but pain and injustice that endure. In this sense, conspiracies provide explanations for the current reality and also afford a sense of control through narrative logic. This is relevant for many of the rumors and conspiracies that continue to be retold.

In this essay, I have argued that rumors and conspiracies thrive in contexts in which uncertainty and lack of information are prevalent, with the Six-Day War serving as a productive environment for such conditions. The anxiety leading up to the war and its aftermath serve as fertile soil for the effective development and dissemination of such narratives, and their content is developed as a function of the prevailing perceptions of society. It is a system utilized to explain an uncertain reality. The “monster” that gives rise to lack of information and ignorance is not always scary at first glance, but is also by no means innocuous; it constitutes an alternative to an unattainable reality, but also represents an opening to a different truth, which reveals beliefs still simmering under the surface.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has existed for over a century, and the events of June 1967 served as a critical juncture. Rumors and conspiracy theories will not be tools that will determine this conflict or bring peace to the Middle East. However, listening to the stories allows for something that verification or refutation of the stories cannot help with. It lets us realize what the concepts, beliefs, fears and hopes are which guide individuals and entire communities faced with choices, in past and present times.

### **Primary Sources (Interviews, in alphabetic order according to first name)**

**A.A.** – Male, aged 73 when interviewed in Jerusalem in February, 2018.

**A.L.** – Female, aged 90 when interview in Jerusalem on January 9, 2018.

**A.M.** – Male, aged 73 when interviewed in Jerusalem on October 16, 2017.

**H.A.M.** – Male, aged 77 when interviewed in Jerusalem on April 22, 2017.

**A.N.** – Male, aged 70 when interviewed in Bethlehem on February 20, 2017.

**A.S.** – Male, aged 65 when interviewed in Jerusalem on March 21, 2017.

**B.A.S.** – Male, interviewed in Jaffa on July 24, 2016.

**E.A.** – Male, aged 79 when interviewed in Jerusalem in July 2017.

**E.B.** – Female, in her 80s when interviewed in Jerusalem on May 28, 2017.

**E.G.** – Female, in her 70s when interviewed in Jerusalem on September 4, 2017.

**I.T.** – Male, aged 63 when interviewed in Jerusalem in August 2019.

- M.B.** – Male, aged 69 when interviewed in Jerusalem in July 2019.
- N.** – Male, aged 77 when interviewed in Jerusalem on February 21, 2017.
- N.B.** – Female, aged 59 when interviewed in Jerusalem on April 29, 2017.
- N.H.** – Male, in his 60s when interviewed in Jerico on February 17, 2017.
- O.A.** – Female, aged 69 when interviewed by telephone on May 2, 2019.
- R.M.** – Male, aged 83 when interviewed in Jaffa on September 6, 2017.
- R.R.** – Female, in her 60s when interviewed in Jerusalem on March 17, 2017.
- S.W.** – Male, aged 870 when interviewed in Jerusalem in August 2018.
- Y.** – Male, aged 70 when interviewed in Jaffa in July 2019.
- Z.K.** – Male, aged 73 when interviewed in Afula on August 13, 2019.

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# Traces of Violence and the (Im-)Possibility of Reaching Closure in Narration

*Regina F. Bendix*

## 1 Introduction

War is inherently violent.<sup>1</sup> Buildings are destroyed, living beings are killed or wounded, the earth is devastated. Given this specter of annihilation, the fear of suffering alongside the hope to potentially be on the victorious side are intermeshed in the lead-up to a war. Memory stores this state of tension alongside the experience and outcome of war, but depending on an individual's position in the subsequent decades, the narration of the personal experience of this briefest of wars will filter the 'before' through the lens of the unfolding 'after.'

This article is historical in nature, a reflection on violence as remembered and reflected in interviews focused on what is best referred to as 1967, with the present inserting itself in the process of remembrance. The brief yet dramatic war of June 1967 altered a great deal in the political and everyday lives and landscapes of individuals born into one of the more than two groups in a Middle Eastern territory that has seen many changes in power over the past 150 years. However, May 2021 – the time of this writing – saw a renewed intensification of hostility between Israelis and

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was initially presented as a keynote in the international Folklore Fellows Summer School June 2021, organized by colleagues in Joensuu, Finland, but held online. The theme of the summer school was "Traditions of Violence – Violence in Tradition," hence the focus of the analysis presented here. I thank all colleagues and participants present for the event for their comments and suggestions, as well as Galit Hasan-Rokem and Hagar Salamon. The paper was substantially revised for this printed version to avoid repetitions with the present volume's introduction.

Palestinians. It will be added to the long list of larger and smaller altercations and wars between Israel, the PLO and Hamas, with or without the support of additional parties. What is old in the tension of 2021 is the reluctant reaction of surrounding Arab states.<sup>2</sup> What is new is the hostility within the state of Israel between Arab- or Palestinian-Israeli citizens and Zionists – indicating that the ambiguous relationship between many Palestinians living within Israel’s borders and those living in the West-bank and Gaza is turning toward mutual support. What 2021 will come to mean likely clarifies only years after this book reaches publication. The political contours of the region will remain fragile.

Examining the personal narratives embedded in the interviews carried out for the project ‘1967 and after,’ and searching for traces of violence recalled, a further element emerged. Individuals who look back to 1967 with their lives and livelihoods seemingly intact, narrated their memories in episodes, sometimes even polished kernels, that indicate an integration of the war’s events. Others dwelled on moments of shock, on blow-by-blow accounts left without conclusion, on losses, anxieties, and injustices, on conspiracies and disappointments that – unbottled in narration – remain open-ended, lingering through the decades, and, as many interviews acknowledged, never really unfurled in oral narration. It is this spectrum of differences that I hope to illustrate and analyze in this contribution. Before I turn to this task, I will offer a few remarks on violence as discussed in (some) cultural scholarship. The most recent outbreak between Israel and Gaza in May 2021 has brought to the surface the long-term, *structural violence* in the region, particularly because Palestinians inside Israel’s borders stood up as well. With the tentative analyses shared here, I try to focus closely on the speaking and narrating as personal, experiential ramifications of the macro, albeit dynamic, structural situation.

## 2 When and What Is Violence? Narrating 1967

The 1993 Congress of the German *Volkskunde* Society was dedicated to the topic “Violence in Culture” and the conference proceedings cover the tough potential of ethnographic and cultural historical work in this realm (Brednich and Hartinger 1994).<sup>3</sup> The many case studies in those two volumes confirm the presence of violence throughout history, as well as the recognition that the potential for violence is wired into human bodies (much as it is for love, thankfully). To what extent it is actualized is connected to the sociocultural or multispecies context into which we are enculturated. Play and ritual may offer opportunities for violence to manifest itself physically in culturally sanctioned or even celebrated form. However, there are few limits in language and in symbolic expressions to the assertion of what an

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/05/15/world/israel-gaza-updates#arab-states-condemn-israel-but-arent-going-beyond-words> (New York Times, May 15, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Of course, there is a plethora of relevant work on violence in cultural anthropology and beyond; e.g. Feldman (1991), Scheper-Hughes and Bourgeois (2003).

addresser may intend to be painful and an addressee may experience as violence – indeed, a great deal of literary and cinematographic narratives show in words and images dimensions of violence that surpass what most can imagine to be endurable. And, in these mediated realms, legal instruments generally lag behind in identifying and regulating what is felt to be transgressive in a violent manner.

The doing of violence, including and especially in war, is selective. Its reporting and remembering in narrative make up for a good part of written literature and film. Personal narrative is an essential means of concretizing, reframing and processing experiences of violence – provided they are being told. Overcoming trauma, Carl Lindahl and others would confirm, is tightly connected to naming the experience out loud (Lindahl and Foster 2017). In addition to the tendency to suppress memory of war (Joas and Knöbl 2008), there is also the fact that not all individuals process these experiences as traumatic. War may be a constant threat in some settings, generating emotional ‘fortitude’ and enhancing attitudinal practices focusing on personal strength and resistance, as one can argue, using Monique Scheer’s Bourdieuan approach to emotion (2012). Alternately, the constancy of war and its combined threat of violence, dispossession and displacement may also wear down such inner fortitude and make way for the kind of despair that no longer narrates.

There are sites and situations where violence done and violence experienced sit in the memory of everyone, but where no morally sanctioned single version of the historical textbook variety is available or even possible. It is generationally held onto, and new instantiations of that complex of anxiety and aggression accumulate from which violent agency is generated and/or felt. Indeed, this may ultimately be the case everywhere. However, the Middle East, with its three old, major religions and their attendant senses of entitlement, its political history, its streams of migrants, refugees and settlers, is undoubtedly a paradigmatic site for experiences and interpretations of violence.

The very fact that 1967, in the everyday life of the 2010s, was hardly talked about was a significant reason for the focus of the project reported on this volume. The project offered interview settings within which 1967’s force in the affected terrain could be narrated, in the expectation that this would be a productive if painful endeavor.<sup>4</sup> Our goal was to carry out interviews with individuals born between roughly 1930 and 1960, focusing on Jerusalem and East Jerusalem initially and particularly, in the Palestinian case, expanding into the West Bank, Gaza and refugee camps in Jordan. The extent to which this plan could be realized methodologically and socio-politically is discussed more fully in the introduction. Overall, approximately 300 interviews were conducted; they are of highly different length and topical extent. The very difference in the interview corpus constitutes arguably an accurate

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<sup>4</sup> The experience was, to be precise, painful for the researchers who with every interview conducted or read in transcription gained more insight into the anxiety, pain and losses suffered. For many Jewish interviewees, the memories and their narration was joyful, however, tainted with acknowledgment of opportunities foregone. For many Palestinian interviewees, narrating the events renewed sorrow and a deep sense of injustice.

reflection of Israeli and Palestinian lifeworlds respectively, and of the possibilities of encounter and mutual revelation they afford.<sup>5</sup>

The artist Ronit Agassi included dioramas of soldiers, lying in wait, ready to fight against aggression that might come from so many possible directions in her 2017 exhibit the *The New Tenant* (Fig. 1).<sup>6</sup>

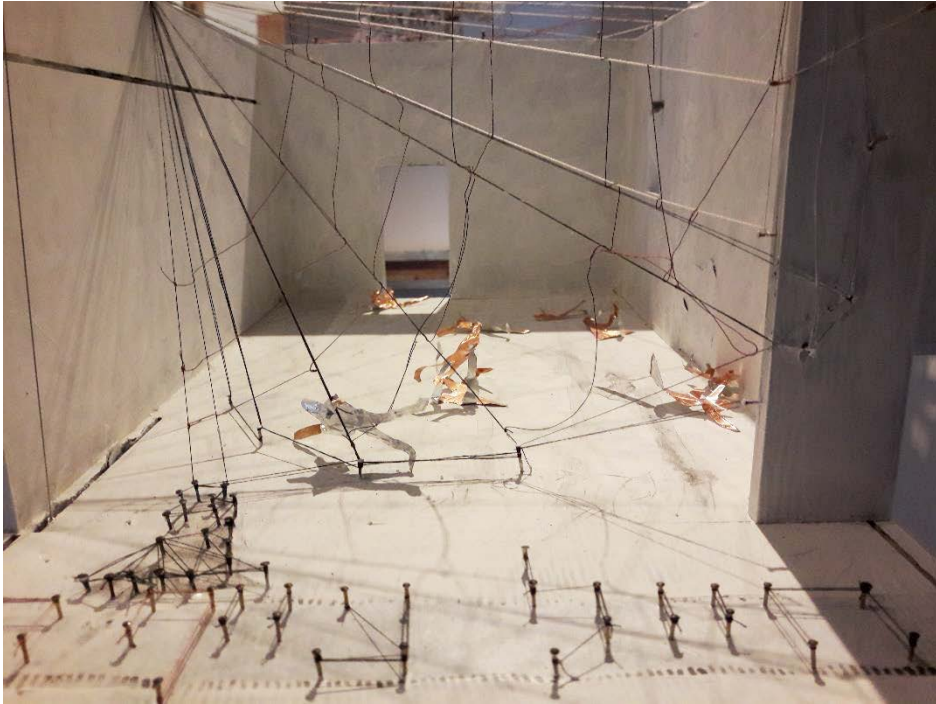


Figure 1: Installation from Ronit Agassi’s exhibit “The New Tenant” (Jerusalem 2017), printed with the artist’s permission.

The work is keenly associated in my mind with an informal dinner conversation in Jerusalem, where an Israeli anthropologist, now in his seventies, recalled how, as a young soldier, he was summoned to the front in June 1967, and how he was shaking on the way, finding himself sitting down and crying as he was sure he would die.<sup>7</sup> But Agassi’s work, of course, is equally well associated with Palestinian sensibility, with the new tenant living on what used to be ‘their’ land. In 1967, most Palestinians did not even have weapons. One interviewee working in a municipal building in East

<sup>5</sup> See Salamon and Bendix (2020) for a case study of one interviewee that illustrates the very complexity of what is possible to tell to whom and in what way.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. “Ronit Agassi – Israel Museum,” <https://www.imj.org.il/en/exhibitions/ronit-agassi> (accessed July 28, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> Field diary, February 2019.



Jerusalem at the time recalls how anxious Palestinian civilians arrived at this Jordanian-run office: “We want weapons, we want weapons, we want to defend ourselves!” they demanded, and were told that the Jordanian army was in the process of achieving their liberation, clearing out the new tenant, so to speak.<sup>8</sup> Neither of the two moments invoked is violent, yet both establish the anguish in individuals facing the potential of a violent death. What traces remain of such anguish, of witnessing and being embroiled in violence? To what extent are such experiences integrated into the personal past, to what extent do they hover?

With limited international support, Israel on June 5, 1967, initiated the war with a surprise dawn attack on the Egyptian air force, still on the ground. Four hundred planes were destroyed. The ground forces of the Arab League, thus, lost the air cover in one strike before they had properly advanced. Israelis then had air supremacy, the Arab league states were forced to withdraw their barely advanced tanks and soldiers, and the war ended within just six days, with Israel gaining a great deal of land. While “Six-Day War” is the name used among Israelis, Palestinians call it *Naksa* – the ‘Set-back’, in its sound and meaning indicating that it was bad but not as bad as the *Nakba* of 1948. The physical violence toward bodies in terms of deaths suffered was limited.<sup>9</sup> The emotional intensity, however, was enormous. Within our research team we identified fear and euphoria as the two prominent emotions shared across the population, with fear changing from the Jewish to the Palestinian side within a few days, and the Palestinian prewar euphoria switching to the Israeli population. The fortification separating Jordanian East from West Jerusalem was torn apart and a path to the Western Wall, a highly prominent Jewish holy site, was broadened by pulling down Palestinian homes nestled close to it but a few days after the war.<sup>10</sup> Access to the Western Wall was an event and outcome of this war that nearly all interviewees on the Israeli side recalled; here is just one example from a woman who experienced it as a child:

I remember it was the evening of the Shavu’ot holiday, wasn’t it? Yes, [...] I remember [...] people singing, they had to wait there, there were so many people going up, you had to wait, but nobody complained, nobody pushed. Everybody was singing, it was wonderful, even now I get goosebumps when I remember it. Yeah, that was a very, very moving event.<sup>11</sup>

For many Palestinians, the return of fear was coupled with disappointment, even fatalism as it became clear that they would not be liberated. The immediate fear of atrocities of the type suffered in 1948 made way for a sense of multiple losses, multiple abandonments. An economic symbiosis between Israelis and Palestinians arose,

<sup>8</sup> Z.Z., interviewed by Screen Abumeizer in February 2020.

<sup>9</sup> There were fewer than one thousand killed on the Israeli side, fewer than 20,000 killed on the side of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq combined. Cf. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six-Day\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six-Day_War) (accessed June 1, 2021).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Salamon in this volume.

<sup>11</sup> S.G., interviewed by Yiftah Levin, in July 2018.

and the latter experienced some new opportunities and access to modern infrastructures that had been lacking during the Jordanian administration. The Israeli euphoria lasted longer, as they, in some ways, broke out of a quite homogeneous and drab economic situation and encountered, for the first time since 1948, the colorful liveliness of Arab markets and villages and were able to visit historic sites from which they had been cut off. Some Jewish interviewees recall a feeling of possibility, embracing the Other, so to speak, reaching across the divide and building a state with equality for all, but the euphoric moment passed, and the next war loomed around the corner. “We should have” and “why didn’t we” is what a good number of Israelis stated, knowing now how much hardship the failure to act, back then, has brought.

The prewar situation in spring 1967 was full of expectations of impending violence: the aggressors and vindicators promised the annihilation of Israel, the Israelis prepared to fight – better to die oneself than to be driven away. Those are acts and sentiments of the moment, experienced bodily and supported by the kinds of rhythms and movements that permit human beings to fight and kill. Within the many efforts to grasp and theorize violence, the micro-sociological analysis of violence championed, for instance, by Randall Collins (2008), would confine itself to those very moments, preferably capturing them on video and treating them as concluded when the video ends. Drawing on a little noted article by Georg Simmel entitled “On the Problem of Historical Time” (2003), sociologist Wolfgang Knöbl (2019) has shown the limitations of such a micro-perspective. The immediate context as much as the emerging historical context as time begins to unfold are missing if one zooms close to individual acts, such as the soldier raising his gun, the expression on his face and the child finding cover before the bullet hits the car.

But while such acts, feelings and experiences of war may not enter grand historical or sociological narratives in the manner Paul Ricoeur outlined,<sup>12</sup> they do figure within personal narratives. They do so, perhaps, even more poignantly, when war events have not been told repeatedly, when they are too recent or brought no resolution that can be assessed with any kind of neutrality.<sup>13</sup> Those moments emerge as snapshots, perhaps recalled because an interviewer triggered them, and they may dangle loosely, with little or no effort to fully interpret and rationalize them. In contrast to the verbal artistry of *Story, Performance, and Event* elaborated on by Richard

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Ricoeur 1986; summary in Knöbl (unpublished paper).

<sup>13</sup> Tsafi Sebba, a colleague working in Haifa, wrote to me after I gave the presentation this paper is based on. She inquired to what extent the present – i.e. 2016 to 2018 – “infiltrated” the narratives in the interviews about 1967. In an email from June 10, 2021, she explained her inquiry as follows: “I asked how feelings and thoughts originating in the Israeli present infiltrated memories of the war because I remembered that Dov Noy wrote that the Israeli Folktale Archives absorbed much more conflict stories between 1967-1973 than in other periods, and these weren’t stories about Israel but about Jewish life in Yemen, Iraq, Poland and more. It was probably easier to tell and to listen to such memories than to speak about the unsolved and never-ending war between Israel and its neighbors.” In other words, the distant past surfaced more strongly during a period of a lot of conflict in the present. It is an inquiry that would be worthwhile pursuing to establish to what extent past conflicts are a memory and narrative resource in making it through a given present.

Bauman (1986) about men playing pranks on each other, the shades of violence entailed in war memories can reach jaggedly into the flow of narration, left for the listener to interpret, to be made light of or to stand in accusation. They are, however, different depending on the outcome of the war for the narrator, very likely also different depending on the social station and prior opportunity to verbalize the war experience, and different, furthermore, in terms of the dialogic situation present in an interview.<sup>14</sup>

### 3 Poignancy – With and Without Closure

In order to offer a sense of the material that the project generated, I start by presenting two personal stories as told during a project about the impact of 1967 in personal lives.

And praise be to Allah. The war was a blink of an eye. We were in [one world] and we came to it in another world, we woke up at 8 o'clock on Monday and saw tanks – God is my witness – tanks standing at the building of what they called the general governor [instead of calling him mayor, this title is used in the Gaza Strip according to the Egyptian system]. We saw tanks and heavy machines in the heart of Rafah. [...] The people, out of happiness and pleasure, went to the tanks with food, drinks, sweets, thinking that the Arab armies had reached Rafah. But unfortunately, after scrutinizing [them] and the soldiers refusing to talk to anyone, even after the people offered them food and drink, and they didn't get down from their tanks, finally one of the Beer al-Sabe people – God praise him – said to the people: "I swear to God those flocks they are not Arabs! They are Jews, they are not talking and they don't look like Arabs!" People left the site and realized that Jews had reached the heart of Gaza.

[...]

Praise God, the thing was amazing and contrary to what people imagined, and what they were convinced of, people had had a hope in victory, the disaster was very great for the people, people were amazed and afraid of the consequences.<sup>15</sup>

A.M., a male Palestinian refugee who was eleven in 1967, captures this very turn from elation at an imminently expected victory, to the realization that a new disaster

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<sup>14</sup> Vera Becker interviewed young, internationally situated Palestinians for her BA Thesis (here in Göttingen) while working as my assistant in this project. There were a number of young interviewees who expressed anger and frustration at their parents precisely for *not* narrating anything about 1967. One of the reasons given was shame – for having "lost" and for having stayed within Israel as marginalized Arab-Israeli.

<sup>15</sup> A.M., male refugee/displaced Palestinian family living in Gaza, aged 11 in 1967, Rafah, aged 62 at the time of the interview recorded in October 2018, pp. 38–39.

was striking his people. S.G. was a young Israeli mother at the time and encapsulated the change in mood, from fear to subsequent humor and elation in two stories:

Let's see, oh my stories about the Six-Day War. Can I tell it now? The sad story was, when the, when the war broke out, my son, my older son was in first-second grade, I don't remember, third [...] anyhow, they sent the children home, and on the way home they began shooting, towards Emek Hamazleva, where we had artillery. And somebody pulled him into their shelter and then they called [...]

Interviewer: Strangers?

Yeah, yeah. But they saw him, a child running on the street and they pulled him in the shelter and they called me to tell me where he was so I wouldn't worry, and then when it got quiet, they sent him home. I didn't realize what a traumatic experience it had been for him until a few days later we were out walking, and he said: "You see that store over there with the hallway? If they start shooting do you think you could run there?" In other words, he was constantly looking for a shelter. That was the sad story. The funny story is, we used our bathroom as the shelter, because it had only a small window high up, and so I put filled sand bags in the street and put them on the window. And they had advised people to fill your bathtubs with water in case, you know in those days they had the water tanks on the roof, in case your tank gets hit, you'll still have water. So we're sitting there, my husband was not home, I and some of the children were there and everybody that was in the building came down to our shelter in the bathroom, and even people on the street, when they were caught in the fire, they came up and went in. So it was quite crowded. And my son, who was about six years old, was sitting on the edge of the bathtub because there was no room elsewhere, and he fell in the bathtub with the water in it. I said that was our only war casualty (laughing). That's the funny story.<sup>16</sup>

"Human beings participate in history both as actors and as narrators," wrote Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995). He continued, "in vernacular use, story means both the facts of the matter and a narrative of those facts, both 'what happened' and 'that which is said to have happened'" (1995: 2). The two events reported by S.G. have been shaped, by her own definition, into "stories." That which has happened has been given generic contours and appears to have been told and retold, encapsulating aspects of the 1967 war and, thus, making it part of personal history embedded in the greater history of Israeli-Palestinian struggles. In narrativizing the affective depth of fear of violence and uncertainty that both her sons and she experienced in the moment, she has achieved a palpable distance to that war. In emplacing it in personal biography and national history, she has seemingly conquered "what happened" and

<sup>16</sup> S.G.: female Israeli, ca. 75, interviewed by Yiftah Levin in July 2018.

can historicize it with relative ease. A.M., the Palestinian refugee cited first, offers a near poetic frame: “The war was a blink of an eye. We were in [one world] and we came to it in another world.” What he tells in between, however, is a sequence of images that, in their snapshot nature, evoke the shock of recognition: it is not the liberators who have come, it is the enemy. This unexpected turnaround was for many Palestinian narrators, children or youths at the time, also the first time that they had actually seen an Israeli. Many had fled with their mothers to caves near their villages, and felt even more vulnerable away from their houses, confronting tanks and soldiers. Their mothers sternly instructed them not to accept the sweets those *Yabuds* [Jews] offered. This, too, is a motif in many interviews, guiding the interpretive direction given to the story, with mothers being reported as saying, “They try to win you over!” or simply “Don’t trust!”

In searching for traces of violence in our corpus of interviews, I venture the claim that many of our Palestinian interlocutors were caught far more in “what happened” than in “what is said to have happened.” In some cases, the narration is ever so slightly reminiscent of how Renato Rosaldo (1984/2004) explained the layered nature of Ilongot hunters’ narration, repeating the seemingly same sequence, but adding a further aspect in the process. Thus M., interviewed at the age of 72 in a refugee camp near Ramallah, dwells on the twin daughters she gave birth to prematurely, just days before the war began, alternating with decision-making, stretches of flight and separation. She hid with her family in a cave, though she had had strong reservations to go, given the newborn babies. She was unable to breastfeed for fear, she says, and both of the babies died before the families returned to their home.<sup>17</sup>

Other Palestinians invoke events blow-by-blow, not necessarily in the temporal sequence in which they occurred. Here, for instance, is an excerpt from an interview with S.Z.A.S., a 67-year-old refugee at the time of the interview, who was 17 in 1967:

They were firing everywhere. My mom was doing the laundry at home. She told me to go to my uncle’s house, as the shelling might be less in that area. They were living in the downtown but, we lived in the northern area and our house was made of bricks. We arrived there; there were about 40–50 families. We stayed in the concrete room. There was another room above us, then a bomb from the northern area struck it. Shrapnel fell on us. They kept hitting until one o’clock in the afternoon, I had a *Hatta* with me. When the firing was over, I put all the bread in the *Hatta*, I put it on my shoulders. People walked towards Tubal area, east of Qalqilya. We left behind us 150 dead. M.’s family did something similar to the civil defense, they carried the dead bodies personally. I held 6 bodies who were [names all the names]. We removed their

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<sup>17</sup> M.E., aged 72 at the time of the interview, interviewed by an NGO working on behalf of Aziz Haidar, in the summer of 2018. Later on, the interviewer writes that M.E. is referred to honorably as “the mother of Palestine” in the refugee camp, and even considered as a martyr because she lost her twins in ’67 and because of her support for her sons who fought/fight for liberation and have been imprisoned and fallen severely ill in jail.

bodies from the streets but others [were left] on the streets until we came back from Nablus. We put blankets on them and put them on a truck and buried them. These corpses stayed in the streets for 27 days.<sup>18</sup>

S.Z.A.S. strings together images and brief explanatory detours almost without catching a breath, we hear the firing, we sense the concrete room and then the bomb, and feel the shrapnel falling, there are people walking, fleeing, there are the dead one tries to honor by taking them with one, and we as listeners are left with corpses that proved too numerous to all be taken along. The sensory violence of the attack is interwoven with small everyday details initially, then makes way for an accounting of flight and return, streams of people being sent hither and thither. At the end of his narration, the interviewer says: “How do you feel, when you remember these days?” and Sameer answers “I feel I was in a movie that never happened.”<sup>19</sup>

Shrapnel also figured in the interview with B.L., an Israeli woman in her 90s at the time of the interview.<sup>20</sup> But in her presentation, objects resulting from the war’s violence appear as collectanea, integrated into daily life. She reports first on how women preparing for a reception at the synagogue were shot at: “They were shooting at us. Probably a sniper. And that made a hole in the tablecloth. Now that type of cloth, she kept, and she used it when my younger son [celebrated] *bar mitzva*h.”

She then turns to the first day of the Six-Day War, recalling details of that day’s arrangements:

Anyway, Monday morning came along [...]. I turned on the radio, it’s 8 o’clock in the morning, and the war had started. I called my friends immediately, they were on their way to their car, they were going to Tel Aviv, so that was changed. And at 8 o’clock it had already started. Then we decided to go to the shelter, our neighbors [...] And I left the shelter for a while because somebody had to make a call and just then my husband calls me and he says, “Don’t worry, we just shot 104 airplanes. Out of commission, in Egypt.”

Interviewer: He already knew it?

He was a journalist. [...] So I didn’t believe him! I thought he was joking. He says, “No it’s true. You can tell them that they can quiet down.” [...] So I told the people in the shelter and we all felt much better. But I still have shrapnel here. I have some. Did you ever see shrapnel?

<sup>18</sup> Interview with S.Z.A.S., interviewed in Ramallah by an NGO on behalf of Aziz Haidar in October 2017. I have not found a translation for what a “*Hatta*” is – I assume it is a basket to carry goods to and from a market.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with S.Z.A.S., interviewed in Ramallah by an NGO on behalf of Aziz Haidar in October 2017. Although S.Z.A.S. says that when people ask him to talk about these experiences, he tells them, the sense of the narration is one that is more reminiscent of a first time “stringing together” the events, as I observed with earthquake stories (Bendix 1990), where consciousness finds a logical sequence as the event is recalled. The film metaphor appears in many interviews in the entire corpus, it is not exclusive to Palestinian recollection.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with B.L., interviewed by Hagar Salamon in May 2017.

[...] It fell in our garden, and it went in our neighbor's house, right through the refrigerator. And also, in the shelter, it fell between two people.

B.L. then rummages in the room and finds the piece of shrapnel to show the interviewer; the 1967 war memento is weighed in the hand, and she points to shrapnel's potentially lethal nature as it penetrates the body. Then the interview turns seamlessly to first visits after the war in Jerusalem's Old City. While she is not downplaying the tension and confusion, there is a pragmatism in her recollection, and we understand that it is facilitated by having had trustworthy information early on regarding the incapacitation of enemy planes. Israel won the Six-Day War, life went on, children celebrated life cycle rituals, a weapon's potential devastation transformed into a shrapnel souvenir.

There is also a set of Israeli interviewees who regard the Six-Day War as a sequence of miracles rewarding Jewish people for the firmness of their belief. But there are many other Israeli interviewees who convey memories suffused with a deep pragmatism. Encounters with violence accumulate, built on a long history of Jewish suffering, yet, shored up by a resolve to stay, build, endure, and yes, also enjoy a life and a livelihood that is protected by a very strong army to which many Israelis, male and female alike, give several years in training.<sup>21</sup> While 1967 was a big game changer, it was followed by the War of Attrition, followed, in turn, by the Yom Kippur War, further military altercations, intifadas, each of these events being named and absorbed into biography and history, with the piece of shrapnel, the occasional bullet as objects of memory of wars and violence overcome.<sup>22</sup>

The ultimate result of violence, death, was experienced differently as well. There are interviews with Israelis who lost a son, a father, a brother in this war and emerged scarred and shaken. Central to their recollection is often the affront of the bodies of the deceased being buried in haste, without proper rites. It often took weeks or months for a reburial to take place.<sup>23</sup> Yet, even here, within the context of a victory, the bereaved individuals found ways to honor their lost ones and achieve if not

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. the interview with M.S., interviewed by Hagar Salamon on Sept. 1, 2017. M.S. argues for keeping the land, because giving it back is only rewarded with hate; she sees the miraculous component of 1967, she emphasizes the inner strength of the Jewish people, their leadership skills – and sees those lacking in the enemy whom she sees enculturated into constant hate. M.S. narrates in her interview how a neighbor couple lost both of their sons in 1967 and never recovered from the severity of this loss. M.S. had wanted to celebrate, the mother wanted to wait for news from her sons, and a few days later heard that they were dead.

<sup>22</sup> The argument outlined here could be sharpened by offering further detail from personal narratives of different positionalities. The reader is referred, for example, to the paper by Yiftah Levin in this volume whose interviewees of strong Jewish belief offer narrative interpretations of 1967 of a near teleological nature. Some Israelis who lived through 1948 up to the present bring a different capacity to narratively encircle episodes of violence in their biography and the country's history; younger Israelis, by contrast, respond to the present with far more fear; in particular, the knife intifada for some holds horror that is hard to conquer.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. the paper by Bosmat Ibi Hardy in this volume, as well as the interview with M.S., see next footnote.

closure, then at least social acknowledgment of their loss. Palestinians were, for the most part, not themselves actively engaged in the war and were, under Jordanian rule, officially not allowed to have weapons. But especially male interviewees remember starkly the encounter with dead bodies, particularly of Jordanian soldiers during the war and in the ensuing weeks. A.R. describes how there were Jordanian bunkers near his home at the time. As the war started

I heard the Jordanian shooting from the house above me [...]. One day after the war, when it ended, I went up. I saw them dead over there, the soldiers, a few, and they had an Uzi without bullets. An Uzi without bullets! What is it? Is this a war?<sup>24</sup>

The shock of the discovery has been surpassed, over time, with the anger that those meant to free Palestine were so poorly equipped. Y.O. recalls how some mass graves near his school were made with bulldozers, in part because the bodies were not always complete and identifiable. He went with his older sister to the site, planting flowers and coming back to water them regularly. Another memory stands out grimly for him: “I remember the day we found one soldier, [...] with his gun in his hand; we tried to carry him. This is after I think twenty days. His hand, we took his hand. It was a fearful thing.”<sup>25</sup> A.R., Y.O. and other interviewees are not talking about family members who died, but instead of soldiers from the Arab League, most often Jordanians who had perhaps been stationed there as part of the kingdom of Jordan’s occupying force or who had been deployed as part of troops meant to be victorious on behalf of Palestine. Now, their corpses were left behind, with no one there to bury them other than Palestinians. If there is a fierce sense of entitlement to bury one’s people in the Israeli bereavement narratives, the images of unknown war dead sitting in Palestinian interviewees’ memory are jarring. Within but a few days of the hope of liberation through the combined forces of Arab countries, the violence of war left behind the ghastliness of bodies maimed and unclaimed.

The Palestinian remembrance is, thus, characterized by indeterminacy and a sense of the unfinished.<sup>26</sup> There are interviewees recalling in oral history manner details of the Israelis taking the village of Qalqeelya, one of the few places damaged heavily and ransacked in 1967;<sup>27</sup> there are narrations of young men witnessing the advance and withdrawal of Jordanian soldiers and tanks,<sup>28</sup> and there are analyses for why the Arab League crumbled, in part suffused with conspiracy narratives.<sup>29</sup> However, while Palestinian interviewees also recall poignant images, the narration, not surprisingly, reflects the difficulty of achieving the kind of biographical-national

<sup>24</sup> Interview with A.R., conducted by Yiftah Levin in April 2017.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Y.O. conducted by me with Sarah Abu Arafé, February 2018.

<sup>26</sup> This resonates strongly with what Shuman and Bohmer report on asylum seekers “broken narration” (2021), cf. also Goldstein (2021).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. the contribution by Ronni Shaked in this volume.

<sup>28</sup> The quotes are drawn from interviews carried out by an NGO conducting the work for Aziz Haidar.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. the contribution by Yuval Plotkin in this volume.



ordering and sense-making, and the capacity to find closure more evident in the personal narratives of Jewish interlocutors. The memories remain open and often venture back and forth between what happened during the *Naksa* and recollections of a simple, peaceful, near bucolic pre-1967 Palestinian village life.

We were owners of lands, which were planted with wheat, barley, and all the vegetables and fruits. I used to plant fenugreek and make out of it a drink, which could cure 40 diseases. However, these days no one cares about this plant.<sup>30</sup>

We were very tired, we used to go to the harvest on foot. During the harvest, we used to sleep in the caves and sometimes in the field. We also used to make yogurt. It was a tiring process. My mother-in-law was kind, we respected her, when the family became bigger, one woman used to stay with my mother-in-law to help her with the food and housework. [...] The relationships among people were beautiful, and the families were like one united family. People used to help each other. There was no gossips. Life was about working, but it was beautiful. [...] Even consolation was better, people used to cry and feel the sorrow of losing a person. People used to respect and support each other.<sup>31</sup>

As a folklorist/cultural anthropologist, I am, of course, more than familiar with the tropes associated with the good old days, the times of hard but honest work before modernity struck. However, many of these passages are not disguising hardship, strife among relatives or husbands who had left for work elsewhere. But it was a life in the context of social and economic arrangements that were familiar, and that had an amount of predictability to them. With scattered family networks within and outside Israel, and with a deep economic uncertainty, there is no horizon of certitude against which a past war can be integrated into some kind of biographical certainty. While there are also many passages in Palestinian narratives invoking the excitement of witnessing modern amenities for the first time, especially among men who were young adults in 1967, recalling the bucolic nature of pre-*Naksa* days also contains an awareness of the violence done to familiar ways of life, both by the *Nakba* and the *Naksa*. Many Palestinian men had already worked abroad before 1967, leaving their wives to raise the children while earning money abroad. With the occupation, work opportunities opened in Israel,

Ward Awad, a Palestinian MA student at the Hebrew University participating in the analysis of our interview materials, argues that these non-story passages dwelling on agriculture and livestock, year cycle events and simplicity constitute a verbal evocation of the split identity that particularly Palestinian refugees suffer who have left and lost their land in 1948. He cites Ibrahim, an interviewee who began his story

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. note 25.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. note 25.

with “Palestine was removed, and the name ‘refugee’ remained.”<sup>32</sup> Here is where the individual experience of violence unfolds into the structural violence of the occupation.

Almost without exception, Palestinian interviews interweave 1967, the *Naksa*, with the *Nakba* of 1948.<sup>33</sup> Whether experienced by the narrator or absorbed as part of family history, the 1948 refugee fate of one’s own family or fellow villagers offers the rationale for how one was acting in 1967. There were those who left, driven by the memories of massacres suffered in 1948 and rumors of new massacres occurring. There were others who were not about to suffer the fate of those who had lost home and land and remained refugees since 1948.<sup>34</sup> Z.Z., the oldest of three brothers, remembers how his middle brother tried to persuade him to leave the country. He put all of Z.Z.’s clothes in a bag in order to convince him to leave with him:

He tried to put pressure on me, took my clothes with him, but I did not intend to leave, I told him, “My clothes will benefit you, take them and put them on.” He stood in the street for three hours and when he despaired that I would not go with him, he went home, returned the bag and stayed with us. Me and my father, our position was very clear, either we die here in our house or we live in our house, the idea of emigration was not negotiable to us.

The family home and the family land appear as a near nonnegotiable component for finding peace – that is what guided many Palestinians through the *Naksa*, 1967. Better to suffer violence or death than to become a refugee like those ’48ers, the Palestinians who fled and were unable to return. Compared to 1948, 1967 held little in actual physical violence toward the civilian Palestinian population. There was deep humiliation and desecration, particularly in how teenage boys and grown men were treated until the new division of power was sorted (Salamon and Bendix 2020). But it is the loss of familial land and homes that remains processed, in everyday stories, as the greatest violence of all. The only picture hanging in a tailor’s small shop in the Old City is one of his ancestral land; an aging activist for the abandoned village of Lifta, tears up as he gestures to the valley behind where the family’s olive trees grew and where now Jewish settlements and streets have taken over.<sup>35</sup> The one source of deep dissatisfaction registered in an interview with M.S., a well-off Palestinian of Bedouin background, is that his land is not his ancestral land: “My body is here, my heart is with my land.”<sup>36</sup> While he has been given an equal amount of land to what he lost in the aftermath of 1967, he aspires to get his own land back – twenty

<sup>32</sup> See Ward Awad’s contribution in this volume

<sup>33</sup> In addition to Ward Awad’s paper, the contributions by Screen Abumeizer and by Salwa Abed address these connections.

<sup>34</sup> The following paraphrase and quote are from Screen Abumeizer’s interview with Z.Z. in February 2020.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Y.O., conducted by me with Sarah Abu Arafé, February 2018.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Mh.S., interviewed in Jericho by Hagar Salamon, Ronni Shaked and me in February 2017.

kilometers downriver. He dreams of his land at least once a week and in his dream, his father who had to be buried elsewhere, is on the land.

## 4 Conclusion

Land, the rights associated with dwelling on this land, and the way individuals connect with land is the crux of the matter, not just in this conflict. The violence committed to get it back as much as to keep it or to enlarge it, settlement by settlement, are central to the everyday sensibilities of many individuals inhabiting this troubled piece of the earth. Land left behind in fleeing from aggression is also deeply part of Jewish memory and in rare moments of peaceful debate, aged Palestinians and aged Jews from Russia, Ukraine, Germany, but also Morocco or Ethiopia could come to acknowledge that their losses are comparable.<sup>37</sup> Our interview questions focused on memories of events during and in the aftermath of the Six-Day War or the *Naksa*. We asked more about the perception of change than the memory of violence, not least in the hope of recovering some of the sense of opportunity that was there in the months after the first half of June 1967.

What I learned from combing through the materials with a view toward “how does violence experienced translate into narrative?” is the impact of the presence or absence of safety and certainty on the narrative contours that emerge, and the role of longevity and the perspective this proffers on fear and danger. Were one to continue working in the project of the trilateral configuration we have experimented with, a focus on land and individuals’ sentiments toward it might be a direction to steer toward more calm. During my stays in Israel/Palestine as a supporting researcher in this project, I often had to think of Keith Basso’s wonderful study *Wisdom Sits in Places* (1996), and imagined what wisdom would look and feel like in these Middle Eastern lands, without barbed wire, grim walls, safety cordons and deserted planes used for bombing and shooting practices. What it would mean to turn it from what Anna Tsing would call a “blasted landscape” (2015) to one that could breathe with the centuries of experience woven into it. It would be a goal to work toward.

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<sup>37</sup> Fieldnotes on Y.O. (see note 31) reporting on an exchange between him and an old Jewish man claiming a house in Lifta.

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## Contributors

**Salwa Alinat-Abed**, born in 1979 in Maghar in the Galilee, is a historian at the Open University, a postdoctoral fellow at Tel-Aviv University and research fellow at the Truman Institute. Her fields of study are political Islam, religious women and political activism in the Middle East. She has published several articles in Hebrew and Arabic about Palestinian children's literature in Israel and the West Bank.

**Screen Abumeizer** was born in Jerusalem in 1996. She completed a master's degree in political science at the Hebrew University and is currently working as a consultant for higher education. She grew up in the Muslim quarter of the Old City in a house facing Haram esh-Sharif, and during this period, faced a complex political reality, imbued with many stories about Palestine, Jerusalem and the wars the country had gone through.

**Ward Awad** was born in Kafr Yassif, Northern Israel, in 1994. He is a PhD student in the General and Comparative Literature Department at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he finished his bachelor and master's degrees in the same department. His main interest is in how the literature of traumatized exiles paves the way for new concepts of human solidarity based on universal human experiences.

**Regina F. Bendix**, born in Brugg, Switzerland, in 1958, teaches cultural anthropology/European ethnology at Georg-August-University, Göttingen, Germany. In addition to her interests in narrative and its embedding in different communicative settings, she has worked on cultural property and heritage and other cultural practices located at the intersection of politics and economics, as well as on the ethnography of the senses. She serves as one of the founding editors of the journal *Narrative Culture*, and has written a number of books, including, *In Search of Authenticity* (1997), and co-edited various volumes including, jointly with Galit Hasan-Rokem, *A*

*Companion to Folklore* (2012), and jointly with Aditya Eggert and Arnika Peselmann, *Heritage Regimes and the State* (2013).

**Aziz Haidar** was born and raised in Majd-Alkoroom in the Galilee in the 1950s. He is a research fellow at the H. S. Truman Institute in the Hebrew University. He earned a PhD degree in sociology and anthropology from the Hebrew University and was a visiting scholar at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. He now teaches sociology at the David Yellin College in Jerusalem. Prof. Haidar was the head of Sociology Department at Birzeit University for four years and taught sociology there until 1997. In that year, he founded the Institute for Area Studies at Alquds University and currently serves as the director of that institute. He is the author of the chapters “The Economic Strategy” and “The Social Strategy” in *The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel*. He is the director of “The Growth and Consolidation of the Arab Middle Class in Israel” research at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. He directed the “Arab Local Government in Israel” project in 2006–2007.

**Ronit Hemyan** is a PhD student in The Graduate Program in Folklore and Folk Culture Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Her research focuses on the interactions between personal and collective memory, traditions and practices for constructing a cultural heritage among Israelis and Palestinians in Hebron/al-Khalil, in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict from 1967 onwards.

**Bosmat Ibi Hardy**, born in 1972 in Haifa, holds an MA in education and arts and completed an MA thesis in folklore and folk culture studies at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. She teaches cinema and communication, both practical and theoretical, with an emphasis on visual culture, mass media and stills. She also works as a freelance stills and video photographer. Her research at the Hebrew University focuses on memorials and the culture of bereaved families.

**Yiftah Levin** was born in 1981 in Ness Ziona, Israel. He completed an MA in anthropology at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He is currently studying toward a PhD in the Folklore and Popular Culture Program at the same university.

**Yuval Plotkin**, born in Bat Yam, Israel, on May 27, 1992, is a student in the Graduate Program for Folklore and Folk Culture Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Born into the complicated Mediterranean reality, he divides his time between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. His academic research deals with oral stories, and especially with rumors, conspiracies and myths about the Six-Day War. Alongside his studies, he writes in the Israeli press about cultural and literary matters and publishes short stories in literary magazines.



**Hagar Salamon**, born in Jerusalem in 1960, is Max and Margarethe Grunwald Chair in Folklore at the Graduate Program for Folklore and Folk Culture Studies and a Senior Research Fellow at the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Her research focuses on cultural and identity issues relating to Jewish communities (mainly the Ethiopian Jews), present-day Israeli folklore in both public and private spheres, life stories and humorous narratives, and women's folk creativity. Her recent book *Israel in the Making* was published in 2017 (Indiana University Press). She has been co-editor of the journal *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore* since 2004.

**Ronni Shaked**, born in 1946 in Jerusalem, studied at the Hebrew University. Like most Israelis of his generation, he participated as a combat soldier in the 1967 war, 1973 war and the 1982 war in Lebanon. He is currently a research fellow at the Harry S. Truman Research Institute in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He focuses his research on the social-psychological aspects of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Dr. Shaked has written five books dealing with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict; his latest book *Beyond the Kaffia* (2019) won the prestigious Israeli award for military literature in 2020.

The clash of June 1967, called by Israelis the Six-Day War and by Palestinians the Naksa (setback), is a critical milestone within the longstanding Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Despite all the scholarly attention ever since, there remain unheard voices and untold stories. It is the personal stories of people in the region that are at the center of this book. How do they remember 1967? How were their lives affected, even changed dramatically as a result of that short war? Listening to their stories as told some 50 years later, an incomplete tapestry of memories and understandings emerge. This book is the product of a research collaboration among Palestinian, Israeli and European folklorists, cultural anthropologists and sociologists. The personal stories were collected in the framework of interviews with men and women from all walks of life, on the days before, during and after this dramatic confrontation. The book is comprised of eleven chapters based on a corpus of several hundred conversations, as well as eight representative interviews. Together they afford insight into differential memories and sensations, visions of euphoria and despair, newly revived hopes, pain and disappointment, disillusionment and repentance.



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