

Helplessness

If you woke up in the morning and found all peoples enjoying freedom except us, say dammit.
 If you looked at the world and found Japan progressing forwards and the Arabs backwards, say dammit.
 If you saw a fat American boy and an emaciated Somali child, say dammit.
 If you looked at universities and could not find an Arab name in the top rankings, say dammit.
 If you looked at Iraq and found it suffocated by alien invaders, say dammit.
 If you looked at Yemen and Syria and could see nothing but horror, say dammit.
 If you looked at art and could not find us, say dammit.
 If you looked at culture and could not find us either, say dammit.
 If you looked at Yarmouk and did not see us, say dammit.
 The personal pronoun 'us' refers to us, the Palestinians, the philosophers, the passive and helpless ones who are unable to do anything except talk, dammit.

Editor-in-Chief

AL HAL - Thursday 16/4/2015

4 PAGES

INSIDE

02 Respiratory care graduates seek trade union framework to save them from unemployment

03 Clemense, a German national, offers many things to Palestine

04 The life of one household!

Why do some Palestinians of 1948 (areas) vote for Zionist parties and how can we regain their votes?

■ Azhar Hanaa

Why do some Palestinians living in 1948 areas vote for Zionist parties? What common interests exist between those Palestinian Arabs and Zionist parties? What makes an Arab become a member of a Zionist party that threatens his survival on his land? How can the leaders, professionals and policies of Arab parties attract this group in society and get them to rejoin the ranks of the national movement to gain more votes and influence in the Israeli Knesset? There are many questions that require clear and candid answers to understand this phenomenon. In this report, Al-Hal explores this dilemma through interviews with Palestinian voters who voted for Zionist parties to learn their motives, and with those who voted for Arab parties to understand their position.

Extreme right back to the fore

The Israeli elections ended with the electorate again choosing the extreme right to form a government. The percentage of voters participating in the elections was 72.3%: Arab participation was 66%, with 13% of Arab voters giving their ballots to Zionist parties, according to the website run by Arabs from the 1948 territories.

Apart from the victory of the United Arab List, which won 13 seats, other Arab votes went to Zionist parties distributed between Hamad Ammar of Israel Beiteinu (Israel our Home), Zuheir Bahloul of the Zionist Union, Freij Issawi of Meretz, and Ayoub Qara of the Likud Party. This is to say that there are 17 seats for Arab members. If these seats were under one coalition, it would have had an impact on the concept and practice of the fluctuating Palestinian presence in Israeli politics.

Why did you vote for "Zionism"?

Al-Hal interviewed Hatem Hassoun

from Shafa Amr village and asked him why he had voted for Zionist parties. He answered: "The democratic system provides citizens with the freedom to vote without fear or threats. Therefore, an Arab citizen may wish to exercise this right despite the pressure exerted by Arab parties on Palestinian citizens who became fed up with the previous Arab partisanship. This increased the percentage of Arab voters [for Zionist parties]."

Hassoun added: "Arab voters find that Arab representatives do not have powers or capabilities, whereas Zionist parties are active in Arab towns and villages; they make visits to these areas and give promises of an "economic" nature to Arab minorities, like access to budgets which have been under the control of right-wing parties in recent years."

Hassoun concluded: "Another reason for Arabs voting for the right-wing is the inclusion of Arab candidates in the ranks of Zionist parties. These candidates convey a message to Arab voters that voting for a Jewish party enhances Arab integration in Israel and facilitates access to Israeli institutions and progress in economic and social life in Israel."

Fear of the outcomes of the Arab Spring

Arab student Ghassan Mureeh explained why he voted for the Likud Party: "Throughout history, we have seen that it is better for us as Arabs to vote for the Likud. Under the rule of the Netanyahu government, the Arab Druze live in peace, security and are satisfied to be a minority in Israel in contrast with the left-wing parties."

Mureeh added: "In light of the current Arab revolutions, we are seeing sectarian divisions produced by the Arab regimes, leading to violations of the dignity of our community in Syria and Lebanon. Our interests today lie with right-wing parties,

which provide us with security, democracy and freedom since they do not believe in religious discrimination." He continued: "We see that Islamic movements are attempting to attack us as Druze and want to destroy us as a minority in this world. Hence, I see our unity with right-wing parties as protecting us as an Arab minority in Israel, and so I voted for the Likud party in the Israeli Knesset."

The nomination of my friend made me vote for Leiberman

In an interview, journalist Nimer Abu Qasem said: "Frankly speaking, I do not trust Arab parties in the Israeli Knesset, so I opted to give my vote to the Israel Beiteinu Party for two reasons: first, my friend Hamad Ammar is a member of this party, and second, standing with Jewish parties gives us protection as an Arab minority in Israel."

He added: "Hamad Ammar is the one who will save us as a minority living on the bottom in terms of economy and politics. He and Akram Hassoun were able to improve our image in the world and it is our duty to support them in every way."

Likud party activist Ali Qara said: "Minorities in the State of Israel usually vote for a variety of parties. Some choose Arab parties, while others prefer large Jewish parties. Each individual pursues his interests according to his personal motivations."

Qara added: "Some clans are headed by an individual who decides which direction is socially, economically and politically beneficial for them, and which urges them to trust large parties such as the Likud." Qara concluded: "I vote for the Likud party where my social and political interests are represented. My uncle Ayoub Qara is a Knesset member of the Likud and it is my duty to support him to protect the Druze minority in Israel in all aspects of daily life."



The huge task of regaining Arab votes

In an interview with the head of the political bureau of the National Democratic Assembly party, Mohammad Tarabay, on how to attract these sectors to vote for Arab parties in the next elections, he said: "Since 1956, the State of Israel has sought to divide us by sects as in the theory of divide and rule. Israel has always implemented its Zionist conspiracy for our fragmentation [in the 1948 territories] by separate educational curricula and our division into communities of Druze, Arabs, Bedouins and Christians." He continued: "Israel has worked hard to brainwash members of the same people, especially among our Druze brothers, through imposing military service on them and separating

their education curricula from that of other Arabs."

Tarabay added: "We in the national movement work to contain this phenomenon and attempt to make an rapprochement with these people, as is evident in the decline in votes for Zionist parties with each round of Israeli parliamentary elections."

Tarabay asserted: "We will not abandon our brothers, the Druze, to this conspiracy. We will work hard to get closer to them and communicate using all means, and we will attempt to change this sectarian discourse among some of our young people against them or vice versa."

Tarabay concluded: "Our social, political and cultural communications with this sector of the community will help us change the discourse and attract their votes next time."

Respiratory care graduates seek trade union framework to save them from unemployment

Maram Arar

Unemployment and the absence of a trade union framework are two major problems that face graduates of respiratory care. These are young people who studied in the hope of getting a job upon graduation, but found themselves unemployed.

Respiratory care is a healthcare specialty related to heart and lung functions. Respiratory care practitioners apply scientific principles to the prevention and treatment of chronic and acute disorders of the cardiopulmonary system, in addition to their knowledge of the physiology of the body and heart and lung diseases. This specialty enables them to diagnose, evaluate and monitor patients with cardiopulmonary disorders and treat them effectively.

Ikhlas Arar (23 years old) is a graduate of respiratory care from the Modern University College. She looked for a job everywhere, but was completely rejected on the grounds that there is no such specialty and that there is no trade union to register and protect graduates of such a program.

Ikhlas was no more fortunate than previous graduates of this specialty who are also unemployed. She said: "To solve the problem of these graduates, they must be enlisted in a trade union that defends their specialty and demands job opportunities for them."

Dr. Ribhi Bsharat, who is responsible for this specialty at the Modern University College, said that they are making slow progress in convincing the Ministry of

Health to recruit these graduates and have achieved the first step of obtaining an occupational license for them. Bsharat clarified that unemployment is caused by the absence of a trade union for these graduates, who number 50 in total. He pointed out that there is weak interest in this specialty due to its very high costs, requiring special laboratories that were established for the successful introduction of this rare specialty required in the Palestinian market at a cost of around eighty or ninety thousand dollars.

Poor knowledge of the importance of this specialty

Dr. Bsharat clarified that the respiratory care specialty had been approved by the Ministry of Education and welcomed by the Minister of Health at the time as an important discipline, since respiratory diseases are the third highest cause of death in Palestine because of the environmental and health context. Bsharat emphasized that poor awareness of the importance of the specialty is the main reason for the lack of job opportunities for graduates in both public and private sectors in the West Bank; operation rooms are licensed for this specialty in hospitals in Jerusalem.

Dr. Ribhi added: "The current political situation and the inability of the Palestinian Authority to pay the salaries of existing employees is one of the reasons preventing the employment of graduates of this specialty."



Ikhlas Arar



Adel Abu Amriyeh



Ousama Najjar

Adel Abu Amriyeh, a graduate of respiratory care, was obliged to go back to school and expressed regret at spending two years in a specialty that does not exist in the market unless he travels abroad. He said that, although many physicians have encouraged him and his colleagues to see a future for this important career, he does not see anything promising.

Najjar: ready to cooperate with graduates

Ousama Najjar, head of the Palestinian Federation of Health Professions, confirmed that respiratory care is a new discipline and there is insufficient awareness of its importance and qualifications, the nature of the work, and the degree to which the Ministry of Health needs graduates of this specialty. Najjar called on the students to issue a publication about the nature and

importance of this specialty and to meet with health trade unions or with the Ministry to ask to be included in the Ministry's occupations. He also called on them to group themselves and form a trade union to engage in trade negotiations with the Ministry of Health about their cause. He described a similar experience with the optics specialty, which did not exist [as an occupation] in the Ministry of Health until the optics trade union explained the nature and importance of the specialty and suggested the recruitment of an optician in each health directorate or hospital. In this way, jobs were created for this specialty at the Ministry of Health. Najjar expressed his willingness to cooperate with the graduates to establish a trade union for this profession to address the Ministry of Health and convince those in charge that their work is different than nursing and that it is a rare specialty.

7000 government vehicles use millions of shekels in fuel annually

Amjad Hussein

Some 7000 government vehicles for military and civilian use consume millions of shekels worth of fuel annually. There are 4500 vehicles for security agencies and 2500 in the civilian sector; this is a matter of public controversy from time to time. Some people are critical about the very existence of these vehicles and view them as a drain on public funds, while others believe them to be essential to the work of the public sector and an item of expenditure that can always be controlled through rationalization and [good] planning. Al-Hal interviewed the Director General of the Public Transportation Department at the Ministry of Transportation, Mohammad Hallaq, who believes that government vehicles are now regulated following the 2010 decision of the Council of Ministers to ration and restrict the use of government vehicles.

A law is in place

Hallaq said that there are two types of government vehicle: those allocated to ministries and military vehicles. Both types vary between personal cars and those that enable the mobility of staff of a ministry or security agency. Personal cars are only given to specific ranks such as ministers, deputy ministers, governors and the heads of a body, or similar. This is stipulated in the law issued in 2010 by the Council of Ministers giving the right for these personnel to use the cars for their personal purposes, with some limitations to prevent use by their children or any misuse.

Military vehicles

Hallaq added: "For military vehicles, rank is not taken into consideration as much

as the need for a vehicle. In other words, it is not a must that all staff with the rank of major should have a government car of their own. Actually, there are high ranking staff who do not own a car based on their special circumstances that do not require a private car." A middle-ranking police district officer in a certain governorate may own a car because of his special circumstances or need. However, a Brigadier General, Colonel or Major General are all given cars. He said that vehicles of all types are distributed by the orders of a traffic superintendent in each institution, who is also responsible for all vehicles of the security agency or ministry and their maintenance and usage costs according to a specific system overseen by the Public Transportation Department at the Ministry of Transportation.

Vehicles with high costs

Asked about the reason for using cars with big engines and high costs, Hallaq replied that the government is obliged to use these cars as they were donated by donor countries and not bought by the Palestinian Authority. He illustrated that some vehicles are part of a specific project and are sold by the government once the project ends and the money goes into the Treasury. Sometimes, the car expenses are part of the project's budget. The Ministry is devising a new procedure to enable the discarding of all high expenditure vehicles by selling them and replacing them with low cost cars.

He said that vehicles with high costs are used in the security sector in all countries of the world because there is no durable alternative for this purpose.

With regard to car number plates, Hallaq indicated that those carrying the number '99' are the same as those holding a red plate. However, the former are allocated for movement in areas outside PA control due to the difficulties imposed by Israeli occupation forces at checkpoints between governorates and on outside roads on cars with red plates, which are more noticeable. These vehicles may also be used by the Drug Control Agency, intelligence apparatus or for detection and investigation, so there is no sense in giving them an eye-catching red plate.

A maximum of 50 cars hold ordinary plates and not '99' or red ones. These were given on a temporary basis to specific people for special security purposes.

False accusations were made against some public figures

Hallaq clarified that the decision of the Council of Ministers referred to earlier on government vehicles has been detrimental to many public figures holding sensitive positions that necessitate a car. Examples include the General Traffic Superintendent, who is responsible for the circulation of all vehicles in the country, the Prosecutor General, Deputy Prosecutor, Director General of Customs and the Director of Income Tax, who control a high percentage of the country's money. According to Hallaq, it makes no sense that these figures travel by public transport in view of their sensitive positions, while there are breaches of the law by which ordinary employees of the Ministry of Finance receive personal cars. Hallaq clarified that he is only an executive officer

who applies the law and sends notices to the Council of Ministers, which is entitled to take decisions. He said that they receive complaints from the public on violations and these are investigated, but the cause is the absence of a transparent system for vehicle distribution.

The director of the Capacity Building and Information Unit at the Coalition for Accountability and Integrity (AMAN), Fadl Sulaiman, said: "In 2010, we carried out a search and inspection to put an end to this financial drain following receipt of numerous complaints and we respected the decision issued by the government at the time to rationalize the use of vehicles."

However, this positive step by the government was eventually overturned and things returned back to square one and a situation where many violations are being recorded. He added: "Since 2014, we have called for a transparent and strict system for the allocation of government vehicles. We also call for the implementation of promises made by the Minister of Transportation for new prosecution campaigns, new procedures to ensure best practice, and an end to the waste of public money by issuing official permits for the use of any government car, even during the evening, to remove all doubt.

Sulaiman said that the Council of Ministers' decision was clear about taking all possible measures to reduce and rationalize the use of government vehicles, including a halt on the import of costly cars by possibly specifying the type of car donated since donors do not usually insist on a type of vehicle.

Do you accept interference related to your hijab headscarf?

Tahrir Bani Sakhr

A campaign on the hijab, accompanied by a leaflet distributed to female students at Birzeit University, produced conflicting reactions. Some opposed the campaign on the grounds that it interfered in the freedom of women and was an authoritarian step loaded with complications related to the domination of new generations of women. Al-Hal conducted an open discussion with girls on this subject to allow those targeted by the campaign to express their views. This is what they said:



Sofia Jibril

It is immoral to interfere with the different ways of wearing the hijab. I am against any intervention because this is a matter of concern for the girl alone and her choice is not necessarily a violation of public morals. I think this is part of society's perception of women as a body that must only be suppressed. In practice, wearing a hijab or not does not determine the identity and manners of a girl, who is not merely an object of pleasure that must be veiled regardless of religious conviction. It is extremely annoying to think that a hijab is the only thing that identifies a girl's personality and her religious disposition. A girl is made up of her thoughts and her ability to contribute rather than the way she wears her hijab. It is wrong to distribute this leaflet in the university since it humiliates veiled students and disrespects Christian girls, whereas Islam respects all other religions. I believe that a girl must be respected as a human being and not as a body.



Yara Shahin

The manner of wearing the hijab is a personal choice and does not harm others. The hijab does not define morality since a girl may be wearing a hijab without conviction; thus, her behavior may be abusive of herself and her community. On the other hand, there are unveiled girls who are committed to their religion. I am not against the campaign if it is intended as advice and not as an imposition. In other words, the campaign is the promotion of an idea that we may adopt or leave.



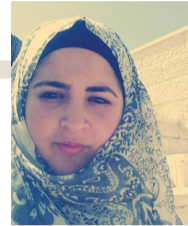
Madona Rafidi

I can accept the idea of someone handing me a leaflet on the hijab as they do not know that I am a Christian. Therefore, I would take it without making a comment, or perhaps tell the young man distributing it that I am a Christian and the hijab is not an obligation in Christianity. Ultimately, Christianity is a religion of forgiveness and acceptance. All religions call for respect for other religions. Thus, I do not expect my reaction or that of anyone to be aggressive since I should respect all religions and beliefs. A person distributing a leaflet is not necessarily trying to impose the hijab on me and there is no offence in becoming aware of the beliefs of other religions. Ultimately, I respect all religions.



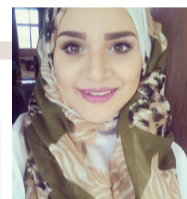
Asmaa Mohammad

University students have sufficient awareness of the correct way to wear a hijab and do not need anyone to determine how to wear their hijab. I oppose any interference in the decision of any girl. A hijab shows one thing only: that the girl wearing it is a Muslim, but it has nothing to do with morality. There is no harm in distributing such a leaflet for advice only, but not to impose a decision or a new reality.



Tujan Abu Atwan

I strongly oppose such behavior since wearing the hijab or not is a personal freedom in my opinion. I do not like someone to interfere in my behavior in any way or for any reason. The hijab is on the exterior and does not define the identity or morality of a girl. It can be the result of religious beliefs or societal circumstances, like living in a society that has a negative perspective of unveiled girls, so it may be a custom and not religious. A girl's identity and morality is never determined by her external appearance, which may show her religious beliefs, but cannot determine her morality without interaction with her and getting to know her personality and mind. To treat the hijab as a determination of the identity and morality of a girl is unfair because many well-brought up girls do not wear a hijab although they are Muslims, or may be followers of other religions, or even atheists. It is not fair at all to impose the hijab by force because there is no compulsion in religion. A Muslim girl certainly wears the hijab with conviction and is satisfied with the way she wears it and does not need someone to interfere with her hijab and hate her for it, or cause her to have feelings of guilt.



Ruaa Naser

The hijab is a religious obligation, but a girl should personally be convinced when she wears it and it should be the result of deep reflection. I am against interference in the way a hijab is worn on the grounds of personal freedom. Islam calls for respect and acceptance of the other, and not to impose anything on others under any circumstances, except as an advice that may be accepted or rejected. No one can force me to judge a girl by her exterior appearance, whether she wears a hijab or not.



Hanin Bayatneh

The leaflet that was distributed to female university students is unfair, especially because there is more than one religion on campus. Dress does not usually reflect religion and is part of customs and traditions. The girls targeted by the leaflet will not be affected. University students are 18 years and above which means that they have brains capable of managing themselves. Therefore they would not be convinced or accepting of the leaflet. This is nothing to do with morality or its absence. At the end of the day, each individual is free in his behavior, dress and morals and judgment is only in the hands of God. Let us start first with ourselves and changing for the better, then start with others. For anyone who wants to know more about something, including the hijab, there are many books and articles everywhere that make such a leaflet redundant.

Clemense, a German national, offers many things to Palestine

Majd Hamad

On 27 January 1997, hydrologist Clemens Messerschmidt came to Palestine for the first time. His MA research in 1993 was on the hydrology of Wadi Araba in Jordan. He moved to Palestine to work on projects in the water sector, where the first project lasted for three months and was followed by other projects related to water, sewage and well drilling.

He was attracted by the human aspect [of life] and found himself privileged as a foreigner, making it easier to deal with people. Yet after his stay of 18 years, he knows that he is no longer a stranger. People are not fascinated by him as a foreigner as they were in the beginning. In those days, he used to see fear in their eyes if he was driving his car with a yellow number plate, thinking that he was an Israeli settler, but, he stresses, people accepted him quickly when he explained who he was.

For him, Ramallah is not like the rest of Palestine. Unlike the other cities, Ramallah represents 'a five star occupation'. Clemens finds that even in large cities like Nablus and Hebron, people still know each other and have a high level of social

solidarity although resources are less. As a foreigner, this suits him, although he thinks that if he were a Palestinian, people might interfere in his affairs.

His passion for cities is not where he bases himself; a city like Jerusalem is charged with 'stress and tension', especially the Qalandia 'Chicken-point'. His favorite locations are Palestinian rural areas, particularly in the north where he has lived and worked and knows it better.

German expert Clemens Messerschmidt has lived in Palestine for 18 years in Palestine, but longs for certain items in his country, specifically in his native Bavaria. He longs for a bookstore in any location where he can buy lots of books; he longs for the good newspapers that can be easily read; he also longs for thick German loaves made from half wheat and half rye, similar to barley seeds; for pork meat which is more or less absent here; he longs for some friends; he loves German mountains and lakes and loves to swim there; he longs to go biking on tracks that are made for that. According to Clemens, groundwater is the richest source and is a top priority for water resources in Palestine. The only way



German hydrologist Clemens Messerschmidt.

to increase water resources is to dig wells. In his opinion, all other solutions come next. He repeats: "Wells, wells and wells" is the solution for water problems. Clemens ended the interview with this

important fact about water: "The official quantity granted to Palestinians in the Oslo Accords was 118 million cubic meters a year. We have currently reached 85 cubic meters per year!"

The life of one household!

Abdel Baset Khalaf

Al-Hal visited a family from Tubas living in very poor conditions in a house surrounded by debris and persecuted by snakes and rodents. We are concealing the identity of the residents of the house to maintain their privacy. We describe a brief picture of their circumstances, accompanied by pictures that we hope officials will become aware of.

House: Built in 1980 with two small rooms, a kitchen and a primitive bathroom in a narrow yard. The total area is no more than 50 meters and owned by many heirs. The windows are old and covered with plastic sheets or cloths. Tiles have not been introduced or discovered yet. The second-hand rusty fridge and washing machine come from a market. The only closet has no doors and is broken, just like the solitary bed. The kitchen is very modest with a poor gas stove, no cupboards and without a water supply. The bathroom has no tap or tiles, no tight door or roof. The yard is used to bake bread on very old utensils. There are three sheep donated by a kind-hearted person. The surrounding buildings are in ruins, producing snakes and rodents, which the family kill every summer.

Facilities: Taboun, an Arabic oven, a stove, a palm tree and more ruins.

Father: born in 1964, he is incapable of working due to his bad health and persistent back pains. He engages in many professions, barely covering his daily expenses, and could not save money to build or rent a house.

Family: three daughters and three sons, the eldest 20 years old and the youngest 8.

Profession: father, mother and children work all day and for most of the night making Arabic bread, Kullaj, Qatayef and other traditional sweets. They clean and cook Qaware' calves' legs, cut vegetables, cut the thorns off Akkub [a thistle for the preparation of a well-known Palestinian dish], roll Arabic tobacco cigarettes, prepare meals that take hard work and time for several clients, clean houses, sell flowers, make soap - and anything they can do to earn a living in dignity.

Working hours, specifically for the mother: from five in the morning to one am. on most days, and double this time in seasons and holidays.

Urgent wish: after being ignored by officials (according to the family), they wish to remove the ruins from their surroundings, destroy the pests and equip the kitchen to help them to finish their daily work quickly.

Dreams: to own a house or save enough money to rent a livable house far from snakes.

Assistance provided: food parcel worth NIS150 in Ramadan granted by a semi-official party and NIS750 from the Ministry of Social Affairs every three months since 2013.

Debts: NIS 22 thousand to the municipality for water and electricity bills.



April, the Thursday month and season of pleasure

Aziza Thaher

The month of April is the title for joy, happiness, celebrations and seasonal pleasures in Palestinian culture. Our ancestors used to call it 'the Thursday month' because they had a big celebration on every Thursday of the month. They divided April into four Thursdays of celebrations: the first for plants, the second for the dead, the third for eggs and the fourth for cows; these were in addition to other seasons and reasons for celebration each year.

The plants' or girls' Thursday

Hajah Sabha Jawabra (80 years old) said: "On the first Thursday of April, unmarried girls would go out to pick flowers from the fields. They would put them in a pot of water and leave them outside overnight so the stars would do their work during the night. The girls would then wash their hairs with the magic 'starred' water in order to get married." She added with a smile: "We used to repeat the song saying, 'oh plants oh plants ...make the girls' hair long and the boys' hair short'."

The Thursday of the dead

On the second Thursday of April, Haj Abu Mahmoud Dabas of Aseera Shamaliah village (106 years of age) said: "Women used to get up in the early hours of the morning on that day to knead flour and bake it in the taboun, then olive oil was spread on the bread. Loaves of bread were put on trays made of straw, together with pastries and sweets, covered and distributed to children and the poor in the village cemetery as a favor to the souls of the dead."

Haja Sabha added: "On the Thursday of the dead, cooking rice in milk and sugar was a must and we used to gather in front of the house of one of the women to eat this dish, also as a favor to the souls of the dead."

The Thursday of eggs

(and Halawa (confectionary)

"When we were kids, we used to wait eagerly for the Thursday of eggs", was how Hajah Baseema Um Fayez started her speech. She said that on the third week of April, women used to gather eggs and boil them on Thursday morning, adding onion peel to give a reddish or brownish color so kids would enjoy them. They used to distribute the eggs to children in the village. Some would eat them and others would enjoy breaking the eggs together.

Haj Dabas from Aseera Shamaliah village said that on the third week of April they used to go to Nablus to buy the halawa of the season, which was made in two types: one a hard white confectionary mixed with pistachios and called mousamieh, and the other red sweets made from pumpkin, plus zalabyeh, to be distributed to sisters, aunts and daughters as a gesture of goodwill and compassion for relatives.

The Thursday of cows

Haja Um Saleh (94 years old) searched her memory and said: "On the Thursday of cows, sheep and camels, we celebrated by painting the cattle red.

The day was announced as a break for the animals and they were not sent to work in fields or pastures. Their milk was not sold on that day, but distributed to the poor in the name of God so the Almighty would bless the produce.

They used to milk the cows at noon instead of the morning and the milk pots would all be painted in red to show happiness. Also on that Thursday, cattle owners would wash the sheep and cut their wool because it would be heavy on the animals in the summer."

Prophet Moses season

The Prophet Moses shrine in Jerusalem used to be packed with visitors from all the Palestinian cities to celebrate the season. Haj Abu Mahmoud said: "When I was young, I used to go with my father and mother and many relatives from the village to the Prophet Moses shrine. Visitors used to prepare meals for other visitors, read verses of Quran, and climb up and down the shrine. We used to buy Prophet Moses colored sweets made from sugar and walnuts, found only at this time."

Festivals and events

Khaled Tamim, head of the events department at the Directorate of Tourism and Antiquities in Nablus said that the Ministry is seeking to revive Palestinian popular heritage. "For the past five years, we have revived the seasonal celebrations such as the Thursday season or the spring festival. These events include art and singing, dabka dancing groups, cultural and entertainment events attended by no less than 3000 people and some groups of foreign tourists. The Almasoudiyeh - Burqa area was chosen as the site for the festival of the Thursday month." Researcher and historian Dr. Fawzieh Shehada says that, "April is called the month of Thursday because on each Thursday there is a celebration. It is a season of celebrations characterized by vitality and giving, the month of going outdoors." Dr. Shehada indicated that Salahuddin Al-Ayubi had observed the Prophet Moses season in an attempt to raise awareness about the enemy plans, which were disguised under the sacred cloak of the cross to deceive people and occupy Palestine. This was to achieve their worldly ambitions and had nothing to do with Christianity, a religion of peace and devotion. Palestinians, Christians and Muslims alike stopped those plans. As Salahuddin Al-Ayubi revived this popular heritage, and our people never stopped