



Palestinian National Authority
Nablus Municipality



Nablus .. a City Tale



November
2011



Nablus **Municipality**

Nablus .. a City Tale

Prepared by
Public and International Relations Division

November / 2011

Book revenues shall be allocated
for the Nablus static landscape

PRICE: 15 Shekel

Nablus .. A city telling a tale

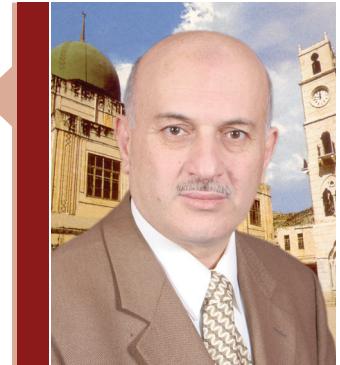
From the Mayor

Right there, at the eastern gate of the old city, you face the Greate Mosque, while at the western gate, you watch Al-Khader Mosque, on the summits of its both mountains “Jerzim and Eibal”, and within its extended eastern and western valleys live the Nabulsi people. All these elements constitute an integral part of the Nablus long epic. The key players of this charming city drank from its fresh water, and cherish both memorable and dark moments within which feelings were melted, and were inspired to produce poetry and pros for Nablus, when this city became a tale to tell.

Nablus is unlike other Palestinian cities, it is a city that, for some reason, inflames the nostalgia burning in the hearts of its citizens, especially those who are living in the Diaspora. It unleashes passion and love towards its valleys, mountains and old quarters among those who visit it for short or long stays. Nablus is always present for its charm and long history, meld with tears and smiles, rich for its past nations and civilizations settled in the city for thousands of years. It is for this cultural heritage, Nabulsi people exhibit a special life style, attributes, characters, and distinctive identity as demonstrated in their local dialect, aromatic food and famous dishes known for Nablus people only.

As we, at Nablus Municipality, are deeply rooted to this city, and derived from our loyalty to Nablus, we find ourselves compelled to document part of the city history in a brief resume stipulating a very interesting tale within this book. We are proud to deliver this present ‘Nablus.. a City Tale” to each Nabulsi, to all Palestinians, and to people in the whole globe. We aspire, within this endeavor, that it would be possible to reveal the splendor of this city with its blend of past civilizations, being a unique hub for the three major religions in an extraordinary love and passion that never been witnessed elsewhere.

Finally, we present this work to all people of Nablus who adore this city, for those who copy its charming folklore and paste it in their memories. We present it to all who are interested in the past and present history of Nablus, we tell them .. Yes.. Nablus has a tale to tell.



Eng. Adly Rifat Yaish
Mayor of Nablus



Nablus **Municipality**

Nablus .. **A City Tale**

Nablus **Municipality**

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Photographer: Hasan Qamhiyyeh

Photo archive: Studio scoop (Shahrori)

Printing: Abdul Rahman Hijjawi Co.

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Nablus Municipality

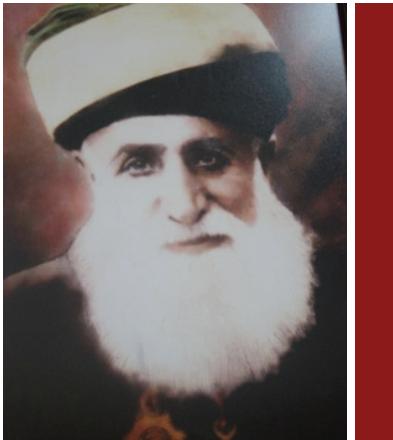
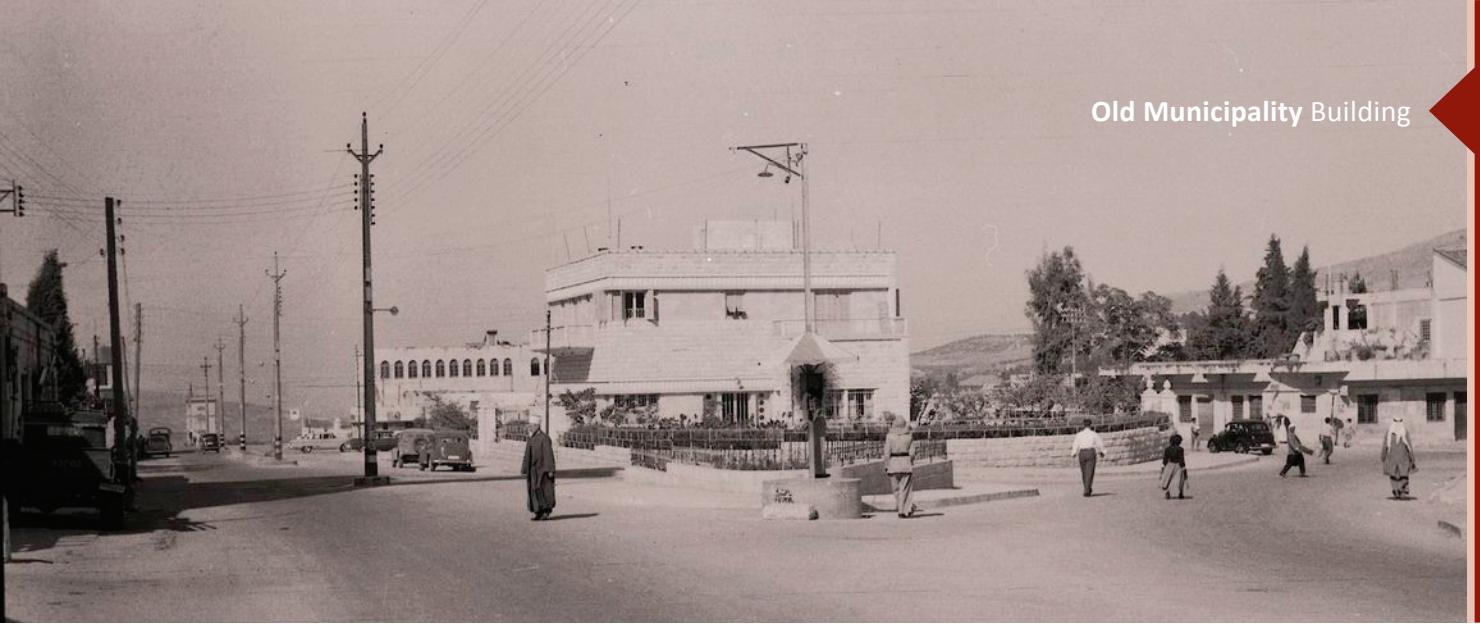


A semi governmental institution founded in 1869 as one of the earliest municipalities incepted in Palestine and in the region as a whole. Since then, forty two elected and nominated mayors have chaired Nablus Municipality.

Nablus Municipality is being governed through specific by-laws and rules that emanated throughout a wide practical and long experience of former administrations and mandates. These have been enacted with a high priority to serve Nablus and its citizens by six major departments: Administration, Finance, Engineering, Water and Wastewater, Public Health and Environment and Public Services.

Nablus municipality was able to maintain services' provision to the citizens and managed to handle different issues during hardship situations encountered the city, such as the First and Second Intifadas "Uprisings", the Israeli continuous incursions to the city, and most importantly the strict closure imposed on the city for more than eight years extended from 2000 till 2008. Despite all these challenges, this grand institution was able to implement a number of emergency and job creation programs that aimed at restoring the infrastructure of the city on one hand, and preserving the cultural heritage and create jobs for local citizens on the other hand. Further, during the state of total anarchy and political instability emerged in the last decades, Nablus Municipality emergency team acted as

Old Municipality Building



Sheikh Mohammad Tufaha Hussein
The first Mayor in 1869

security forces and emergency aid mission in the city. Food supply and medical services were also rendered by municipality staff to the needy families in the old city, surrounding towns and villages in the entire governorate, jeopardizing their lives and the future of their families due to the brutal bombardment and atrocities committed by Israeli occupation forces. Moreover, Fire Brigade staff acted on behalf of police forces when Israeli army banned Palestinian police from assuming their duties to reinforce security and stability in the city.

Today, Nablus Municipality is considered among the largest Palestinian institution in terms of services rendered to the citizens, number of strategic projects carried out, in addition to the number of technical and administrative staff of about 1600 employees running the show of the entire departments and divisions. Thus, Nablus Municipality is regarded among major development wheel and employment sector in Palestine, rendering a comprehensive services to more than 200,000 people living in the city and the surrounding localities.

Nablus City .. History and Civilization

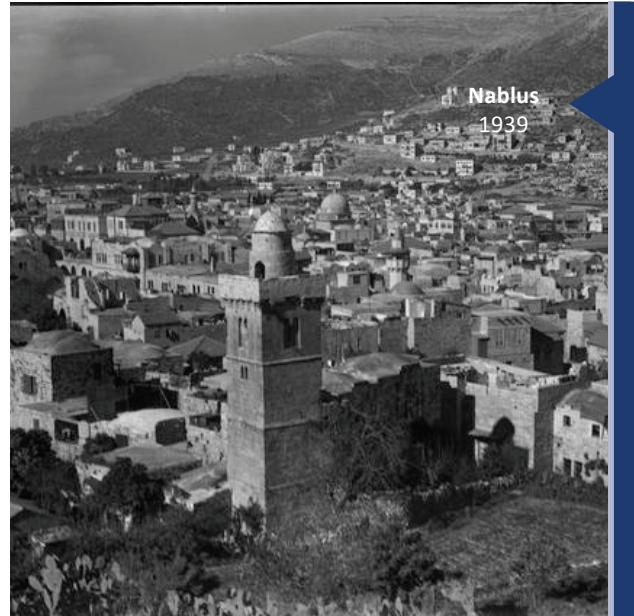
Nablus city is located in the heart of Palestine and was built on a long valley lies between mountains of Jerzim (south) and Eibal (north). The city stands over a huge reservoir of natural spring water and fountains. Nablus valley extends up to Jordan River to the east, and Wadi Al-Tuffah up to Alexander River to the west. The north mountains extend to Marj Ibn Amer valley in Jenin, while those of the south are directly connected with mountains of Jerusalem without any natural borders.



Historical documents indicate that Nablus was established for the first time over a hill named as Tal Balata, located at the eastern entrance of Nablus near Balata village. Archaeological excavations carried out by foreign missions and archaeologists in Tel Balata site during periods 1911-1914, 1924-1927, and 1956 -1967, proved that Nablus was founded around 2500 BC by the Canaanite tribes who called it Shekem, which means the high land or shoulder.

In the year 1550 BC, Shekem encountered brutal devastation by Egyptian Pharaohs, who expelled Hyksos from Egypt and tracked them to Palestine, where they vandalized Nablus. Later, and around the 4th BC, Shekem was rebuilt and revived by Canaanites under the mandate leader Labaiue, when the reign of Canaanites came to an end.

Since the 13th century BC, Shekem became a fragile entity and was subject to series of invasions by different strangers and tribes such as, Hebrews, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians and Greeks, until it was conquered by Romans in 63 BC. However, a revolution was erupted by people of Shekem, who were oppressed by the Romans. During that period, Shekem was honored by Jesus Christ's visit to Nablus during his journey from Jerusalem to Galilee, where he met a Samaritan women at Jacob's Well and asked her for a drink of water. The



woman answered; how do you ask me a water to drink, while I am a Samaritan and you are Jewish? (because Jews do not deal with Samaritans).

During the period (67-69) AD, the Roman Emperor Vespasian destroyed Shekem, and built a new city to the west, where the old city of Nablus stands today, and called it Neopolis; a Latin Roman word that means the new city, and thereafter was named Nablus.

The geographic nature of Nablus manifested it self on the shape of the city that appears in a form of a long valley, surrounded by two mountains and extends from east to west. The city was crossed by a main road called Decumanus Maximus, and consisted of four squares at that time. The Romans left their finger tips in the city through building four important utilities; theater, hippodrome, amphitheatre, and Jupiter temple on the summit of Mount Gerzim.



In the 4th AD, and during of the reign of Emperor Constantine, Christianity dominated as the official religion of the Roman Empire, when symbols of paganism pound to diminish, and substituted by cathedrals and other buildings with architectural characteristics associated with this new religion. Two cathedrals were built at that time; namely Jacob's Well and Virgin Mary's church that replaced the Samaritan temple.

Like other Palestinian cities, Nablus was invaded by Persians in 615 AD, but the Romans, led by Heracles, defeated them in 628 AD, and then confronting the Arab Muslim conquests. In 636 AD, and later when Romans were defeated by Muslims in the battles of Yarmouk and Ajnadin, Amr Ibn Al-Aas entered Nablus, of which community was a blend of Christians and Samaritans.

During the first two centuries of Muslim conquest, Nablus witnessed transformations at religious, architectural and social levels. Arabic became the official language, and population became a mixture of majority Muslims, and minorities of Samaritans and Christians. During that period, Nablus referred to Al-Madina Al-Munawwara, the capital

of the Caliphate State through the Wali of Palestine first, then to Wali of Cham. Later on, Nablus joined Damascus; the Umayyad Caliphate capital, and then referred to Baghdad; capital of the Abbasid Caliphate.

In the year 968, Nablus was ruled by Fatimids, who founded Egypt as their political capital. After the emergence of the Sunni Seljuk Turks who opposed Fatimids, both parties slipped into violent conflict that continued until crusades occupied Palestine including Nablus in 1099. Nablus remained under crusaders regime until the emergence of Ayyubids, who were able to regain Palestine and Jerusalem after the Battle of Hittin in 1187 under the leadership of Salah Eddin El-Ayyoubi.

During the reign of the Ayyubids, Nablus encountered a devastating earthquake, killed more than thirty thousand people in 1197, leaving huge damages to the entire buildings, which required an immediate restoration measures of the city that began during the reign of the Ayyubid, and continued during the Mamluki period through which Nablus witnessed prosperity at different levels, mainly at the architectural, scientific and cultural levels.

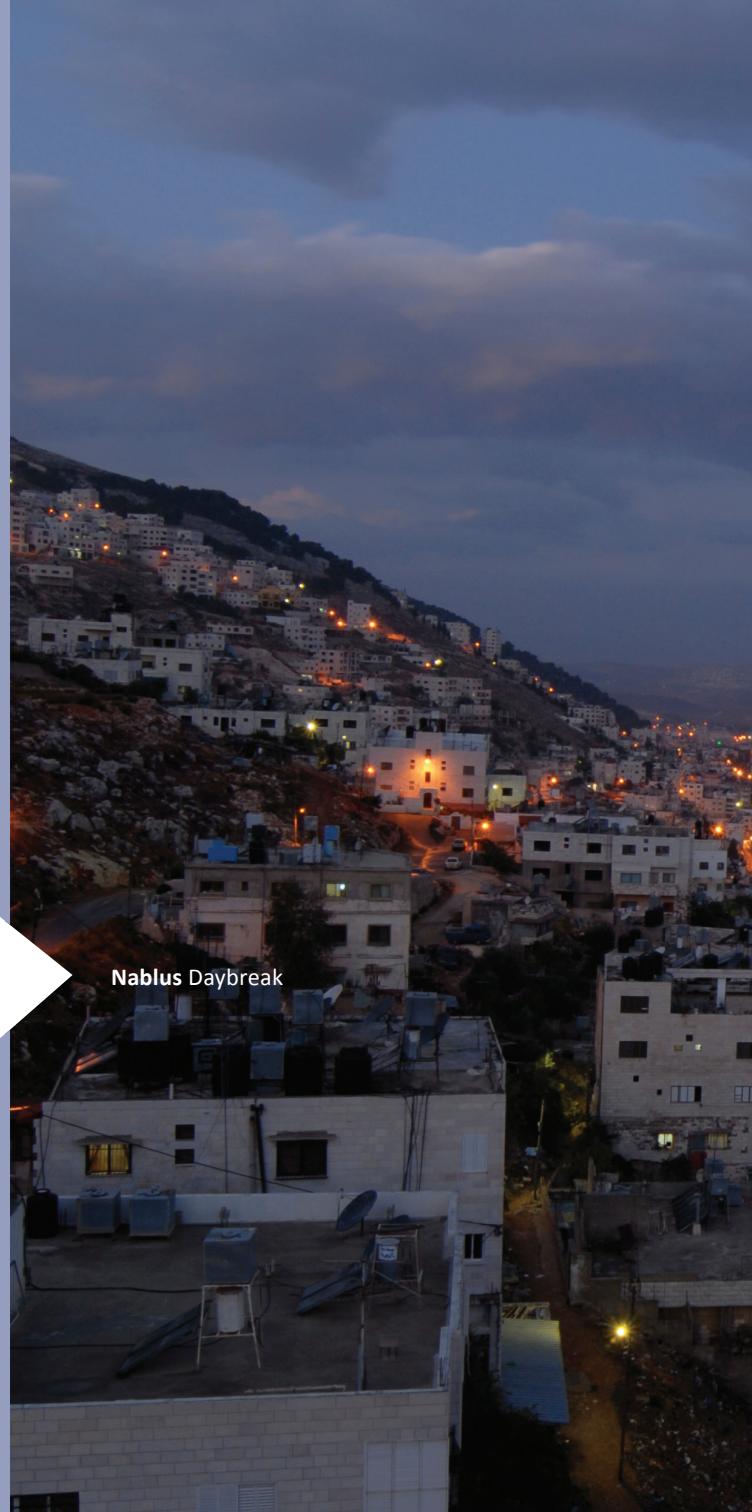


However, after the emergence of Ottoman Turks in Minor Asia, confrontation with Mamluks has been escalated to a war, Ottomans defeated Mamluks in 1516 in Marj Dabek battle. While Ottomans ruled Egypt and Syria, Nablus became one of Syrian cities. Ottomans during the 17th century, ruled Palestine including Nablus city in coordination with the rich and influential families of Nablus such as Al Nimer, Toukan and Abdul-Hadi. By the end of 19th century, the Ottoman Empire decided to rule the country directly, including Nablus when it was governed by a number of Ottoman Turk rulers. At the same time, Nablus witnessed a wide movement of construction and restoration measures for the historic buildings, for which Nablus Municipality was established in 1869.



Following defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, Nablus became under British mandate on the first of September 1918. Repercussions of the 1927 earthquake were harsh and severely destructive on the buildings and people of Nablus at a time. When World War II out broke in 1947, Nablus and the entire Palestinian cities suffered poverty and scarcity of resources. The defeat of Germany and the victory of allies put an end to the British mandate in Palestine, through which Zionists occupied it in the same year. The Zionist occupation in Palestine was a de facto due to the inequity between Arabs and Zionists who expelled Palestinians to leave their lands and properties, led to the Palestinian Catastrophe “Nakba” in 1948 upon which State of Israel has been established.

In 1950, the West Bank was annexed to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan until 1967, when Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinians all over West Bank and Gaza Strip rejected the Israeli occupation when the first Intifada “Uprising” out broke in 1987. Nablus had a tangible participation in said uprising that led to the signing of Oslo Accord between the PLO and Israel in 1993. While Oslo accords led to the



Nablus Daybreak

inception of the Palestinian National Authority, it was aspired that it would pave the way towards the Palestinian state at a later stage. However, Israel breached the Oslo Accords and caused turbulences among Palestinians and their leadership, led to the eruption of the Second Intifada “Uprising” in September 2000. Israel, intentionally, swept over all Palestinian cities and vandalized the infrastructure, private and public buildings, killing innocent people and suffocating Nablus by imposing a very strict siege on the city extended for more than eight years.



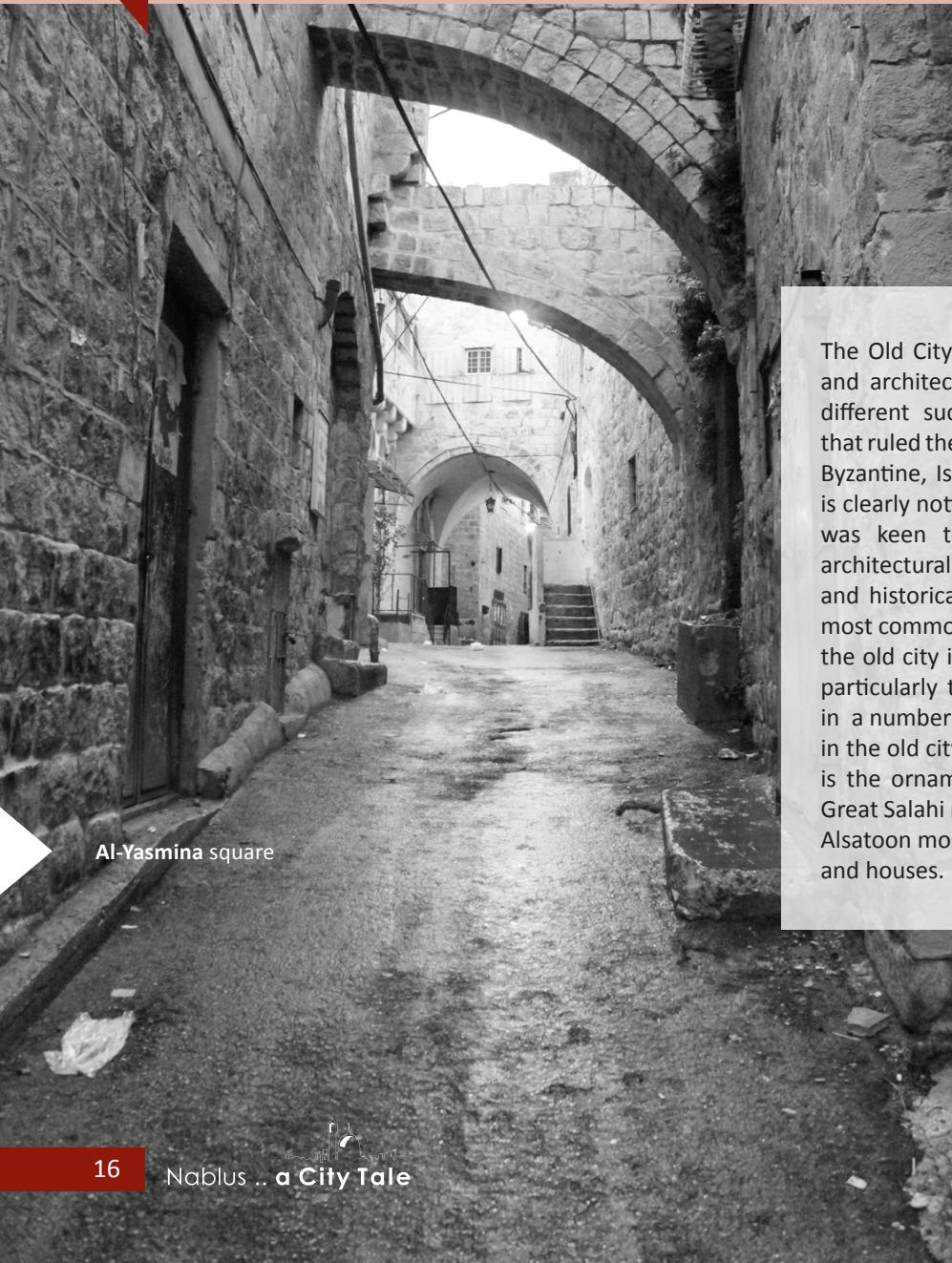




Nablus .. a City Tale



The Old Town...The Heart of Nablus



Al-Yasmina square

The Old City of Nablus is known for its charm and architectural characteristics, enriched by different successive civilizations and cultures that ruled the city over centuries such as Roman, Byzantine, Islamic and Ottoman civilizations. It is clearly noticed that each of these civilizations was keen to leave special finger prints of architectural heritage on different milestone and historical sites in the old city. Among the most common architectural patterns dominates the old city in present time is the Islamic style, particularly the Mamluki patterns that appear in a number of buildings and old mosques exist in the old city till present time. A good example is the ornaments of the northern gate of the Great Salahi mosque, those of the major gate of Alsatoun mosque, and other historical buildings and houses.



Al-Shifa' turkish bath in the Old City

The Turkish baths (Hammams) are among the most important features of the architectural heritage of the Old city, distributed in different old squares and alleyways. However, two out of ten Turkish baths still functioning till today; Al Shifa and Sumara baths. Although the name “Turkish” referred to architectural style of these baths, yet, many of them were not founded during the Ottoman era that ruled Palestine between (1516-1918). Some believed that a number of these baths were founded during the Roman Empire. It is worth mentioning that the old city encompasses the highest number of Turkish baths in historical Palestine counted to 30 baths.

The historical mosques associated with their charming minarets, and huge domes add special splendor to the old city. A number of these mosques were built during the period of Islamic conquests, such as Alsatoon Mosque, founded during the reign of Caliph Umar Ibn Al-Khattab (634-644), and The Salahi Great Mosque, which was named in celebration of the conquests of Muslim leader Salah Eddin. Al-Naser Mosque, situated in the center of the Old city with its massive dome, is also regarded as an important historic monument in the old city, and many others.





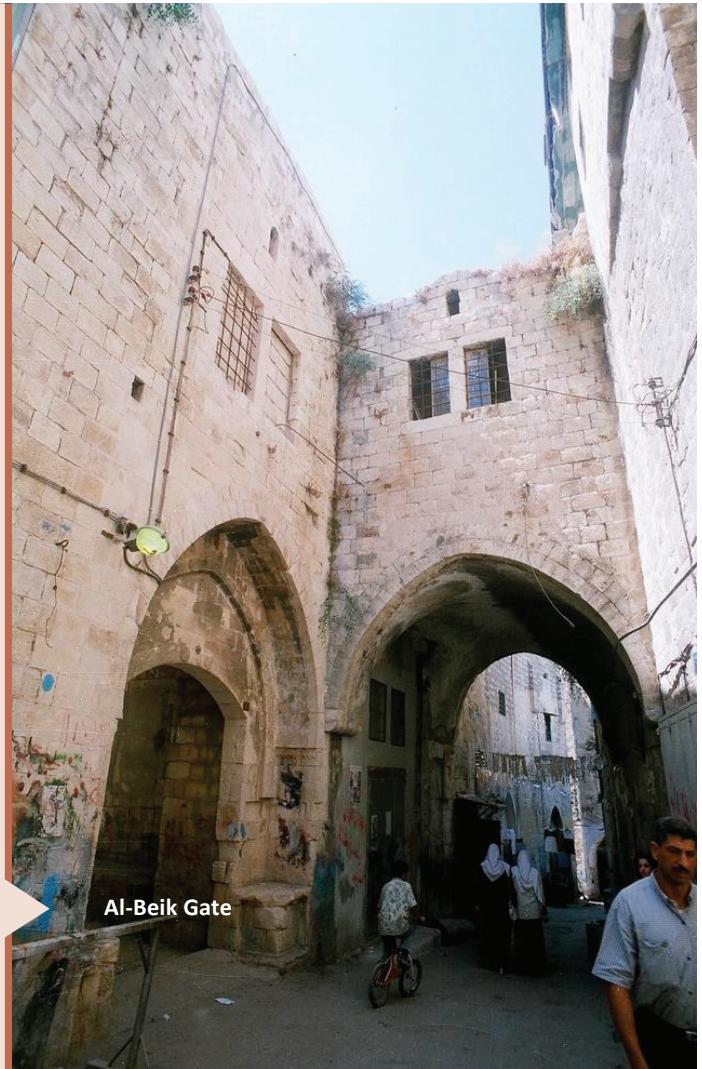
Palaces and Castles of the old city played a significant cultural role in defining and enriching the features of its own history. Most of these sites were built during the reign of the Ottoman Empire, and belong to owners who usually descended from feudal and wealthy families. Ottoman authorities intended to nominate those people as local governors of Nablus district and other parts of Palestine. The main palaces of the old city are; Touqan (Al-Beik Gate), Abd Al-Hadi Palace in the west part of Al-Qaryon neighborhood, and Al-Agha (Nimer) palace in Al – Habaleh square.

Roads and alleyways of the Old city are crowded with small-scale traditional handcrafts workshops that are considered as basic elements of its architectural and social network. It incubates a number of factories and shops that vendor different traditional products like Halawa and Zalabya, Sesame Paste, Kunafah, and other traditional handcrafts such as; upholstery, brass polish, blacksmith and carpentry. The major part of these workshops are distributed over two parallel streets extending from east to west and incubate hundreds of stores and other shops like butchers,

vegetables and fruits, bakeries, restaurants, grocery and sweets shops.

The old city is currently inhabited by approximately twenty thousand people, distributed among six major quarters and alley ways; Habaleh, Aqabeh, Qisariyyeh, Qaryoun, Yasmineh, and Al-Gharb. Apparently, Nabulsis who live outside the old city are keen to keep it vivid and alive through intensive roaming and shopping there, especially during the month of Ramadan.

The Old city experienced the worst hardship situation encountered the city in April 2002, when the Israeli army launched the most brutal incursions and committed sever atrocities against its citizens, leaving more than seventy martyrs, and hundreds were arrested. Furthermore, many historical sites and monuments were demolished and completely devastated by Israeli rockets and bombing tanks in an attempt to purge features of the cultural heritage and the historic identity of the Old city. The Israeli schematic policy intended to erase the Kanaan Soap Factory completely from the map in addition a total vandalism that touched dozens of houses and shops, leaving many families outcaste and homeless.



Al-Beik Gate

It is worth mentioning, since it was established before more than nineteen centuries, the old city is still inhabited and commercially active. Moreover, it exhibits a prosperous status as a significant residential and commercial center at the national level. Despite of the periods of turbulences and political instability, yet, the old city represents an eye witness on the unique cultural heritage of Nablus city.

Location

Nablus city enjoys a significant strategic location links north with the south as it is located in the main road conjunction extends from Nazareth to Jenin in the north to Hebron in the south, and from Jafa in the west to Jericho in the East. The city is 69 km distance from Jerusalem, 114 km distance from the Jordanian capital (Amman), and 42 km distance from the Mediterranean sea with 35,16 longitude and 32,13 latitude.



Population

According to the recent estimates of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics for the year 2011, the total population of Nablus governorate is estimated at 348,023 inhabitants. While Nablus city population including the refugee camps is 170,069. Nablus governorate includes 61 population localities (including Nablus city) with total population of 192,103 inhabitants in the urban areas, 122,474 inhabitants in the rural areas, and 33,446 inhabitants in the refugee camps (Askar, Balata, and Ein Beit El-Maa').







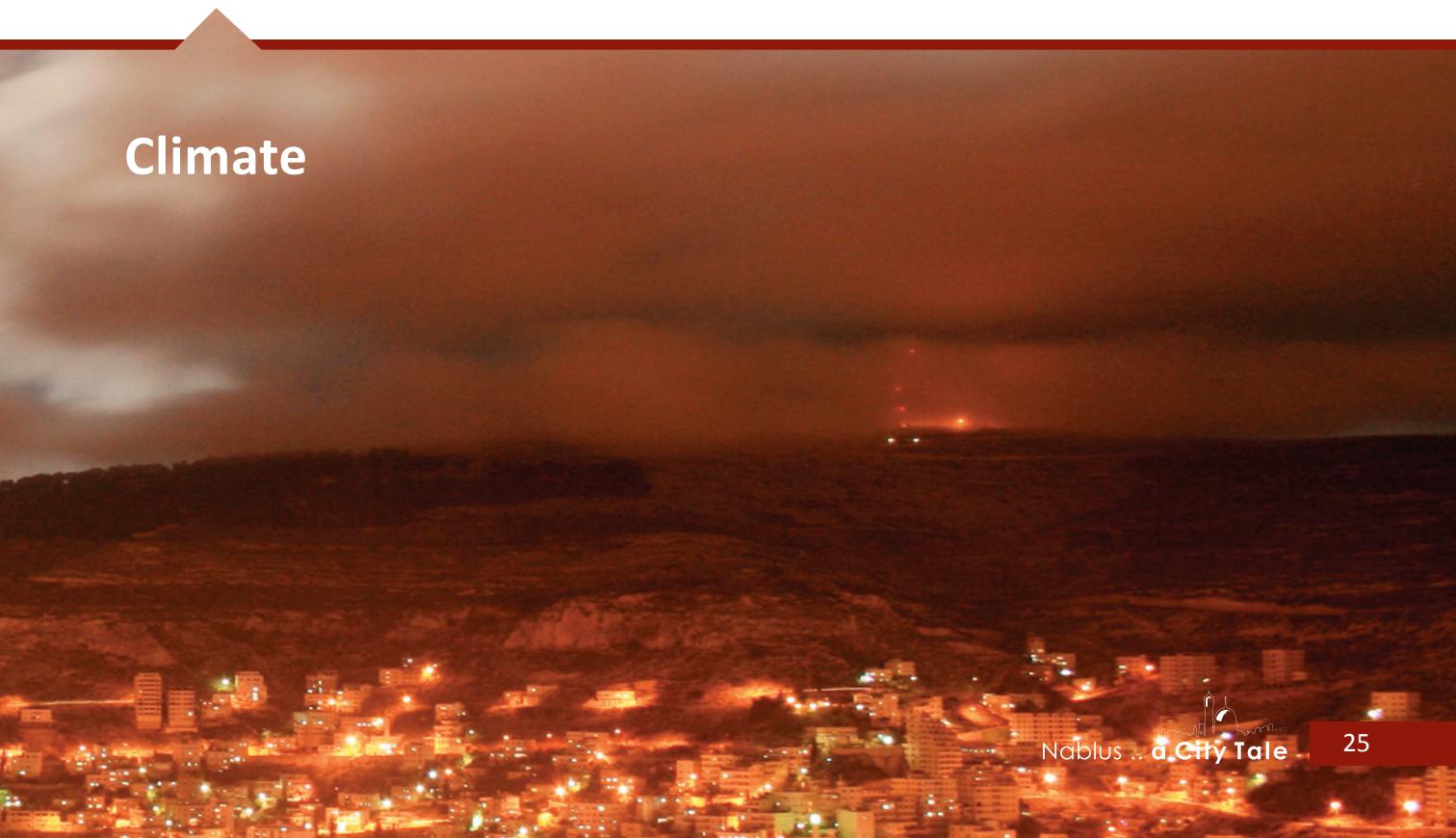
Land Area

The total size of Nablus District land area is approximately 605 km², while the size of Nablus city land area is 29 km² only. As for the total built area, it is about 8.7 km² represents 30% of overall land size of the city.



Located within the Mediterranean region, Nablus enjoys a moderate climate with average maximum temperature reaches 13.1 centigrade during the coldest month (January), while the minimum temperature reads 6.2 centigrade. As for the month of August, the average maximum temperature reaches 29,4 centigrade, while the minimum reaches 19,5 centigrade. North west is the dominant wind with average speed of 10 km/hr, while humidity average reaches 61%.

Climate







Nablus . a City Tale



Religions' followers ... Peace and Cohesion



Many researches, historical and religious resources referred to Nablus or (Shekem) as an important holy place, due to its contribution in a number of important historical events, such as the story of Jesus Christ with the Samaritan women at Jacob's Well. This is a true evidence that the city enjoys a prominent and important status at both religious and historical levels.

Accordingly, such status of Nablus manifested itself in its social network and the reality of life where three religions' followers; Moslems, Christians, and Samaritans, are peacefully co-existing, living in cohesion since hundreds of years, demonstrating a very unique case that rarely exists elsewhere. The three religions' followers are very aware and sensitive to their responsibilities towards their city, working homogeneously for the cause of different issues of concern to their city and local citizens.



Samaritan Festival of Huts

The Samaritan minority in Nablus counts the least population of 345 people, and they only live in Nablus with similar community of 400 living in Holon-Tel Aviv. Samaritans believe that the summit of Mount Jerzim, where they are settled, is the most holy place on earth, on which the Samaritans' temple exists. This forms the core difference between their beliefs and that of other Jewish religion followers.

As for the Christians' followers whose population counts 750 people, they mostly live in Rafidia area and belong to six churches managed by different Christian communities. The Jacobs' church in the east part of the city regarded as one of the major Christian and holy landmarks at the both local and global levels.

Political Status of Nablus



Photo by Abdel Rahim Qusini

Mount of Fire, a famous name given Nablus by rebels, in recognition to its defensive role against occupation and the big sacrifice made by its citizens throughout the Palestinian past history. During the second Intifada “Uprising” out broke end of 2000 led to a continuous Israeli invasions to the West Bank cities in April 2002, Nablus massively struggled through many martyrs and prisoners who rated 27% of total number of those in the West Bank.

Other means of oppression, the Israeli forces meant to suffocate the city, imposed a very strict siege extended for eight years, of which have had severe negative impact on all aspects of citizens' daily lives. Such closure caused a total collapse in commercial and economic activities, and led to a compelling tangible cutbacks in several industrial and economic utilities, part of which fall down to a complete closure.

As stipulated by Oslo Accords signed between Palestinians and Israel in 1993, it was assumed that, within the transitional period extended from 1993-1998, a full sovereignty on Palestinian territories should be transferred to the Palestinian National Authority. However, Israel proceeded with practicing brutal measures including killing of people, expanding settlements, houses' demolish, vandalism, and bombardment against land and people at a time. Further, Israel divided Nablus district lands, as other Palestinian districts, into three zones: A, B, and C of which zone A of Nablus district represents Nablus city with 1.5% of total district lands, while zone B represents 20.5% of total district land and it includes all towns and villages of Nablus district. As for zone C which represents 78% of total Nablus district lands, it includes all agricultural and mountain lands that Israel has designated for building settlements and military bases for the Israeli army and enabled full sovereignty of Israel on civil and security affairs of the area.

Thousands of land hectares owned by Palestinians were confiscated by force for building Israeli settlements which are inhabited by 12,000 Israeli settlers. Existing of these colonies within Palestinian territories forms a direct threat on citizens' lives, crops and their private properties as a result of daily friction and continuous harassment by settlers. This is clearly demonstrated during the olives' harvest season that witnesses massive land and harvest confiscation, in addition to olive trees uprooting, while hindering Palestinians from reaching their lands.



Photo by Abdel Rahim Qusini

Nablus.. As a Business Incubator



Nablus (Shekem) was known as a prominent and prosperous commercial center even during the Canaanites era in 2500 BC. Today, and after more than twenty centuries past since it was ruled by the Roman Emperors, Nablus is considered one of the basic pillars for Palestinian economy, due to the diversity of goods and commodities produced by hundreds of factories and crafts workshops based in the city, of which exported to both national and international destinations.

Nablus city is famous for a number of industries due to the big number of crafts workshops, and the quantities and qualities of its products; such as traditional soap, building stones, aluminum and furniture industries in addition to the fashion and food industries including olive oil, dairy, nuts and sweets. According to the 2009 records of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics , the number of industrial and commercial facilities in Nablus District counted about 13,742 distributed among different sectors (private, public and civil). While the overall number of workers reached 38,542 between employees and workers. Recently, a new sector emerged in Nablus pertained to services including hotels, restaurants, stock-exchange, and communications being managed with total workers of 4000 distributed among 900 services' utilities.

During the second Intifada in September 2000, the city suffered the repercussions of the strict siege imposed on the city associated with the massive Israeli military operations launched in April 2002. This compelling closure of businesses and many industrial facilities and workshops , caused a sever financial deficit with losses estimated at tens of million US dollars. Economic indicators showed a daily losses of Nablus District during 2002-2008 estimated at \$ 1.2 million of which industrial sector share read 42%, services' sector read 30%, agriculture sector read 20%, and tourism sector read 2%.

Today, and upon the reinforcement of the security campaign in Nablus beginning 2008, and with the lifting up of siege, Nablus was able to regain its position as a central commercial hub and business incubator. Economic indicators showed a remarkable drop in the unemployment rate from 37% in 2005 to read 12,9% during 2010. In the last few years, it was clearly noticed that a number of new service facilities were opened including restaurants, public parks, and different commercial centers.

Nablus enjoys high potential for being the leader of Palestinian industry and commercial activities even in the hardship and worst situations. It is, with no doubts, the business incubator and the economic capital of Palestine.



Nablus .. An Educational Destination



Over the prolonged history, Nablus was, and still, a major destination for scholars and students from different neighboring countries, who seek education in different fields of knowledge, particularly religious fields (Sharia). Within this environment, many Nabulsi scholars excelled in several areas of disciplines, made it gain high reputation in the Arab and Islamic world namely; Poet Ibrahim Touqan, Poet Fadwa Toukan, thinker Qadri Touqan and Master of Arab Translators Adel Zueiter.

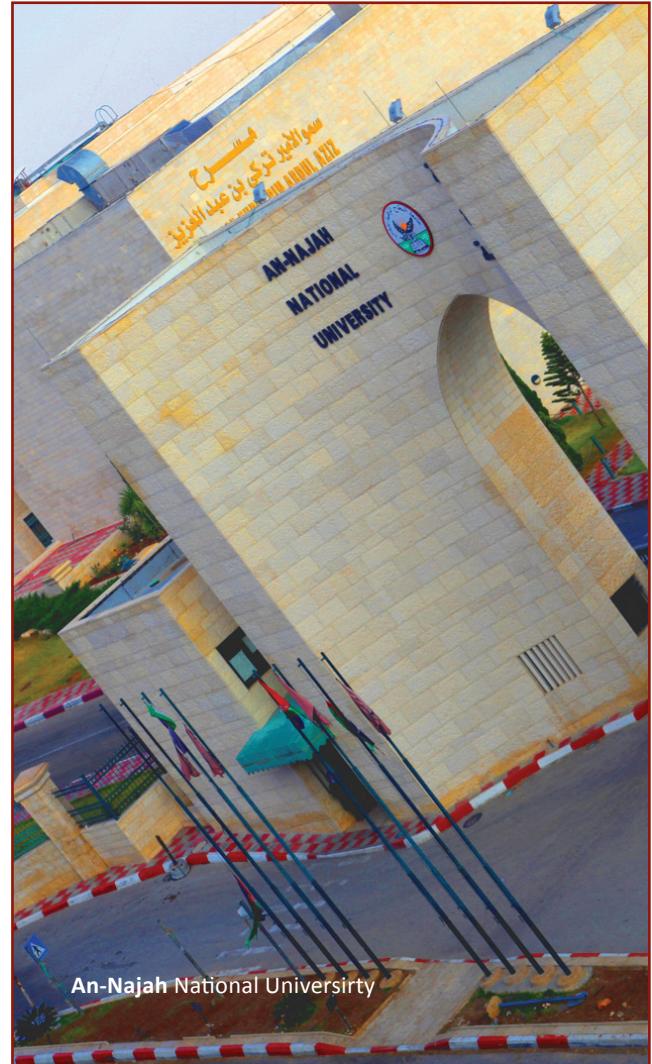
Despite the volatile events in Nablus in particular, and Palestine in general, throughout the past decades, the city enjoys an advanced position as a major destination for education, as it include a wide variety of educational institutions and academies. Moreover, one can say that the rhythm of educational activity has notably increased compared to the past.

This fact has found an echo in the figures shown by Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). Representing 13.9% of the total number of schools in the West Bank (1848 schools), the estimated number of schools in Nablus Governorate for the academic year 2008-2009 was 258 schools, including 217 public schools, 14 UNRWA schools and 27 private schools. PCBS figures also indicated that the total number of students of Nablus Governorate during the same period was 95,700 students, with a vast majority of public schools (79,390 students), then UNRWA schools (9,489 students), and finally private schools (6,800 students). Moreover, illiteracy percentage in Nablus Governorate is considered relatively low, not exceeding 4.7%. These facts and figures accordingly

impacted, to great extent, the results of high school (Tawjihi), when a number of students from Nablus ranked advanced positions including the first position at the national level.

Nablus hosts An-Najah National University; the largest Palestinian university with more than 21,000 students distributed among different faculties. At the educational level, An-Najah University is classified as the top rank university at the Palestinian level, while achieved advanced position among Arab universities. Further, the major branch of Al-Quds Open University offers education for more than 6036 students from Nablus Governorate. Nablus also hosts other educational institutions and community colleges such as Al Rawda Community College, Hisham Hijjawi Technical College and Andaleeb Al Amad Nursing College.

Undoubtedly, Nablus Municipality contributes in supporting the educational process, through raising necessary funds for the construction of new schools whether through securing the required lands, or by providing the technical support in this direction. It is worth mentioning that the number of schools that were built during the period between 2006-2010 is 23 schools.



Health Care .. Numbers Reveals Interest

A new type of tourism emerged in Nablus recently to be referred to as a national medical resort, due to the wide variety of health care utilities such as hospitals, health care centers and clinics exist in the city. According to statistics of Ministry of Health (MoH), the number of hospital beds has notably increased during the last decade to count 495, distributed among 6 hospitals; Rafidya and Al-Watani public hospitals, Al-Ittihad and Saint Luke's hospitals that are run by charitable societies, and finally, Nablus and Arab Specialized hospitals that are owned by the private sector. Furthermore, Nablus district incubates around 60 health care centers distributed between the city and surrounding villages. MoH supervises 41 centers, while 16 being managed by the private sector, and 3 centers being run by UNRWA. The number of pharmaceutical companies were estimated at 12, supplying 336 pharmacies with different kinds of drugs and medicines. Further, the city is rich for its medical human resources whose number counts 699 doctors, with 301 general, 185 specialized and 213 dentists.

Medical care abilities in Nablus proved to be distinctive, referred to a number of complicated and rare medical interventions; such as kidney and spinal cord, corneal transplanting, and endoscopes surgeries. This is in addition to the field of In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) that Nablus excel at the Palestinian level.



A close-up photograph of a doctor's white lab coat with a red tie and a stethoscope. The stethoscope is black and silver, resting on the white fabric of the coat. The red tie is a vibrant, textured color. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white.

These figures and data show clearly the great interest in the health sector in Nablus, both at public and private levels. It also indicates that Nablus is taking the lead towards a new prosperous era that qualifies it to become the medical capital of the north.

Tourism in Nablus .. A Blend of Authenticity and Modernity

Today, and after 2500 years passed, the city of Nablus is still vivid and rich in several historic and archeological sites that enables it be a center of attraction at both national and global levels. Undoubtedly, visitors to the city can touch the civilization legacy belongs to different nations settled in the city since many years past namely; Canaanites, Romans, and Byzantines. Tal Balata site hosts the Canaanites Shekem, and forms a basic source of information for researchers, historians and those concerned with the Canaanite civilization in Nablus and in the region. Sabastia village is also wealthy with Byzantine and Roman archeological elements, become an important historic reference for the entire Palestinian region.





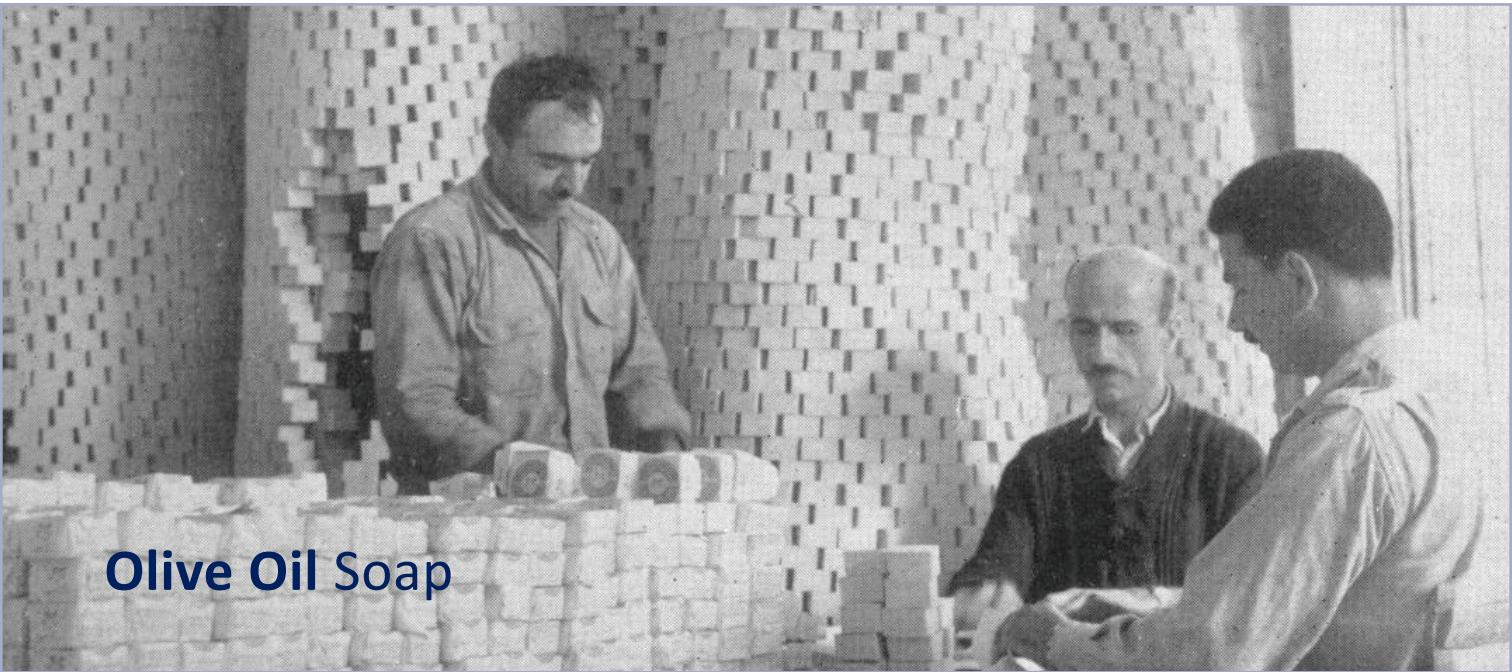
Sama Nablus public Park - 2009
Photo By Ahmad Khalaf

At the recreational level, Nablus classified among attractive points in Palestine due to its topographic fascinating nature, and its moderate weather in summer and winter times. The old city is a true treasure with the crowded commercial stores and souqs, made it an important site for visitors coming from different parts of Palestine and those from the green line, who enjoy shopping and roaming within the charm of the old city.

Therefore, Nablus demonstrates good potential to find a foothold on the Palestinian and global tourist map. Yet, achieving this endeavor is subject to overcoming a number of challenges and obstacles facing tourism industry in Nablus and Palestine in general. The political instability particularly in Nablus and the general turbulences in Palestine represents the major stumbling block against any attempts or plans for development of tourism sector.

Despite of this high potential, tourism industry in Nablus is still immature, and needs deep exploration and development of related infrastructure. Nonetheless, opportunities for improving this sector are high, if relevant concerned parties launch joint efforts towards tourism promotion that would lead to economic development in the city and the whole region.

Traditional Industries of Nablus



Olive Oil Soap

Soap manufacturing in Nablus is an old traditional industry, back-dated to the fourth century. Structure of soap factories' "Masaben", production process, and raw materials remain similar to that of the Ottoman period with slight improvement. The number of Masaben in Nablus noticeably increased during the nineteenth century. However, many were hit by the 1927 earthquake, while others were demolished by Israeli incursions to the city like Kanaan soap factory, and led to the deterioration of this industry. Currently, only four soap factories are still functioning and produces this traditional product.

Black Seed Paste “Qizha”

Black Sesame Paste “Qizha” is very popular in Nablus, comprises of black sesame seeds’ fluid and has a bitter taste. People of Nablus usually serve Qizha at breakfast or even dinner, plunging bread with sugar or honey. This traditional product has a high health value and it is prescribed, in some cases, for treating some chest diseases.

Nabulsi Kunafah

Nablus is very famous for this popular sweet product called Kunafa, and became a genuine part of the city culture. This delicious dish extended to various cities in the in Palestine and neighboring Arab countries. Kunafah recipe consists of paste, white cheese, sugar syrup and decorated with pistachio. It is said that if a visitor to Nablus did not taste Kunafa, he/she never been to this city.



Pumpkin Halawa & Zalabyeh

Many shops in the old city produce and sell this famous kind of sweets, which is famous for Nablus only. Pumpkin Halawa is made by cooking pumpkin with sugar syrup, while Zalabyeh is made by frying a special kind of paste with vegetable oil.

Tamriyyeh and the Garlic Toast

Tamriyyeh is one of the famous sweets known for Nablus only. It comprises of a thin dough stuffed with a piece of sweet made of cooked wheat with sugar, fried with oil and eaten as a desert.

As for the Garlic Toast, it comprises of a blend of wheat mixed with eggs, frying oil and garlic. The ingredients are mixed then spreaded to be thin, then fried and eaten with a mixture of Sumaq, spices and salt.

Sesame Seed Paste “Tuheneh”

A popular traditional industry that exists in Nablus since long decades. A special paste called Tuheneh is made out of grinding sesame seeds to form a special dressing, and considered a major ingredient of Hommos (a famous dish known in Nablus and the Middle East, comprises of smashed chick pees and mixed with Tuheneh, lemon and salt), Halawah Tahiniyyeh (a special sweet pie) and other traditional dishes and salads. Tuheneh dressing is being packed in plastic small containers exported to other Palestinian cities and some neighboring countries.



Natural Stone Industry

Nablus classified on top of Palestinian cities in extracting the natural stone. It includes more than 86 quarries in different areas of Nablus district. Stone industry is an old profession and was known in Nablus before more than 3000 years. This industry has been developed recently and became one of the most important natural resources, being exported to the entire Palestinian cities and to the neighboring countries.





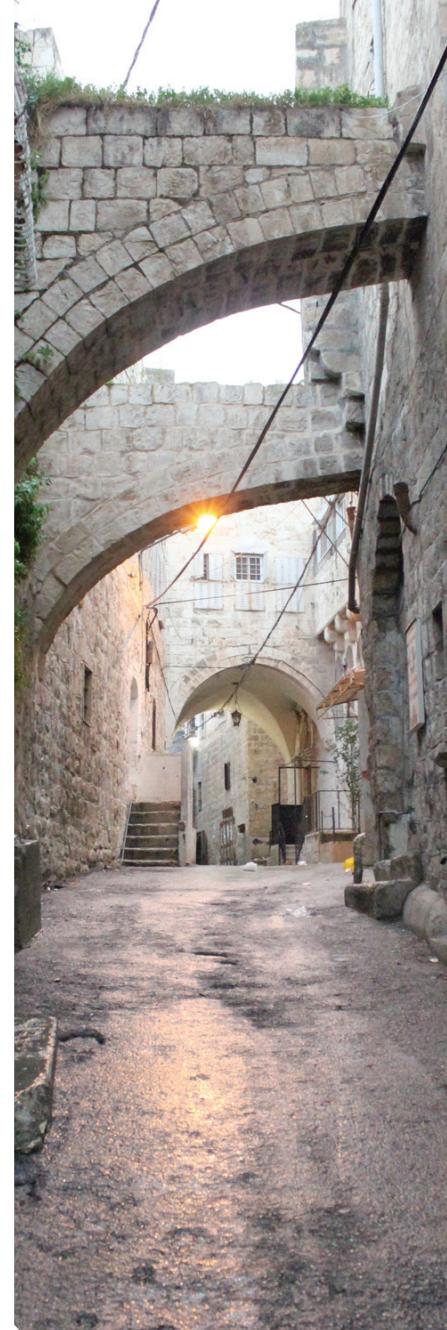

NabluS .. a City Tale

Archeological and Historic Landmarks of Nablus

The old of city of Nablus embraces six major quarters located in different streets and alleyways namely; Al-Yasmineh, Al-Gharb, Qaryon, Aqaba, Qisariyyeh, and Habaleh. These squares are surrounded with historic and archeological buildings, mosques, and arches to form a blend of past civilizations ruled the city since it was founded during the Roman period in 69-72. Historic landmarks are not limited to the old city, there is a number of historic sites and archeological landmarks located outside the old city particularly the Canaanite Shekem and other sites as illustrated hereunder:



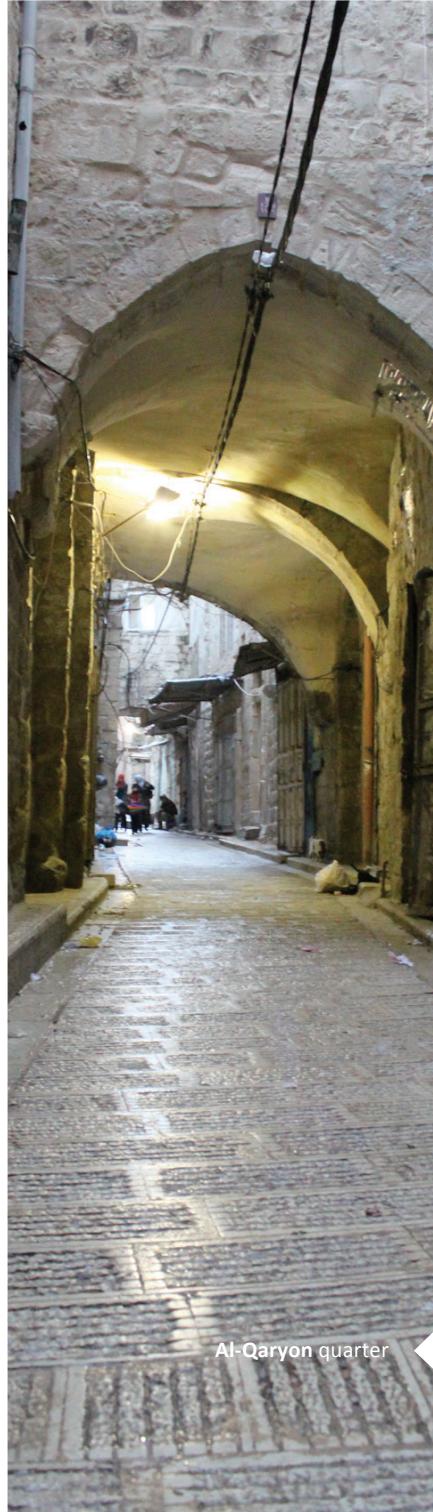
Al-Habaleh quarter



Al-Yasmina quarter



Al-Aqaba quarter



Al-Qaryon quarter

Canaanite Shekem

Located in the east part of Nablus on top of Tal Balata hill. The site was named Shekem (which means the high land) by Canaanite tribes who built it in the mid of third century BC. The city witnessed several invasions of which Romans were the last who destroyed the site in 63 BC.

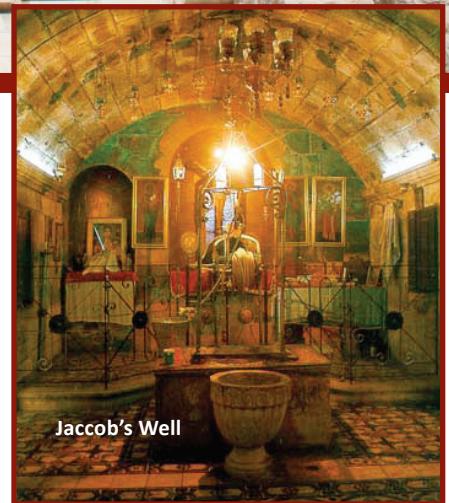
Jacob's Well / Jacob's Well Church

Located in the east part of the city and it is a famous site where Jesus Christ stop during his journey from Jerusalem to Galili and met the Samaritan women to ask for a drink of water.



Jacob's Well Church

Located in the east part of the city and close to Joseph Tomb site. The Church was built during the Roman era under the rule of Constantine in the 4th century BC, and was destroyed and rebuilt several times between 1009 - 1914. The Church was recently subject to further restoration and expansion measures.



East Roman Cemetery

Located to the west of Askar village and was discovered in 1980, however, archeological searches referred this site to the 3rd century BC. The site consists of a rectangular chamber and it includes a number of stone coffins referred to a rich family.



East Roman Cemetery

West Roman Cemetery

Located to the west part of Nablus and was discovered in 1942 BC, then was diminished to be discovered again in 1965. The cemetery embraces 3 chambers of which ground covered by a layer of mosaic with a front yard and it also contains a number of coffins referred to a rich family.



West Roman Cemetery

The Roman Hippodrome

Located outside the old city opposite to Al-Watani hospital. It has been discovered recently in 1985 BC and has been built in the mid of the 3rd century.

The Roman Amphitheater

Located in Ras El-Ein area outside the old city and it has been discovered recently in 1985. The site is considered one of the largest amphitheaters discovered at the Palestinian level.

Located in Al-Yasmineh quarter in the old city and it is the first mosque established in the city after the concurrence of Arab Moslems in 636 BC. Several restoration and expansion measures have been carried out to the mosque during 1287-1895 BC.

Al-Satoon Mosque



Al-Khadra Mosque

Located in the north-west part of Al-Yasmineh quarter in the old city. It is an old site where Crusaders built a church nearby, and then was transformed to a mosque in 1187 BC. The mosque was subject to restoration measures during the Mamluks era in 1288 and then was restored during the Ottoman period.

Al-Hanbali Mosque



Located in Al-Gharb quarter in the old city and was built during the Ayyubid era. The mosque has been rebuilt by the Mamluks and was subject to restoration measures during the Ottomans period. The mosque is rather holy than other mosques as it is the place where the holy hairs of prophet Mohammad are claimed to be kept and being opened every year for public.

The Great Mosque (Al-Salahi)



Located in the heart of the old city to the east of Al-Nasr street. The west part of the site was a mosque built in the 9th century, while the east part was a church built by Crusaders in 1167. The entire site has been transformed to a mosque in 1187, and was rebuilt and restored after the 1927 earthquake.

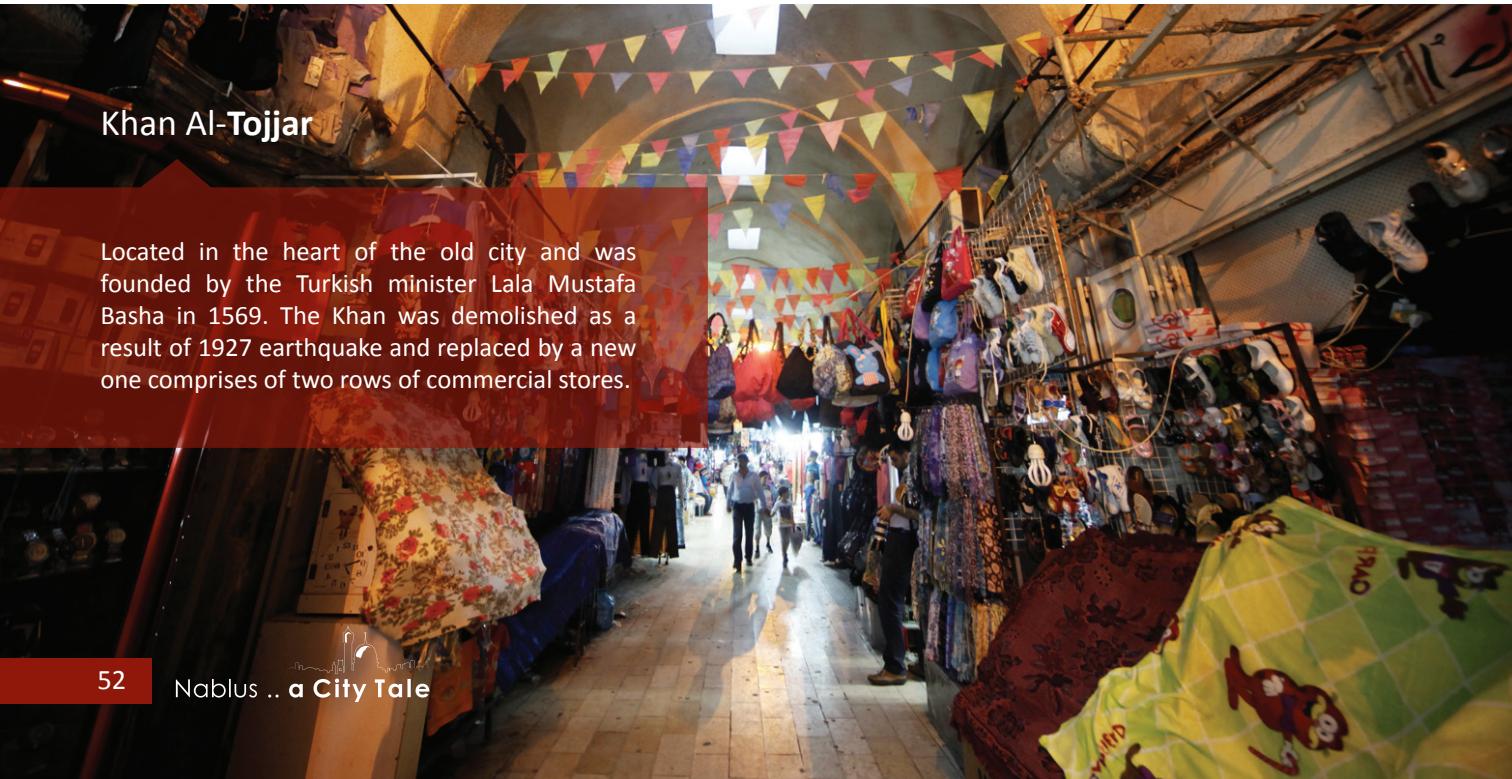
Joseph Tomb Holy Site



Located to the east part of Nablus and it is an old and famous site, claimed to be referred to prophet Joseph. A small dome has been built on top of the tomb during the Ottoman period, and the whole site has been restored and remolded in 1897 and recently.

Khan Al-Tojjar

Located in the heart of the old city and was founded by the Turkish minister Lala Mustafa Basha in 1569. The Khan was demolished as a result of 1927 earthquake and replaced by a new one comprises of two rows of commercial stores.



Khan Al-Wakalah (Wakalet Al-Yusr Arafat)

Located to the west of Al-Gharb quarter in the old city and has been built by Nablus citizens in 1868 as a residence for Ottoman army. However, it was partially demolished by the 1927 earthquake and has been rebuilt and restored recently to be used as a guest motel.

Khan Al-Faroukhiyeh

Located close to the west entrance of Khan Tujjar and was built by Nablus ruler Amir Farroukh Basha in 1630 to form as a place for pilgrims. The khan comprises of two floors each contains a number of commercial stores and rooms, however, it has been used for trade and commercial transactions.

Al-Nabulsi Soap Factory

Located in Al-Naser Street in the old city and owned by Nabulsi family. It was built during the 18th century with similar architectural features as other soap factories in the city.

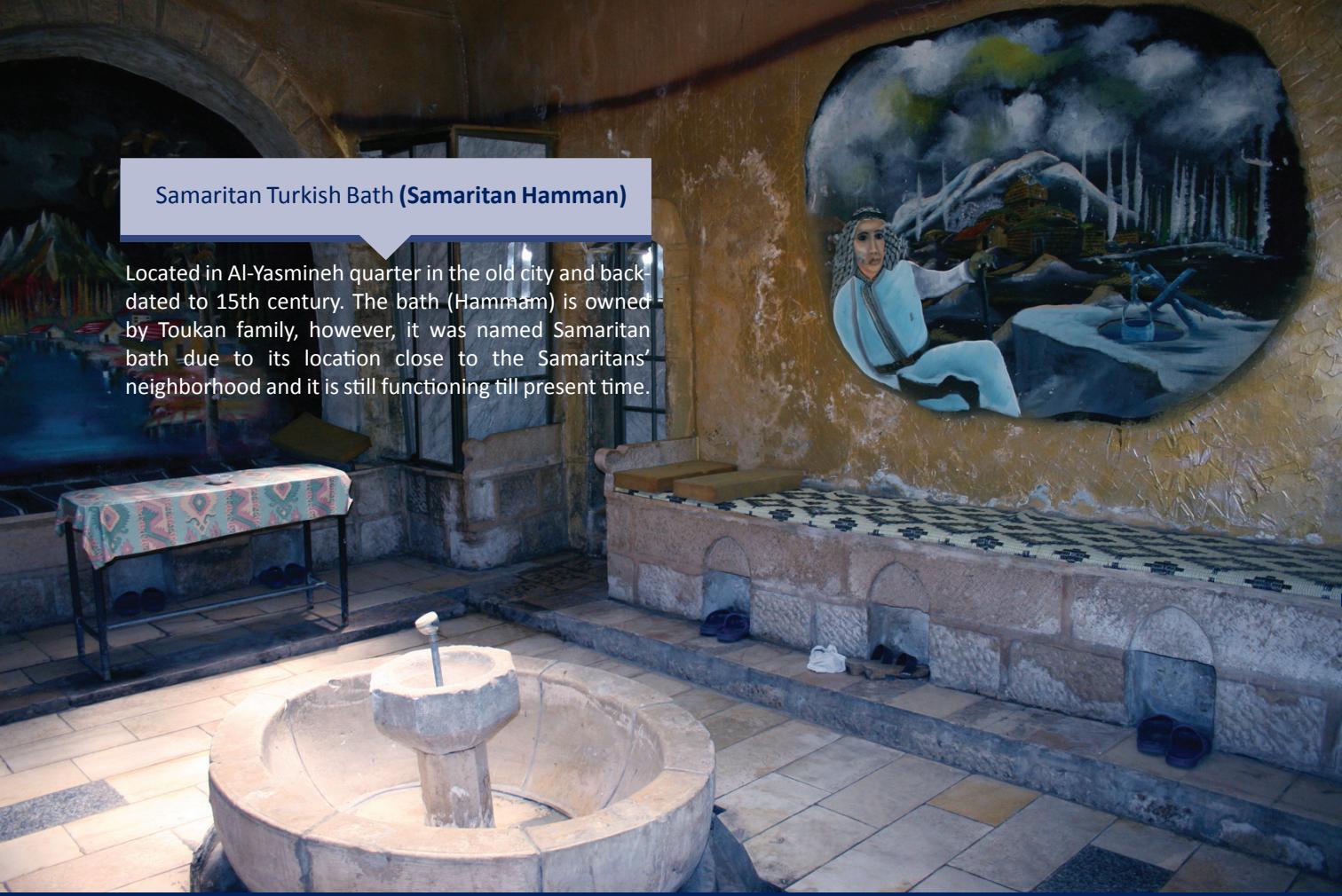


Toukan Soap Factory

It is among famous soap factories in Nablus, located in the city center and back-dated to the 18th century. The building comprises of two floors, the first is designated for manufacturing process, while the second floor for cutting and packaging purposes. It contains an oil storage well and burner for soap cooking.

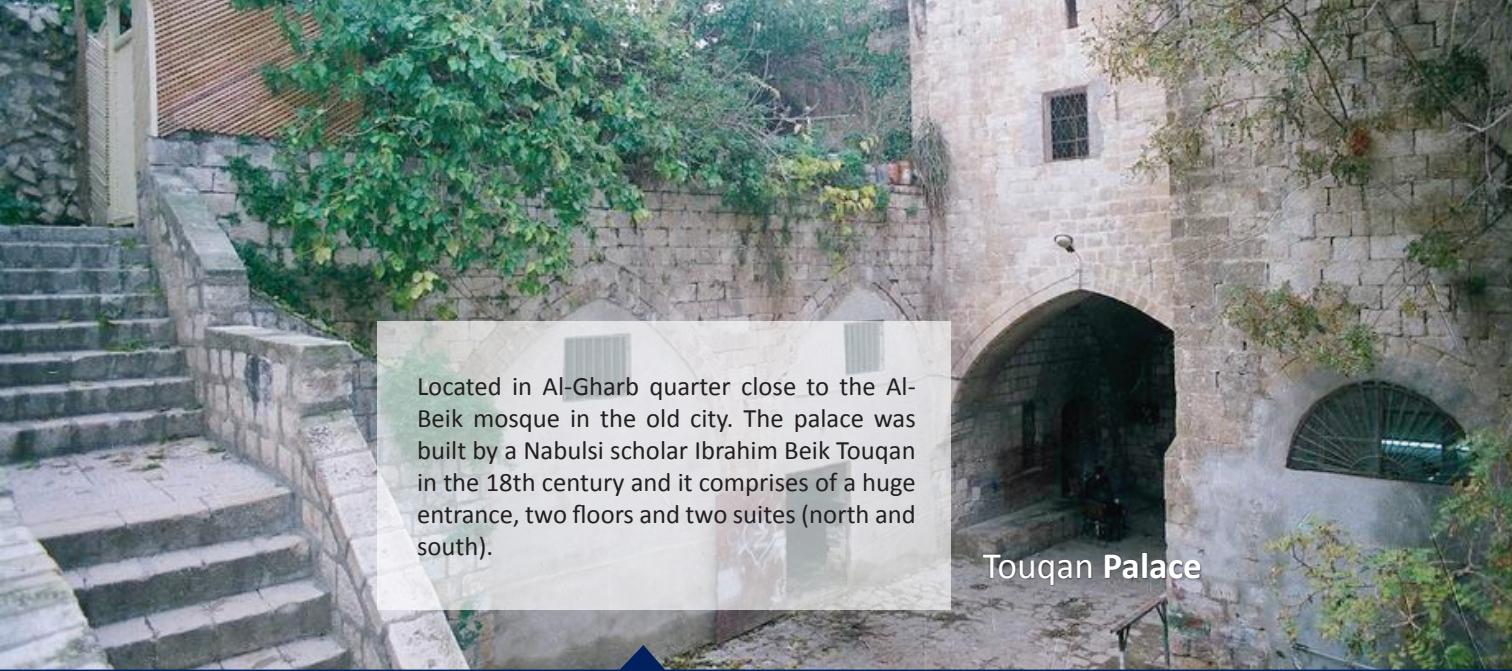
Samaritan Turkish Bath (Samaritan Hammam)

Located in Al-Yasmineh quarter in the old city and back-dated to 15th century. The bath (Hammam) is owned by Toukan family, however, it was named Samaritan bath due to its location close to the Samaritans' neighborhood and it is still functioning till present time.



Al-Shifaa' Turkish Bath (Shifaa' Hammam)

Located in Al-Gharb quarter in the old city and was built by Saleh Basha Touqan in 1736. The Turkish Bath (Hammam) is still functioning till present time and has been restored frequently since the establishment.



Located in Al-Gharb quarter close to the Al-Beik mosque in the old city. The palace was built by a Nabulsi scholar Ibrahim Beik Touqan in the 18th century and it comprises of a huge entrance, two floors and two suites (north and south).

Touqan Palace



Al-Nimer Palace

Located in Al-Habaleh quarter in the old city and was built by Nablus ruler Yousef Bin Abdullah Basha Nimer who died in 1997. The palace embraces a huge entrance and two floors in addition to a front orchard.

Abdul-Hadi Palace

Located in Al-Yasmineh quarter and was built by Sheikh Husein Abdul Hadi in 1834. The palace embraces two floors and a number of suites, each contains a number of rooms and front yards.



Al-Manarah Square (Clock Tower)

Located in Bab Al-Saha square in the old city opposite to Al-Naser mosque. The tower was built in 1900 when the Turkish Sultan Abdel Hamid the second, awarded Nablus a clock in the occasion of silver jubilee of his carnation. The tower is a rectangular building, comprises of 5 floors. The clock has been installed on the upper part of the tower. It is regarded as one of the major landmarks of Nablus and the clock is still functioning till present time.



Sabastiya Village



Sabastyia village is located approximately 10 kilometers to the north west of Nablus. The origin of the name of the modern Sabastiya village referred to the Herodian city of Sebaste, founded in 25 BC by Herod the Great on the site of ancient Samaria. Herod the Great, was awarded the city in 30 BC by the Roman Emperor Augustus, and built a temple dedicated to Augustus, a stadium, a theatre and refortified the city with larger walls. The site includes a number of fascinating ruins back-dated to several historic periods including; the Basilica, the theatre, the defensive tower from the Hellenistic period, the Temple of Augustus, the Columned Street, the ancient city wall and gates. Besides that, Sabastiya encompasses the grave of Prophet Yahia, the Muslim name for John the Baptist.





Nablus .. a City Tale

Nabulsi Habits

Charm and Specialty

Nablus, for long years past, exhibited a distinctive presence for its unique architectural and cultural heritage, and its special habits and traditions known for Nabulsi people only, part of which are still common till present time, while others were diminished. This booklet meant to briefly highlight the most common habits as per hereunder:

The Month of Sha'aban (Al-Shaboniyah)

Following the Arabic calendar, the month of Sha'aban falls before the fasting month of Ramadan. During this month, relatives and even friends of the Nabulsi community usually become more closer through which one invites his relatives, and some times close friends for a gathering on lunch or dinner, which named as Sha'booniyah. Then, similar invitation is made by other members of the same family simultaneously and round the month. This habit reflects the warm social network and family relations of Nablus community.

Concluding Holly Quran

Concluding the holly Koran was a popular habit of Nablus community until the 1950s, when school children of the sixth grade used to conclude the Holly Koran. In rewarding the child who won this contest, a special celebrity used to be organized in the form of riding a car decorated with silk and flowers, roaming the entire streets and residential areas of the city.

The Month of Ramadan Traditions

The month of fasting “Ramadan” in Nablus has a special taste and warm atmosphere. The commercial stores and food shops in the city center, particularly in the old city, witnesses an influx of local visitors and those who are coming from other parts of Palestine to enjoy the aroma of fresh food, vegetables, Nabulsi famous sweets and typical beverages made exclusively in Ramadan. Families in Ramadan usually celebrate Ramadan by gathering to break their fasting and enjoy the major meal “Iftar” starting with green vegetables which are famous for Nablus, such as Atrichoke “Akkob” and Mallo “Mulukhiyyeh” and many other kinds. The table of Iftar is also crowded with special appetizers such as Hommos, Baba Ghannouj, Falafael and the smashing colored and famous salad called Fattoush. The Iftar in Ramadan is mainly started by different kinds of soups such as lentils, wheat “Freekeh” and vegetable and many others, in addition to the famous Nabulsi beverages including Amareddin, Carob, Tamarindi, Licorice “Soos, and other types of juices. After this delicious and heavy meal, its time for the famous tasty sweets of which being prepared exclusively during this month mainly Qatayef stuffed either with white cheese, walnut or coconut and mixed with sugary syrup, in addition to Awwameh, Kunafa and many other types of sweets.

While children under eight years are not able to fast, folks trained them to fast half day, break their fast in the noon time, then continue fasting so that to get them acquainted to this month at an early stage.

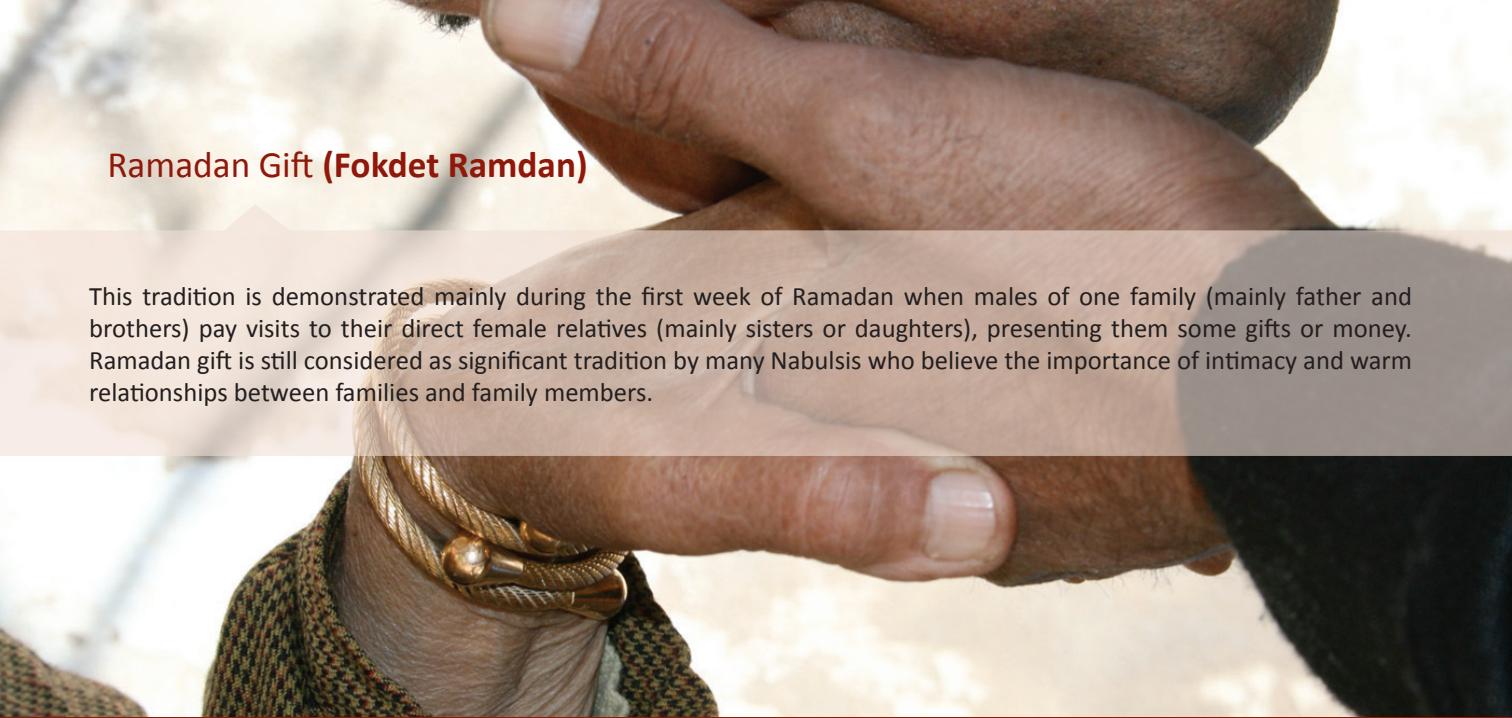


Children Sack

As an incentive method for fasting in Ramadan, children usually keep a fabric sack where they kept different types of fruits, chocolates and candies, when they break their fast after “Iftar”, they gathered, each to open the sack, eat and share what they collect during the day with their peers.

The Cannon of Ramadan

Few minutes before the Iftar, a total state of calmness and observation prevails the city when the Cannon of Ramadan, which was placed on mount Eibal hill, was unleashed, giving a sound to alert people for break fasting, as a sign for “Iftar”.



Ramadan Gift (**Fokdet Ramdan**)

This tradition is demonstrated mainly during the first week of Ramadan when males of one family (mainly father and brothers) pay visits to their direct female relatives (mainly sisters or daughters), presenting them some gifts or money. Ramadan gift is still considered as significant tradition by many Nabulsis who believe the importance of intimacy and warm relationships between families and family members.

Downtown Bazaar (**Souk Nazel**)

Thrilled by approaching end of Ramadan to receive the Fitr Feast, a joyful bazaar that used to be organized during the last week of Ramadan in the Al-Manarah Square inside the old city to celebrate the end of this blessed month. Parents and children enjoy walking in the old city after the “Iftar”, while holding the lightening lanterns and singing collectively popular songs known for Nablus only specially the famous song “Souq Nazel”.

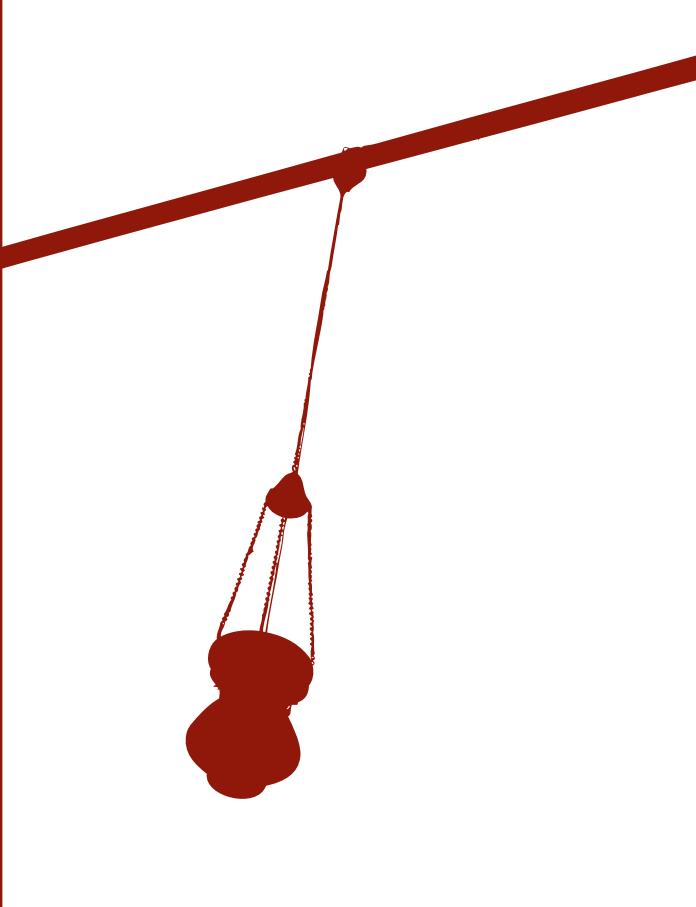
Women Monthly Reception (**Istiqbal**)

This is an old tradition, known for Nablusi women only, and was common before the seventies. Each women calls for a gathering once a month through nominating one day a month, dedicated for this occasion. Women visitors to this gathering include women’s female friends and relatives who meet together and exchange issues and talks on different topics and social events of the town.



Prophet Mohammad Birthday

Nablus citizens celebrate this special holy occasion every year, by decorating the roads and public squares. Celebrations prevails the public places and houses, while sweets and candies are distributed among children and street pedestrians.



Islamic New Year

Nabulsis usually receive the Islamic New Year (according to the Arabic Calendar) by cooking fresh vegetables (such as artichoke and green beans) in hope their new year would be prosperous and joyful. Coinciding the day of Ashoura on the 10th of Moharram, (the first month according to the Arabic calendar), families gather and celebrate this occasion by serving a desert dish called Ashoura.

The Adha and Fitr Feasts

People in Nablus receive and celebrate the two Eids (Adha and Fitr) with joy and happiness especially the Fitr Feast which falls after the month of fasting “Ramadan”. Ceremonies of the two Eids “Feasts” must start with the Eid pray at the mosques, exchange visits with their relatives and friends, and gathered in a warm atmosphere. Mainly women and children are given a symbolic amount of money representing the gift of the Eid, given by men of their families. The two Eids are very special occasions where members of each family and sometimes extended families meet and enjoy eating special sweets and meals prepared exclusively for this occasion.

What makes the two Eids special is the special pastry prepared only for this occasion by members of the each family who gather few days before the Eid. People of Nablus and mainly children get excited and thrilled by this occasion, as they usually make intensive shopping to appear with new dresses and good looking during the Eid. Children receiving the two Eids with utmost passion, waiting to meet their relatives

to collect their gift “money” that enable them fulfill their needs of sweets, games and toys from their own pockets. In this occasion, a number of popular songs which were inherited through generations and being sang by children, are known for many years past to express children happiness during the Eid.



Folk Songs

Since many decades passed, citizens of Nablus celebrated different religious and social occasions in a special traditional way that revealed the rich culture of Nablus, part of which are the popular songs known for Nablus city only. Occasions included the down town bazaar, wedding parties, back to schools, and other occasions. Many of these songs are still common and being used till present time.

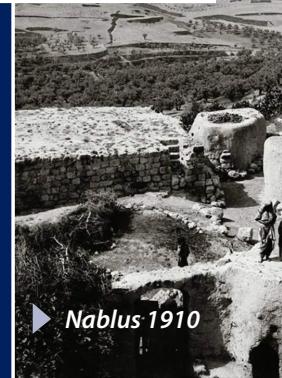
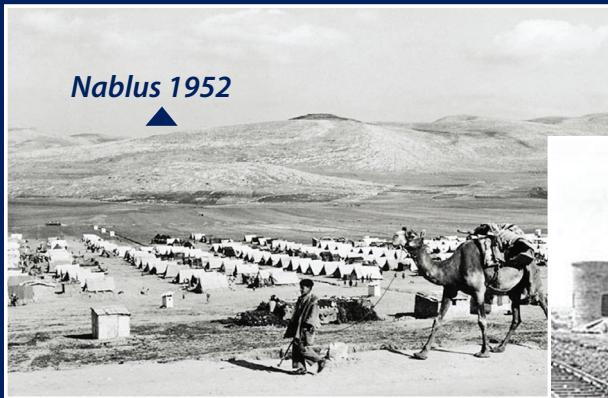
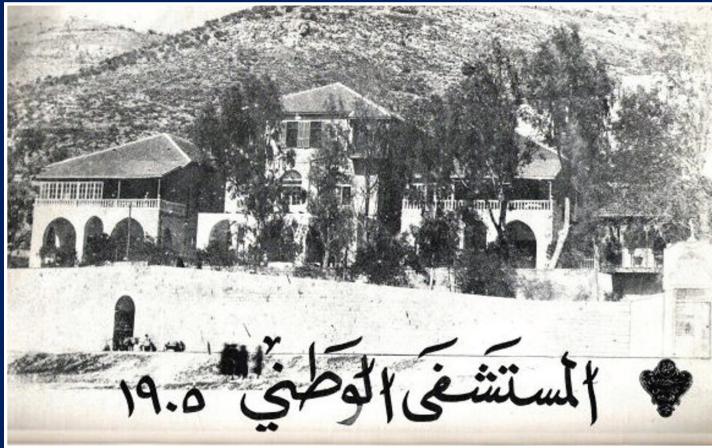
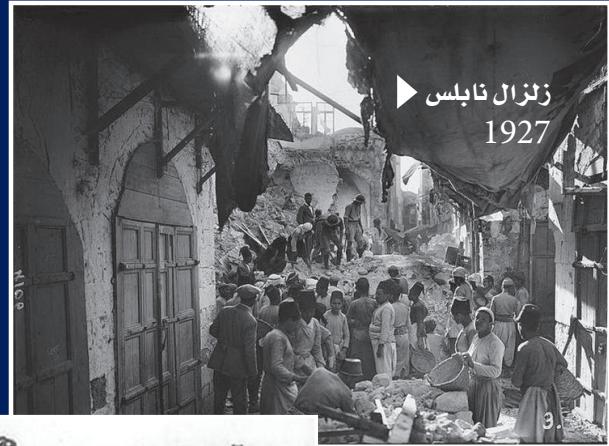


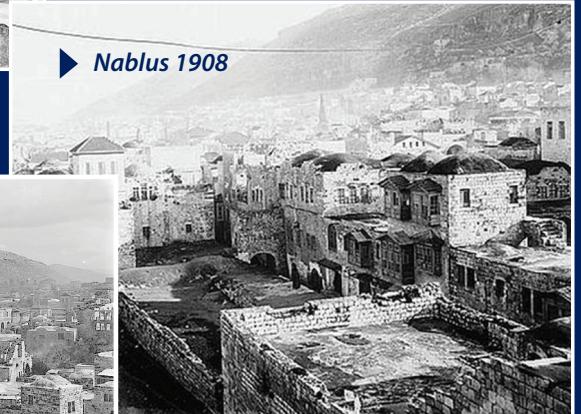
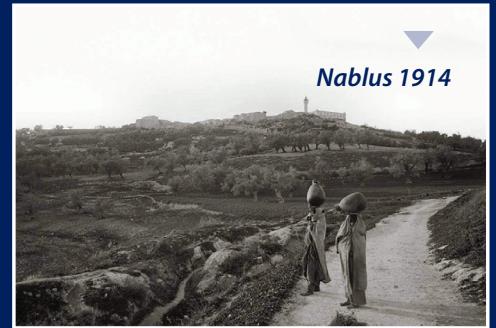
Children Popular Games

Nablus children's life was marked as spontaneity and simplicity, especially when it comes to popular games they played. Children from the same square used to play together in a place called "Hakourah" or backyard (the Hakourah is an open space in front of the house or the surrounding area). Such games that were inherited through generations, till were vanished and replaced by more sophisticated ones used by today's children. The old popular games are available in the surrounding environment at no cost, as children used remnants of different materials to form their own games or toys, such as wood, paper, plastic and other natural materials. Children old games are, in some cases, associated by folk songs that reflect the culture of the city, providing an atmosphere of fun and happiness rarely seen in our present time.



▶ Memorial Photos





With every sunrise
We have a new tale to tell





Acknowledgement

Mayor of Nablus Adly R. Yaish and municipal council members convey deep thanks and appreciation to all local institutions and individuals who contribute in data collection, maps and photos that enabled the production of this booklet. Thanks to

- Nablus Governorate
- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
- An-Najah National University
- Nablus Chamber of Commerce
- Ministry of Health – Palestinian Health Information Center
- Directorate of Education – Nablus
- Palestinian Meteorological Office
- Engineering Department, Nablus Municipality
- Mr. Abdullah Kaboneh, Archeology Dept., Ministry of Tourism
- Mr. Raed Abed Rabbo, Applies Research Institutions “Arij”
- Mr. Zuhair Dub’i
- Mr. Hasan Qamhiyyeh
- Studio Scoop (Shahrori)
- Photographer Abed Qusini
- Mr. Ishaq Samri

Special thanks to the Public Relations Team and Nablus Municipality who accomplished this work and produced this booklet.

Nablus ... A City Tale

Nablus Municipal Council
November - 2011



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