

Appendix I

War in the Old City: The Diaries of Constantine Mavrides[♦]

May 15-December 30, 1948

Translated from the Greek by **John N. Tleel**

Introduction by **Musa Budeiri**

Introduction

What is so striking about Constantine Mavrides five short memorandums—all of which were written during the few months when the Old City of Jerusalem was being fought over yet once again between politically contending forces with whom he finds little to identify—is how strongly it brings home the notion that there is not a single identifiable entity recognised by all and sundry as constituting ‘The Jerusalem’ (perhaps this is made clearer by the Arabic name of the city Al Quds ‘The Holy’).

Mavrides text, despite its extreme brevity and rather parochial outlook, enabled me for the first time to consider Jerusalem in a new light. Having been born in Jerusalem in the closing years of the Mandate, to a family whose home was in one of the Arab quarters of West Jerusalem, I have always rather lazily identified with a view of the city—which along with other diverse cultural luggage unspokenly bequeathed to me, and which I accepted uncritically—of Jerusalem as a Arab Moslem city (albeit possessing a Jewish minority, a concept which I carried along but it was extremely

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Constantine X. Mavrides was of Greek Thracian origin and was born in Adrianople in 1890. He received his early education in his native country and continued his studies in Jerusalem, where he immigrated to and settled down. In Jerusalem he studied at the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate schools and at the then highly regarded Theological School of the Holy Cross, in the monastery situated in the Valley of the Cross. After graduation Mavrides served in the secretariat department of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem for eight years. In 1918, he was employed by the British and served devotedly in various posts in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon and was decorated by the British for his services. After the establishment of the British Mandate in Palestine, Mavrides took up a position as interpreter and secretary in the General Consulate of Greece in Jerusalem. Biographical information provided by John Tleel.

hazy; there were also Christians, but those I tended to regard as a rather outlandish Moslem sect). This was transformed in 1948 as a result of the magnitude of the defeat inflicted by the Zionists on the Arabs, and the implosion of the existing social and economic structure. The truncated Jerusalem I grew up in, in the 1950s was Moslem and Jordanian. Or at least so it appeared to me.

On my daily walk from Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, down Nablus road, I pass the old derelict Synagogue, then the American Colony, the Tombs of the Kings, St. George's Cathedral, and an assortment made up of the American Baptist Centre, the First Church of Christ the Nazarene, the YMCA, the American Consulate, the Church School Service, the Dominican Convent de St. Etienne, the Ecole Biblique, the Garden Tomb, the Convent of the White Sisters (Franciscans de Marie), Schmidt Girls school and into the Old City, itself a veritable museum-cum-art-gallery of Christian religious artifacts. All of a sudden Al Quds appears in a new light. Now I realise what I have always perceived, as Al Quds is only one of many "Quds's". I muse how an Orthodox Jew who would venture out of his embattlements, physical as well as cultural, would view Jerusalem. Perhaps as a Jewish city with a troublesome Moslem minority, and a veritable amount of expensive real estate whose title deeds are jealously guarded by a multitude of feuding Christian denominations?

In Context

According to the United Nations partition resolution, Jerusalem was designated an international zone forming a corpus separatum, an enclave within the proposed Arab state. Covering a total area of two hundred and fifty eight square dunums, this included Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour, Sur Baher, Beit Safafa, Sharafat, and Ramat Rahel in the south, Silwan, Al Tur, Izzariye, Abu Dis, and the Sawahreh in the east, Al Malha, Sheikh Badr, Lifta, Deir Yasin, 'Ayn Karim in the west, and Issawiya, Shu'fat, Hadassah Hospital, and the Hebrew University in the north.

According to the most authoritative source on the agreements reached between Prince Abdullah and the Jewish Agency, both parties undertook not to interfere with each other's plans. (Shlaim, p.178) Abdullah would not allow his army to enter the area allocated to the Jewish State, while the Jews undertook not to thwart his occupation of the Arab parts of Palestine. There was however no agreement over Jerusalem. There is no doubt that both Ben Gurion and Abdullah coveted Jerusalem, but neither made his stand public nor communicated his opposition to the Partition decision to the United Nations.

The Battle for Jerusalem had already started immediately after the United Nation's partition decision in November 1947. The Haganah, which had a strong military presence in Jerusalem, took the offensive while the British were still formally in control. The villages and neighbourhoods of Lifta, Romeima, and Sheikh Badr (the site of the present day Knesset), were attacked and emptied of their inhabitants by January 1948. By April, Qatamon and Talbiya had been taken over. By the onset of May 15th western Jerusalem had become completely Jewish (Morris, p. 52). Al Quds had been reduced to the Old City and the sparsely populated neighbourhoods of Sheikh Jarrah and Bab al Zahira.

Until the entry of Abdullah's Arab Legion into Palestine on the 15th of May 1948, the brunt of the fighting in Jerusalem had been borne by assorted irregulars, more often than not locally organised, and rarely operating outside the vicinity of their immediate villages or neighbourhoods. Having been expelled from West Jerusalem, the Arabs concentrated their defense on the ramparts of the Old City walls. But the Old City itself was home to nearly two thousand Jewish inhabitants, and rather than evacuate the Jewish Quarter, the Haganah leadership planned to hold on to it and use it "as a springboard for capturing the entire Old City." (Shlaim, p.180) Without the intervention of the Arab Legion there is little doubt that the Old City would have been overrun by the Haganah. On the 17th of May Abdullah ordered Glubb, the British commander of the Arab Legion, to send his troops into Jerusalem, and on the 18th of May the first company of Jordanian soldiers entered the Old City. With the Jewish offensive in Jerusalem halted, the battle shifted to the Latroun salient, which dominated the main road from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The war that ensued was the result of the Haganah's attempts to dislodge the Arab Legion and break the stranglehold on Jerusalem. For its part, the Arab Legion did not conduct any offensive operations and remained loyal to Abdullah's pledge not to enter Jewish designated areas.

The Greek Orthodox Church at War

Mavrides has written briefly about the effect of the 1948 war on the Greek Orthodox Church. He has written about his Jerusalem, and indeed he makes brief references to other Christian sects; negatively to Arabs, and in a more hostile vein, to Jews. Right from the very beginning he declares his neutrality ("two peoples claiming the country"). The Arab quarters he refers to like Qatamon had been occupied by the Jews who had "dislodged ...the armed Arabs and occupied it militarily...". Their attack on the Old City was with a view "...primarily to rescue the about two thousand Jews pinned down and besieged inside the city...". Most of the Arab inhabitants of the city (inhabitants of the Muslim and Christian suburbs) had already gone abroad

before the 14th of May. The remaining took refuge in the Old City itself. They received the hospitality of their relatives, or sought refuge in convents and monasteries. Only the Franciscans refused to open their doors to the refugees. His own church, the Greek Orthodox offered its hospitality to over 400 people, both Arab orthodox and Greek. They gave shelter to their own.

The highlight of this first period is the entry of the Abdullah's Arab Legion, which is greeted with joy and enthusiasm. The author himself is not immune from a certain sympathy both for the Officers of the Legion and for their commander in chief, Abdullah of Trans Jordan. Not only did this safeguard the Old City from falling into the hands of the Haganah, but it also resulted in destruction of the two ancient Jewish synagogues in the Jewish Quarter, and the surrender of the Jewish community, both combatants and civilians. He records the Arab plunder of the Jewish Quarter, but hastens to add that the Jews behaved in a similar fashion towards Arab-owned "and mostly-Christian owned" property in the western quarters of the city.

The intense bombardment of the Old City by the Haganah, which followed the fall of the Jewish quarter and the surrender of the besieged Jewish community, is viewed as an act of revenge, pure and simple. Mavrides does not offer a political perspective. The direct hits scored on the church of the Holy Sepulcher, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, and the Greek Orthodox Monastery are deliberate attempts in retaliation for the destruction of the "simple and without important historical value Jewish synagogues". Christian sites are deliberately 'marked out'. Two Greek orthodox priests fall victim to the bombardment. In a rare mention of destruction in other parts of the Old City, he does mention a shell landing at the Mosque of Omar that resulted in the death of twenty-two Arabs, presumably Moslems!

In a general comment on the behaviour of the Arab middle class of Jerusalem and other Arab urban centres, Mavrides notes that long before the 14th of May, many inhabitants of the Muslim and Christian quarters of the City had gone abroad. Closer home, he records that the heads and leaders of the Arab Orthodox community left their posts and to save themselves, also went abroad. Only the very poor and those who had no money were forced to stay. During the first truce in June, a total exodus from the city took place, and the city inside the walls became empty of population. Only five to seven thousand people remained in Jerusalem.

The glimpse Mavrides gives us of Jerusalem is of a city which is sharply divided along confessional lines, and one moreover that is abandoned by its own inhabitants. From the passing reference to a demonstration in the Moslem quarter, it is clear that people were aware early on in the war that the battle had been lost. It is not surprising that in those circumstances Abdullah should appear as a saviour. Indeed Mavrides does not hide his admiration for the King's cleverness, and records that on a tour of

the West Bank in December 1948, he is warmly received by the people. Abdullah, of course, is a victor. But Mavrides is not blind to the human tragedy and ends by remarking that with the end of hostilities those who took refuge within the city walls are awaiting “ the unification of the two sectors of the cut up city, to go and visit and recover their abandoned homes”.

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The Diaries of Constantine Mavrides

May 15-December 30, 1948
Memoranda 1-5

Memorandum 1: The Siege of the Old City of Jerusalem May 14-31, 1948

On Friday night, May 14, 1948, the last High Commissioner of Great Britain in Palestine sailed from the port of Haifa, leaving the country in chaos, bloodshed and revolt; and two armed peoples—Arabs and Jews—claiming the country.

For months, hostilities between the Arabs and the Jews were intensive within the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem while the British were still in power. It appeared that on the one hand, the Jews were prevailing in the suburbs, but on the other, the Arabs were in the Old City inside the walls, having free exit and communication toward the Eastern part: Jericho and Transjordan, and to some degree, towards the north, to Ramallah and Nablus, through the disputed Sheikh Jarrah quarter. Bloody clashes had been taking place for months in the Sheikh Jarrah quarter, where the Jews had sought its capture from the beginning for free access to the Hebrew University and Hadassah Hospital both on Mount Scopus and the Mount of Olives; while the Arabs sought free access to the north. For the defense of the Old City, the Arabs had taken certain precautions. They had built special walls in front of each of the Gates of the City to protect them—at Mamillah Road (Monastery of the Cross-Rehavva), in front of the Spiney's shops, in front of the old municipality, Jaffa Gate, the adjacent opening of Emperor Wilhelm and in front of the New and Damascus gates. They were troubled however by the presence and existence of the Jewish quarter inside the Old City, and of the armed Jews of the *Haganah*, with their fortress-like synagogues Hurva (built first in 1701), the Tivereth Israel and that of Yohanan. Many armed Arabs were engaged in their blockade and containment.

A month before May 14, the Jews had dislodged the armed Arabs from the Qatamon and occupied it militarily. But they were still hindered in their military operations by the year-old English security zones or cantons.

There were three such cantonment zones. The "A" Zone comprising of the Greek and German colonies, the railway station, the government Printing Press, the petrol

installations Socony Shell, Mantashef, the German Hospital for Lepers and the English Athletic (Sports) club.

Zone “B” included David’s Building where the Press offices were, King George V Street up until the Terra Santa College, as well as the US Consulate, the Palace Hotel, the YMCA, the King David Hotel and the French Consulate.

Zone “C” included the Central Post Office, the Municipality, Barclays’ Bank, the Police Headquarters, the radio station, the prisons, the government hospitals and the whole area of the Russian Compound.

Afterwards, and by request of the Greek Consulate General as well as other notables, a fifth Zone was established, which included the Talbiya quarter where both the Greek and the Spanish consulates were situated.

Prior to the departure of the High Commissioner, many of the more important buildings of Jerusalem were placed under the protection of the Red Cross, and a special concentration zone was established for the war victims and refugees. Such buildings included the YMCA, the King David Hotel (the area around these two buildings constituted the international area of the Red Cross), the Government House and all the hospitals, as long as they were not used for waging war operations, like the Hadassah and others.

Immediately after midnight on May 14, the Jewish army occupied all these security zones. So they occupied the Greek and German colonies, the Upper Baq'a, the Russian Compounds and the prisons, and later arrived in front of the Old City walls. The next day, they started to pound the Old City gates with bombs, mortar shells and rifle-fire, claiming to want to take the city, but with a first priority of rescuing the almost two thousand besieged Jews inside the city, many of whom were from the *Haganah* organization.

Long before May 14, many inhabitants of the Muslim and Christian suburbs of the city—those who had not gone abroad¹—took refuge in the Old City, and brought with them what furniture, household utensils and other articles they could transport. These were transported by primitive means because for several months before this event, automotive means had been impossible due to fuel shortages resulting from the destruction caused to the installations in Haifa, the railways and the road networks. People took refuge in the houses of relatives or friends; some temporarily rented one or two rooms; but most notably all convents, monasteries and patriarchates willingly received members from their congregations, as well as other members from different congregations, and offered them shelter. In contrast with the Latin Patriarchate, which was inundated with Arab Latin refugees, the Franciscan Monastery was the only order which did not allow anyone in.

Our Greek Orthodox Patriarchate and the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher

again renewed their historic tradition and principle of opening their arms to their flock and providing shelter. The doors were again opened, as they did 150 years ago, to embrace as many as it could. Over 400 Arab and Greek Orthodox people were given hospitality at this time: rooms, arches, corners, corridors, unused offices, dining rooms, cellars, vaults, lobbies, porches and all that could be made available for housing were converted and used as refugee shelters.

The Jewish army—the *Haganah*, and other independent Jewish organizations—started the attacks against the gates of the Old City during the night of Saturday, May 15 and continued till 5 p.m. on Monday, May 17. There was a continuous pandemonium of rifle-fire, mortar projectiles, bombs, automatic weapons, flares and crossing bullets, spreading panic and fear. None of the besieged and the refugees got to shut their eyes. We were all walking around seeking safer shelter. Only the Yeron² (Elder) Dragoman Archimandrite Theodoritos was going round the apartments and the sections of the Central Monastery, to calm down and reinforce the patience of the terrified and panic-stricken refugees. Sleepless, as an escort, I observed his movements.

During the whole night, the irregular (guerrilla) armed Arabs were running inside the city going from Jaffa Gate to the New Gate and Damascus Gate and vice versa to reinforce the vacancies. The dead and the wounded were carried by the newly created stretcher corps of the Red Cross and were taken to the Austrian hospice by the Praetorium on the way to Gethsemane, which they had converted into a hospital.

Around noon of May 17, panic spread: it was rumored that the Jewish³ army had forced open the New Gate and was threatening to enter the City. It was also being said that they had occupied the French buildings such as the Notre Dame, the hospital⁴ and Reparatrice Convent⁵ situated immediately outside the New Gate. Having the advantage from these buildings, the army was firing at the defenders who were on the Wall.

The panic-stricken inhabitants of the New Gate neighborhoods inside the wall migrated to the inner part of the city. Fueling the panic were the mournful cries of some mothers and sisters accompanying the transport of their dead. On top of all that, the electric power and the municipal water had been disconnected.

On May 17, the Jews captured Zion Hill and the German building, including its strong and high belfry, and started firing at the wall and the Arab defenders, aiming to force Zion Gate open and come to the assistance of the Jewish Quarter that is very near to the Gate and the besieged Jews inside the city.

The Jewish positions were bombed from the Shu'fat hill, near the Qalandia airport on the Ramallah road, by the artillery of the guerrilla leader Qawuqji, thus backing up the Arab defenders within the city.

On the evening of May 19, the Transjordanian⁶ army⁷ of King Abdallah arrived. Its entry into the city of Jerusalem was greeted by the crowds with plenty of enthusiasm. Indescribable scenes were manifested in front of the Gethsemane Gate⁸ and the streets of the city. The mob and especially the street boys were voluntarily carrying the army's trunks, provisions and ammunition. These gestures looked like jubilant demonstrations especially when yelling "they came, they came..." From the moment of the army's entry, an atmosphere of relief spread through all—both those fighting and the civilian population.

The Jewish attack continued all that night and intensified during the next day and night as well (May 20). Even though the attacks were directed mainly at Zion Gate, the Jews camouflaged their tactics by first attacking the New and Jaffa gates. The Transjordanian troops helped enormously in the defense and especially in safeguarding the Zion Gate. There were also about 30 armed Arabs, mainly Jerusalemites, who knew the Wall in all its details, who climbed and defended it effectively.

On May 21, the fighting, the rifle-fire and shelling lulled. On the 21 and 22, the Transjordanian army placed within the city armored cars with guns. They had to negotiate the narrow streets of the Old City from Gethsemane Gate to Damascus, New and Jaffa Gates, because Suleiman Road, situated immediately outside the wall, had been covered up with ruins from the destroyed Notre Dame and Reparatrice buildings. The scene was extremely vivid: each car was surrounded by about fifty Arabs jostling one another, trying to give the cars a greater push on the steep and ascending road filled with stairs.

The armored cars and the accompanying guns strengthened the defense of the city of Jerusalem in a definite and effective manner.

The Arab guerrilla fighters who later joined with the Legion of Transjordan were preoccupied with clearing the Jews from the Jewish Quarter inside the Old City, who even used their own synagogues as strongholds from where attacks were made. Qawuqji and the Transjordanian army were continuously pounding the Jewish Quarter. The Tifereth Israel Synagogue was first destroyed, and was followed by the most famous and historic Hurva Synagogue, which was destroyed on May 27. But the Arab Headquarters had warned the Jewish Headquarters through the International Red Cross that unless the armed Jewish forces withdrew from the Synagogue within a certain time limit, they would be compelled to attack it. Since there was no reply from the Jewish side, as it was stated officially by the Red Cross, the Arabs bombed and destroyed it.

Immediately after the destruction of the Hurva Synagogue the Jews began to waver. They started to show signs of surrender. Before the entry of the Transjordanian troops there were rumors that the Jews wanted to surrender, but only to the Legion. The

Arabs were seeking to force them into surrendering through starvation and deprivation.

On Friday, May 28, after the fall of the Hurva Synagogue, the Jews unconditionally surrendered about 350 *Haganah* soldiers and nearly 2000 women, children and elderly people. The *Haganah* soldiers were taken as prisoners of war to Zarqa in Transjordan, but the women and children were handed over to the Red Cross.

They were all in a miserable state. Many corpses were found unburied and almost in a state of decomposition, and the Arabs had to burn them on May 28 and 29 after the capture of the Jewish Quarter. The burning of the corpses, especially during the night, gave the spectacle of a widespread fire with many scattered hearths.

The Arab mob got busy and plundered everything that was left. The bombardment had destroyed the houses and the properties as well. What was left was still plundered, swarms of Arab children and women came into the quarter, most of them from the surrounding villages and tore out window shutters, half-burned doors, railings, etc., and took them away either to sell them in the Arab market or out of the city to their villages.

Memorandum 2: The Siege of the Old City of Jerusalem June 1-16, 1948

Our Patriarchate, as well as placing the Central Monastery at the disposal of about 400 refugees to house them, also placed the Central Girls' School, the Greek Gymnasium⁹, and the Monastery of St. Demetrios at the disposal of the refugees for the same purposes. The upper floor of the St. Demetrios Monastery¹⁰ was used as offices by the Arab Executive Committee, while the ground floor was used to house refugees. The Monastery of Abraham, the Metochion of Gethsemane¹¹, the Monastery of the Great Virgin Mary and other Greek Orthodox convents received refugees as well.

After the devastation of the Jewish Quarter and its synagogues, the bombing and the crossfire by both the Arab and Jewish sides intensified. On the part of the Jews, their attacks against the Old City intensified from June 1-9, concentrating on the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, our Patriarchate¹², and the Central Monastery¹³. During the interval, mortar shells were fired at the monasteries of St. Vassilios (Greek Orthodox), of the Saints Theodores (Greek Orthodox), the Casa Nova (Catholic), the Archangels (Greek Orthodox), the Convent of Abraham near the Church of the Anastasis (Greek Orthodox), the Central Greek Orthodox Monastery as well. The shells which hit the Central Monastery landed on the Finance Office some meters away from the Central Library, where ancient, historical and valuable manuscripts are kept, upon the eastern corner of the St. Demetrios Monastery, where the Arab

Executive Committee sits, and on some other sites as well.

Taking into account the approximate circumference of the dropped projectiles and the targets around the Monastery of Demetions, there are some who assume that the Jews launching their attacks from the Notre Dame building or from behind the Russian Compound were aiming, albeit to no avail, to hit the offices of the Arab Executive Committee. But considering the projectiles that hit the distant Convent of Abraham, and Convent of St. John the Firerunner and some other ones that are situated in the Via Dolorosa, this hypothesis is refuted. This is reinforced in light of the shelling of the big Dome of the Church of the Resurrection: a serious consideration of this action lends to the theory that the Jews dropped these shells in revenge for the destruction of their synagogues in the Old City.

On June 7 at 7.30 a.m., a mortar shell coming from the north-eastern direction, mainly from the Jewish positions (Notre Dame and further behind it), hit the leaden cover of the Dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and when looking at it from a distance, it seemed as if a hole approximately 30 by 40 centimeters had been caused.

The blinding passion aroused, as already mentioned, to avenge the destruction of a simple synagogue without any historic value, is unforgivable. The damage caused to the Dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, small as it may be, is of consequence and polity regarding its repair and restoration. Not least in causing oppositions and antagonisms among the three dominant and sharing nationalities of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher: Greeks, Catholics and Armenians, as well as other denominations and nationalities of the Church.

The nights of June 7-8 were very active in terms of mortar and machine-gun-fire. We did not sleep. The 9-10 June was the same, especially during the night of June 10, where the intensity was excessive. It seems that each one of the warring parties was seeking to gain strategic ground positions. The next day, at 8.00 a.m., Mr. Bernadotte announced the beginning of a four-week temporary cease-fire and truce.

Memorandum 3: The siege of the Old City of Jerusalem June 16-July 18, 1948

During the imposed four-week truce, the Old City of Jerusalem was full of life. Arabs from the villages of Silwan, Bethany, Abu Dis, and from the towns of Ramallah, Bethlehem and Jericho were supplying provisions to the city in various ways. The general state of the inhabitants of both Jewish and Arab areas—the fate of relatives and friends became known through contact with representatives of both the United Nations and the Red Cross and also members of the international community resident in each area. The Greeks of the Old City managed to get supplies to Greeks in the

Jewish occupied area and also those that took refuge in the Old City, and a sum was allocated by the Greek Community Presidium for this purpose. Some members of the Old City Greek community also provided their relatives with needed supplies. The members of the Holy Sepulcher Brotherhood in the Monastery of the Holy Cross, the Superior Archimandrite Gregorios, and the Monk Seraphim Superior of the Mount Zion Monastery were also supplied with provisions through the General Consulate of Greece.

But what really characterized the movements of the residents of the Old City during the four weeks of the truce was the exodus of the non-combatant population from the city to the countryside, the surrounding villages and the towns such as Ramallah, Jericho and Bethlehem, or Transjordan. From morning till evening the streets were full of porters and pack-animals, belonging to the Ta'amreh and A'bed tribes, who were carrying furniture, household utensils, mattresses, clothing, etc., from different parts of the city and heading to the Damascus Gate. The exodus was like an ongoing chain of animals, porters, women, aged people, and children—all of them carrying something under the burning sun of July. As the end of the 'truce' neared, this chain of people and animals got denser and denser with each passing day.

At 8 a.m. on Friday, July 10, as the truce expired the Old City was almost empty. Out of a population of sixty thousand (plus the nearly ten thousand refugees who came from the New City suburbs), it is estimated that only five to seven thousand remain. Most of them were very poor, and thus did not have enough money to move away. Among those remaining in the city were the clerics of the different monasteries, patriarchates and the different religious establishments and the civilian government, consular and municipal employees obliged to remain at their posts. A complete desolation ... and indeed the Old City's narrow streets, formerly teeming with people buying and selling to visitors, villagers and passers-by, is now a city empty of people, with closed shops, and only once in a while one would meet a person or two in the street. Because of this situation, robberies are taking place in the streets and in full daylight with the robbed passer-by unable to call any one for help.¹⁴

The situation of the various monasteries and patriarchates was eased by this exodus as many of those who took refuge inside these institutions also left. Out of nearly 400 refugees staying in the Orthodox Patriarchate and the Central Monastery, three quarters of them went abroad leaving and locking their furniture inside the rooms conceded to them.

At 8 a.m. on Friday, July 10, 1948 the four-week truce, as they said, was over. The radio announced that on the one hand, the Jews are accepting its prolongation for another month, but the Arabs are refusing. At exactly 10 a.m., a bombardment and an

all out battle started just outside the wall and mortar shells landed outside Jaffa Gate.

On Saturday the shelling from the Transjordanian side was intensive during the day and the night. At 5.30 a.m. mortar shells shook the city, and many fell outside the wall and hit the row of shops that belong to the Sacred Commune¹⁵ of the Holy Sepulcher (Bristol, Hanania, Boulos Said, Yeron Euphthymios). Other mortar shells were fired at the covered market place¹⁶ behind the German Church and close to the Monastery of Abraham, and the mortar shelling did not stop for quite some time, hitting other targets.

On July 12 at about 6 p.m., many Arabs were assembled listening to the public radio in the Mosque of Omar area, when a mortar shell was fired, causing the death of twenty two people and the severe injury of many. Among the dead were Fouad Khalidi and his son. The former was a member of the Jerusalem Arab Extraordinary Committee that organized the Arab resistance of the Old City. The funeral of the victims took place the following day in an atmosphere of general mourning.

July 14 was a day shaken by an intensive bombardment originating from the Arab cannons. But the Jews were also firing mortar shells and one of them fell on the Holy Parvis¹⁷ of the Church of the Anastasis and hit a spot in front of St. James Cathedral at a distance of one and a half meters from its wall. It destroyed the stand that was in the Parvis which was used as an office of the architectonic workshop of the Archeological Department of the Government of Palestine, concerned with the restoration of the Church of the Anastasis. Another mortar shell fell at a point between the garden and the roof of the Patriarchate Printing Press.

The night of July 15 passed quietly, but by around 8 a.m. on July 16, intensive bombardment and rifle fire started. According to the Arabs, it was they themselves that were attacking. About 9 a.m. a mortar shell fell in front of the Church and the priory of the Great Virgin Mary Convent, not far away from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate. There were no casualties. By sunset, the shelling by the Arabs lulled a little. But at around 8 p.m., an all-out Jewish attack on the walls of the city and the slinging of mortar shells started.

We saw the first shell that was fired illuminating the rooftops of St. James' Cathedral (also called the terraces of the Central Monastery). The Yeron Dragoman and I were in the room of Archimandrite Hyacinthus at the recent C.M. Building. We had paid him a visit because it was his name day and we were watching from the window of his room. We both rushed out and went down to the spot where the explosion occurred to see the extent of the damage. But we were unable to do so because the mortar shells started dropping constantly. The shelling became more intensive as the time approached 9 p.m., and continued past midnight. It is estimated that they were firing one shell every two minutes. Sometimes more frequently and two or three

simultaneously at different targets and spots of the city. A patient clergyman asserts that till midnight, he had counted one hundred and seventy eight mortar shells. Others estimated the number of dropped shells till the morning to be about six hundred. According to gleanings, there were indications that there were three positions from which they were being fired: the area of Mount Zion; the King David and David's Building ¹⁸; and the last and main area was from the Russian Compound behind Notre Dame.

At the same time, the Arabs were bombarding the Jewish positions and the intensity of the rifle fire, the crossing of the mortar shells, the machine guns and other weapons of both sides looked like an on-going large-scale battle. The flares uninterruptedly uncovered the attackers' positions. Fires broke out everywhere. From our site in the Patriarchate, we were discerning with difficulty the Franciscan's big clock, which is hardly one hundred meters away. For us, it was a black and sinister night... but phantasmagoric, splendid and unique for the observers and viewers from the Mount of Olives, where the panoramic view of the City of Jerusalem is comprehensive and always imposing and admirable.

We were all terrified, including my wife and my children. We were together in the Great Anteroom that leads to the Official Reception Hall of the Patriarchate. Together with us were also the Patriarchal Vicar and some lay people as well. We were worried and frightened. Still, in a passive state—we were nervously awaiting the development of the Jewish attack. All of a sudden, the young student, Spyros Couloumbis came running to meet us, panting asked for a doctor and announced to the Vicar that Deacon Theoctistos had been hit by a shrapnel of a mortar shell in the cardiac region. He was hit and collapsed bleeding in front of the St. Constantine Church while he was advising the other curious refugees of the Patriarchate to withdraw and protect themselves. Not even twenty minutes had passed when Archimandrites Artemius and Alexander came rushing into the same hall announcing that Monk Vincent, the bakery supervisor, is lying dead and nobody is able to get near him. Monk Vincent, responsible for the distribution of the Monastery bread was hit by a mortar shell that fell in front of his room on the St. James rooftops. The Vicar and the Yeron Dragoman both hurried to the place where Theoctistos was hit and they gave orders for his removal from there, but they are unable to go near Vincent's dead body, for the mortar shelling continues unabated. The news that Vincent died and that Theoctistos was fatally wounded increased our fear. The shelling went on till morning and each one of us had to remain nailed where he already was. We all were awaiting in anguish the rising of this tragic day. The light of that day revealed to us the befallen destruction. Deacon Theoctistos died on his way to the hospital. ¹⁹

Just as the day arose, and being curious and wishing to ascertain with my own

eyes the actual destruction that occurred, I joined Mgr. Aristobulos, member of the editorial committee of the periodical "Nea Sion"²⁰ and the Holy Synod in a tour of the city, visiting most of its damaged places. The destruction in most spots of the Sacred City was substantial. The destruction sustained by Greek Orthodox properties, establishments and monasteries compared with those belonging to the other nations was far greater. One can assume that the Greek Orthodox institutions and monasteries had been marked out.

So St. Vassilios Convent in the New Gate quarter was ruined completely, while the nearby Franciscan Convent fortunately suffered nothing. All the rooms and cells of St. Vassilios Convent were completely destroyed—no trace of any room remained, its entire narrow facade dispersed about thirty meters away on the public street. Also destroyed was a house nearby that belonged to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate.

Near the Archangels Monastery, the Sik-Sik house sustained serious damages, and the Monastery of St. Aikaterina was damaged as well. Other convents that sustained damages were the Saidnaya, the St. Euthymios and the Monastery of St. Abraham in which the upper room was completely destroyed. The Metochion of Gethsemane in front of the Anastasis Church had a tragic fate: an entire section was ruined and four tenants were killed. At the time of our visit to the Metochion, the funeral of two of the dead was taking place in the Chapel of the Metochion.

Upon a rooftop two meters away from the recently constructed and built Katholicon²¹ of the Anastasis Church a mortar shell fell creating a hole; other shells destroyed the nearby wall that separated the Dome from the Muslim Mosque *Khanke*. Fragments of these shells caused some damage to the leaden cover of the Big Dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

Mortar shells fell on the Monastery of the Great Virgin Mary, destroyed parts of St. John's Hospice and shops, streets and side-walks in the large market-place.²² They also hit the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer and its belfry; the city's dry Hezekiah's Pool; Solomon's Temple; the Via Dolorosa; the Salahieh French edifice, school and church; and the Catholic and Armenian patriarchates. Indeed, no building, street and corner were left undamaged or intact. The size and extent of the damages are not ascertained yet.

Though certainly the damages and destruction caused by the Arab cannons and weapons to the Jewish occupied and purely Jewish neighbourhoods will be serious, it is also certain that the Jewish revenge enacted on the Old City of Jerusalem and its shrines and holy places will have given them satisfaction.

During the following day, July 17, quiet prevailed. It was rumored that on both the warring parties a cease-fire had been imposed. However, the last flash of the battle was the Jewish assault on the Jaffa and Zion Gates—it was a Sunday, July 18,

at about 3:30 p.m., but it did not last long. Since then, and on both sides, the fire has ceased.

Memorandum 4: The Siege of the Old City of Jerusalem July 20-end of September, 1948²³

This period has been characterized by several developments. Firstly, the demarcation of neutral zones between the belligerent Arabs and Jews by the United Nations representatives and the tripartite Consular Commission. Secondly, Count Bernadotte's continuous shuttle flights to the various Arab capitals and other important Arab and Jewish centers to participate in discussions about disputed issues in the ultimate quest of a lucid and just solution to the Palestinian problem. Thirdly, the continuation from both sides of the attacks and shelling with fluctuating intensity.

On August 2, a delegation of the three main communities of the Holy Places: the Greeks, the Catholics and Armenians, paid the Count a visit at the German Augusta Victoria Building on the Mount of Olives. The delegation asked him for protection of the Holy Places and the cease of hostilities in the Jerusalem area. On August 9, the Count paid a visit to the Anastasis Church. On August 11, while Count Bernadotte was still in Jerusalem visiting the Arab and Jewish officials, intensive bombardment and rifle fire took place from 1 to 6 in the morning, specifically in the area of Nabi Daoud (Zion), Deir Abu Tor²⁴ and New Gate.

On August 16 the overall situation worsened. There was mortar shelling, rifle fire, detonations and flares. The fighting was waged mainly in Nabi Daoud and the Musrara quarter. A rocket is said to have landed on St. George's Anglican Cathedral, and destroyed the section encompassing the library. There were rumors that the Jews were attempting to take over the strong position on Jabal Mukaber on which stood the massive Government House, previous home and offices of the British High Commissioner.

On Tuesday, August 17, rumors were circulating that the Jews had captured Government House. This meant that the Gethsemane-Bethany-Jericho road, the only road left for communication between the Old City and Transjordan, was under direct threat to be cut off by the continuous firing of mortar projectiles and bullets. At about 10 p.m., walking on the street of St. Charalambos Convent, I was on my way to the Red Cross offices that are situated near the site of Christ's Prison and the Praetorium.²⁵ Just as I went past the Convent's door, I noticed that out of the obscure marketplace Bab Khan ez-Zeit²⁶, a crowd of people was advancing upwards in haste toward me and behind the crowd there were sounds of voices and shouts accompanied by demonstrations. Before it became clear to me what was going on, I was swept

backwards by the crowd and I then saw the mass of demonstrators coming nearer to me. Most of the demonstrators were street boys holding rods, sticks, and attacking every store and storekeeper not complying and refusing to close his store. They were also chanting and repeating rhythmically the following words:

“Sacrou ya alil ed-din, Rahat minna Falastin” [“Close your doors, oh lacking of faith, we lost Palestine.”]

As the approaching mass of demonstrators was increasing all the time, the storekeepers started to throw in haste the sacks, vessels, stands, chairs and whatever was displayed in front of their stores, shutting the store quickly for fear of being plundered and attacked. In a short while the marketplace closed down, the population was hurrying to hide, and the city was deserted.

The news of the capture of the Government House and the full blockade of the Old City which completed the chain of the siege, was the despair of all those citizens who were informed of the news, among them the animated street-children. However, fresher news came through that Bernadotte’s aides and the Red Cross Organization (under whose auspices and flag was the Government House), had persuaded the Jews into withdrawing. This news calmed the situation—order was restored and the market reopened.

The demonstration in the market place indicated the depth of the discontent felt by both the Muslim and Christian populations because of the deterioration of political affairs.

The period from August 18 to September 11 passed without any serious episodes, though one always heard some rifle fire, detonations, explosions and blasts; and about politically unimportant news and the movements of Count Bernadotte etc.

From 7 p.m. on Saturday, September 11 until the next day at 2 p.m., the Old City was under continuous and intensive Jewish attack. It was estimated that forty mortar shells landed on different targets in the city during that time. The Armenian Patriarchate and our Greek Orthodox Patriarchate were among the institutions which were hit. Two mortar shells fell on the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, causing serious damages to several rooms in the Patriarchate’s private quarters, garden and kitchen, and leaving nearly most of the upper floor almost uninhabitable.

Impressions of the catastrophes caused by mortar shelling on September 11 at 11:40 p.m.

...We were in the bosom of Morpheus²⁷, in our first sweet sleep. All of a sudden, a terrible quake shook the Patriarchate and threw us out of our beds. Stones were

falling, window shutters flying and vanishing and glass shattering. Each person was thinking that the catastrophe had only befallen him, and that it was only his room that was destroyed. Some dashed out of their room, and others looked for matches or light to see what was happening and where. Outside my room in the shared corridor, I heard Monk Theophanes' speeding footsteps and him shouting: "Up, up in Anatolios' room." At the same time, I heard calls as if coming from the depths: "Come up, hey you, up over here." The first one to respond was Monk Theophanes: barefoot and stepping on broken glass, he dashed up to the room of Archimandrite Anatolios Georgiades, the Cypriot Professor of the Patriarchate's Gymnasium, to help him, finding him struggling in the darkness under rubble, dust and broken timber. The second one who rushed in was my next door neighbor, Mr. S. Spyridon, and I followed him in. As I came to the door, the Archimandrite looked as would the "resurrected Lazarus", wrapped in a sheet, soaked and all white from the dust, terrified and frightened, he was looking for his inner cassock. The mortar shell had fallen in the middle of his room through the roof, creating a large hole in the ceiling revealing the sky and stars. The Archimandrite would surely have been killed if a wooden part of the fallen roof had not shielded his bed. He was miraculously saved. For many days, the ruined site was visited by many—clerics, government employees, civilians and many others.²⁸

During the night of September 15, the Old City experienced yet more suffering. At about 7:30 p.m., the Arabs, according to what people were saying, charged the Jewish positions and the Jews sustained serious casualties. Thus they retaliated with mortar shells, hitting the Old City again. This time, the Central Monastery, the Central Library, the kitchen and other Greek Orthodox properties were hit.

This latest attack upon the Old City and its Holy Places and the Patriarchate compelled the Patriarch of Jerusalem, H.B. Mgr. Timotheos, to again protest in a tone of indignation with the might of the earth. On September 16, he addressed a written protestation to Count Bernadotte through the Elder Sacristan Archimandrite Kyriakos, who went to the Augusta Victoria German building on the Mount of Olives, the Count's office and home during his visits to Jerusalem. The Elder Sacristan handed over the protestation at 3 p.m. to Colonel Bonnot, the director of the Count's office, and asked him to deliver the written protestation to the Count as soon as he arrived at the office. It was known that the Count had arrived in Jerusalem that day.

Unfortunately, the Count could not make it to his office to see the protestation. An hour after its delivery, he was dying by the murderous Jewish bullets. The Count, in a convoy of three cars under the United Nations and the Red Cross emblems, had departed a little while before 4 p.m. from the British High Commissioner's house heading for the YMCA building through the Qatamon and Rehavia quarters. After

the convoy went past the Qatamon quarter and entered Rehavia, near the Italian Consulate, not far from the offices of the Zionist Organization and the Agency, the convoy had to stop at a roadblock. Four people jumped out of a jeep that was standing close-by, approached the Count's car, and shot at him and at Colonel Andre Sarot, who was sitting next to the Count. The latter died instantaneously, but the Count was wounded and was still alive. The assassins realizing this fired at the Count again. The driver of the car managed to pass through the roadblock and brought the dead Sarot and the injured Count to Hadassah Hospital, where the Count died immediately.

It was assumed that because the incident happened in the Jewish occupied region and the jeep in question was similar to those used by the Jewish army, that the assassination was their responsibility.

On the night of September 16, more mortar shells were fired and fell on a Greek Orthodox house close to the old Greek hospital.²⁹ Windows and glass panes at the Catholic Patriarchate were also damaged.

From September 17 until today (September 30), mortar attacks aimed within the city walls are continuing...

Memorandum 5: The Siege of the Old City of Jerusalem October 1 - December 15, 1948

Throughout the month of October, until mid November, the sporadic explosions and rifle fire outside the wall continued. The redeployment of the Egyptian Army to the south of Palestine and the capture of Beer Sheba and the Negev by the Jews made the inhabitants of the Old City fall into a new despondency. The news that women and children were leaving Hebron by motor-car and taking refuge in Jericho and the surrounding areas clearly revealed the extent of the upheaval of the situation... The gravity of the situation did however give rise to some positive developments: notably drawing more conciliatory moves from well-minded Arab leaders who had previously been hard-hearted and also pushing the United Nations towards action.

From mid-November onwards, meetings took place between Arab and Jewish leaders, through the endeavors and good offices of the organs of the United Nations. Among the Arabs the behavior of the affable and mild Colonel of Transjordan—Arab Garrison Commander and Military Governor of Jerusalem, Abdallah Bey Tell was highly commendable. The meetings that occurred in the last ten days of November resulted in a complete cessation of hostilities. The end to the violence was an unforeseen heavenly grace. It was God's gift, a reward for the perseverance of the besieged inhabitants of the Old City. It became clear that not even a stray bullet would enter the city.

The Old City inhabitants, gaining their courage, ventured to climb the city walls and even to approach the soldiers to discover what was happening outside the walls. The self-exiled refugees returned from Jericho and Transjordan, bringing back with them their furniture. The city and its streets, which had been empty since May, filled with more people every day. The stores opened again, ready to receive the gainful Hermes.³⁰

In parallel, the peacemaking work of the United Nations representatives also bore fruit. The representatives—the Americans, French and Belgians—were busy all the time, going from one battlement to the other, from one corner of the wall to another, trying hard to ensure the continuation of the cease-fire and their peace policy. After the cessation of hostilities, the inhabitants of the suburbs of Baq'a, Qatamon, Talbiya and the Greek and German colonies, who took refuge in the Old City in anguish, awaited the opening of the New and Jaffa Gates to enable them to go and recover their abandoned homes.

This period also saw the emergence of H.M. Abdallah, King of Transjordan as a viable leader in the minds of Arab Palestinians, just two months after they had been divided over the question of choosing a government and a leader. This was a result of many factors: the Egyptian Army's redeployment in the south; the capture of Beer Sheba; the lack of response from any other Arab states; the stability of the Transjordanian army; and their successful defense of the Old City.

On December 1, 1948, an assembly of leaders, tribal chiefs, mayors and Palestinian personalities convened in Jericho and decided to unite with the crown of Transjordan, proclaiming King Abdallah their monarch. After the convention, they went to the King's winter palace in Shoune, on the eastern bank of the Jordan River, and submitted their proclamation. Ten days later, the King visited Bethlehem, Hebron, Beit Jala and other cities, where the population warmly received him.

So the extremely clever King Abdallah, a far-sighted and diplomatic Arab leader was leader of a state, of his own, and then attached to that state the Arab part of Palestine and was thus proclaimed its King.

In reviewing the siege of the Old City of Jerusalem that began on May 15, 1948, having myself remained here throughout continuously "faithful to their will,"³¹ I consider it my duty to say a few words on the following:

The Patriarchate: the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher headed by H.B. Patriarch Timotheos steered the vessel of the Jerusalem Church through the storm of the siege with great dexterity. Each member of the Brotherhood kept his post in the Holy Places, the administration, priories and procurators demonstrated patience and self-sacrifice. The Patriarchate prudently faced the issues concerning the Holy Places in Gethsemane, and the Coptic building close to the Church of the Anastasis. It cared

for the victims of the siege with great strength, led its terrified flock, protected the refugees in many ways—opening its monasteries to food and shelter, and in such a way became worthy of its name and mission. On October 28, our National Day, by my request and with H.B. the Patriarch's consent, a Doxology was sung in the Church of the Saints Constantine and Helena.

The Arab Orthodox Community: the Arab Orthodox Community was abandoned to God's grace, unprotected but for the care of the Holy Sepulcher's Brotherhood. The leaders of the Arab Orthodox Community left their posts and to save themselves, went abroad. The very poor Orthodox Community was abandoned. However, three or four leaders remained at their posts and became the protectors and mentors of their people.

The Hellenic Community: the division of the City of Jerusalem resulted also in the division of the body of the Hellenic community and its presidium. Some went abroad, others stayed in the Jewish zone and only two took refuge in the Old City. Together with community members, and through the Red Cross and the R.G. Consulate of Greece, they supplied their compatriots in the Jewish occupied zone with food. Together with their Arab Orthodox brethren, they dispatched circulars abroad to raise funds, took care of the local Greek compatriots, gave loans to relieve the poor and the unemployed, and documented the displacement of all Greeks that became refugees. Finally, in closing these memoirs I would make an omission if I did not mention the pain I also suffered while caged within the Old City under fire, which has bequeathed me with vividly painful recollections. These memories are sweetened somewhat however when I remember the good and brotherly company of all those I mentioned, whether they be clerics, lay people, Greeks, Arab Orthodox and others, who shared the same pain. I also would like to express my warmest thanks to H.B. the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Mgr. Timotheos, and to all the members of the Holy Sepulcher Brotherhood—from the Patriarch's Vicar to the last door keeper, for the fatherly love with which they surrounded me and my family, the hospitality they accorded to me, and their moral assistance in the execution of my difficult duties as Liaison and Representative of the R.G. Consulate of Greece in the besieged Old City of Jerusalem.

Endnotes

- ¹ It is said that until the end of the month of April over two hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants left for Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Transjordan.
- ² Title of the respect and honor traditionally held by four archimandrites office-holders among them the Dragoman of the Patriarchate.
- ³ In Greek terminology Hebrew is used instead of Jewish which is rather a religious term, so the writer strictly follows this rule.
- ⁴ The French Hospital, Saint Louis.
- ⁵ The massive French Convent of the St. Marie de Reparatrice Sisters used to stand just outside the New Gate, on the left side going out and leaning on the City Wall. It was opposite the French Hospital and on the other side of Suleiman Road (renamed Haznhanim Road after 1967) The Convent is no longer there and the road is in its place.
- ⁶ At present the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.
- ⁷ The Arab Legion.
- ⁸ St. Stephen's Gate.
- ⁹ A secondary school.
- ¹⁰ It is rather the building of the St. Dimitri School close to the very old St. Demetrios Church from where the school derives its name.
- ¹¹ It is a small dependency of the Monastery of the Virgin Mary opposite the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.
- ¹² The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate.
- ¹³ The main Greek Orthodox Monastery.
- ¹⁴ The mixing of tenses on occasion is true to Mavrides' original text.
- ¹⁵ Another name used for the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher.
- ¹⁶ This is the Suk El-'Attarin, the market place for spices and apothecaries and next to it is the Suk es-Sa'at or Suk el-Lahhamin, where entrails and meat are sold.
- ¹⁷ The Courtyard of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.
- ¹⁸ The building which used to be located to the south west of Jaffa Gate.
- ¹⁹ See endnote number 14.
- ²⁰ *Nea Sion* (New Zion) was the official periodical of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate.
- ²¹ The main Greek Orthodox Church within the Church of the Anastasis (Church of the Holy Sepulcher).
- ²² Dabbagha market, next to the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer.
- ²³ The dates in the present as in the three past memorandums are given according to the Gregorian Calendar.
- ²⁴ On the Southern outskirts of Jerusalem on the Bethlehem road. The name is connected with the ancient St. Modestos Greek Orthodox Church existing there.
- ²⁵ Pontius Pilate Praetorium.
- ²⁶ The covered and crowded market place at the lower and northeastern part of the Old City.
- ²⁷ God of Dreams, Son of the Night and of Sleep.
- ²⁸ This wing of the Patriarchate remained ruined until very recently. A stormy winter night caused additional damage and it was not until 1992 that the Patriarchate decided to start repairing and renovating it.
- ²⁹ The building that during Jordanian rule served as the City Hall and during Israeli rule became a municipality annex.
- ³⁰ The Greek God of Commerce and Eloquence, identified by the Latins with Mercury.
- ³¹ The author uses the immortal words inscribed for Leonidas and the 300 Heroes of the Battle of Thermopylai (480 B.C.E.)

Appendix II

The Namamreh Neighbourhood in Baq'a

Tahir al-Nammari

The name of 'al-Baq'a' is found in the maps and registrations of Gordon Pasha who, in 1864, supervised the documentation of historical place names in Palestine. Prior to this, the name al-Baq'a was also used to refer to this same area of land in documents of the Islamic *Waqf*, including, for example, the inheritance document of the deceased Muhammad bin al-Khalili in the year 1137 Hijri (1724 CE). The Baq'a area was also known locally as the 'Rose Valley' [*Wadi al-Ward*] due to the abundance of roses in the gardens, some of which were harvested to prepare rose water for local churches. The land of lower Baq'a is a wide, low plain which was known for its agricultural produce: apricots, pomegranates, olives, almonds, apples, peaches, pistachios, grapes, as well as grain crops and legumes. Travelers who passed through this area mention that Baq'a was full of gazelles, rabbits, hyenas, wolves, and foxes. They also say that bandits were active here, especially after dark.

During the time of the British Mandate, Jews called the area 'Emek Rafa'eem' after the place mentioned in the Torah as the site of a fierce battle during the time of King David between the Israelites and the Philistines. For this reason, Jews attempted to register the land as Jewish land. The Mandate Government, however, concerned about Arab anger in the city in response to such a move, rejected the Jewish renaming. More recently, under the municipal government of Teddy Kollek in the 1970s, the municipality founded a park, the Bell Garden, in Baq'a next to the Omariya School. This park lies on the northeastern edge of the Namamreh neighbourhood.

The Neighbourhood

The construction of the Namamreh neighbourhood coincided with the arrival of the first Protestant German immigrants to Baq'a in 1873 who received land from the Ottoman government. Later, the Greeks arrived and founded the Greek Colony beside the German Colony on the west side of the Namamreh neighbourhood. Al-Wa'riya and Upper Baq'a were located to the east of al-Namamreh, Talbiya to the north, Qatamon to the east, and Mikor Ha'im to the south.

In this period, two families left the Old City to live outside the walls. The first family, al-Nammari, went to Lower Baq'a while the second family, al-Wa'ri, moved to Upper Baq'a. Abdallah Ibrahim Muhsin al-Nammari purchased land from the people

of al-Malha, Beit Jala, and Bethlehem. The land was registered through the Islamic court in the name of Abdallah al-Nammari and made into a family *waqf*. The al-Wa'ri family had relations with the Ottoman governor from whom they received a portion of government land. They were given the name 'Wa'ri' because they left the urban area within the Old City walls and went to live on 'rugged, wild' or 'Wa'r' land.

Abdallah Ibrahim Muhsin al-Nammari was a fifth generation Jerusalemite. His ability to buy land outside the walls and to erect a number of homes on this land was a result of his wealth—he owned a modern oil press, worked in trade, raised sheep that he sold as meat to the Old City, and invested in soap production. In addition, he received income from the properties he owned in the Old City, and later, from the crops—olive oil, wheat, and grapes—that were raised on the Baq'a land. He moved his family—sons, Ibrahim, Izzat, Omar, Abdelkarim, and Khalid, and daughters, Ruqayya, Salma, Labiba, Zulaykha, and Aisha—to Baq'a from Hayy al-Sharaf (the Jewish Quarter today) in the Old City. They built more modern homes in Baq'a, which are still standing today. Around his house, he erected six homes for his children which formed the beginning of the al-Namamreh neighbourhood and from which it derives its name.

The homes in al-Namamreh combined both modern and old styles of architecture. They had a large central room flanked by doors that opened onto other rooms for sleeping and other uses. These rooms had arched windows and doors, both between them and facing outside. The roofs were covered in red tile. Cisterns were dug next to the houses that collected the winter rainwater. There were no central running water or sewage networks in place until the late 1920s or early 1930s when the water and sewage networks were extended to this area under the mayorship of Raghیب al-Nashashibi. In the late nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Far'oun family joined the Namamreh neighbourhood. Eventually, other families moved into the area, including the Barakat, Budeiri, Dajani, Khalidi, Abu al-Sa'ud, al-'Aouri, 'Asali, Ja'ouni, al-Daqaq, Istambuli, 'Owedah, Abu al-Hawa, al-Fitiani, al-Deisi, and some Christian families.

The Namamreh Market

Initially, there were no markets, mosques, schools, or medical facilities located on Baq'a's unpaved streets. Children used to walk to the Old City to attend school as did those who needed to go to the market. In violation of the Islamic *waqf* law which states that *waqf* property cannot be sold, mortgaged or rented for extended periods, the British Mandate authority confiscated 51 dunums of Nammari family *waqf* land to build the 'Sports Club' for the British. The High Islamic Committee intervened

and the matter was settled through financial compensation for the land. This money was used to build the Namamreh market which in turn provided income for the *waqf*, which reinvested the money in new buildings. In the market, goods were bought and sold in both wholesale and retail trade, and a number of workshops were established as well as a pharmacy.

The construction of the market and development of the area attracted more people to the Baq'a area, especially in the 1920s and 30s, which in turn brought additional improvements. In old times, during the long, dry summer months, the inhabitants of the area used to line up at a single tap to fill containers with water brought by brick pipe from Solomon's pools near Bethlehem. The development of the area, including the construction of the train station, the market and the presence of the Sports Club, also encouraged the paving of the streets, the extension of a piped water network, and electricity.

Education

The children of al-Nammari families continued to attend schools in the Old City, such as al-Rawdah (which is currently called al-Omariya) and the small kuttabs where a sheikh taught the children Arabic, arithmetic, the Qur'an, and hadith. Graduates such as 'Izzat Abdallah al-Nammari, Musa Ismail al-Nammari and Muhammad Ibrahim Muhsen al-Nammari (who became Finance Inspector of Jerusalem at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century) went on to study in Istanbul, Egypt and Beirut. Muhammad Ibrahim reconstructed the writings that had been destroyed from the upper part of the Dome of the Rock and 'al-Turrah', the marble block at the front of the Rashidiya school near Herod's Gate. Other members of the family studied architecture at the Ottoman Institute. Some of these men held the title of 'Ma'mar' Pasha, such as Abdurraheem and Bakr Omar (both sons of Muhammad Sadiq). In 1923, the Terra Sancta school was founded on King George Street in the New City and in 1925, the Omariya government school opened. Students from wealthier families who were able to pay the school fees attended the Terra Sancta, while those families who could not afford the fees sent their children to the government school. These later generations went on to study medicine, architecture, law, etc..

The 1948 Disaster

During the fighting between Jews and Arabs in 1948, al-Namamreh, along with other nearby Neighbourhoods such as Qatamon and Talbiya, were subjected to concentrated attacks by the *Haganah* forces. Residents and fighters defended their

neighbourhoods until the first truce. During the truce, the Israelis attacked those that remained in the neighbourhoods and took some of the people prisoner—they were not released until the second truce (Rhodes) in 1949 when they were handed over to the Jordanian forces across the Mandelbaum gate. Two of the Nammari families, headed by Shukri Amin al-Nammari and Yusif Rashid al-Nammari, managed to stay in al-Namamreh by taking refuge in the German church. After the war, they and their families tried to return to their homes but the Israeli military authorities prevented them by declaring their homes ‘absentee’ property.

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Source: Government of Palestine, *Urban Property Tax Ordinances, 1928-1932*, Jerusalem.