

**Banat, Aminah. Interviewed 23 August 2005 in Burj el-Barajneh, Beirut.
Translated by The Nakba Archive, 2018.**

Time Code: 00:02:00 – 00:05:00

Aminah Banat: We never needed to buy any fruits or any vegetables. All our vegetables would grow in nature, and we were living the natural way. We didn't know any sickness, we didn't use any chemicals or anything. We were living a slow life. We would never hear about dangerous illnesses [cancer]. We were just being, we were happy. One day, we did not know why, they said "War is about to break out, there will be skirmishes. Each individual must buy a rifle and keep it at home, in order to defend himself, in case something happens to us." That is what the elders said.

Bushra Moghrabi: How big was your family? How many brothers and sisters were you?

AB: Are you asking how many brothers I have?

BM: Yes.

AB: Three of them. One of them is blind, they got him in the eye when he was young and he lost his vision in both his eyes. He is still with us. I have one brother who is still alive. My older brother died, I did not see him. My mother died, I did not see her. My father died, I did not see him. I have two sisters, they died, I did not see them. I am here in Lebanon, all by myself. I do not have a brother, nor a mother, nor a father, nor anybody at all. I only have a son, here in Lebanon, and two daughters. Nobody else. Four of my children went missing in 1982. My husband received a projectile on his head while he was at home. His brains spilled on the ground and we buried him. And there I was, looking for my missing children. In Palestine, when they told us the skirmishes would start, they asked each person to buy... [interrupts sentence]. I was aware at the time, I was not a child. I left Palestine at the age of eighteen. My husband and his father bought a rifle, so did my neighbour, as well as my brother, and so-and-so did too... Each rifle had a magazine, and each magazine had five combs. Each comb had five bullets. One day, we were just sitting there, and we suddenly see tanks coming in from the city, going from 'Akka to the villages... To our town. I got married in 'Amqa. There is a town called Kweikat, it's closer to 'Akka than 'Amqa. Its people saw the tank lights going on and off. The men had prepared an ambush and were waiting

for the tanks. The tanks got closer... I'm still talking about Kweikat. The tanks got closer to the town and they began "takh takh takh" [fighting onomatopoeia]. Some men had five bullets, others had twenty-five... They ran out... What happened was that they [the tanks] were trying to get to our town through Kweikat. They left [Kweikat] and a week later, they were in our town, in 'Amqa, where I got married. The guards protecting the village saw the tanks coming, and again, they started: "takh takh takh". One tank came and left, and then three tanks came back. They left again for a week and came back, with more tanks, I don't remember how many. And once again, those who had rifles ran out, and so they left.

00:09:00 – 00:17:00

BM: Did the women work outside of the house, in your village?

AB: Yes, on their own lands. Farmers would work on their properties. But people in cities were not farmers. They would buy from us farmers. My father used to pick figs for me, which I would bring down to 'Akka. He would harvest cactus fruit, enough to fill two crates. He would load them on a donkey for me, and I would ride it and bring everything over to the city. There was never any fear or any danger upon us.

BM: Would you go on your own?

AB: Yes I would. No, there were other people going there as well. But even if I was late and lagging behind them, I would not be worried. There would always be other people behind me. As soon as the Shaykh would sound the athan, for Fajr prayer, we would go down to 'Akka. We would be selling as of ten in the morning and then we'd come back. We did not get around by car or anything.

BM: How?

AB: We rode our donkeys, excuse my language [for saying the word hmar since it is also an insult]. We would load our crates on the donkeys, and bring them down [to the city]. And wherever there were streets, for example near the river, or near al-Kābri, or near a farm, a "manshiyeh" [oldest part of town]. Where there was a road, the car would come... There was a member of my family named Muhammad Banat Abu-Rāshid. He was living in al-Rashidiya,

but he passed away, his children are still there. He used to have a pickup truck. He would charge by the trip, and would load up in the village and bring everything over to 'Akka and display it at the fruit and vegetable market. And those in the villages, including myself, would pull out our boxes, and people would come and we would tell them "My okras are better... Your okras are better... Your tomatoes... Your cactus fruits... Your figs". This is how we were living, in Palestine.

BM: What would you grow in your town?

AB: We would grow everything. As I told you, cactus fruit was part of our produce, figs were part of our produce, and olives as well... If I had to tell you how many olive groves my father had, you wouldn't believe me. How many pieces of land... When my father would find a watermelon that had grown this big from the sun, he would dig a deep hole in the ground and bury it, leaving only the top side uncovered. We would put grass on it to protect it from the rays, so that it wouldn't ripen too fast. Later on, we would bring it out of the ground and it would be that big [gestures a huge size]. We would try to fit the watermelon in a basket [*khirj*], and it would not even go through the hole. You don't know what a *khirj* is, do you?

BM: Yes, I do.

AB: We would put the watermelon inside it and it would not even get to the bottom of it. There were corn ears too. Imagine you were growing corn, and I wasn't. Or you were growing watermelon and I wasn't, or figs. I would come to you and pick out some of your produce, you would come and you wouldn't say anything other than "Enjoy your meal". Say you had watermelons and I didn't, and I came over to choose, you would not make me pay for it. Wild cucumbers, tomatoes... I would take a basket and pick out tomatoes from a brother's crops. And if you were the landowners and you saw me picking, you would not say anything to me. If you knew I did not have much, you wouldn't say anything. We were living in abundance. We would all sit and share the same meal. All the neighbours, and all the village women would sit together, and whatever each woman brought, they would offer it to you. There would be seven or eight women sitting in a circle over here, and another circle over there in another neighborhood, and there in yet another neighborhood... This is how they sat... At a common table. You would not think of your neighbour as a stranger. Same town, same brothers and sisters. Are we living that way now? No... Here, even brothers wouldn't mind killing each other. We are living

in oppression, here. What if I told you that we've been here for twenty-three years, and we barely have a drop of drinking water for the whole camp. And that throughout this whole camp, there is not one house that directly receives drinking water. We have to buy the water. It's been twenty-three years.

BM: Hajjeh, who were the biggest land-owning families in your town?

AB: The Rustom family. Their name was Rustom Abdel-Aal, they used to own land. We did not associate being a farmer with being poor. If I counted my father's pieces of land, the ones I still remember, you would not believe me. That was my so-called poor father. Not really poor, only financially poor. Since my father did not have young men helping him, and he was alone - because we were four daughters first, until the boys were born... He did not have anybody to help him. He was not be able to cultivate the entire land. He would farm according to his needs.

BM: Would the villagers help each other out with farming?

AB: Of course they would. Whoever was harvesting... Say you were harvesting your wheat and I was done before you, I would come over and help you. Say I was still picking olives, and you were finished before me, you would come over and help me. Our family built a house, we did not have any wheel barrows, whoever was a construction worker would come and help me. This is how they were in 1948. I went back, I've been back three times. Whoever needed to build a house, but did not have any money... [interrupts her sentence] Whenever there was an evening gathering in town, people would create a *diwan*... A *diwan* is like a huge living room, where people set up sofas. Strangers who didn't know anybody came, as well as guest who might be lost or late to show up at their hosts. They would practice something called *nadafeh* [cleanliness] in that living room. An example of *nadafeh* would be when someone would say "People! Umm Aziz wants to build a house and she does not have enough [resources]". And, three or four construction workers would step up and say "We will be there tomorrow". They would bring rocks. "We will go help him tomorrow". "So-and-so wants to pour cement tomorrow". We would go help them out. They would mix the cement, and place five or six ladders. Then, men would carry tanks on one shoulder, and women, on their heads... And that is how they would help whoever needed to pour cement for his house. Whether there were two or five rooms [to be built], they would help. This is how we would help each other in everything. We were together, even the British in our town... In

Palestine, there were British people, I remember them. And there were Jews who would go from Nahāriya to Jiddīn. They would pass through our town. They would see a child and say [welcoming gesture]: "Come, come". The child would go to them, and they would carry him, kiss him, and give him a biscuit, or candied almonds or money. So, everytime we [as children] saw a Jew going to his town of Jiddīn, in the mountains, we would run to him so that he could give us a biscuit or a candied almond, or a coin, and we would be happy. He would carry us and kiss us. It didn't matter if it was a little boy or a little girl.

BM: There wasn't any enmity at the time.

AB: There wasn't any enmity. To the point where, when the Jew came, as I said, kids would run towards him, and young and old would welcome him and salute him as if he were an Arab. We were living together with them [the Jews]. There was Tel Aviv, there was Nahāriya. I was born in Nahāriya. There were Jews living there. There was no enmity between the Arabs and the Jews. There were still Jews in Palestine in 1948, right? Well, there are many Palestinian men who married Jewish women. But a Palestinian woman never married a Jewish man.

BM: Did you use to sell to the Jews or buy from them, during that time?

AB: No, their town was a *nuzha* [family leisure place]. Nahāriya was a *nuzha*. But they came over to my house, or I met up with them... The *mukhaddir* was a Jew, the doctor was a Jew.

BM: What do you mean by *mukhaddir*?

AB: What's a *mukhaddir*... For example, if somebody was taking his cows or his goats to graze, and if they [the herds] went to eat the wheat of anybody who had planted it, there was a *mukhaddir*. His name was... His name escapes me... There was a Jewish doctor who used to treat us... Oh yes, the *mukhaddir*'s name is Mlikha.

BM: So you mean he was a guard?

AB: Yes, a guard. In order to avoid so-and-so's goats or cows entering someone else's wheat crops and eating them, the *mukhaddir*'s job was to guard the fields. He is the guardian of the plants. For example, there were

wild plants that grew between the crops. We used to harvest that much purslane, dandelion, 'akub [thistle] in big quantities... When we went, the mukhaddir would not stop us. We would go pick, and they would not prevent us. If you stepped into the wheat fields, the wheat crops would get flattened and not come back up again. But if a tarsh ate one wheat spike, it wouldn't grow back. It would be cut, it would be over and done with. That is when the mukhaddir would come in and guard. He had horses, and he would ride them around the entire piece of land that he was watching over, and guarding against the tarsh eating the crops - not against any human being.

00:28:35 – 00:35:05

BM: Would they hold weddings in Shaykh Dannoun [village named after Sidi Dannoun, a shaykh around whose shrine the village is built]?

AB: Yes, they would hold weddings there, however not inside the shrine. They would celebrate the groom in the shrine, and sing for him during an hour, more or less. Or, they would shave his head and take him outside of the shrine. There were huge carob trees, lots of shade, and a flattened land, and they would play the drums for him, they would dance for him and take him around the village on a horse with the bride. I even went from my town of Shaykh Dannoun to 'Amqa on the back of a horse. Not in a car, or anything like that. I rode a horse, and they had a scarf tied on its head... And the bride's wedding dress was tucked under the saddle and she would arrive by horse from another town. And if it [the wedding] happened in the same village, and the house was nearby, people would take her around and sing for her - and they would do the same for a bride coming in from another village - they would sing for her, accompanied by a spectacle of galloping horses in front of her. Songs and horses... I swear, there were about three of them before my eyes, and I was riding one. There was one horseman riding all the way to there, and another one galloping that way, and another one back there, that's how big the land was... Until I arrived at the [other] village.

BM: So they would marry one of your villagers out to a stranger, then. It wasn't a problem, right?

AB: Yes, I am from Shaykh Dannoun and I got married in 'Amqa. Who did I marry? My cousin on my mother's side. I am my husband's cousin, his aunt's daughter on his father's side, and he is my uncle's son, my mother's brother.

My uncle came over. He came over, and he said "I want the girl" and my mother gave me to them.

BM: If he were not your cousin, would they have given [you to] him?

AB: Yes, they would have. It didn't matter, they would get them [the brides] from Majd el-Krum, which was faraway. They would bring them from Umm al-Faraj, al-Mazra'a, al-Smariyeh. Anybody who saw a girl - or whose father saw one - and said "I want her", his father would go claim her. They would give [her to them]. There wasn't a problem.

BM: So would the husband see the bride?

AB: Trust me, had he seen her, and claimed her verbally, and had her father agreed to give her... [it would be a different story]. The girl would not even be there. That was the case for me. I swear to God, when my father gave me, I had no idea. All I saw was them coming to read the Fatiha, and a group of men entering. My mother told me "Go get dressed". I said "Why?" I was playing, I was just a fourteen year-old girl, I was playing with my friend, her name was Fatmeh al-Khaled and there was also Nihaya al-Haneel. She [my mother] said, people are coming to read your Fatiha... "To read my Fatiha?" She said "People are coming, your cousin wants to get engaged to you, people are coming to read your Fatiha." As soon as she said that, there they were coming through the door. There were mangers behind the door, they had placed them there for the cattle to eat hay out of them. got up, I was in a shocked state, so I went to hide behind the door. I didn't want to see anybody, I hid behind the door. They started asking "Where is the bride? We want to see her already, we want to know what she looks like". They would say that if someone wanted to take [a bride] from another town, surely it must be better than from the hometown. I was not pretty. My sisters were very beautiful. I was not pretty. But my uncle would come over and say "I do like Aminah, she has vigor, she is agile, I want her for my son." So my mother gave me away. So they kept asking "Where is the bride?" while the bride was hiding and listening in on everything. They ended up reading the Fatiha and leaving, and they did not see me nor did I see them. When I came out, my mother said "Where were you?" I said "I was hiding where the tables are". She said "You are not getting away with this. Why did you hide?" I said "Because I don't want to see anybody". I swear, it was my wedding day, and my girl friends were there and there was cactus fruit... I went with these friends, the ones I was telling you about, Nihaya and Fatmeh. And I hope they

can hear me saying this now. We went and made a house out of stones [gestures a circle], pretend houses. I made myself a house like this, she made a house over there, and she made one like that, and we took rocks and I said "This is my son" and she said "This is my daughter"... And we made three houses next to each other, by playing with stones, and my hands and feet had henna on them and it was my wedding day. They were coming to get me at noon. People came to prepare me to be a bride, and my mother could not find me. She told my sister: "Go call her, see where she is." My sister went up to the roof and kept calling me while I was on the other side, playing house with my friends on the grass. Because I was young... And today's generations of ten year-olds and nine year-olds are more aware than we were [nfaha]. As for us, we were under God's will. We did not know how, nor did we want to know.

BM: Was the foreign wife's dowry higher than the local wife's dowry?

AB: No, it was the same dowry. The price of these girls was the same. Today, they talk about a two thousand dollar advance and an "x" amount post-divorce. Do you want to know the amount of my dowry? A hundred Palestinian. A hundred Liras... No a hundred and ten. Ten thousand post-divorce, and a hundred up front. And I bought scarves, and nightgowns, and a closet, and you know... mattresses and all, with that one hundred Liras. In Palestine, we used to buy seven arms' length [of fabric] with one shilling. Seven for a shilling, they would say. A shilling was five piasters. Seven for a shilling. We would buy seven arms' length, and out of these we would make a dress and a pair of trousers. And each fabric had a name. We had the yuhyuh, the organza, there was the... 'carreaux', we had balama [palma], batesta [batiste], 'maronis'. Each type of fabric had its own name!

BM: Hajjah, how long did you stay in 'Amqa before the skirmishes started with the Jews?

AB: I was there for three years... Three or four years. I know that when I left Palestine, I was eighteen years old. I got married at the age of fourteen.

BM: What happened before you left? What was the thing that made you leave your house?

AB: The war that was brought upon us, dear. The tanks came for us, and because we fought against them, we had nothing left [to fight with] when

they invaded the town. They started bombing the town, they burnt down the houses, they bombed, and after they bombed the whole village that had resisted against them, they brought bulldozers and bulldozed the entire town.

BM: Where were you when they brought the bulldozers?

AB: We were in the Druze regions, in Jat and Yanuḥ and Yarka, these were Druze towns. The Druze were peaceful, they did not fight. We sought refuge in their towns. When we heard that the borders would close down, we left the Druze regions and went to the borders.

35:55 to 40:56

BM: Did the men come with you?

AB: No, the men had crossed and fled before the borders had closed. They had run away, they had no more ammunition left. I had two daughters, my husband could not even take one of them. He left me and he went. When we got to the borders, they [the Druze they had paid to guide them out - will be clear later] told us "These are the borders with Lebanon, you can go through. These are the borders with Palestine, and we will be coming back". We went from the Lebanese borders... First, they [the Druze] dropped us off on the street, at the border. When my daughter saw the armed Jew, she got scared and started crying. If you could see how beautiful she was... How beautiful my daughters are. Even though I'm not pretty, their father is handsome. The girl started crying, so the Jew told me: "Madam..." That street was at the Palestine-Lebanon border. I said "Yes?" and went like this and stayed there [lowers her head and mimics pulling her headscarf to hide her face]. He said "Silence bubu, why is he crying, this bubu, why does he cry?". I told him "Khawaja, he want water to drink". He went like this on his water bottle [gestures tapping on the right hip] and said "No water... You be waiting here, me go get water?". I looked this way over to the Lebanese borders and saw people on camels and donkeys stocking up on water. So I told him: "Khawaja, if you do favour to God, not to me, to God and to bubu, you allow I go. I go down there, there is water, and I make bubu drink." What did he answer? He said this and that "Ukhtu [Mother-... (omits the "-fucking")] Arab. Ukhtu Arab, Ukhtu Arab. All Arab not good". The Druze that had brought us there had also loaded a few things on a camel. A bit of semolina and a bit of wheat, and two blankets and a mattress, on one camel, and they brought us over, the two

Druze. They [the armed Jews] had surrounded the camel and they were searching it. I had seventy Palestinian Liras and a couple of spiral bracelets. I had slid them inside my girl's pillow, it was this size, and then under the laundry basin, and had her sitting on it. They came and said "Take girl off". I removed her, and they tore out the seams of the pillow. They wanted to see what was in it, but they still hadn't broken the inside. When the Jew - whom I had asked to let me get water as a favour to God - came back, he told me "All gold you carry, you leave here so bubu can go. Yalla, leave it and you go for bubu. Leave all of gold, and you can go." I told him: "God bless you, Khawaja. May God protect you, Khawaja." They put the things on the camel, and we left. They did not take one piaster from us [note: however, they took the gold]. They did not humiliate us, nor did they beat us, nothing at all. That was at the border. We went down to 'Ayta ash-Shab. In 'Ayta, we were boiling to death, out of fear and out of thirst. We went to sit down, they had made a cabin and were guarding the fig tree so that nobody would pick it. We went into the cabin and found it full of fleas. We left it and sat outside, with the girls under the sun. One of them was crying of thirst, and I was thirsty as well [wipes tears]. We looked over and found a well, there was a dead goat beside it. I swear, the worms inside it were moving like boiling rice. We opened the well and found a puddle of water at the bottom. We wanted to drink, but we could not reach the depths of the well. My cousin and I took off our scarves and tied them together with my girl's blanket, and we dipped them into the puddle at the bottom, and then we wrung them in a plate, like this [mimics wringing]. The water came out... You know how the water gets when it rains, the dirt, the redness... I swear to God, we drank it. But what about the girls? I went into a nearby house and I told him... I went in... I knocked on the door, he said "What's wrong with you, who are you, lady?" I told him "I am Palestinian. God bless you, brother, may God extend your life, what is your name?" He said: "My name is Bou Kamel." I said: "May God protect your children, Bou Kamel, would you please give me just a bit of water in a jug so these poor girls can drink? They are thirsty and little and they are dying in front of me." He told me: "Shoo shoo, go out, leave, leave, leave." I told him: "Why, my brother, what did I do to you?" He said "You Palestinians, we don't welcome you. We don't welcome you, you are unclean." I said: "No, my brother, I swear we didn't do anything. Maybe you could give me a bit of water as a favour towards God." He told me "I won't give you." So I said "If I gave you a jug of oil, would you give me a jug of water?" He said: "Do you swear that nobody else touched the olives?" I told him: "I swear, I was the one who picked it and pressed it into the gallon and who brought it with me". So, I gave him a jug of olive oil, and I swear he gave me a jug of water. And we stayed thirteen days

in 'Ayta ash-Shab, and then we went to Jwaya and then from there to Hayy al-Maslakh. I swear, we kept in touch and asked about him and he came to visit us from 'Ayta ash-Shab to Hayy al-Maslakh, and we went to visit him as well. We became friends. He gave me a jug of water, I gave him a jug of olive oil. We suffered a lot, my dear.

43:24 to 44:21

Mahmoud Zeidan: What did you feel when you went back [to Palestine]?

Aminah Banat: How can I describe it... I felt as if a treasure had opened in front of me, a treasure chest full of gold! As if something happened right in front of me. I don't know how to explain to you how I found myself. I went back and I saw my brother whom I had no guarantee I would ever see again, and I arrived to my house in my hometown, and I saw my brother who was only eight years old when I left him. I found him again at the age of forty. I left him as an eight-year old boy, I was absent for thirty-two years. I had not been back to Palestine in thirty-two years, when I went and saw my siblings. I left my younger sister, and I came back to find her with kids. I found my brothers married with children. I found myself in a whole other universe. I cannot begin to express what it felt like to have so much joy enter my heart. I could not find my missing children, when I went.

48:38 to 50:06

MZ: I want to ask you one last question about Palestine, I don't wish to remind you of your children.

AB: Yes.

MZ: After this difficult period, and despite all the tragedies you went through and with the absence of your children...

AB: Yes [wipes tears with a handkerchief].

MZ: ... Do you express your longing towards Palestine, or to the town of Shaykh Dannoun where your children live... or where your siblings live? I

mean, despite the catastrophe of your children whose fate you do not know about...

AB: In the same way that the memory of my children remained... Although the memory of my country does not equal the memory I carry of my children, I will never forget my country. I will never forget my nation. I will never forget my hometown. And I don't wish to be buried anywhere other than in my country, over there, because that is where my brother, my mother, my father and my sister are, and I would be with them. If I told you that my country could compare to my children, I would be lying. A child is more precious than one's own soul. A mother is not more important than her child. As they say "I'd rather wish for death to have me and to spare my child". As for my country, I could never forget it, and it remains in my thoughts, but not as much as my children. Even my husband who was martyred... Not as much as my children. Not even my sister, not as much as my children. Nor my brother, not as much as my children. My older brother who died, not as much as my children [starts crying]. And my sister died, and they all died, but none of them compare to my children. My children were born from my heart.

59:06 to 1:05

MZ: The Jews that were nearby, were they living in the same village or were they in settlements?

AB: No, they were living in their settlements, but we would go to them, and they would come to us. And if an Arab *zlam* [gang or militia member] man liked a Jewish woman, he would marry her, one of the Jews. But if a Palestinian woman [liked a Jew], she would not marry the Jew. However, a Jewish woman would marry an Arab, and she liked to marry an Arab, and we would hold weddings and invite them, the Jews. We would invite them to our weddings and they would come. And so did they. I visited other places... We would go to their region, and they would come to our region. You wouldn't say here's a Jew... What is a Jew anyway? We did not know who was a Jew. There was no difference. You couldn't tell a Jew from an Arab, they were the same. "Had the days of yesteryear remained, and us with them, we would have slept on the thorny burnet shrubs" [translation of the proverb: "Ya ret'ha damat wou doumna, wou 'aash-shok wal ballan nemna"] We would have stayed living together in peace. We would not have left our homes, nor would our children have disappeared, or... I swear, I told you, I told you I had a

daughter who was one month old, and another daughter who was a year and ten months old. I swear, when I departed from my house... The Jews came... Let me tell you, the skirmishes started and these big militia men came and told the young men: "Listen, the war is upon us. Each one of you needs to own a rifle and to buy a shield". The young men started buying in bulk, and even my husband bought a rifle and a shield. The shield contains five combs, and each comb contains five bullets. They said: "One of the Jewish armed forces is coming towards us, we need to fight them, we don't want them entering our village". Imagine 'Akka over here, and Kweikat closer there, we were further away from the town of Kweikat. They bought them [the rifles] and set up ambushes, and every day, two guards would patrol until midnight, and at midnight others would take turns. They were patrol guards. During one night, the Jews came to that town called Kweikat.

[Repeats the story related above.]

1:02:42

MZ: I would like to ask you to go back in time, before you left. You told me you and the Jews and the British were in the same town. Did anybody from your town get married to a Jewish woman? You said the Arabs would marry Jewish women, the Jews would give them away.

AB: One of them married [a Palestinian], but I don't know her husband's name... Her name was Rita, she was Jewish, she married a Palestinian, yes. But her husband... I don't remember his name. But we would go down to 'Akka to sell things, 'Akka is a city. We would sell, and the Jews as well as the Arabs would buy from us. My father was a farmer, he used to give me wooden boxes of okra, tomatoes, figs, cactus fruit, and he would take me where I could go sell them. They would buy from me. Arabs, Jews, Muslims, they would buy from me. It didn't matter who was a Jew and who was a Palestinian or an Arab. We were together, there was no fear, none. Had they slept in our homes, or had we slept in theirs, there was no fear.

MZ: I would like to ask you about Shaykh Dannoun, is it the same as Shaykh Dawud or is it another village?

AB: There was one neighborhood above it, and one neighborhood below it [talking about Shaykh Dawud]. There was a prophet named Dawud, he died,

and they made him a shrine, and his name is Dawud. People started building around it and they would say: "This is Shaykh Dawud". In our village, there was a prophet named Dannoun. They made him a shrine, with flags and cymbals and drums, and all, and they still stay in it. When the Jews tried to go in to take the drums or the flags, they would carry them, arrive at the door, and would not be able to leave. They would push and push... Because there was a prophet there... They would push and push and not manage to leave. They would hold the cymbals they use for percussion or the big flag... The flag was this thick, and it would stay on the ground and they would not be able to leave with it. Until now, the flags remain in the shrine, in Shaykh Dannoun. But Shaykh Dawud does not have drums or flags, no. But the ones in the Shaykh Dannoun shrine are still there. I went there in 1994, and I swept the burial site...

1:26:42 to 1:30:40

AB: [Repeats story about olive oil jug.] We arrived at Jwaya, the weather change bothered them [the children]. My older daughter's head started swelling, she was three years old. Her head, her hands and her feet became swollen, and she died and I had no money to treat her. And the other girl got about alwan [a disease] in her mouth and she died. We arrived to Hayy al-Maslakh, and I gave birth to my kids here in Hayy al-Maslakh. My oldest son was born in 1950. I left in 1948. I raised them into young men, and they are now married. The ones I lost, I did not find again. They left in an instant while I was with them. And here I am, twenty-three years¹ later and still searching. Still crying and still searching. After everything that happened to me, it's good that I can still stand up, it's good that I can still see, it's good that I still have my brain and I can still come and go.

MZ: Did you try to go back later, when you all arrived to Lebanon? Didn't you try to go back to Shaykh Dannoun, especially since your own parents had stayed there?

AB: My parents stayed there... When they [the Jews] came, they began giving them [the Palestinians] Israeli ID. The car plate numbers were Israeli numbers, as well as their files and each house was counted and registered [for statistics]. The newborn child had to have papers and a file with them [the

¹ Here, the interviewee intended to say 32 years.

Jews], the same way we are doing it here. They open files and papers for them with their age on it. And if a Palestinian newborn child is one month old, they give him a mask, so that if a war happens...To the Palestinian child... I've seen the masks with my own eyes... Each person in the house has a mask, so that if a war happens, the baby doesn't die from the smells. It was a concern of theirs. I don't have a file with them. When they came into my parents' house... My name is not registered with them. My parents gave them the names of only those who were there. I have two sisters there, and I have three young brothers, one of them is blind and the other two are not. My older brother died a year and a half ago. My blind brother and one other brother are still alive. My mother died, my father died, my sister died.

MZ: Why did you not stay with them? When you told me...

AB: I am married, dear.

MZ: Didn't you say your husband departed and left you?

AB: I am married, I am from the village of Dannoun and I married in 'Amqa. When the war started, and the tank was bombing us with missiles, he ran, I never saw him leave. His mother was running in front of him, he took her and his siblings, and he came to Lebanon, and I was still inside Palestine.

MZ: Why didn't you...

AB: I told you, we had rented out two Druze men who took twenty Palestinian Liras from us in exchange for bringing us to the borders.

MZ: Why did you not stay with your parents?

AB: My parents were in one village and I was in another. How was I to go there while the bombings were happening, and where would I even leave from? Between us were olive groves, a bumpy road, and lands. How was I to go back there, carrying girls with me, and a laundry basket? I couldn't.

MZ: You told me that you had hidden the money, and had Jew seen it, he would have taken it.

AB: Yes, because they would search us and if they found money or gold, they would take it. That was on our way out. But while we were living with them,

not at all. They would never remove anything from anyone, they would never take anything at all from anyone. But, on our way out, they would search maybe for ammunition, or money, or gold... Had they seen it, they would have taken it. The Jews had people called the *Haganah*. What the *Haganah* were made of, I have no idea. They would even sing, they were Jews on horses, do you know what they would sing?

MS: What?

AB: They would sing to the Arabs, they would say: "We are the men of the *Haganah*, and seven Kings could never find us. We spent our winter in Palestine and we will spend the summer in our Lebanon". We would hear that, and they would sing, in front of us: "We are the sons of Moussa [Shartuk], we vanquished the seven Kings. Fawzi Basha, you son of a bitch, your army is the army of withdrawal." This is what they would sing to the Muslims and to the people of Palestine, as they rode their horses, and my ears could reach the borders. I heard them myself. What to do... Could we respond to them? Could we sing to them? They had vanquished us.