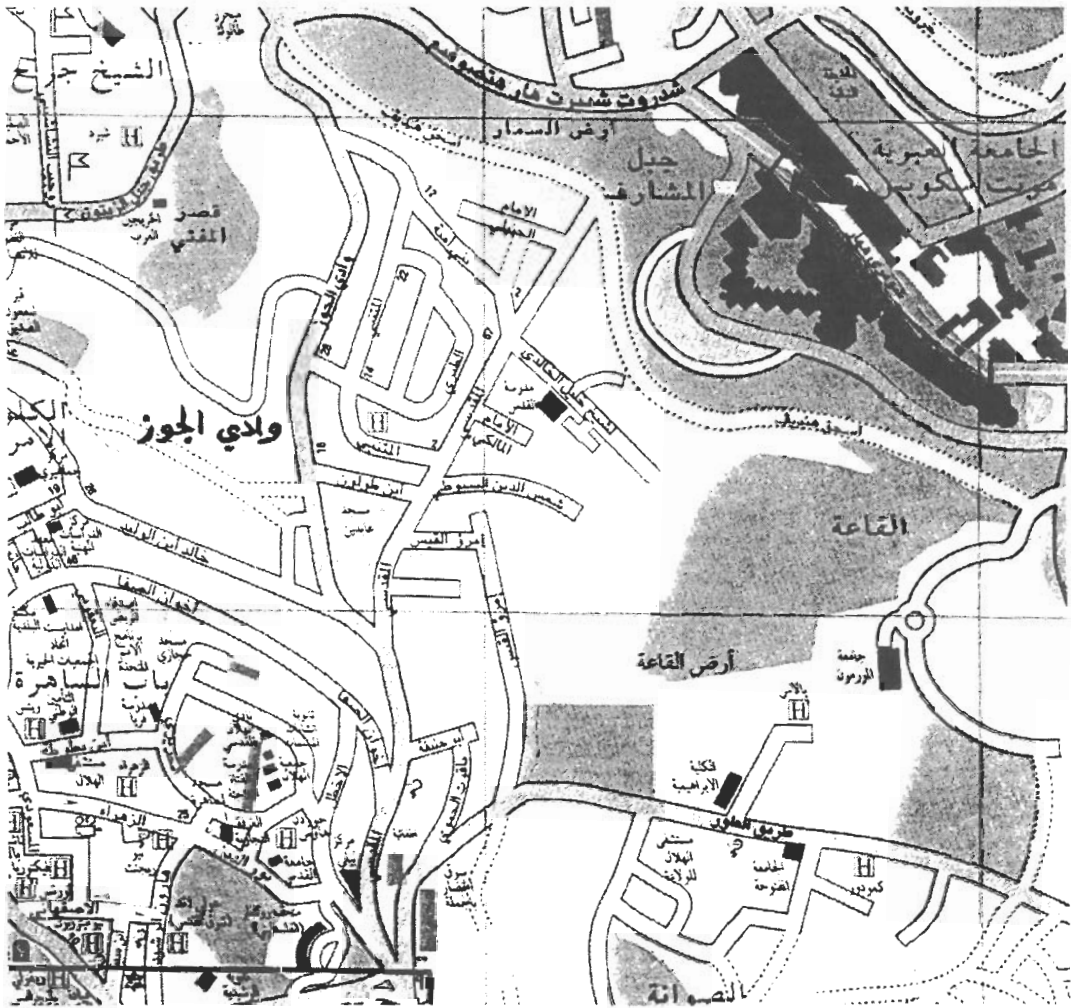


Wadi al-Joz: In Focus

Information for this essay was collected by Dalia Habash. It was directed and written by Martina Rieker. The essay is primarily based on interviews and stories that people shared about themselves and their neighborhood.

For both Palestinian and Israeli Jerusalemites, the term Wadi al-Joz is synonymous with the car repair shops that line the narrow valley. In walking distance to the Old City, Wadi al-Joz is one of the newer Jerusalem neighborhoods taking its current shape after 1948. However, in contrast to the otherwise affluent Palestinian neighborhoods in north-central Jerusalem, Wadi al-Joz is marked by sharp class differences. The poorer areas are largely clustered around the industrial zone in the valley; the older, more established neighborhoods are situated on the valley's slopes.

Wadi al-Joz, literally the "valley of walnuts," was part of the agricultural estate system that defined the areas outside the Old City well into the nineteenth century. Affluent families in the Old City administered these agricultural estates, lining the countryside with their fortified summer residences. The largest and oldest landholders in Wadi al-Joz, the Khatib family, built its residence about 400 years ago. According to the family's late twentieth century self-representation, the Khatibs settled in Jerusalem sometime in the fourteenth century. To underline its rootedness in al-Quds the family uses the descriptor *kināni jama'i* to distinguish itself from other families



with the same surname (e.g., the Khatibs of Hebron and Izariyya). According to Amin Khatib, the family - a collection of "teachers, scientists and imams" - administered its lands and mills from their residence at Bab al-Hadid, next to Haram al-Sharif. After the earthquake of 1926, the family permanently relocated to Wadi al-Joz.

Another landed family that was instrumental in the modern development of the valley, building a series of houses on the slopes of Wadi al-Joz in the first quarter of the twentieth century, were the Hidmis. In contrast to the Khatibs, the Hidmis were relative newcomers to the city. The family patriarch had come to Palestine (along with his sister) in 1831 as part of Ibrahim Pasha's expedition. He served as the governor of Hebron until he was forced to leave in conjunction with the uprising of 1834. Thereafter, the merchant family settled in the Old City of Jerusalem and began to establish local roots. The patriarch not only married into a Jerusalem family but also changed the family's name. According to family legend a *waly* (Muslim holy man) appeared to a woman of the family and promised that her son would be cured of the measles if the family would change its name from Mu'awwad to Hidmi,

the name of a *waly* buried in Jabal Khalil (hills of Hebron).

Parts of the Hidmi family left the Old City and moved to Wadi al-Joz as early as 1870, renting their Old City properties to poorer relations. According to Arafat Hidmi, in this century landowners in Wadi al-Joz hired villagers from Al-Thuri, Hizma, Anata and Isawiyya to work as day laborers on their lands, returning to their villages at the end of the day.

Wadi al-Joz took its present shape in the years between the 1948 and 1967 wars. Both its proximity to the Old City and its relatively sparse character appealed to people, particularly refugees and rural migrants, looking for a place to live in the city. In 1948 refugees from West Jerusalem resettled in Wadi al-Joz. In the words of Ziad Zayda, a merchant at Bab al-Amud, "We came to Wadi al-Joz as refugees, it was one of the few empty areas around the Old City in 1948." The *mukhtar* of Namarma, a subdivision of the West Jerusalem Palestinian neighborhood of Baqa, fled to Wadi al-Joz together with his family in 1948. A politics of location continues to inform belonging in Wadi al-Joz. To ask for the *mukhtar* in the streets of Wadi al-Joz one is invariably referred to Rafiq Namari. These older reference systems compliment the diversity and

complexity of the urban transformation that Wadi al-Joz has experienced since 1948.

Rural migration in the 1950s and 60s has probably had the most significant impact on the development of Wadi al-Joz. Jabal Abu Jibna, an elevation in the heart of the *wadi*, is a shanty-area; it is home to approximately 350 people of rural descent. The hill takes its name from the owners of the land. The Abu Jibna family left the Bab al-Silsila neighborhood in the Old City at the end of the nineteenth century and invested in forty-four dunam of land in Wadi al-Joz. Today the bulk of this large extended family resides in Shu'fat. According to the Abu Jibnas the rural migrants on the hill initially squatted on their land. After 1967, the hill was zoned as a "green area" and consequently lost its commercial viability. At that point the Abu Jibnas negotiated a tenancy agreement.

The 12-13 families living on Jabal Abu Jibna migrated from the Sa'ir region in Jabal Khalil. One of the elderly tenants interviewed was born in Kerak Jordan, and migrated to Jabal Khalil during the British Mandate. He came to Jerusalem in 1955, raising a family of ten on the wages of a day laborer. The tenant reported paying a yearly rent of \$282 for his home. About a decade ago the

municipality connected the area to the city's water system; however, the community continues to rely on generators for electricity. According to the elderly tenant, his children and those of his neighbors' inhabit a position similar to his own on the margins of primarily the Israeli economy (e.g., as maintenance workers and cab drivers).

Just below Jabal Abu Jibna is the shrine of Simon the Just (Shimon Hatzadik), whom legend claims to be the fifth in line to take the Torah from Moses. In 1890 the shrine itself and some land surrounding it were purchased by a Sephardic philanthropic association. Ownership of the land around the shrine is in dispute, yet the keepers of the shrine report generally cordial relations with the Palestinian neighborhood (save for the occasional stone-throwing incidents on both sides).

Approximately 200 people visit the shrine each day, many of whom arrive on foot from the nearby ultra-orthodox neighborhoods of West Jerusalem.

The tomb of Shimon Hatzadik is adjacent to two Palestinian houses. A third building serves as the administrative offices of the shrine. According to Moshe Oxenkrug, the recently retired keeper of the shrine for the past twenty-three years, the

previous Palestinian tenants of the building were compensated for their property in 1967 and left for the U.S. shortly thereafter. Of the two inhabited Palestinian buildings, the Abu Diab family home shares a courtyard with the tomb. As Hasan Abu Diab explains, the close quarters shared with the stream of visitors attending to the shrine created a set of tensions and conflicts which prompted the family to erect a concrete fence separating the properties.

The Industrial Zone

The last Palestinian mayor of Jerusalem, Rawhi Khatib, had moved the Industrial Zone from Nablus Road to Wadi al-Joz. Ostensibly this was done to beautify downtown East Jerusalem and to make room for a centrally located bus station. However, the site chosen for the Industrial Zone - the valley of Wadi al-Joz on 12 dunam of private *waqf* land owned by the Khatib family - has had its share of critics. As a mechanic working in one of the car repair shops put it, "The move was made so that the Khatib family could benefit from the rent paid by the mechanics and garage owners."

The redrawing of the city's urban map in 1967 led to a business boom in the Industrial Zone that lasted into

the early 1980s. Wadi al-Joz became a main thoroughfare, and according to Awad Abu Sulb, another mechanic, Israelis made up 70% of the customers. The costs of setting up a garage in Wadi al-Joz are significantly lower than elsewhere. Avil Tal, an Israeli garage owner in the Industrial Zone who lives on a kibbutz between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, cites cost as the main reason for his choice of location. Today, his Shir Garage, is the only Israeli business in Wadi al-Joz. A few years ago, there were three Israeli garages; two have since closed shop and rented the space to Palestinian businesses. Avil Tal acquired his garage in 1986 by paying "key-money" to the Palestinian owners of the property. While he clearly draws upon an Israeli clientele, particularly from the military, he is also proud of his multicultural staff and customers. To prove his point, he points to two cars currently under repair in his shop: an army vehicle to the right and a Birzeit University student's car to the left.

The construction of new road systems in the last decade, particularly Highway 1, isolated the Industrial Zone once again, but it was the intifada that had the most significant impact on business. Israeli customers stayed away, partly from

fear and partly because of the limited services available during the frequent and unpredictable strike days. Despite changing political conditions, what had made Wadi al-Joz a success were its flexible, informal labor practices. Haj Husayn Muhdir, a garage owner who had started out on Nablus Road before he was moved to Wadi al-Joz thirty-five years ago, maintains that the essential factors accounting for the Industrial Zone's success lay in the fact that the garages could fix a car for half the price in half the time than the garages in West Jerusalem. Today garage owners and mechanics in the Industrial Zone are struggling to survive. After the intifada, fewer Israeli customers returned, and according to Abu Sulb, "even Palestinians now go to other larger and more developed industrial zones in the West Bank."

Municipal Issues

On November 27, 1997 Samir Hijazi's home in Wadi al-Joz was demolished. This was the first complete housing demolition in the neighborhood. Most other "illegal" building activities have been fined. However, almost twenty years ago, the 400-year-old agricultural residence (*qasr*) of the Khatib family was demolished. In 1979 the family applied for a license to convert the

historic structure, built around a flour mill, into an agricultural museum. According to Amin Khatib, the brother of the late mayor of Jerusalem, unmarked bulldozers appeared without previous warning and leveled the *qasr*.

In Wadi al-Joz, most of the tension between Palestinian landowners and the Israeli municipality over land has been confined to the Karm al-Mufti area. The conflicts have pitted the more well-to-do landowners against the Hebrew University complex. The Khatibs claim that the original site of the university was built on land confiscated from them during the British Mandate. In 1968 about eighty dunam were confiscated in Karm al-Mufti. Additional lands were declared "green areas." Today one can still observe village women hired by landowners in these "green areas" harvesting the olive trees that line the eastern slopes of Hebrew University.

For Palestinians living on the edges of the university campus everyday life is a delicate negotiation with both the municipality and Hebrew University. Take for instance the Afifi family. In 1912 the family moved from Bab al-Hadid to the eastern slopes of Wadi al-Joz, building a house on nine dunam of land. Following the confiscations of 1968, the Afifis were left with two

dunam. Since then, they have been struggling to receive basic municipal services. The university dominates and controls the infrastructure in the area, and the municipality has been unwilling to invest in a parallel infrastructure for Palestinians living between Karm al-Mufti and the university. For example, Hebrew University has persistently refused to allow the Afifis to use their phone columns, forcing the family to rely on cellular phone services. Likewise, the expansion of the university complex affected the water supply in the Afifi's well. After years of petitioning, in 1983 the university finally gave permission for a water pump to be installed in the well.

Overlooking Wadi al-Joz to the northeast is the Hyatt Hotel. It too has restricted development in Karm al-Mufti. In 1990 residents became caught up in a power struggle between the liberal elements within the municipal administration and the emerging political right when they attempted to construct a school in Wadi al-Joz. In 1968, thirty-one dunam of a thirty-eight-dunam plot belonging to the Arab Hotel Owners Association in Karm al-Mufti had been declared "state land." On the remaining seven dunam, the Jordanian municipal administration had run a school and kindergarten,

both of which were closed shortly after 1968. In 1990 Israeli Housing Minister Ariel Sharon proposed to build 200 new housing units on the thirty-one dunam of "state land." At that point the Jerusalem municipality (Jerusalem mayor Kollek in alliance with the Ministry of Education) opted to reinstate a plan to build a secondary school for girls on the same plot. According to Sarah Kaminker, who served as a city council member during the Kollek administration, the municipality chose a strategy that had worked well in the past. They began building "knowing that the committee to approve the building license for the municipality would deny a building permit." Yet, the new right within the municipality, in alliance with the Hyatt Hotel and the nearby Border Police, forced the issue and succeeded in stopping construction; the new alliance argued that the school would become "a focal point of clashes." Seeking a compromise, the National Planning Board authorized the building of the school, but for 200 handicapped children rather than 800 teenage girls. However, the Board's decision was contested and overridden in the name of "security." In the words of Knesset member Yigal Bibi, "the pupils may be handicapped, but that does not

mean they don't have arms, and can't throw stones."

The Palestinian community in Wadi al-Joz has been active around the question of local schooling for decades. Yet, the political situation effectively precludes an easy and uncompromising solution. In the 1970s a number of local educators formed a committee to work as a liaison between the Israeli municipality and the Awqaf. The committee has focused on twenty dunam of land owned by the Awqaf on the lower end of the Suwana area in Wadi al-Joz. According to committee member Ratib al-Rabi, a committee plan has been structured around the educational needs of the neighborhood and calls for the building of an elementary school, a secondary school for girls, housing for *waqf* employees, and a vocational training school. The municipal involvement in the vocational training school in the plan, however, has been a source of friction with the Awqaf authorities. The Awqaf has argued that allowing municipal access to 25% of the land amounts to sale of the land to the Israeli municipality, and so far it has refused participation.

The Hyatt Hotel on French Hill has a picture postcard view of the Old City and the golden dome of Haram

al-Sharif. The Industrial Zone located between French Hill and the Old City represents an eyesore to the idealized image of a Holy City that the tourist industry wishes to convey.

Consequently, the Hyatt was a vocal supporter of municipal plans articulated in the 1980s calling for the transfer of the Industrial Zone from Wadi al-Joz to Anata, at the northern boundaries of the Israeli municipality. Sarah Kaminker suggests that this would have effectively killed the booming business in the Palestinian Industrial Zone.

The municipalities plan to move the Industrial Zone was never realized. However, similar projects are being suggested by the various Palestinian owners of the land upon which the Industrial Zone is built. For them, the valley represents a prime real estate zone in central East Jerusalem waiting to be developed. Such development will undoubtedly destroy the mixed and diverse Palestinian community that now can afford to reside in Wadi al-Joz.