

Out of the Public Eye: Adel Jabre's Long Journey from Ottomanism to Binationalism

Mona Hajjar Halaby



“My nature is to keep out of the public eye,” (“Tabi‘ati ala azhar”) is a statement my grandfather, Adel Jabre, once made in an interview about his work.¹ Unlike many of his friends in the field of education, like Khalil Sakakini,² or journalism, like Ibrahim Salim al-Najjar,³ Jabre kept a low profile in his personal and professional life. He was a quiet, humble man. An observer of life, rather than man of action, he pondered the world and especially the fate of Palestine and its people. He did not leave behind diaries or memoirs to help us elucidate his thinking. Yet, in this essay I plan to shed some light on his career as an educator, linguist, newspaper editor, politician and advocate for the Palestinian cause.

It was during my visits to Jerusalem and its various archives that I discovered more about my grandfather’s legacy. After a week of searching in the stacks at Hebrew University Library for the bound

Adel Jabre. Source: Mona Hajjar Halaby collection.

collection of my grandfather's newspaper, "*al-Hayat al-Maqdisiya* (Jerusalem Life), I was rewarded not only by the microfilm, but also the bound copies of the issues of the newspaper. What I wanted more than anything else was to hold the newspaper between my fingers, brush my hand over its pages, smell the ink and paper. I wanted the full-blown experience his readers had in 1930 when they purchased a copy at the newsstand.

The first issue of *al-Hayat* is dated April 1, 1930. On the masthead I read the title, *al-Hayat*, printed in bold black letters in an ornate Arabic calligraphy. On the left in English and Arabic: "*al-Hayat, Daily Newspaper, Proprietors: A. Jabre and K. Duzdar, Address: Musrara Qtr., Jerusalem (Palestine), Phone: 1130.*

Printed in the early 'thirties, *al-Hayat* was a daily morning Arabic newspaper which addressed political, literary, social, cultural, and scientific topics. My grandfather was its editor-in-chief, and his friend, Khaled al-Duzdar, the son of a revered Jerusalem family, was his business partner. The newspaper was considered to be neutral in the strife between the two Jerusalemite camps of the Husseinis and Nashashibis, and a strong proponent of pan-Arabism with a firm anti-British colonialist orientation.⁴

My mother remembers that her father would travel to France, Italy, and Switzerland to subscribe to foreign news services. In fact, he had bought his newspaper printing presses from Germany and Italy. While traveling in Italy, he always seemed to make the time to enjoy the finer things in life. He would often take the train for a side trip to Milan where he would attend the latest opera production at La Scala. My mother remembers him humming tunes from *Carmen* or *Aida*.⁵

Researching further into *al-Hayat*, I discovered that it had a daily circulation of 1,000 copies, a considerable readership for those days. The yearly subscription rate for Palestine and Jordan was one-and-a-half Palestinian pounds, and abroad, two pounds, which is equivalent to about five US dollars. *Al-Hayat* also published international news broadcast by the BBC in London, and selections of articles from the Jewish newspapers.⁶

Al-Hayat offered subscribers who were in business the option of publishing a five-line advertisement three times a year free of charge. It also gave teachers and students a twenty percent discount on subscriptions.⁷

Adel Jabre was born in Jaffa in 1888 to a family of orange growers. His family originally came from Isfahan, Iran, where at the beginning of the eighteenth century the Safavid Nader Shah (founder of the Afsharid Dynasty, described by historians as the Napoleon of Persia due to his military genius) was assassinated, and his successor Karim Khan Zand started persecuting the former's followers. Amongst the persecuted was a clan of Jabres who fled Iran and sought asylum in the Ottoman Empire, their erstwhile enemy. They settled in the eastern Mediterranean ports of Beirut, Haifa and Jaffa. After the Zand dynasty came the Qajars, who granted amnesty to the Jabre clan. However, it is believed the Jabres did not care to return to Iran, but instead became its consular representatives in Palestine, and remained in the Ottoman Empire as orange growers. One of these Jabres was my great-grandfather, Aref.⁸

Aref Jabre owned three orange groves in Yabna, a small coastal village twenty

kilometers south of Jaffa. He was one of the first exporters of the legendary Jaffa oranges to Europe. He spoke all the languages necessary for his business – Arabic, Persian, English, French, and German – and was known to be an astute businessman, employing local villagers to pick the oranges and transport them in baskets on the backs of camels to the port of Jaffa. There they were individually wrapped in tissue paper, crated, and loaded onto skiffs. These small wooden boats would be rowed through the treacherous Jaffa reefs to the steamships anchored outside the small harbor, waiting to sail for various European harbors.⁹

Aref Jabre married Zakiyyeh Abdullah al-Imam, the great-granddaughter of Ahmad Pasha nicknamed al-Jazzar (the Butcher), the famous Bosnian officer, who in 1799 was the governor of the city of Acre. Due to his clever military strategies and ruthlessness, he defeated Napoleon's armies and routed their advances, thus claiming to be the first to break the Frenchman's successes in the Mediterranean. Al-Jazzar has many endowments to his name, including the al-Jazzar Mosque in Acre. My great-grandmother, Zakiyyeh would receive pensions allotted to her annually from the *waqf*, (religious trust) until her death. It is believed that al-Jazzar married off his daughters to imams, who, at the time, were the only learned and important people in town, so Zakiyyeh was descended from an imam, thus her last name al-Imam.¹⁰

Aref and Zakiyyeh lived in a big house in the al-Manshiyyeh neighborhood of Jaffa, very close to Hassan Bey Mosque and the shoreline. After the Arab-Jewish War of 1948 Jewish forces razed most of al-Manshiyyeh's dwellings to the ground. No trace remains of their home or neighborhood. Aref and Zakiyyeh had seven children – four boys and three girls, who were sent to good schools. Their eldest, my grandfather Adel, attended St Joseph, the French Christian Brothers' School situated on the main street in Jaffa.¹¹ He learnt Arabic, Turkish, and French, received moral and religious instruction, and took lessons in philosophy, history, geography, mathematics, commerce, the physical and natural sciences, music and drawing, as stated on his high school diploma.¹²

While still in high school, Jabre wrote and sent articles to "*al-Liwa'*," an Egyptian newspaper edited by Mustapha Kamel. Kamel led the struggle for Egyptian independence from British colonialism. When Jabre's father discovered that his son was writing to *al-Liwa'*, he became angry and forbade him to write, but Jabre circumvented this obstacle by continuing to send his articles either anonymously or pseudonymously. This shows an unusual degree of tenacity on young Jabre's part. I do not know why Aref so adamantly objected to his son's writing for the newspapers; perhaps in those days talk of anti-colonialism was considered subversive, and thus dangerous.¹³

While still a student Jabre wrote for various other newspapers and Arabic magazines, such as *al-Mu'ayyid*, another Egyptian newspaper, *al-Muqtabas* in Syria, and *Thamarat al-Funun* in Istanbul. All his articles broached the subject of colonialism.¹⁴

At the turn of the century when there was talk of reversing the suspension of the Ottoman parliament and of political reform within the Empire, many of Jabre's articles



Adel Jabre's high school diploma. Source: Mona Hajjar Halaby Collection.

appeared in *Dusturiyya Taqaddumiyya*. Interestingly, Jewish literary figures wrote for this publication as well. Among them were Meir Dizengoff, who later became the first mayor of Tel Aviv, and Esther Moyal, a Jewish Lebanese journalist and feminist who was married to Shimon Moyal, a Moroccan Jew born in Jaffa. They were both journalists and writers, whose mother tongue was Arabic, were also involved in Arab journalism, and aimed at providing an Arabic platform for Zionism in Palestine.¹⁵ Other well-known writers and

journalists wrote for the *Dusturiyya Taqaddumiyya*, including Is'af al-Nashashibi, an educator and writer, Yusef al-Issa, a pioneer of Arab journalism who in 1911 became the editor of *Falastin*, Ragheb al-Imam, and Ahmed Lutfi al-Sayed, an Egyptian intellectual, anti-colonial activist, who was one of the architects of modern Egyptian nationalism and secularism, as well as the editor of *al-Jareeda*.¹⁶

In 1905, after Jabre completed his secondary education, he traveled to Istanbul with the French Ministry of Commerce.¹⁷ A year later, upon his return to Jaffa, with the help of Emile Martin Alonzo, he established a bi-weekly newspaper, *al-Taraqqi* (Progress) in the Armenian Convent storage area near the port. The paper included political, economic and cultural articles and was described as a leading newspaper with a modern style. Its first issue was dated July 19, 1909.¹⁸ *Al-Taraqqi* published articles by renowned Palestinian lawyers like Ragheb al-Imam, and writers and journalists such as Yusef al-Issa, and the Egyptian editor, Ahmed Lutfi al-Sayed. *Al-Taraqqi* also sought articles by Jewish writers, amongst them Meir Dizengoff, and Esther Moyal, who translated a French novel in several episodes for the newspaper.¹⁹ *Al-Taraqqi*'s editorial policy conveyed a nationalistic message while attempting to awaken the readers to the dangers of Zionism. It cautioned against the selling of land to Zionists and warned that those who did sell would be considered traitors to their country.²⁰ At first *al-Taraqqi* appeared weekly, but later it was published twice a week.²¹

While editing *al-Taraqqi*, Jabre began teaching Arabic to the first students enrolled in the new Gymnasia Herzliya in Jaffa near the clock tower. The school later moved to Tel Aviv. Among his students was Moshe Sharett (born Shertok) who later became the head of the Jewish Agency, and in the early 1950s, the second prime minister of Israel.²²

In the fall of 1911 Jabre left Palestine to attend the University of Geneva, Switzerland, where he enrolled in the Department of Letters and Social Sciences and studied political science, sociology and economics.²³ One could surmise that Jabre went to study abroad possibly to avoid being conscripted into the Ottoman military, and being used as cannon fodder in the Balkans or the northern borders of Turkey. However, we will never know for certain why he left Palestine, or why he chose to



Members of Palestinian Broadcasting Service, Arabic Program: Omar Saleh al-Barghouti, Adel Jabre, Khalil Beidas, and Yousef Heikal, Jerusalem, circa 1936, *Matson Collection, Library of Congress*.

study at a small, European, Calvinistic university, but we can speculate that because of his anti-colonial views, he did not wish to study in England or France, but found in Switzerland a non-colonial power he could trust. Later, when he had children, he would not send them to French or British missionary schools in Jerusalem, however good their academic reputation was. Instead he sent them to the German Colony Templar School, where they received a non-traditional, progressive education.²⁴

When enrolling at the university in Geneva Jabre struggled with how to describe his identity to the western world. On his registration form dated October 23, 1911 he wrote that his origins were “Arab Protected Persian.” When three years later he enrolled again at the University of Geneva, he registered as a Turkish citizen.²⁵ As Abigail Jacobson suggests regarding the ways Palestinian identity was negotiated and discussed, “people’s affiliation to the Ottoman collective allowed for multilayered, blurry, flexible foci of identity to exist side by side.”²⁶

In 1912 while Jabre was spending his summer in Palestine, getting himself ready to return to Switzerland to finish his education, Sultan Abdul Hafiz of Morocco (who governed from 1908-1912) was passing through Palestine on his way to the Hajj in Mecca. While in Jerusalem he inquired about hiring an intelligent young man who knew French and could be his secretary while visiting the Holy Land. The name of Adel Jabre was recommended to him, and thus Jabre joined the Sultan on his trip, even going with him to his palace in Rabat, where the Sultan offered him permanent employment as his private secretary. According to ‘Ajaj Nuwaihid, the Sultan made

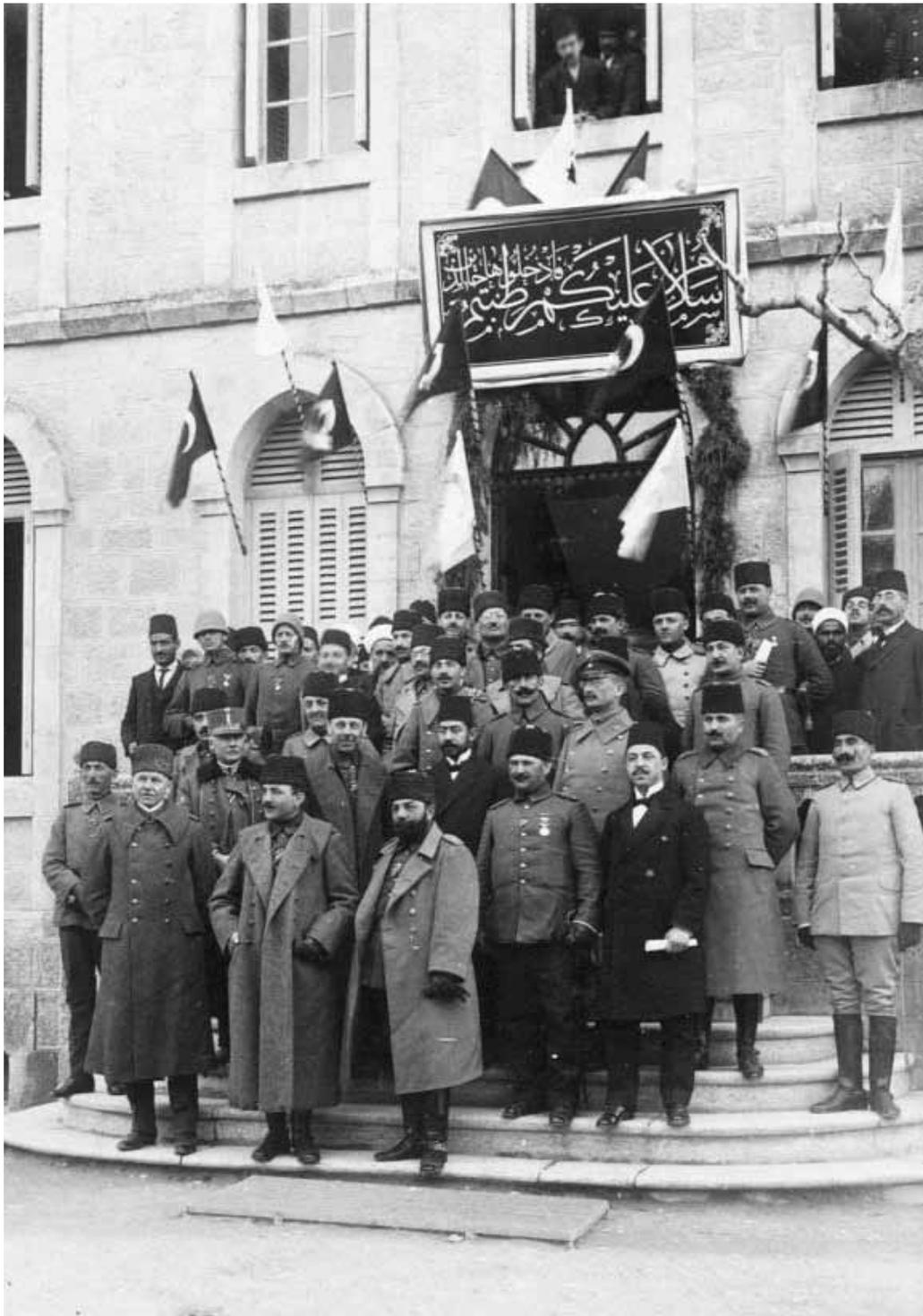
him three tempting offers to keep him in his employ. One, he offered him a fully furnished mansion complete with servants; two, in addition to his salary, Jabre was offered enough money to get married; and three, the Sultan promised to entrust him with all his secrets.²⁷

As alluring as these three offers were, Jabre thanked the Sultan and assured him that his dearest wish was to return to Switzerland to complete his education. In late 1914, after Jabre returned to Palestine, degree in hand, he told his friends, “I don’t regret making that choice.”²⁸

It is not clear when Jabre moved from Jaffa to make Jerusalem his permanent home, but it must have been before the outbreak of World War I. At that time, between 1908 and 1911, he began teaching at the *Dusturiyya* (Constitutional) School, the institution his friend, Khalil Sakakini had created in Jerusalem after the Young Turks’ Revolt and the promulgation of the new Ottoman Constitution of 1908. The School had opened in the fall of 1911. Its pedagogy was progressive and revolutionary by most standards, even to this day. Students from all denominations were accepted, which was a novel concept at the time. The aim of the school was to educate and empower young men without diminishing or humiliating them. Unlike all other schools of that era, the *Dusturiyya* did not follow a behaviorist pedagogy of rewards and punishments. Exams were replaced by students’ reflections and self-evaluations. No attendance roll call was taken. Students were free to leave classes if bored, a method that forced teachers to be more engaging and original in their teaching in order to maintain their students’ interest. The formal subjects taught were Arabic, Turkish, English, French, math, science, geography, history, elementary commerce, health, religion, drawing, music, and physical education.²⁹

In 1915, when Jabre finished his studies in Geneva, he came back to Jerusalem and was employed by the new *Salahiyya* School on the grounds of St. Anne’s Church near St. Stephen’s Gate. The school offered twelve years of studies in Turkish and Arabic, from a secondary curriculum to a university-level course load. The curriculum included theological studies and secular subjects. Adel taught geography and French.³⁰ The other subjects were German, English, Russian, Persian, Urdu or Tatar, math, history and natural sciences. Some of my grandfather’s colleagues were famous reform theologians, and renowned teachers and scholars of Arabic language and literature, amongst them Khalil Sakakini, Is‘af al-Nashashibi, Sheikh Abdel Aziz Shawish, Shakib Arsalan, Abdul Qadir al-Moghrabi, and Rustum Haidar.³¹

Since its establishment in 1918, *Qahwat al-Mukhtar*, a café in the Old City at the entrance of Jaffa Gate near the Imperial Hotel became the meeting place of a group of Palestinians intellectuals, led by Khalil Sakakini. While discussing political and literary matters, Jabre would spend his afternoons sipping Turkish coffee, and smoking an *arghileh* with Yacoub Farraj (appointed vice-mayor of Jerusalem in 1934, during the British Mandate), Anastas Hanania (lawyer and judge) Is‘af al-Nashashibi, Yusef and Issa al-Issa (respectively, editor of *Alif Ba* and publisher of *Falastin*), Ishaq Musa al-Husseini, Khalil Nakhleh, and others.³² In 2003 I was lucky enough to visit the café with my mother’s distant relative, Maroun Tarsha, who



Salihyya School Faculty and Ottoman Officials, front row, left to right Von Schellendorf, Enver Pascha and Cemal Jamal. Second row right Gamil an-Nayyal. In back on right in civilian clothes, Rafiq at-Tamimi. Adel Jabre standing in middle in back row, slightly out of focus, February 1916, Jerusalem. *Source: al-Kulliya as-Salahiya, Jerusalem, photograph by Martin Strohmeier.*

walked me up the cobblestone street at the corner of the Imperial Hotel and into this unremarkable café which had nonetheless been the witness to some of Jerusalem's most animated intellectual discourses.

At the end of World War I, after the Ottoman forces were defeated and Britain occupied Palestine and established its military administration, Jabre served as the Deputy Director of the Arab Education Department.³³

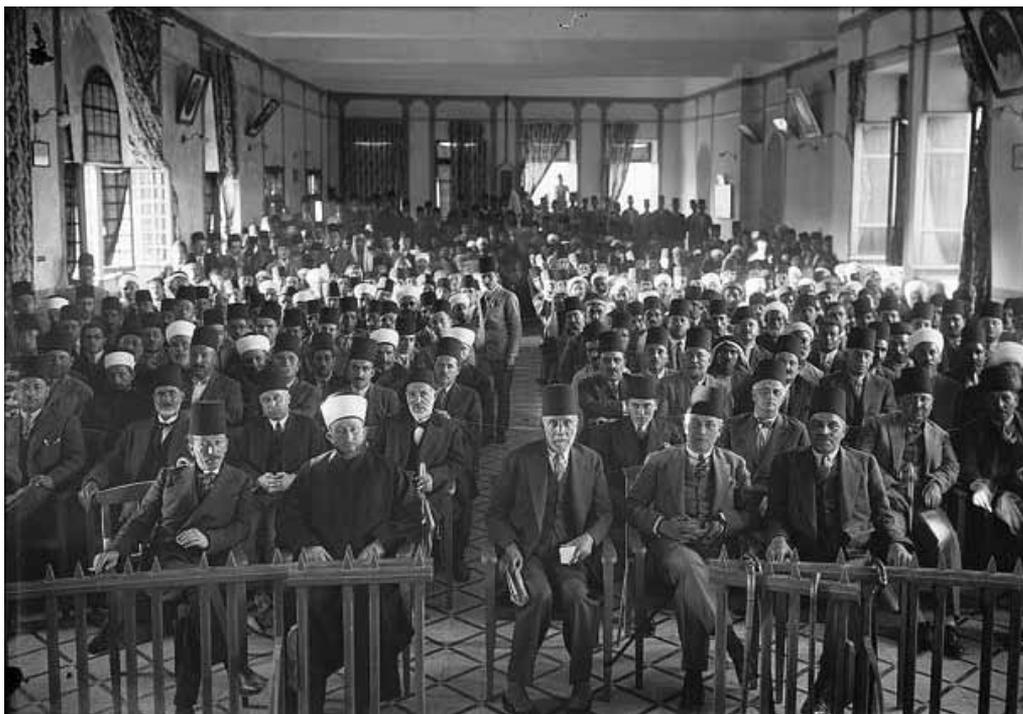
Even though Jabre had enjoyed his teaching career, he preferred writing, especially journalism and the dissemination of social and political ideas. He could not keep away from the burgeoning Arab media. Therefore, between 1921-1922 he became a member of the editorial staff of *Lisan al-Arab*, the first Arabic language daily in Damascus whose editor was Ibrahim Salim al-Najjar.³⁴

Adel Jabre would come daily early in the morning to the office and sit behind one of the three tables in the editorial room [on Mamillah St.] and write the opening article on one or two columns of the first page. This was a rare phenomenon in those days since the opening editorial in the other newspapers used to extend beyond the first page. Adel Jabre used to sit all by himself and the commotion of the workers and the press never disturbed him. After he finished writing, he would put on his tarbush and take his cane and go out the door in his elegant suit.³⁵

In 1922 Jabre embarked on a bold endeavor. He translated a chapter from Max Nordau's *Paradoxes*.³⁶ The chapter is entitled "Nationality," and Adel entitled his Arabic version *Spirit of Nationalism*. He prepared this translation, made from the French, for *Lisan al-Arab*,³⁷ where it appeared in eight installments between March 27 and April 10, 1922.³⁸ Jabre wrote a brief introduction to his translation which appeared with the first installment on March 27:

Everyone familiar with the direction of contemporary thought in the west sees the issue of nationalism preoccupying great politicians, authors, and scholars. Rarely is a reputable newspaper or magazine devoid of this great dilemma and the many studies that have dealt with it. Sociologists of our time have called this the age of nationalism due to the profusion of debate and controversy surrounding what has happened and is happening to the extent that nations have fallen into the greatest of problems and the harshest of wars.³⁹

It is not clear why Jabre chose to translate Nordau's piece on nationality. Perhaps He wanted to remind Palestinians that their country was still part of Greater Syria, since it was 1922, a few years after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and the division of Greater Syria by France and Britain. Or perhaps his intention was to awaken the Palestinian spirit of nationalism, or the spirit of Pan-Arabism. Another thought is that if Jabre were well aware of Nordau's Zionist views, could he have purposefully chosen



Adel Jabre, third row, aisle seat, at the Arab Protest Meeting in response to the British Inquiry Commission, (1929) held at Rawdat al Maaref, Photograph by Antonia Tower. *Source: IPS Beirut.*

this chapter in order to warn Palestinian readers about the rhetoric of nationalism hidden behind the Zionist claim? Yet in his introductory piece, Jabre seems to respect Nordau's opinion about forming a nation based on ethnic and linguistic roots.

In 1923 Jabre was hired as a reporter for the English language *Palestine Bulletin*, which in 1932 became *The Palestine Post*.⁴⁰

In 1923 the Supreme Muslim Council (the administration of Muslim affairs during the British Mandate) hired Jabre as the Director of the Islamic Museum and al-Aqsa Mosque Library in Jerusalem, and assigned him to carry out a number of tasks concerned with national reform.⁴¹ While in Jerusalem I met with Khader Salameh, the current Director of the al-Aqsa Library, who dug with me through its archives and helped me find hand-written letters, dating from 1923, in which Jabre ordered items for his new library from bookstores in Cairo such as Joseph Elian Sarkis, Beirut, as well as from a list of book donors in Tunisia, Beirut, Paris, the University of Hamburg, and Poland.⁴²

Jabre contributed to different boards and committees, such as the Consulting Council of Antiquities, (and participated in their conventions in Cairo in 1910 and in 1924), the Palestinian Council of Higher Education, and the Committee for the Censorship of Film and Theater. Additionally, he was a member of the Consulting Committee for Social Affairs, and a member of the Committee for War Veterans in Palestine. He was also an honorary member of the Swiss Education League, as well

as the Geographical and Anthropological Leagues in Geneva. And he represented Palestine at the World Geographical Convention, which took place in Cairo in 1925.⁴³

As one of Jabre's many duties for the Supreme Muslim Council, he was appointed head of tourism for the Ibrahim Mosque in Hebron.⁴⁴ He wrote two travel pamphlets for tourists, one on the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the other on the Ibrahim Mosque.⁴⁵

Back at Hebrew University Library, as I sit alone holding my grandfather's newspaper, I think of all the hours he must have spent writing his editorials, and reflect on his hopes and dreams for Palestine. I look down at the paper, which is yellowed with age, its edges dark and frayed. Some of the margins are folded; some pages cracked, with small holes in them. It has been lovingly held and read, like a dear old book whose pages are wrinkled and creased by the reader.

While Palestine lagged behind Egypt in its intellectual and political consciousness, there was a clear rise in political fervor after World War I, as seen in the publication of new newspapers and journals, and the sprouting of political associations. The first stirrings of local Arab patriotism and nationalist activities were witnessed, discussed, and recorded in the local papers.

In the 'thirties one of the biggest political issues on my grandfather's and every other Palestinian's mind was British colonial rule in Palestine, and its unavoidable consequence, Zionism. The British Mandate was established shortly after the end of World War I when Field Marshall Edmund Allenby captured Jerusalem and walked through Jaffa Gate on December 9, 1917.⁴⁶ This historic moment heralded the beginning of British colonialism in Palestine. A month beforehand, an important event had taken place in London, an event that would become the root of today's Israeli-Palestinian problem – the signing on November 2, 1917 of the Balfour Declaration, which promised the Jews the creation of a national homeland in Palestine, with some dubious qualifications about the rights of the native population:

*His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.*⁴⁷

In order to achieve a Jewish majority, large numbers of Jewish immigrants were needed to settle in Palestine. So they poured into the port of Haifa from Russia, Poland and Hungary, escaping pogroms and outbreaks of anti-Semitism. Greatly influenced by socialist ideals, they established agricultural communities. Some of the groundwork of an independent state arose: a national language, newspapers and literature, political parties and workers' organizations.⁴⁸

The Balfour Declaration was not only intended to guarantee the creation of a national Jewish homeland in Palestine, but it also planned to protect “*the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.*” However, the



Al-Hayat article. Source: Mona Hajjar Halaby collection.

their land to immigrant Jews. *Al-Hayat*, like other newspapers of the time, published a well-established national slogan to the Arab population, “*Hafiz ‘ala aradik*” (“Preserve your land”). Eventually, at the end of the British Mandate, Britain’s promise to both people caused a clash in the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, which resulted in the expulsion of one half of the entire Arab-Palestinian population (750,000) from that part of Palestine which became the state of Israel on May 15, 1948.

When the efforts of the Palestinian delegation in London to restrict Jewish immigration to Palestine were foiled, *al-Hayat* published an editorial which emphatically concluded that “Arabs, your case will not be solved anywhere else outside your country.”⁴⁹

The *al-Buraq*, or Wailing Wall Uprising refers to a series of demonstrations in late August 1929 when a yearlong dispute between Muslims and Jews over access to the Western Wall in Jerusalem escalated into violence. The fighting started in Jerusalem, spread to Hebron, then to the rest of the country. Hundreds of Jews and Arabs were massacred, and many were injured. The tension that led Palestinians to the uprising came from years of discontent and frustration over the rise in Jewish immigration and settlement building, and more importantly, it incited active resistance against British colonialism and Zionist ambitions.⁵⁰

After the outbreak of the *al-Buraq* Uprising, heated by frustration and discontent in the face of mounting Zionism, Jabre decided to start his own newspaper in order to help awaken and educate the Palestinian population. Many of the newspaper’s contributors belonged to Jerusalem’s literary and political circles. Members of the Palestinian National Movement, like poet and journalist Khayr al-Din al-Zirikli, and Akram Zu‘aiter, Palestinian nationalist and founding member of the *Istiqlal* Party (Independence) were regular contributors to *al-Hayat*.⁵¹

When the *Buraq* Committee, formed by British officials, arrived in the country to investigate the uprising, *al-Hayat* commented in issue no. 64, dated June 22, 1930: “What is the use of these discussions and rulings when the most important problem remains silenced? We have showed a lot of patience, and we will continue to be patient until those in control understand the necessity of addressing the central issue, and only then will we be optimistic.”⁵²

British did not uphold their promise to safeguard the indigenous population. Masses of Jews immigrated to Palestine, affecting the economy and power structures, undermining the confidence of the local population and their aspirations to create an independent Palestinian state. The Arabs, who had been promised independence by the British in exchange for their help during World War I, were also counting on creating their own state, yet some of them were pressured to sell

“The central issue” Jabre was referring to was that Palestinians were fighting against British colonialism, and they perceived European Jewish nationalism as part and parcel of that colonialism. They viewed Jewish nationalism as precluding their independence, equality, and freedom in their own homeland. Tragically, they were prophetic.

Jabre’s first editorial, dated April 1, 1930, introduced his goals to readers. He states with clarity and common sense what his plans are – reform and uprising. Unlike the language of most other Arab newspapers, which are marked by an inflammatory style, the language in *al-Hayat* is explicit and direct:

To Our Readers

This is a genuine and wholesome newspaper, which we present to the people to whom we have the honor to belong. We strongly believe we should serve them, and do our best to please them, so that the newspaper becomes a precise record of people’s deeds, and so that it becomes a clear mirror that reflects their hopes.

We do not aspire to establish today a political agenda that we will follow, because this duty belongs entirely to the people. We vowed not to stray from their opinions with regards to what was approved in previous meetings and what will be approved in subsequent ones.

But this does not mean, God forbid, that we should blindly surrender to these ideals. We consider that one of our most pious duties is to eliminate injustice and allow the truth to prevail, but using legitimate means, and introducing a genuine style instead of following our own whims and self-interests. When a controversial issue arises, we will first examine it closely, then we will provide solutions that we believe to be correct and worth defending. And as long as this issue is being debated, we will respect it so that the people can decide, and we will take precisely that decision into consideration, even if it is contrary to our point of view. This is what is known in politics as the monitoring system.

Following this course, we publish our newspaper, *al-Hayat*, hoping to draw the people’s attention to this process in a bid to organize its life, its political, social, and economic effort. It will eventually lead to great success, because we do not lack programs, but we need to translate these programs into reality and execute them in the best way possible.

The struggle of the people to achieve their full rights remains incomplete when it is limited to politics alone. We need to take into consideration all aspects of life, and in particular the social, economic and literary aspects. We also will not spare any effort in addressing subjects, which are related to the perfect half of our society – women – who should be our companions at work, utilizing their full power and vitality.⁵³

Jabre was not only a political man who fought against colonialism and Zionism, but also an early feminist. In a society where women were mostly valued in the home, Jabre's message in his first editorial rings modern and progressive in its emphasis on employing women in the task force.

In the 'thirties, teaching was considered an acceptable career for Palestinian women. But even as early as 1908, Jabre's wife, my grandmother Marie Sidawi Jabre (nicknamed Manana), a Christian Jerusalemite, was the director of *al-Islamiyyah* School in the old city of Jerusalem, near one of the entrances to the esplanade of the Dome of the Rock. This school was the only Ottoman School for girls in Jerusalem. It taught science and general knowledge, rather than music and handicrafts, the usual subjects taught in girls' schools in those days.⁵⁴

At that time the role of women in the media was not very widespread. Yet Marie Jabre wrote letters and articles for the Jerusalem newspaper *al-Asmai'*, named after the eighth-century Arab scientist.⁵⁵ She also read children's stories on the radio. My mother remembers sitting at home, cross-legged on the living room carpet, listening to the radio on Christmas Eve while her mother read in Arabic *The Little Match Girl*, by Hans Christian Andersen.⁵⁶

Al-Hayat was also cosmopolitan as evidenced by its international advertisements. I found ads for Aspirin and Johnnie Walker whiskey, for Kappel Typewriters manufactured in Saxony, Germany, and for Fargo Trucks built in Chicago. Bata Shoes from Czechoslovakia were also advertized. But it was Cirio's canned fruits and vegetables from Italy that were the most picturesque – peas, beans, or tomatoes growing on vines in the foreground with cans stacked up in the background.⁵⁷

While researching *al-Hayat* I looked up Khaled al-Duzdar on the Internet, and discovered that his great-nephew, Raed Duzdar, lives in Jerusalem. He invited me to his home in Musrara, where the Duzdar family has resided for a hundred years. We are both convinced that *al-Hayat* was published in the basement of his family home.

In 1942 Yacob Yehoshua, a Sephardic journalist who wrote two books on the Arab press, interviewed my grandfather. When asked what he thought about the Arabic media, Jabre said, "The Arabic media has improved, but lacks organization. As for the principles published, they should be based on an academic foundation much more than they are today. Nonetheless, journalists today should believe in what they write ..."⁵⁸ This is what Jabre said about political parties and the fate of *al-Hayat*:

Joining one party is important, but I believe that parties are still in their infancy. They are not built on ideals that are clear and evident. I have not joined any parties. My nature to keep out of the public eye. And that is the case with newspapers. They are still under the influence of individuals rather than values. *Al-Hayat* newspaper was an exception, as it valued principles over individuals. And therefore, the Palestinian parties never regarded it sympathetically. In the end due to financial obligations, it ended. It had lived a noble life.⁵⁹

In late 1931 when *al-Hayat* shut down, Jabre began to work with Fuad Saba, who established the first auditing company in Palestine, on a monthly publication, *Majalat al-Iqtisadiyyat al Arabiyya*, (Arab Economies).⁶⁰

Although Adel Jabre often complained about the corruption and greed that permeated politics, he nevertheless decided to enter the fray for elections in Jerusalem. In 1939 Britain's High Commissioner, Harold MacMichael, nominated him for Jerusalem Municipal Councilman.⁶¹ Jabre worked side by side with Jewish, Muslim and Christian Councilmen on various committees in order to provide services focused on land use, urban and community development. Over the course of his six years of service he was a member of the Water Board, Finance, Roads, Building Permits, Watch (Safety) and Education committees.⁶² He also participated in the General Council for Social Welfare.⁶³

From 1936 to 1947 Jabre presented a weekly radio lecture on the Arabic Program of the Palestinian Broadcasting Service. His subjects ranged from architecture to education, art, literature, and economics. In the spring of 1938 he gave three consecutive talks on the role of education in children's lives. His first talk, on April 11 was titled "Why Do They [Children] Play?" On May 23, he spoke about "Our Children at Home," and finally on June 27, he discussed "Intelligence Tests."⁶⁴ Jabre's progressive notions about education and his groundbreaking concern with a child's home life and its effects on school life are highly interesting at a time when most formal education was traditional and inductive in nature. Even though he never mentions theories of cognitive development, Jabre's opinions suggest that he was aware of the dynamic nature of learning and the importance of listening to children.

He also presented radio programs on other special occasions, such as May 12, 1939, the forty-day memorial of the death of King Ghazi of Iraq;⁶⁵ or May 4, 1940, when he reviewed Selma Lagerlof's *Jerusalem*,⁶⁶ which in 1909 had won the Nobel Prize for Literature; or May 13, 1941, when he sat on a jury with Khalil Beidas, Yusef Heikal and Ibrahim Shanti to select the best poem from Palestine submitted to the BBC.⁶⁷

He regularly attended lectures sponsored by the Council of the Middle East Society in Jerusalem at the Villa Rosemary in the German Colony,⁶⁸ and made presentations at literary events, such as at the celebration on March 26, 1944 of the nine-hundredth anniversary of the birth of the Arab poet from Cordoba, Ibn Zaydun al-Makhzumi, held at the Jaffa Sports Club.⁶⁹

In 1940, frustrated by the mounting tension between Arabs and Jews, Jabre began a series of attempts to negotiate an Arab-Jewish accord. Agronomist Haim Margalio Kalvarisky, in charge of buying land and founding the Galilee colonies on behalf of the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA), suggested that Jabre first contact the Political Department of the Jewish Agency in order to receive its consent and support for his proposal. Jabre and Kalvarisky probably met when Jabre was a Jerusalem Councilman. Kalvarisky was born in Poland and came to Palestine in 1895 with the first wave of immigration. The motivations driving his work appear to be contradictory, and most likely reveal a scheming nature. On the one hand he was involved in purchasing large tracts of land from Arabs in the Galilee to develop Jewish

settlements, while on the other he tried very hard to advance rapprochement and good neighborly relations between Jews and Arabs.⁷⁰

In the fall of 1940 Jabre traveled to Baghdad to talk with Iraqi, Syrian, Egyptian, Transjordanian, and exiled Palestinian Arabs about his idea of creating a confederation of Semitic states, including a bi-national Palestine. After returning to Jerusalem he reported his impressions to Kalvarisky and Moshe Shertok, head of the Agency's Political Department, Ben Gurion's right-hand man and later his successor as the second prime minister of Israel (also, incidentally, Jabre's former Herzliya student). In order to advance the negotiations he repeatedly asked for a Jewish proposal. Having waited several months and receiving no reaction from the Agency, he drafted in cooperation with Kalvarisky a five-point proposal as a point of departure for further negotiations with Arab leaders.⁷¹

On July 7, 1941, Shertok communicated his criticism of the proposal. Jabre was very disappointed and wanted the criticism clarified, so in the absence of Shertok, Kalvarisky met with Ben Gurion on July 21. In his diary Kalvarisky writes that when he laid in front of Ben Gurion Jabre's proposal, before Ben Gurion even glanced at it he pushed it aside in anger and said, "I don't want to deal with this document at all, it's an abomination."⁷²

On 19 August, 1941, Shertok replied to Jabre's question, and negotiations came to an end, because a favorable attitude to the Federation was conditional on a Jewish state being part of it. The Zionists were not prepared to give up their vision of a national state of their own.⁷³

Even though Ben Gurion had since 1931 favored parity in government, the crux of the objection to Jabre's proposal was the fourth point of the proposal – a bi-national Palestine based on full equality. It was Ben Gurion's unwillingness to agree to parity and not the often-heard criticism that "there is no one to talk to in the Arab camp" that was the actual obstacle to an accord.⁷⁴

Because in those days it was dangerous and unpopular to promote the idea of dividing Palestine into two countries, Jabre and Kalvarisky's failed joint venture put their lives at risk. In fact, when researching at the Central Zionist Agency for anything pertaining to my grandfather's bi-national proposal, I could only find a vague mention of his work with Kalvarisky. Jabre was referred to only as "a renowned and respected Arab man."⁷⁵

On December 8, 1942, when my grandmother Marie died, Jabre's world ceased to be the same. Like his best friend, Khalil Sakakini, who also lost his wife Sultaneh at a young age, Jabre mourned his wife until the day he died. Two great Palestinian scholars and intellectuals lose their homeland and their beloved wives, and later they will lose their own lives only a few months apart.

On May 22, 1948 Jabre lost his home in Lower Baq'a in Jerusalem. While he was out of the house Zionist forces invaded it and took his eldest son, Daoud, a civilian in his late twenties, prisoner of war. Daoud was subsequently transported to an Israeli labor camp in Atlit. He remained in the Israeli prison camp for almost a year, until in February 1949 he was freed in an exchange of prisoners. He was dropped off at

Mandelbaum Gate in Jerusalem and was not allowed to return to his home in West Jerusalem.⁷⁶

Meanwhile Jabre remained in the Old City of Jerusalem until the end of the summer of 1948, awaiting news of his son. In a letter to his friend, Khalil Sakakini (preserved by my cousin, Aref Jabre), Adel Jabre describes the horrific “Night of the Five Hundred Mortars” as it is sometimes called. During the battle for the Old City of Jerusalem, Lieutenant Colonel Abdullah al-Tell was in command of three infantry companies based inside the Old City. He and his small number of soldiers provided essential help to the Palestinian population of the Old City when Israeli forces fired five hundred shells into the walled city over a period of three hours, inflicting many casualties and much damage.⁷⁷

August 4, 1948
Jerusalem

My Brother Abu Sari,⁷⁸

... Imagine a huge storm with violent winds howling sometimes and roaring other times, making the earth shake and causing the ceilings and the walls to tremble and the trees to shake violently, making their leaves and branches fall down. And imagine the whole atmosphere filled with thunderstorms, lightening with dust rising and debris all over with fire blazing from all sides. Imagine all of this and look at your brother sitting under a ceiling in an attic with open doors, destroyed windows with shells [mortars] falling at two, three, or four-minute intervals, sometimes from the right, sometimes from the left. And imagine I'm sitting in front of a small lantern, barely shedding light anywhere except on the face of the owners of the attic, the glorious commander Abdullah Bek al-Tell, the commander of the garrison of the Old City, while he organizes the defense of the city, maintaining well his composure and determined attitude, receiving the news via telephone and issuing his orders through it, taking his time, yet never hesitating or losing his smile, even when informed of the death of unarmed men, or women or children. All he did was repeat that all are destined to death, without one word more. Then he faces us again and continues to engage us in pleasant and polite conversation. I should also tell you that I spent the whole night sitting on a very uncomfortable chair from sunset to sunrise and I swear that my eyes were never sleepy, but at the same time I never had any feelings of dread, of fear, of despair. It was because I was getting strength and courage through this great leader. Shells were repeatedly exploding very near to me. I didn't move. It seems my companions and I were not sensing bodies, but thinking minds. Forgive me, I just tried to describe to you what we went through that night, the night of 16-17 of July, but I should add, I probably failed to give you the right impression. Perhaps we will meet and I will explain it all to you more fully.

You might want me to tell you about the outcome of this terrible battle, so I will say this. Seventeen killed and a few dozens of wounded Arabs. As for the enemy, their attack was repelled and they left the battleground in a hurry, leaving behind hundreds of dead and wounded. Fire raged at the eastern side of Al-Aqsa Mosque, but it was almost immediately put out; and the Dome of the Rock from the north-western side had a hit, and part of that historical relic was damaged. The courtyard before the Church of the Holy Sepulcher sustained some slight damage. Also the roofs of some rooms at St. Basilios, adjacent to the New Gate, collapsed. And some damage occurred at the Islamic Orphanage Association (Al-Aytam) and as a result some roofs were destroyed there. May God spare the Faithful further fighting...

Yours faithfully

Adel Jabre⁷⁹

My son, Daoud has been imprisoned, but he is well.⁸⁰

Jabre, like two of his three children, Afif and Zakia, ended up in Egypt where he resided near his friends, Khalil Sakakini and Is‘af al-Nashashibi. His expert knowledge of the Arabic language and scholarship earned him a place in the Arabic Language Academy in Cairo, where with his two friends he advocated for the preservation and integrity of the Arabic language and helped coin Arabic terms for scientific words and expressions that had been introduced into Western languages. One example of Jabre’s work for the Academy was the time he came to visit my family in Alexandria and spent the weekend scribbling in his notepad different Arabic words for “sandwich.”⁸¹

In September 1951 Jabre moved to Amman, Jordan, where he was appointed to the Jordanian Senate. On December 19, 1953, while vacationing in Jericho, he died of a massive heart attack. Snow covered the town while people huddled together for the burial service. The eulogy was given by Prime Minister of Jordan Fawzi al-Mulqi.⁸²

In 1953, when my grandfather died, erecting a tombstone at the burial site was an uncommon practice in Muslim tradition. Instead two rocks were placed one at the head and one at the foot of the burial site to delineate the grave.

When I made inquiries with my cousins while residing in Ramallah, they offered to take me to Adel Jabre’s graveside. In Jericho we entered the old town cemetery that lay behind crumbling walls and a rusty wrought-iron gate. The cemetery was deserted and neglected. My cousins pointed to the northern wall. Three mounds of dirt outlined three graves. I was wondering which one covered the remains of my grandfather when I suddenly detected something gleaming in the dirt next to one of the graves – a small, ordinary, glass marble. I saw this marble as a sign, a marker in my quest for Adel Jabre. I picked it up, slipped it in my pocket, and began to clean up and de-clutter the periphery of the grave. Then I stood silently at the foot of the mound, thinking of the arc of my grandfather’s life and his nationalist vision of Palestine. He had been a modern thinker who believed in co-existence, pluralism, consensus, and tolerance, and

who at a time of great upheaval in Palestine never lost his moral compass, both in his professional and personal life.

Mona Hajjar Halaby is an educator and writer. In 2007-2008 she spent a year at the Ramallah Friends School, training the faculty in the facilitation of class meetings and conflict resolution. She has contributed other articles to the Jerusalem Quarterly, and has published two books on parenting and one on creating community in the classroom.

Endnotes

- 1 Jacob Yehoshua, *Tarikh al-sihafa al-'arabiyya fi Filastin fil-'ahd al-uthmani (1908-1918)*, [*The Arabic Press in Palestine During the Ottoman Regime, vol. 1, 1908-1918*], (Jerusalem: Al Ma'arif Printing Press, 1974), 115. I would like to thank Teddy Theodorie for translating parts of this book for me from Arabic into English.
- 2 Khalil Sakakini (1878-1953) leading Palestinian intellectual, writer, educator and Arab nationalist.
- 3 Ibrahim Salim Al-Najjar (1882-1957), of Lebanese origin, journalist and newspaper publisher in Damascus of *Lisan al Arab*, 1920-1923.
- 4 Mustafa Kabha, *The Palestinian Press as Shaper of Public Opinion 1929-1939* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2007), 23.
- 5 Zakia Hajjar interviewed by the author, 2001-2005.
- 6 Yehoshua, 23-27.
- 7 Yehoshua, 23-27.
- 8 Daoud Jabre genealogy research, 1988-1989.
- 9 Zakia Hajjar interviewed by the author, 2001-2005.
- 10 Daoud Jabre genealogy research, 1988-1989.
- 11 Zakia Hajjar interviewed by the author, 2001-2005.
- 12 Adel Jabre St. Joseph School High School Diploma, from the records of the Archives of the University of Geneva, Switzerland, accessed on March 29, 2007.
- 13 Yehoshua, 112-115.
- 14 Yehoshua, 112-115.
- 15 Abigail Jacobson, "Alternative Voices in Late Ottoman Palestine: Jews and Arabs on the Evolving National Conflict," PASSIA Meetings and Workshops, May 24, 2004, <http://www.passia.org/meetings/2004/May-24-Late-Ottoman-Palestine.htm>.
- 16 Yehoshua, 112-115.
- 17 Mohammad Umar Hamadeh, *Mawsu'at A'lam Filistin fil Qarn al 'Ishrin*, (Damascus, Syria, 2000).
- 18 Yehoshua, 111.
- 19 Yehoshua, 28.
- 20 Fakhri Geday, *Jaffa Bride of the Sea* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 2007), 32-33. In Arabic.
- 21 Kabha, xiv.
- 22 Kabha, 114.
- 23 Yacoub Al-'Odat, *A'lam al fikr wa al-adab fi Filastin*, [*Leaders of Thought and Literature in Palestine*]. No publication data available.
- 24 Zakia Hajjar interviewed by the author, 2001-2005.
- 25 Adel Jabre's University of Geneva application, records from the Archives of the University of Geneva, Switzerland, accessed on March 29, 2007.
- 26 Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem Between Ottoman and British Rule* (Syracuse, N.Y.: University of Syracuse Press, 2011), 80-81.
- 27 'Ajaj Nuwayhid, *Rijal min Filastin, ma bayna bidayat al-qarn hatta 'am 1948 [Men of Palestine, from the beginning of the century to 1948]*, (Beirut: Manshurat Filastin al-Muhtalla, 1981), 25-26.
- 28 Nuwayhid, 25-26.
- 29 Salim Tamari, "A Miserable Year in Brooklyn: Khalil Sakakini in America, 1907-1908," *Jerusalem Quarterly File*, Issue 17 (Winter 2003), 20.
- 30 List of subjects taught at the Salahiyya School and names of the teachers, records from Markaz al-Turath, Bethany, accessed on December 4, 2007.
- 31 Salim Tamari, *Year of the Locust: A Soldier's Diary and the Erasure of Palestine's Ottoman Past*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 39-42.
- 32 Salim Tamari, *Mountain Against the Sea: Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 188.
- 33 Yaacov Shavit, Yaacov Goldestein, and Haim Be'er, eds., *Personalities in Eretz-Israel 1799-1948, A Biographical Dictionary* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishers Ltd., 1983), 117. [Most of the articles on Arab personalities were written by Adel Manna.]

- 34 Yehoshua, 112.
- 35 Yehoshua, 112.
- 36 Max Nordau, *Paradoxes*, translated from German by J. R. McIlraith, (London: Heinemann, 1896).
- 37 Al-'Odat,
- 38 "The Spirit of Nationalism," in *Lisan al-Arab*, March 27 to April 10, 1922, records from Hebrew University Library, Jerusalem, accessed May 8, 2007.
- 39 Translation by Gregory Halaby, August 2012.
- 40 Yehoshua, 112.
- 41 Nuwayhid, 25-26.
- 42 Correspondence between Jabre and booksellers (orders and invoices), records from the Archives of the al-Aqsa Library, Jerusalem, accessed on October 30, 2006.
- 43 Nuwayhid, 25-26.
- 44 Nuwayhid, 25-26.
- 45 I am attributing this information to Fahmi al-Ansari, owner of the Al-Ansari Library in Jerusalem, who gave me a 1965 reprint of the pamphlet entitled, *Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi Al-Khalil*, a Brief Guide Published by the Supreme Awqaf Council at The Industrial Islamic Orphanage Printing Press in Jerusalem.
- 46 Tom Segev, *One Palestine Complete: Jews and Arabs, Under the British Mandate*, (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), 50-56.
- 47 A. J. Sherman, *Mandate Days: British Lives in Palestine, 1918-1948*, (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1997), 13.
- 48 Sherman, 91-92.
- 49 Yehoshua, 23-27.
- 50 Segev, 295-327.
- 51 Al-'Odat,
- 52 Yehoshua, 23-27.
- 53 Yehoshua, 23-27..
- 54 Zakia Hajjar interviewed by the author, 2001-2005.
- 55 Yehoshua, 114.
- 56 Zakia Hajjar interviewed by the author, 2001-2005.
- 57 *Al-Hayat* newspaper, records from Hebrew University Library, Jerusalem, accessed on April 30, 2007.
- 58 Yehoshua, 23-27.
- 59 Yehoshua, 23-27.
- 60 Ali Hassan Bawab, *Encyclopedia of Beautiful Jaffa, Volume 2*, (Beirut: al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabiyyah lil-Dirasat wa-al-Nashr, 2003.), 1307.
- 61 *Palestine Post*, July 27, 1939.
- 62 Minutes from the Jerusalem Municipal Council Meetings from 1939 to 1945, records from the Archives of the Jerusalem Municipality, Jerusalem, accessed on April 13, 2008.
- 63 *Palestine Post*, July 27, 1939.
- 64 Jabre's radio lectures, records from Jabre Family Papers, Birzeit, accessed on May 11, 2007.
- 65 *Palestine Post*, May 12, 1939.
- 66 *Palestine Post*, May 4, 1940.
- 67 *Palestine Post*, May 13, 1941.
- 68 Jabre's invitation, records from Jabre Family Papers, Birzeit, accessed on May 11, 2007.
- 69 *Palestine Post*, March 26, 1944.
- 70 Derek J. Penslar, *Zionism and Technocracy: The Engineering of Jewish Settlement in Palestine 1870-1918* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991), 29-32.
- 71 Aharon Cohen, *Israel and the Arab World*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1976), 285-286.
- 72 Cohen, 285-286.
- 73 Cohen, 285-286.
- 74 Cohen, 285-286.
- 75 Kalvarisky's Binational Proposal file, records from the Central Zionist Agency, accessed on May 10, 2008.
- 76 Zakia Hajjar interviewed by the author, 2001-2005.
- 77 Interviews in 2006 with Abu-Mayzar, a Muristan storekeeper from Hebron who survived the Hebron massacre in 1929 and the War of 1948.
- 78 Khalil Sakakini's eldest child was named Sari. In Arabic "Abu" means "Father of," thus "Abu Sari" means Sari's Father, a customary Arab way of addressing a man.
- 79 Adel Jabre's letter to Khalil Sakakini, records from the Jabre Family Papers, Birzeit, accessed on May 18, 2007.
- 80 Daoud Jabre, Adel's oldest son had been forcibly taken from his home in Lower Baq'a by Zionist forces on May 22, 1948, along with all young male Palestinians still residing in their homes in the neighborhood. Zionist soldiers were depopulating West Jerusalem in an effort to take it over. Anyone living on his own was driven out by fear, or forcibly kidnapped, as was Daoud Jabre. He was an unarmed civilian sitting peacefully in his home when he was taken. He was blindfolded, handcuffed, and thrown into the back of a van that took him to the Citadel Prison in Akka. He was kept there for a couple of weeks then incarcerated in a labor camp in Atlit, south of Haifa (incidentally, with Yusef Sayegh) for almost a year. Daoud was released in an exchange of prisoners on February 22, 1949, at the Mandelbaum Gate.
- 81 Jean Hajjar interviewed by the author, 2012.
- 82 Nuwayhid, 25-26.