

KILL KHALID

**Mossad's failed hit ...
and the rise of Hamas**

PAUL McGEOUGH


ALLEN & UNWIN

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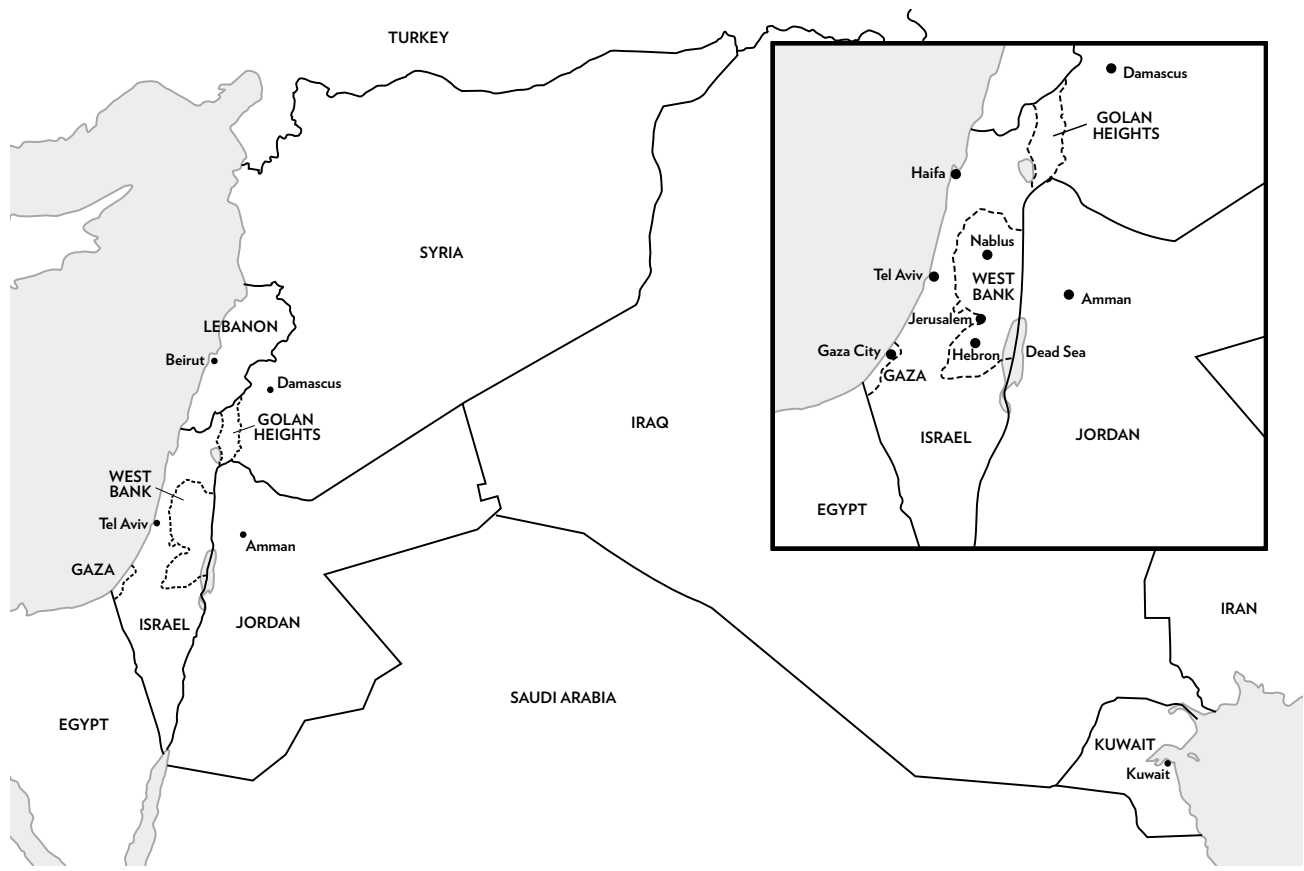
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For Pam



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Acknowledgments

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Paul McGeough
Sydney
October 2008

Who's Who

IN HAMAS

Khalid Abu Hilal—Fatah commander who defected to Hamas in the lead-up to the June 2007 crisis in Gaza

Mohammad Abu Sayf—Khalid Mishal's bodyguard

Mousa Abu Marzook—deputy and former leader of the Hamas Political Bureau

Jawad Abu Sulmiyah and **Saib Dhahab**—first Hamas members killed in clashes with Israeli forces

Isa Al-Najjar—one of the founders of Hamas

Abdel Azziz Al-Rantisi—senior leader in the Gaza Strip

Mahmoud Al-Zahar—senior leader in the Gaza Strip

Yehia Ayyash—master suicide bomber; also known as “The Engineer”

Nadia El-Ashi—wife of Abu Marzook

Ibrahim Ghosheh—Hamis media officer

Ismail Haniyah—appointed prime minister of the Palestinian Authority in 2006

Abu Maher—Mishal's driver

Khalid Mishal—Damascus-based leader of Hamas; also referred to as Abu Walid

Khalid Mishal's family

Abd Al-Qadir—Mishal's father; also referred to as Mullah Abd Al-Qadir

Fatima—Mishal's mother

- Amal**—Mishal's wife
Maher—younger brother of Khalid Mishal
Mohammad Nazzal—member of Hamas Political Bureau
Mohammad Salah—Hamas bagman from Chicago
Said Siam—appointed as interior minister of the Palestinian Authority in 2006
Azzam Tamimi—friend of Mishal since their teenage years and the author of *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*
Sheikh Ahmad Yassin—spiritual founder of Hamas; assassinated by Israel in 2004

IN JORDAN

- King Abdullah II**—crowned king of Jordan upon the death of his father, Hussein, in 1999
Abdullah Azzam—Palestinian-born mentor to Khalid Mishal and Osama Bin Laden
General Samih Batikhi—head of General Intelligence Department, also known as the Mukhabarat, in the 1990s
Steve Bennett—first secretary, Canadian Embassy
Hussein Bin Talal—king of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan from 1952 until his death in 1999
Wesley Egan—U.S. ambassador to Jordan, 1994–98
Oded Eran—Israeli ambassador to Jordan in 1997
Randa Habib—Amman bureau chief for Agence France-Presse
Prince Hassan—brother of and crown prince to King Hussein; was widely expected to succeed him as king of Jordan
Ranya Kadri—journalist
Saad Na'im Khatib—assisted in the capture of Mossad agents in Amman in 1997
Dave Manners—CIA station chief, Amman
Mike Molloy—Canadian ambassador to Jordan
Nasouh Muheiddin—director of public security in Amman
Samir Mutawi—information minister in the mid-1990s
Queen Noor—fourth wife of King Hussein
Asad Abdul Rahman—lectured Khalid Mishal at university in Kuwait; adviser to Yasser Arafat
Fahd Al-Rimawi—editor and proprietor of the weekly newspaper *Al-Majd*

General Ali Shukri—director of King Hussein's private office

Bassam Akasheh—surgeon and director of Queen Alia Heart Institute at King Hussein Medical City, Amman

Sami Rababa—chief anesthesiologist at Queen Alia Heart Institute

Walter Wilson—director of infectious diseases division, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota

IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Yasser Arafat (1929–2004)—president of the Palestinian Authority, one of the founders of Fatah; chairman of the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)

Mahmoud Abbas—also known as Abu Mazen; prime minister and later president (2004–present) of the Palestinian Authority

Mohammad Dahlan—security director and Fatah leader in Gaza

Keith Dayton—lieutenant general, U.S. Army, U.S.-appointed security coordinator between Israel and the Palestinian Authority

Rajoub brothers—**Jibril** stood as a Fatah candidate and **Nayef** as a Hamas candidate in the 2006 elections

Terje Roed-Larsen—Norwegian diplomat and UN representative to the PLO

Nabil Shaath—Palestinian businessman, minister in the Palestinian Authority, and longtime adviser to Yasser Arafat

Raji Sourani—head of the Gaza Center for Human Rights and Law

IN ISRAEL

Ehud Barak—prime minister, 1999–2001

Nahum Barnea—*Yedioth Ahronoth* journalist

David Berger—Canadian ambassador to Israel, 1995–99

David Boim—son of Joyce and Stanley Boim who died in a Hamas attack near Jerusalem in 1996

Alvaro de Soto—UN envoy to the Middle East Quartet

Levi Eshkol—prime minister, 1963–69

Baruch Goldstein—Jewish-born settler who killed thirty Palestinians in a Hebron mosque in February 1994

Efraim Halevy—diplomat and director of Mossad, 1998–2002

- Tzachi Hanegbi**—justice minister, 1996–99
- Shalom Harari**—Israeli Arabist and administration official based in the Gaza Strip in the 1980s
- Martin Indyk**—U.S. ambassador to Israel, 1995–97, and senior Clinton adviser
- Dan Kurtzer**—U.S. diplomat stationed in Israel in the mid-1980s
- Zvi Malchin**—Mossad agent in the 1960s
- Benjamin Netanyahu**—prime minister, 1996–99
- Ehud Olmert**—prime minister, 2006–8
- Smadar Perry**—*Yedioth Ahronoth* journalist
- Yitzhak Rabin**—prime minister, 1974–77; 1992–95
- Ariel Sharon**—prime minister, 2001–6
- Norman Spector**—former Canadian ambassador to Israel, 1992–95
- Majali Whbee**—adviser to Ariel Sharon
- Gilad Shalit**—nineteen-year-old corporal in the Israel Defense Forces who was captured by Palestinian militias in June 2006
- Danny Yatom**—director of Mossad, 1996–98

IN THE UNITED STATES

- Elliott Abrams**—deputy National Security Council adviser under Bush, appointed 2005
- Mufid Abd Al-Qadir**—Khalid Mishal's Texas-based brother and a Holy Land Foundation fund-raiser
- Shukri Abu Baker**—chief executive and president of the Holy Land Foundation
- Sandy Berger**—Clinton's national security advisor, 1997–2001
- George W. Bush**—president, 2001–9
- Bill Clinton**—president, 1993–2001
- Stanley L. Cohen**—New York lawyer retained by Abu Marzook
- Michael T. Dougherty**—FBI special agent
- A. Joe Fish**—presiding judge at the 2007 Holy Land Foundation trial in Dallas
- Linda Hamilton**—wife of Bernard C. Welch Jr.
- Joseph Hummel**—FBI special agent
- Nathan Lewin**—Washington lawyer working in partnership with his daughter **Alyza Lewin**

Denis Lormel—head of the FBI's Terrorist Financing Operations Section

Rob Malley—Clinton adviser on Arab-Israeli affairs

Akram Mishal—cousin of Khalid Mishal employed at the Holy Land Foundation

Colin L. Powell—secretary of state, 2001–5

Condoleezza Rice—secretary of state, 2005–9

Bruce Riedel—Clinton adviser on Near Eastern affairs

Dennis Ross—Middle East envoy and peace negotiator in the George H.W. Bush and Clinton administrations

George Tenet—director of the CIA, 1997–2004

Bernard C. Welch Jr.—convicted for the murder of Dr. Michael Halberstam in 1980

David Welch—assistant secretary for Near Eastern affairs, 2005–9

Robert Wright—FBI agent working on Hamas investigations in the United States

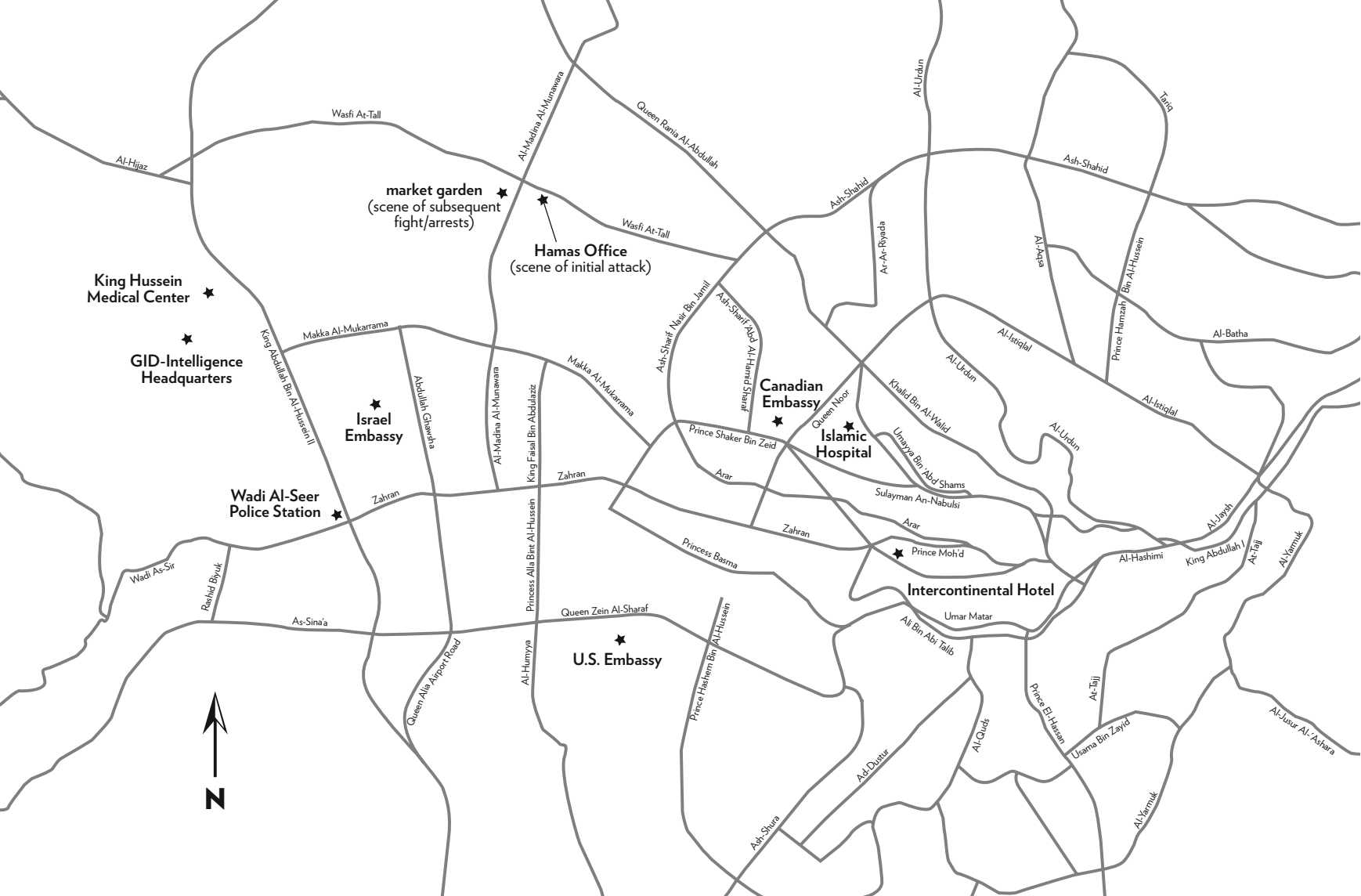
IN CANADA

Badger—anonymous blogger believed to operate from Canada

Lloyd Axworthy—minister for foreign affairs, 1996–2000

IN LEBANON

Alastair Crooke—former British intelligence agent, European Union adviser in the Middle East, and founder of the Beirut-based Conflicts Forum



King Hussein Medical Center

GID-Intelligence Headquarters

market garden
(scene of subsequent fight/arrests)

Hamas Office
(scene of initial attack)

Israel Embassy

Wadi Al-Seer Police Station

Canadian Embassy

Islamic Hospital

U.S. Embassy

Intercontinental Hotel



1

The Tourists

The Canadians arrived on different flights from different cities. Young, fit, and well dressed, they looked the part—Westerners with deep pockets dropping in to see Jordan's jewels . . . wondrous Nabatean ruins at Petra; stunning Roman relics at Jerash; and the desert wilds of Wadi Rum, where David Lean and Peter O'Toole created the cinema classic *Lawrence of Arabia*. If there was time, perhaps a beachside party at Aqaba on the Red Sea.

In September 1997, in the madness of the Middle East, Jordan was a pocket of relative peace. Usually a few tourists bobbed up among the suited foreign-business and white-robed-Arab traffic at Amman's Queen Alia Airport and the Canadians were quickly swallowed by the anonymous chaos of the arrivals hall. Immigration officials perfunctorily stamped their passports; half an hour later, all five were downtown, piling out of a couple of battered taxis in the paved forecourt of the Intercontinental Hotel. Checking in, they again presented Canadian papers and chatted easily with a desk clerk about which of the tourist attractions were within easy striking distance of Amman.

Only later, when all assembled in one of their rooms, did they abandon the pretense. These "Canadian tourists" were agents for Mossad, the fabled Israeli intelligence service. Their mission in this quiet, U.S.-friendly Arab city was state-sanctioned assassination—in the name of Israel.

With the door chained from the inside, they dropped the phony accents and spoke in their own language. Unpacking their gear, they sat for one last time, methodically rehearsing the deadly detail and schedule for the coming days. They ignored the minibar. But, instinctively cautious in a part of the

world where selected guests were assigned rooms expensively rigged for others to eavesdrop, they turned up the volume on the TV.

A glass-topped coffee table became a workbench on which they spread the essentials of death. A street map of Amman, with hand-drawn circles on a west-side business district. Photographs of their intended victim, who was a forty-something Arab male—lean, round faced, and bearded. Few in Jordan, or Israel, would have recognized him. Oddly, there was a small camera too.

A practiced nonchalance masked caution and anxiety in all five of them. One of the men—blond and bearded—handled the camera with a care and respect that went way beyond any ordinary tourist's concern for holiday snapshots. The camera, in fact, was the killers' "gun."

One of his colleagues produced a pouch, from which he extracted a small and seemingly innocuous bottle that had been brought into the country separately and delivered to them at the hotel by a secret courier. It contained a small quantity of a clear liquid—Mossad's "bullet." This was a chemically modified version of fentanyl, a widely used painkiller. But in this potent, altered form it would kill within forty-eight hours, leaving no trace for discovery on the autopsy table. Their plan was murder—silent, unseen.

In the privacy of another room in the same hotel, a handsome brunette opened a small makeup bag to assure herself yet again that one bottle in particular had traveled well. She was the Mossad men's insurance policy.

Her inclusion in the plot was most unusual, but so lethal was the drug the agents would be using for the first time that Mossad's mission planners had demanded the presence of a doctor and an antidote in case one of the team accidentally exposed himself to the poison.

Their orders were to kill Khalid Mishal. The forty-one-year-old Palestinian activist had been overlooked by the legion of foreign intelligence agents operating in Amman. But at the Mossad bunker near Tel Aviv, Mishal was seen as the first of a dangerous new breed of fundamentalist leaders. He was hard-line, but he did not wear a scraggy beard or wrap himself in robes. Mishal wore a suit and, as the man accused by Israel of orchestrating a new rash of suicide bombs, he was, by regional standards, coherent in his television appearances. From the Israeli perspective Khalid Mishal was too credible as an emerging leader of Hamas, persuasive even. He had to be taken out.

They struck on Thursday, September 25, 1997. It was just after ten AM—and they botched everything. Had they been successful, Mishal would have gone home and died quietly; the agents would have been on their way home too, over the Allenby Bridge on the Jordan River and back in Jerusalem for a

celebratory lunch. Instead, two of the Israelis were soon languishing in dank cells under an Amman security complex and the others were hunkering at the Israeli Embassy—which, incredibly for a supposedly friendly foreign mission, was locked down by a menacing cordon of Jordanian troops.

King Hussein of Jordan could rise to the occasion in a crisis. Filled with rage, he fired a shot across the Israeli prime minister's bow, warning Benjamin Netanyahu that his Mossad men would hang if Mishal died.

More deliberately, Hussein then picked up a phone and placed a call. It was answered across the world, where a woman with a sweet voice answered: "Good morning. Welcome to the White House."

Village of the Sheikhs

The young boy knew this truck. In the summer it delivered fleshy watermelons to stalls in the village market. Now Khalid Mishal and dozens of his stricken relatives were dumped on the back, where he was more accustomed to seeing fruit piled up like great green boulders. His mother, Fatima, was distracted, but he clung to her. Some of his aunts sat on the hard boards; cousins were squished between fat suitcases and bundles of bedding and other effects, which were held together in knotted blankets and bedsheets.

Heading east and away from their homes in the Jerusalem Mountains, they descended into an alien, inhospitable world. As the old truck lurched into the furnace of the Jordan Valley, the fertile familiarity of a village that had been the boy's entire world gave way to desolation—an arid, bone-dry moonscape.

As they made their way toward the Allenby Bridge, the crossing just north of where the indolent Jordan River fused with the glycerine depths of the Dead Sea, Khalid saw his first war dead—the bodies of fighters on the road. Taking it all in with a child's eyes, Khalid did not understand that, amidst this grief and sorrow, he and his family were being detached from their homeland. It was June 1967.

The traffic was chaotic. Trucks and taxis were bumper-to-bumper. Many other people were fleeing on foot. Hungry and thirsty in the heat of early summer, some wearily abandoned their baggage—suitcases and even a prosthetic leg were dumped along the way. Mothers with two-year-olds screaming for water could be seen. U.S. diplomats later estimated that tens of thousands had fled ancient Jericho alone.¹

In the grim aftermath of the Six-Day War, Palestinians were repeating

their own history. Just two weeks after Israel's snap conquest of the West Bank, Khalid was now another anonymous youngster in the second wave of Palestinians driven from their land. The first had been almost twenty years before, back in 1948, when so many were forced out to make way for the new state of Israel.

Fatima now ordered her teenage girls to keep a tight hold of five-year-old Maher, Khalid's younger brother. Yelling over the noise of the rattling truck on which they found themselves, she attempted to give the frightened children a simple explanation for this upheaval. "The Jews have taken our land," she said.

As they finally reached the river crossing, there was congestion and more panic when all were forced to abandon their vehicles. The old Allenby Bridge had been bombed and gaping holes in the timber planking made it impassable to cars. Now ropes were strung up as makeshift handrails, to assist the thousands of refugees as they carefully made their way across the splintered pathways that remained at the sturdier edges of the bridge's deck. Fatima and her children left their homeland on foot, inching across the river into Jordan.

Silwad was nestled in chalky high country in the heart of the West Bank. At the end of a track to nowhere, sixteen miles north of Jerusalem, about eight thousand people lived in a hillside pastoral that marked them as villagers—it was their relationship to the land, not their numbers that defined them.

The village straggled along a stoop-shouldered ridge running north-south. In front of its villagers lay a spectacular bird's-eye view of what, after the calamity of 1948, were the lost lands of Palestine—the coastal plains from Jaffa to Haifa. Behind them rose the lofty bulk of Al-Asour Mountain, which, at 3,370 feet, was the West Bank's second highest peak.

Silwad had been spared much of the bloodiness and brutality that shrunk the land of Palestine. But Khalid's father, Abd Al-Qadir, had left the village, as an eighteen-year-old, to find it. He had been riveted by the sermons of the firebrand preacher Izzadin Qassam, which he listened to at Al-Istiqlal Mosque in Haifa—the northern port city to which many young Silwadis went in search of work. In 1936 he had joined the ranks of the much-romanticized, but ill-fated, Arab Revolt against colonial British forces in the Arabs' attempt to preempt British support for the proposed state of Israel. In this uprising, which fueled Palestinian nationalism, Abd Al-Qadir sometimes fought with up to a hundred men; at other times, he roamed in a small guerilla cell.

London had won control of Greater Palestine when the First World War's victors had carved up the Ottoman Empire. Thousands of Arabs died as their insurrection was brutally crushed by the British. When the revolt petered out in 1939, Abd Al-Qadir returned to Silwad with a new sense of the Palestinians' isolation and a deep disquiet about the failings of his people's fractured leadership. In the face of a persistent, British-backed push by the Jews for Palestinian lands, the Syrians had passed weapons and ammunition to the Palestinians, but the Arab leaders of the day had offered scant support and done little to help unite the bickering Palestinian leadership.

Amidst a rising sense of foreboding about Jewish ambitions, life in Silwad had continued for Abd Al-Qadir and his extended family of field workers and artisans. He had married Fatima, his first cousin and at that time a mere twelve-year-old, and together they had settled into a simple, if harsh, life.

Silwad was a bare-bones village with no electricity. There was just a single phone, which was locked away in the municipality office; water was drawn from the wells; and each family's only transport usually was a single donkey. Some here were wealthier than others, but the subsistence realities of life created a simple local egalitarianism—all cooked their bread on a hot steel dome, and all spread it with the same local tomatoes, homemade cheese, and olive oil for lunch. Such was the life of a Palestinian peasant.

Here, the children accepted as normal each family's deep engagement with recent Palestinian history, the sometimes coarse tribal ways, and the deeply conservative culture. In the same way, they took for granted the privations of a depressed rural economy that saw men go abroad for years at a time, working to supplement meager family funds. It was women who raised the families and crops. When Khalid was just fourteen months old, his father all but disappeared from his life—to distant Kuwait, sending back a few dinars each month. Sometimes the gap between his visits home was as long as two years.

For all that, there was a sense of security. Life was good. Their home was a single room, just twenty feet square, which had been walled off at the end of a building made of uncompromising gray stone. The rest of the structure was home to others in their extended family. Translated from the Islamic calendar to the Judeo-Christian, the dated keystone in the lintel read 1944.

More important than the house, however, were the salt-and-pepper fields of clay and broken limestone that came with it. Abd Al-Qadir was fortunate to have had a well-to-do grandfather who, on his death, bequeathed him forty *dunams*—about ten acres.² In these rough-terraced, boulder-strewn

fields the family grew wheat, fruit, and nuts—olives, figs, apricots, grapes, and almonds. In her husband's absence, it was Fatima who marshaled her brood to work the fields between household chores and classes at a small local school, which was a walk of just more than a mile from their home in a spartan quarter of the village called Ras Ali.

Silwad was known as the "village of the sheikhs" because a long tradition of local men had undertaken spiritual studies at Al-Azhar, Cairo's fabled Islamic university. Most returned to the Jerusalem Mountains to preach and teach. They included the blind Sheikh Khalil Ayyad, who had a powerful hand in shaping Silwad's strict religious character at a time when Abd Al-Qadir and Fatima were finding their feet, somewhere about the middle of the local pecking order—socially and economically.

Abd Al-Qadir had a decent piece of land and, by local standards, a reasonable income. He was a restless man, often on the move, seeking the time of key political and religious figures. He had had only a brief, elementary school education, but he took to studying the Qur'an and in time his services were sought as a mediator, settling local disputes according to the tenets of Sharia or Islamic law. Fatima could neither read nor write, but she was philosophical, telling her husband, "We're not a wealthy family, but we have wealth in our brains."

After the 1930s revolt, violence had escalated—Arab on Jew, Jew on Arab. As Abd Al-Qadir saw it, the vacillating British were virtually giving Palestinian land to the Jews. "Piece by piece . . . in front of our eyes," he would say. Like the Palestinians, Jewish fighters had taken to attacking the British forces as Palestinians were shunted aside to make way for a new Jewish homeland. Against rising tension, it was the Jewish underground militias, the Irgun and the Stern Gang, that had created a specter that would haunt both peoples for decades—of deliberate and lethal attacks on civilian crowds. Arab fighters had gone on the attack with "the knife, the bludgeon and the fuel-doused rag," but the Jewish response had been the introduction to the conflict of the standard equipment of modern terrorism—"the camouflaged bomb in the marketplace and bus station, the car and truck bomb and the drive-by shooting with automatic weapons."³

In 1945, as the world reeled from the horror of the atrocities to which the Nazis and their supporters subjected the Jews of Europe, the Zionists went for broke in their campaign for a homeland of their own, demanding all of historic Palestine.⁴ The emerging Cold War powers, Washington and

Moscow, ignored Arab protests and, in November 1947, the United States and the Soviet Union backed a UN resolution calling for Palestine to be divided between the two peoples—with the exception of the holy city of Jerusalem, which U.N. Resolution 181 proposed be put under international control and accessible to Muslims, Jews, and Christians.

Inspired by an Islamist speaker who came to Silwad from Cairo in 1946, Abd Al-Qadir joined the Muslim Brotherhood—known in Arabic as “Ikhwan Al-Muslimun.” The Brotherhood was a controversial group, established in Egypt in the 1920s to counter secular trends and to push for religiously oriented Muslim societies that would live by Sharia law. The Brotherhood was drawn to Palestine by the Arab Revolt.⁵ Later it sent fighters to help the Arab resistance against the Jews and the British. It opened dozens of branches, and in Silwad most religious figures signed up—as much for political as religious reasons.

As Israel’s War of Independence loomed, Abd Al-Qadir took up arms again. But he chose not to fight with the Brotherhood. Instead he went under the command of Abd Al-Qadir Al-Husseini, a legendary resistance leader who died as a Palestinian hero in heavy fighting at Qastal, west of Jerusalem, just weeks before the proclamation of the state of Israel in May 1948.

In the weeks before his death, Al-Husseini’s paramilitaries so thwarted Jewish fighters in battles for control of steep hills on the strategic road between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem that the Haganah, the Zionist fighting force, devised what it called “Plan D.” With the objective of clearing hostile and potentially troublesome Arabs out of Palestine, this was a military campaign that directly and decisively contributed to the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem.⁶ The aim of the plan was the destruction of rural and urban areas of Palestine.⁷ Water supplies were poisoned and massacres were counted in the dozens.⁸ Yitzhak Rabin, a 1940s Israeli military officer who would serve twice as his country’s prime minister, later wrote of his part in what the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé ranked with the biggest forced migrations in modern history. It was essential that fifty thousand civilians be driven out of Lod and Ramle, towns near Tel Aviv, Rabin wrote.⁹

“The population of Lod did not leave willingly. There was no way of avoiding the use of force and warning shots in order to make the inhabitants march the ten or fifteen miles to the point where they met up with the [Arab armies] . . . the inhabitants of Ramle watched and learnt the lesson: Their leaders agreed to be evacuated voluntarily.”¹⁰

Palestinians counted more than five hundred villages destroyed. By the end of 1948, about seven hundred thousand people, more than 60 percent of the Arab population of what had been Palestine, were refugees in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

The Declaration of Israeli Independence, read by the legendary David Ben-Gurion at a ceremony at the Tel Aviv Art Museum on May 14, 1948, deliberately omitted any reference to the national borders proposed in the UN's awkward attempt to evenly divide the disputed territory of the Holy Land because Ben-Gurion anticipated expanding beyond those boundaries. Within twenty-four hours of reading the proclamation he had his chance.

The next conflict, which began on May 15, would be perceived very differently by both sides. What Israel called its War of Independence, the Palestinians would call their *Al-Nakba*: "Catastrophe."

In the face of a collapse by the Palestinian resistance in fighting in the preceding months, the multinational Arab League threw its support behind them. Units of the Egyptian, Jordanian, Syrian, Lebanese, and Iraqi armies moved into Palestine the day after Ben-Gurion's declaration of independence. For decades Israeli historians would present the conflict as the Israeli David confronting the Arab Goliath. But in mid-May 1948, twenty-five thousand Arab troops in Palestine faced an Israeli force of thirty-five thousand. Both forces grew and by the end of the year Israel's hundred thousand men under arms outnumbered Arab forces by nearly two to one.¹¹ Israel began with inferior weapons, but arms shipments from Czechoslovakia, within weeks of the outbreak of war, tipped the balance in its favor.¹²

Israel was better manned and better armed, and it fought strategically.

By the end of the war, about six thousand Israelis and twice as many Arabs were dead. The Egyptians took and held Gaza and, with it, as many as three hundred thousand new Palestinian refugees who cowered along its mean coastal strip. Jordan's British-trained and funded Arab Legion moved in and held the West Bank along with the eastern quarter of Jerusalem—an outcome that was canvassed by Amman's wily King Abdullah I in a series of prewar meetings with Zionist leaders. Those secret encounters made the Jordanian monarch a weak link in the Arab coalition that Israel could exploit to its own strategic advantage.

The UN plan for Jerusalem to be an international zone was dumped. The city was divided along the cease-fire line, giving Amman control of the historic Old City and its revered shrines—for both Islam and Judaism. This was a cause of much bitterness for Israelis, who now were denied access to their

holiest place of worship, the Western Wall. Palestine as a nation-in-the-making was erased from the map. As Israel, the world's newest nation, grabbed almost double the land mass allocated under UN Resolution 181, the burr of Palestinian dispossession was fixed firmly under the saddle of world leaders and armies of diplomats for generations to come.

In Silwad, shock at the outcome of the war and the failure of Arab leadership was acutely felt, as hundreds of Arab refugees from the new Jewish state found their way up the track into the Jerusalem Mountains. They came from Haifa and Jaffa, first borrowing outhouses and space in villagers' homes, but in time acquiring land, building houses, and marrying into village families.

Two years later, King Abdullah of Jordan formally annexed all of the West Bank—and, with it, the village of Silwad. Some locals yearned to be a part of an independent Palestine; others objected to being forced under the control of Amman. But Abd Al-Qadir lectured his family that, like it or not, Arabs would be better off under any Arab regime than under Israeli or British control, even if their new Arab monarch's clandestine dealing with Israel made him an outcast in the Arab world.

War, politics, and the hardships of village life aside, these were tragic years for Fatima. A rural Palestinian wife's first duty was to produce children—with the firstborn preferably being a son. Fatima's first five babies died within months of their birth—three sons and two daughters. Her first to survive were girls—Safiyah, born in 1950, and Miriam, in 1953. It was not until March 1956 that she fulfilled her marital duty by providing Abd Al-Qadir with a male heir. This was Khalid Abdul Rahman Ismail Abd Al-Qadir Mishal—whose name, in time, would be shortened to Khalid Mishal.

Any sense of joy was short-lived. Within months, her husband did as many other village men did—he took a second wife. Culturally, what seemed a cruel blow to Fatima was perfectly acceptable conduct. Abd Al-Qadir would draw quietly on his cigarette and profess himself well pleased with an arrangement that told the world he was a man of means, someone of stature. Fatima, then an attractive thirty-year-old, was furious. As her husband set up a second household and took to spending only half his time with Fatima and their children, she challenged him. “How can you do this to me?” she demanded to know. “I'm your cousin. I'm your wife. I've given you a son—why do you want another wife? Haven't I looked after you, the children, your mother, and the farm?”¹³

Her husband stonewalled her. Shrugging his shoulders, Abd Al-Qadir argued that polygamy was a right granted by Islam and Arab tradition. Such

seemingly heartless behavior was a complex tale of Arab male indulgence. In Abd Al-Qadir's case, it became more difficult to understand when, a year later, this man who needed the world to believe he could afford to keep a second wife and home announced he was going abroad for work—to supplement the family funds.

The track abroad from Silwad was well worn. In the early days of the British mandate, young men hauled themselves to Nazareth to find work; through the 1930s and 1940s they went off to Haifa—to labor and to hear the fiery sermons of Qassam.¹⁴ In the 1950s, a good number of Silwadi males packed their bags and headed for Kuwait, and now Abd Al-Qadir joined them. He went legally. Many others, including a cousin of his first wife and the first husband of his second wife, died traipsing the hot desert between Baghdad and Kuwait City as they attempted to smuggle themselves into the burgeoning emirate, oil rich and tiny, at the head of the Persian Gulf. His departure was doubly painful for Fatima, because Abd Al-Qadir had decided to take the newer of his wives to Kuwait. Fatima was abandoned in Silwad to run the farm and raise his first family.

Life was tough and lonely for women left behind. Fatima took solace from the farm and her children—especially Khalid, the all-important first son. At age four he demanded to be taught to read by his older sisters; soon, he was helping his illiterate mother to understand the labels on medicine bottles. She was proud of her son. His schoolteachers were pleased too. Khalid was at the top of his class regularly and became the school know-it-all. Village folklore recorded that whenever an exercise defeated his classmates, it was clever Khalid who provided the right answer. He amused Maher, his younger brother, by crafting cars and other toys for him from bent wire and tin cans.

Village play was a great leveler. Boys built kites, played marbles, and invented their own games of skill and chance. Much of their time was spent in the shadow of a giant, castle-like rock on the higher edge of Ras Ali, which the children had dubbed Ea'arak Al-Kharouf, or "Sheep Rock." When they fell over at play, they were immediately ordered to get up; as a child, Khalid split his head when he fell head-first from the living level of their home onto a rock floor in the basement below. The gaping wound was treated with a simple press of coffee grounds.

This was a parched corner of the world and, as the decade of the 1950s rolled into the 1960s, the infant Israeli state and its Arab neighbors were edging toward a new war footing—over water. Israel intended the Sea of Galilee as a great cistern for its new towns and farms. But only one of the three

streams feeding it actually rose in Israel. The others—the Banias and the Dan—rose in Syria and in Lebanon. The Jordan River, flowing from the southern end of the Sea of Galilee, was a vital water source for Syria and Jordan.

Indignant Arab governments ordered their engineers to embark on a dramatic plan to divert the Banias and the Dan before the rivers entered Israel. But when they started digging, the Israelis bombed their bulldozers and dredges to a rude halt. There were frontier clashes between Israel and Syria, and an obscure but determined new Palestinian nationalist by the name of Yasser Arafat dispatched the first of his Fatah guerrillas on cross-border raids into Israel.

In Silwad, with her politically aware husband absent in Kuwait, Fatima was oblivious to the beat of the war drums. There was no television, and few newspapers reached the village; it was only the men, gathered around their battery-powered radios, who listened gravely to Radio Cairo and the BBC World Service. A fuse was burning but, apart from the fact that Fatima could neither read nor write, this was harvest time—she had just done cutting wheat and was drawing breath before bringing in figs and grapes.

Lasting just six days, the war was virtually over before a breathless nephew brought Fatima the news that it had begun. In a stunning series of strikes in the first week of June 1967, Israeli jets destroyed four hundred aircraft of the combined Arab air forces—most while they were still on the ground. The same morning, the Old City of Jerusalem was surrounded and, just hours later, Israeli ground forces penetrated deep into the West Bank. When they reached the outskirts of ancient Jericho, just before sunset on the first day, they received orders to snatch the entire West Bank for Israel.¹⁵

Fatima's nephew announced that nearby villages were being surrounded by Israeli forces—or, as he put it, in simple parlance, “the Jews.” “We’re losing our land!” he yelled. Next morning, refusing to panic, Fatima still sent eleven-year-old Khalid and his sisters to school while her father set off to work his fields. But the old man quickly returned. In great distress, he ordered Fatima to arm herself with a kitchen knife, telling her, “The Jews are coming. You can’t die like an animal—defend yourself!”¹⁶

Like much of the Arab world, many in Silwad believed the propaganda that beamed in from Cairo. They believed the Egyptians’ wildly exaggerated accounts of Arab victories in the making. In the streets of Amman, the Jordanian capital, crowds cheered fighter jets that roared overhead, going into Israeli airspace. These, they thought, were Egyptian fighter jets that would

show no mercy to the Israelis.¹⁷ In fact, they were the Israeli Air Force returning from the preemptive strikes, which had wiped out virtually the entire Egyptian air force. Abdul Fatah, Fatima's uncle who ran a grocer's store in Silwad, was captivated by Radio Cairo. He told his niece, "We are winning! We'll have lunch in Tel Aviv!"¹⁸

But a mere twenty-four hours later, Silwad fell without a struggle. There was no organized resistance—just a brief skirmish, in which one local was killed. Israeli troops moved through the streets, ordering locals to hang a white flag out front as a sign they would not resist. As the first nighttime curfew was imposed and their new Israeli overlords dug in across the West Bank, Fatima's mother submissively hung the universal sign of surrender on the doorjamb of her fearful daughter's home.

Fatima had no way to contact Abd Al-Qadir in Kuwait. Under the control of an occupying army of young Israeli men, she worried greatly for her daughters, seventeen-year-old Safiyah and fourteen-year-old Miriam. Her aunt Haleema wanted to flee to caves up in the mountains, but, as the head of her household, Fatima was defiant. "They can destroy my home if they want to—but I'm not leaving," she declared, words that rang in her children's ears.

Realizing just how badly the war had gone for the Arab armies, Abd Al-Qadir and Abdul, his older brother who also was in Kuwait, were gripped by fears that Israeli troops would repeat the killing and village demolitions of 1948. They rushed to Amman, where the older man asserted the authority of age. He argued that it was too dangerous for them both to enter the West Bank, now occupied by the Israelis, and ordered Abd Al-Qadir to remain in the Jordanian capital while he went to fetch their families from Silwad.

Arriving on Fatima's doorstep, Abdul told her to get the children ready for a quick departure. Instead of paying for the lunch in Tel Aviv that he had anticipated as a result of an Arab victory, Abdul Fatah, her grocer uncle, forked out his money for the owner of the watermelon truck to evacuate the family to the Jordan crossing.

As the truck pulled away from Silwad, Fatima looked back into the faces of her parents, who had elected to stay behind. She had packed lightly—just two suitcases for five of them—because the village men claimed they might be back within weeks, or maybe even days. This mess would be settled, they were sure; somehow the Israelis would leave and all the villagers would then return to complete the harvest. But something gnawed inside Fatima. Gazing into the fields, she burst into tears. She had nursed them as she had nursed her children. What troubled her most was the basics of rural life she left behind—

her stocks of homemade cheese, olive oil, dried figs, soap, and the grain she had just set aside as seed for next season.

In a swift and extraordinary mobilization, Israel had seized control of what then prime minister Levi Eshkol described as “a good dowry”—the West Bank snatched from Jordan; Gaza and the Sinai from Egypt; and the Golan Heights, strategically located above the Sea of Galilee, from Syria. Eshkol continued his wedding metaphor: “but it comes with a bride we don’t like.”¹⁹

Addressing the leaders of Israel’s Labor Party, Eshkol was articulating the contradiction that would dog Israel’s existential debate for decades. His anxiety was widely shared and very simple.

Israelis wanted the Palestinian land, but not its people. Amid suggestions that they be expelled—and even that the Dome of the Rock, the Islamic jewel on the Jerusalem skyline, be blown up—the fate of the Palestinians became “the question of the million.”²⁰

The Israeli lobby in Washington went into overdrive immediately, piling pressure on President Lyndon Johnson. American Jews feared that Israel might be forced to withdraw from its new turf without first negotiating a peace treaty with its vanquished foes.²¹ But it was never clear that Israel really wanted one. Back in 1948, Ben-Gurion had concluded that time was on the side of the Israelis—that there was no need to rush to any formal peace talks, which might curtail future opportunities to create what his colleague Brigadier General Uzi Narkis described as “new facts.”²² When the fighting stopped in 1967, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan told the BBC that Israel was happy with its position—that he did not envisage negotiations. Cheekily, he added, “We’re waiting for the Arabs to pick up the phone and call.”²³

There was fierce debate within the Israeli establishment about just what to do with the West Bank. Menachem Begin opposed returning it, and Dayan worked up plans for Israeli military outposts and new Jewish communities on high ground among the Arab villages and towns. The debate canvassed the Jordan River as a new international frontier—or having no border at all. Options for dealing with the Palestinian refugees were calculated clinically. To make them disappear from the new-look Israel, they might be resettled in Arab states—maybe in the Sinai, or across the river in King Hussein’s shrunken kingdom of Jordan. But, even as this debate went on, groups of Israelis were given government grants and armed protection for the first of the controversial new Jewish settlements on Arab land.

There was a slight hiccup when Theodore Meron, a lawyer in the Israeli

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, produced a legal opinion that argued that the settlements contravened a Geneva Convention stipulation that an occupying country could not deport or transfer its own civilian population into occupied territory. Undaunted, the government countered with a claim that, because the final status of the West Bank had not been determined and its inclusion in King Hussein's Hashemite Kingdom in 1950 had not been executed legally, Israel could argue that the West Bank did not constitute occupied territory. To appease early American anger over the landgrab in the Golan, the first settlements were presented as "military" outposts and some settlers even were issued military uniforms. Just six months after the end of the war, there were already ten Jewish settlements in the Palestinian Occupied Territories.²⁴

Vehicle-borne loudspeakers were dispatched to towns and villages, urging Palestinians to leave and threatening those who lingered. When they did leave, their homes were destroyed. Dayan was well pleased when refugee numbers crossing the Jordan River hit one hundred thousand. He said, "I hope they all go. If we could achieve the departure of three hundred thousand without pressure that would be a great blessing."²⁵

The first of what would become decades of collective punishment by the Israelis was dealt to Arab villages and cities that resisted in any way—passively or aggressively. The Israelis imposed curfews; bus services were canceled and businesses were ordered closed. Homes were searched; individuals were arrested and tortured under interrogation. Some were deported, and more homes were demolished.

An effort to co-opt some Arab community leaders—as a precursor to an independent Palestine, whose sovereignty would be hugely compromised—was at times comic and very soon declared to be a failure. So too was a "transfer" program, which called on the skills of those Israeli operatives who had ferried Jews illegally into Palestine before 1948 to now turn their minds to making Palestinian refugees disappear from the Gaza Strip. Mordechai Gur, who was among the first Israelis to enter the Old City on the third day of the Six-Day War, was appointed military governor of Gaza; he cheerfully admitted he was doing his bit to pressure Arabs to leave by deliberately eroding their standard of living.²⁶

And yet many Palestinians simply decided not to move. When an Israeli post office was opened at Hebron, the Arab mayor, Sheikh Muhammad Ali Jabari, treated the assembled dignitaries to a brief but pointed history lesson. He was just a boy, he told them, when the Turks opened Hebron's first post office in the days of the Ottoman Empire; later, during the years of the mandate, he had officiated at the opening of a British post office, and after that a

Jordanian one.²⁷ He was quite confident someone else would take the place of the Israelis.

When the Palestinian rush to the borders stopped, Uzi Narkis wrote: “We certainly hoped [the refugees] would flee, like in 1948. But this time they didn’t. We made buses available. Whoever wanted to, could go to the Allenby Bridge. At first some left. Then fewer and fewer every day, until they stopped.”²⁸ In the end, Israel estimated that the Six-Day War created up to 250,000 refugees.²⁹

The creators of the Israeli state were digging in, making it impossible for their successors to agree to any concessions on what would continue to be the four burning issues at the heart of the Middle East crisis: a return to the 1967 borders, Arab access to Jerusalem, a right of return for Palestinian refugees, and the removal of Jewish settlements from Palestinian land.

In 1968, Moshe Dayan ended up in the hospital after he was trapped in a landslide on an archaeological dig. His many visitors included the Arab mayor of a town that had been assisted by Dayan in the postwar confusion. When Palestinian homes had been demolished, the Israeli warrior with the trademark eye patch had had some of them rebuilt. Later, Dayan spoke of the special bond he believed he had with the mayor, who had come to his bedside bearing oranges still on the branch: “The situation between us is like the complex relationship between a Bedouin man and the young girl he has taken against her wishes. But when their children are born, they’ll see the man as their father and the woman as their mother. The initial act will mean nothing to them. You the Palestinians, as a nation, do not want us today, but we will change your attitude by imposing our presence upon you.”³⁰

The Six-Day War changed the Middle East—and the contest between Jews and Palestinians—forever. The two were locked in a crude vise that, in the abstraction of a child’s mind, the boy Khalid could feel tightening. In Silwad, the children had been allowed to sit in the village circles, as old men drank their tea and told stories of Palestinian heroics amidst the overpowering losses of 1936 and 1948. In the weeks before the Six-Day War, the boy had had a sense of foreboding as the elders hunkered around the radio, and his instinct had sharpened as air-raid drills interrupted classes at school. The danger had become real and present when he raced to the top of Al-Asour, Silwad’s mountain backdrop, to cock his ear for the thump of artillery as he and his schoolmates gawped in the direction of Jerusalem in June 1967.

Khalid Mishal would forget none of this.