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My Childhood Memories of Life in Palestine

Wegdan Ashkar
St. John Fisher College

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My Childhood Memories of Life in Palestine

Families pick olives from their trees
as shepherds graze their sheep
We carry stones to build the family home
We sit on sheep skins placed on top of straw carpet
all gathered around a kerosene heater.

Seated on small straw chairs
we eat newly-pressed olive oil
and Grandma's just-baked bread.

I jump rope and play hopscotch
with friends
and Bedouin children
on the sandy hill.

I walk to school with my sister
We line up and say prayers before entering
Bismillāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīm
Al ḥamdu lillāhi rabbi l-'ālamīn
Learning to read and write Arabic letters and Arabic numbers
we absorb science, religion, and manners
we sing Arabic children's songs
My uncle Mansoor the carpenter
Our minds nourished we return
to picking and eating wheat.

We visit Jerusalem
The Dome of the Rock
a home where my father was born
Walking through the marketplace
we eat cheese-filled, syrup-drenched kunafa. [1]

We stay with Grandma and Grandpa
Grandma bathes us as she sings
We peel garlic for *molokhia* [2]
Grandpa tells me the story of Little Red Riding Hood
We visit Great-Grandmother in the evening
watch relatives pray
look and talk about the moon and stars
with grandparents.



Wegdan Ashkar