



## DAHER AL -UMAR'S REGIME IN PALESTINE ACCORDING TO IBRAHIM NASSRALLA'S PALESTINIAN COMEDY

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### **Abstract:**

*The Palestinian Comedy* is a series of novels, which is considered to be a dramatic epic and a historical narrative, and in which, Ibrahim Nassralla recorded the history of Palestine since the Ottoman Empire, until this age, through seven novels. This study deals with the Palestinian administrative, political, economic, social, religious and cultural conditions as they are reflected in the events of the novel *Qanadil Malik al-Jalil/ The Lanterns of the King of Galilee*, in 86 years (1689-1775). The study focuses on the deep reflection on the actual and spiritual history of Palestine and at the same time on an exceptional historical leader, Daher Al-Umar, who was unique in his understanding of the values of dignity, justice, freedom, the right to live and religious tolerance, in a way that was ahead of his time.

**Keywords:** Daher al-Umar, Ottoman rule, Palestine, historical, commercial, social, religious and cultural life

### **1. Introduction: Who is Ibrahim Nasralla?**

He started as a photographer, then he moved, with his quill, to visual art. He held his pen writing poems. Nassralla was born in 1954 for Palestinian parents, who were expelled from their lands (al-Burayj village, 28 kilometers in the western part of Jerusalem) in 1948 A.D. Ibrahim Nasralla studied at the International UNRWA Schools in Amman-Jordan, and continued his studies at UNRWA- a Training Centre for Teaching in Amman, and earned his diploma of education and psychology. Then, he worked as a teacher in Saudi Arabia, then he returned back to Jordan, and worked in journalism. Then he was promoted to be a cultural counselor and a supervisor of literary activities in Darat al Funun – Abd el Hameed Shoman's institution. Finally, he devoted himself to writing. At present, he is a member in Jordan Media Monitor – JMM, and the General Union of Arab Literatures and writers. He has written a collection of poems called *Nu'man Yastariddu Lawnahu* (Anemone Regains Its Colour)

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(1984/2006), and a number of novels. His literary compositions were translated to many other languages. His literary works achieved numerous awards.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. *The Palestinian Comedy: A Series of Novels*

One of his most important accomplishments is the narrative series of novels titled *The Palestinian Comedy*, which is considered to be a dramatic epic and a historical narrative, and in which, Ibrahim recorded the history of Palestine since the Ottoman Empire, until this age, through seven novels which cover 250 years and are arranged in the as the following sequence:

1. *Mujarrad Ithnan Faqat/ Just the Two of Us*, Arabic edition (1992), Italian edition by Ilisso under the title "Dentro la notte" (2004), and English edition under the title *Inside the Night* by The American University in Cairo Press (2007). Its events start after the Israeli Independence Day, called al-Nakba Day by the Palestinians, and end at the time after Oslo Interim Agreement in 1996.
2. *Tuyur Amina / Birds of Caution* 1(996). Its setting is in the Palestinian Refugee Camp in Jordan during 1967-1950; that is, after the Nakba Day and before the Six Days War in 1967.
3. *Tifl al-Mimha/ Eraser Child* (2000). Its events take place in different periods in the life the Palestinians before and after the Nakba (1848)
4. *Zaytun al-Shawari' / Olive Trees of the Streets* (2002). Its events start before al-Nakba and end in the middle of the nineties of the last century. Its events take place in the Palestinian Refugee Camp in Jordan.
5. *Aras Amina / Safe Weddings* (2004). Arab Scientific Publishers, (2009). Its events take place in Gazza Strip during the Second Palestinian Intifada.
6. *Under the Midmorning Sun* (2004). (English, Arab Scientific Publishers, 2009). Its events take place in the West Bank, many of which take place specifically in Ramallah during the period after Oslo Interim Agreement and the Second Palestinian Intifada.
7. *Zaman al-Khoyul al-Baydha' / Time of White Horses* (2007). Shortlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction, Translated by Nancy Roberts and published by the American University in Cairo Press. Its events start at the end of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and end with the Day of the Catastrophe, known as Day of al-Nakba in 1948.
8. *Qanadil Malik al-Jalil/ Lanterns of The King of Galilee* (2012). Its events start at the end of the seventeenth century and covers, nearly, the whole 18<sup>th</sup> century (1689-1775).

Ibrahim says about the "Palestinian Comedy" Project:

*"The Palestinian Comedy" as a narrative project is a dream that I had for more than 16 years, out of responsibility, when many of our parents and grandparents passed away taking the largest part of their memories with them to their graves." That time, I read a sentence by Ben Gurion, which says: "Their eldest will die and their youngest will be forgotten", and that frightened me. Thus, I started collecting personal evidence and statements for several old people who had a strong*

<sup>2</sup> Al-Rashid, Jawdat Kamel. Daher al-Umar. Retrieved on 23/06/2015: <https://docslide.net/education/-5589a918d8b42a5f6b8b46fa.html>

*memory, resulting in more than seventy hours of working on evidence for a year and a half. That was before publishing Barari al-Hummal/ Prairies of Fever (1985), a while ago. I figured then that I would write only one novel on the Palestinian issue, but I discovered that evidence is not enough. As a result, I established a library that contains of social and political issues concerning Palestine since the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and started studying customs, traditions and popular beliefs, which granted me a more beautiful and precise conception of the Palestinian Spirit. However, after every single progressing step I was backed off even more. Now I tell that I did well, because as the days passed, I realized that an issue such as the Palestinian one will not be covered by only one certain novel. In a time that I wasn't tending to trilogies or quartets, and I think that when I decided to change that to a project including five or six novels, with distinctive questions, characters and, literary formation and terms, it just became more conspicuous and closer to achieve."*<sup>3</sup>

## 2.1 Why Is It a "Comedy", Not a "Tragedy"?

Ibrahim Nassralla was asked in many interviews about the reason for calling this narrative series of novels a 'comedy' and not a 'tragedy'. He answered that a tragedy, linguistically, ends with all the heroes dead. However, the Palestinian cause will not rise without hope, liberation and struggle to assure the light at the end of the tunnel. For that reason, Ibrahim chose comedy, far from the comic, to cover his novels. He used it in the shadow of its different meanings in Arabic, like the person who is inattentive to something but cannot be separate from it. Inattentive hearts are heart that is pretending to be busy. Nansralla avoided applying the term "comedy" comedy literally, but applied its connotations and formal semantics in the Arabic Language. For example, an adherent of something is a person who strongly supports certain, principles, values, traditions, ideas or creeds. Therefore, adherent or adhesive hearts are hearts that are strongly related to certain principles and values.

## 2.2 The Novel of "The Lanterns of the King of Galilee"

At the beginning of the novel the writer emphasizes its background, setting and plot. He says:

*"In the eighteenth century, on the shores of Lake Tiberius among the mountains of Galilee, ab ordinary man began his journey toward the greatest aim anyone could hope to achieve in those days, namely, the liberation of his land and establishment of an autonomous Arabs state in Palestine. In so doing, he was destined to challenge the rule of the most powerful state in the world at the time, the Ottoman Empire, which had extended its way over the continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa. The man's name was Daher al-Umar al-Zaydani (1689- 1775)".*<sup>4</sup>

According to historical sources, Daher al-Umar was the son of a *multazim* or tax-gatherer for the Ottoman Empire. His family had contacts with both the region's Bedouin community and with the Maan and Shihab emirs of southern Lebanon — a reminder of the unnatural and a

<sup>3</sup> To read about the *Palestinian Comedy* in Turkish, see: Bostanci, Ahmet (n.d.) *Ibrahim Nusrallah ve Filistin Konulu Romanlari*. Ammam: Dar Noon.

<sup>4</sup> Nassralla, Ibrahim (2011/15). *The Lanterns of the King of Galilee*. Beirut: al-Dar al-Arabiyya li al-'Ulum Publishers. p. 9.

historic nature of the borders which are now enforced on this part of the Middle East. Drawing on these various allegiances and on the frustration of many Galileans at the high taxes and arbitrary rule of the Ottomans, Daher al-Umar founded what was effectively an independent kingdom in northern Palestine, acquiring titles which included governor of Safad, Sheikh of Akka (Acre) and Galilee, and emir of Nazareth.<sup>5</sup>

We understand from that the Nassralla's lanterns shone for a about a century, which is the period of Daher al-'Umar. This is a phenomenon that historians, researchers and artists rarely looked at it till the writer Ibrahim Nasralla arrived and cleaned some of the dust from a fundamental period in the Palestinian history and artistically revealed personal features that resemble the mythical characters in their birth, evolution, development, challenges and achievements in their tragic end."<sup>6</sup>

### 2.3 The Title of the Novel of "*The Lanterns of the King of Galilee*"

Ibrahim Nasralla presents in his novel *Lanterns of the king of Galilee* the character of Daher al-Umar as a legendary and mythical hero who suckled the horse, indicating Hai Ibn Yaqdhan's legend. However, his legend also depends on folktales, customs and traditions. The most significant tale that the novel contains are indicated in the title. Employing the lanterns refers to the popular belief that was prevailing, which states that people lighten their own lanterns and wait for the first one to be extinguished, and guess the age of the person whose lantern was extinguished first, and according to that they know that he will die first. Daher al - Umar and his three brothers, Saad, Saleh and Youssef lightened their lanterns to know who was going to live the shortest period of time to assign him the hardest mission:

*"The lantern-lighting ritual was a last resort for people who disagreed over some question that touched on matters of life and death, and the number of parties to the disagreement determined how many lanterns would be lit. The person whose lantern went out first was believed to be the one destined to live the shortest life, and he would be chosen for the most difficult task".<sup>7</sup>*

The events in the novel take place and depend on this belief. Thus, after Omar al-Zaydani's death, his sons conflicted on who will be responsible for Tiberias, and they all tried to avoid the responsibility for that. They finally resorted to other measures- the lanterns- to judge:

*"The four lanterns were breathing their last, and the four brothers were about to discover the order in which they would bid farewell to this world. The flame of Daher's lantern tilted and*

<sup>5</sup> Irving, Sarah. 2015. "Romance and adventure in eighteenth-century Palestine". Retrieved on 11 February 2015: <https://electronicintifada.net/content/romance-and-adventure-eighteenth-century-palestine/14265>

<sup>6</sup> Nassralla, Ibrahim (2014). *The Lanterns of the King of Galilee*. Translated into English by the American translator Nancy Roberts and published by the American University in Cairo Press. For reviews and comments on the novel in English, see: Irving, Sarah. 2015. Romance and adventure in eighteenth-century Palestine. *The Electronic Intifada*, Retrieved on 11 February 2015:

<https://electronicintifada.net/content/romance-and-adventure-eighteenth-century-palestine/14265>.

<sup>7</sup> Nassralla, Ibrahim (2014). *The Lanterns of the King of Galilee*, p. 32.

*straightened again. Then its head fell into the darkness. He raised his head. The others looked half dead. "The game's over," he said, "and you all win!"*<sup>8</sup>

Employing the lanterns extends over the whole novel, on the level of language and events. Thus, the first word we identify is "lanterns". And maybe employing the lanterns is, on the one hand, to lay out the general atmosphere in the novel in its social and legendary extent and aspects of the popular awareness during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. But on the other hand, it is to present the contradictory perceptions on the awareness of legends relating to lanterns which prevail. According to that, the legend tells that the one whose lantern will be extinguished first will live the shortest period of time in his life. However, Daher al -Umar lived eight six years, contrarily, and reigned over the country for 65 years. Daher al -Umar represented the contradictory awareness of a legend, which was indicated by his behavior, courage, statements, and by what he said to his brothers: *"I am afraid of death. But the fact that my lantern went out before yours can't possibly frighten me. I'll do my best to drive death out of Tiberias"*<sup>9</sup> ; by his statement to his brother, Saeed: *"Gone are the days when we waited for the lanterns to go out. The Ottoman authorities have left us no choice but to light them, then light them again whether we're dead or alive"*<sup>10</sup> ; and by his statement to his friend, Bishr: *"If you want to see the world, Bishr, you're going to have to light your own lantern"*.<sup>11</sup>

#### **2.4 The Lanterns in the Novel of "The Lanterns of the King of Galilee"**

Ibrahim Nasrallah lightens his own lanterns over Daher al -Umar's personality since he was born, and over all the details of life during his regime, socially, historically- politically, culturally, educationally and religiously. Daher al -Umar is the first Arab who reigns over the country that time, who was responsible for his father's mission of levying Al Miri taxes when he was fourteen years old. He was also the first to establish an independent Palestinian country. Ibrahim also indicates that he depended on two biographies of Daher al-Umar, written by Michael el Sabbagh and Abboud el Sabbagh, which do not exceed one hundred pages, and which include a lot of contradictions, brevity and conciseness. He also depended on a book titled "Daher al-Umar" by the writer Tawfiq Muammar, the lawyer, which discusses Galilee history specifically, and the Syrian cities and towns.<sup>12</sup>

In that regard, what concerns me is to present the different living dimensions and aspects during Daher al -Umar's regime, in order to be able to trace the transformations after Al Zayazdneh. And that what Nasrallah presents in his novel *Time of White Horses*.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 33.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 45.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 133-134.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 76.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 11.

### 3. Aspects of Life in the Novel during Daher al -Umar's Regime

#### 3.1 The Historical-Political Level

On the realistic historical level, Nasrallah's novel embodies the first Palestinian attempt to establish a liberal and independent Palestinian residence of the Ottoman Empire's authority. Perhaps, like the first striving attempt which sought to establish an independent Arab nation and residence in the East, he would start with the Palestinian lands and territories. Beyond any doubt, he has achieved his goals and accomplishments immeasurably in that time, which was represented by authorizing Akko, Jaffa, Haifa, Galilee, Irbid, Ajloun, and parts of Syria, Houran and Sidon, while the latest was occupied by his allies al- Matawila, Shiites in the Emirate of Mount Lebanon in the south, and Beirut by the Shihab dynasty, while only Tripoli Seaport was authorized by the Ottoman leader.<sup>13</sup>

Daher al -Umar's regime can be divided into three essential stages which all appeared in the novel: expanding his investigation on Galilee until its reunification by al-Zayazdena during the years 1730 to 1746. The second is reinforcing his reign in Akko and Galilee, and trying to expand on other Palestinian districts from 1746-1770. The last stage is his alliance with the ruler of Egypt, Ali Bek al-Kabir until the end of his regime during the years 1170-1775. Daher al -Umar had taken Tiberias as a residence and stronghold. Thus, he built it and fortified it and started to behave as a local governor, and not just as a person who is committed to levy taxes. He worked on winning the peasants' hearts and on allying with the strong tribes. In 1742, Suleiman Pasha the Great to lay siege on Tiberias and destroy the rule of Daher al -Umar. However, he could not because of the territorial inviolability of Tiberias. After Suleiman's death, Daher al – Umar dedicated himself to supporting his reign in Galilee and moving his capital city in Tiberias, from Damascus to Akko. That was in 1746. Daher al-Umar took the advantage of his economic and financial potential to reinforce his relations with the representatives in the country.<sup>14</sup>

Since the forties of the eighteenth century, he worked on establishing a regular army, on which he could depend on for years. Then he expanded his reliance on mercenary soldiers, in addition to local soldiers. After he had expanded his reign on Galilee, he looked forward to expanding farther. During his attempt to achieve that, he faced strong resistance by the local families that governed Gaza, Nablus and Jerusalem in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century A.D. He succeeded in occupying Haifa and its neighborhoods. Then he occupied the surrounding villages.

The Ottoman Empire decided to demolish Daher al-Umar after he crossed the red lines by allying with Ali Bey al-Kabir and the Russian Navy. The Empire appointed Pasha Al Misri

<sup>13</sup> Cohen, Ammon. (1973). *Palestine in the Eighteenth Century- Patterns of Government and Administration*. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University; Al-Rashid, Jawdat Kamel. Daher al-Umar. Retrieved on 23/06/2015: <https://docslide.net/education/-5589a918d8b42a5f6b8b46fa.html>

Yanni, Jurji. (1903), Daher al-Umar. *Al-Muqtataf*, 28. Sabbagh, Michael. (1935) *Tarikh al-Sheikh Daher al –Umar al-Zaidani Hakim Akka wa Bilad Safad*. Lebanon: Matba'at al-Qiddis Boulus. Farid, Muhammad Bek. (1912). *Tarikh al-Dawla al Uthmaniyya*. Eygpt: Matba'at al- Taqaddum.

<sup>14</sup> Manna', Adel (2003). *Tarikh Falastin fi Awakher al-'Ahd al-'Uthmani* 1700-1918, p.59-62 & 70-71. Rafeq, Abd al-Karim (1990) *Falastin fi 'Ahd al-'Uthmaniyyin*, 1, pp. 709-717. Bazili, Qustantin, (1989). *Suriyya wa Falastin That al-Hukm al-'Uthmani*. pp. 51-59 & 63-68.

as a leader to the Ottoman campaign of wiping out Daher al -Umar. However, Othman Pasha al-Misri was worried about this encounter with Daher al -Umar, and therefore, they came to an agreement at the end of the year 1773 which states that he will be appointed a ruler in Gaza, Nablus, Jaffa , Ajloun and Sidon, in which, he had to levy taxes. However, the Ottoman Empire refused this agreement, and when it stopped the war with Russia, it dedicated itself to confront Daher al-Umar. According to that, it sent a navy, led by Captain Hasan Pasha to get rid of Daher al-Umar, whose sons had rebelled against him, and whose allies have withdrawn.

Daher al-Umar's assassination was by al-Dankizli, who killed him and cut his head off, and commended it to the Ottoman Navy, expectantly for his remission of penalty in August, 1775-8.

*“Al-Dankizli aimed and fired his fatal shot into Daher’s heart. But he didn’t fall. He remained standing, blood gushing out of his chest and his eyes fixed on al-Dankizli’s face- the powerful, penetrating eyes al-Dankizli knew so well. Drawing his sword, al-Dankizli lunged at Daher and, with all the strength he could muster, cut off his head. As the blood streamed out of his body, it turned into the hugest lantern flame under the sun, and began burning more brightly”*.<sup>15</sup>

With the murder of Daher al-'Umar at the end of 1775 by one of his Moroccan soldiers, the rule of al-Zayadena in Palestine ended. In one of his famous quotes, Daher al-'Umar said about his sons: My sons!?! I swear by God that since they grew up, I haven't seen them doing anything except sending the wind after the wind to extinguish what remained of the light of the lantern! They wish me a lot of darkness!

### 3.2 The Cultural Level

Daher Al-Umar's constructional effects are still obvious, in all northern districts and in Palestinian coast, except for Safed, which extends from Tiberias and Nazareth, to Acre (Akko) and Haifa, and ends in Jaffa, which was represented by establishing high mosques, churches, castles and boundary walls that give evidence to his historical presence then. Furthermore, and according to the writer Ibrahim Nasrallah, this historical Palestinian culture and landmarks form a challenge belongs to a Zionist statement: *"A land without a nation for a nation without land."* Tiberias boundary walls, its mosques and some of its churches were built by Daher al-Umar himself. In addition to that, he also established in Nazareth al-Saraya, (the old building of the municipality which exists in the old market) which represents a pattern of the Palestinian cultural civilization, which constitutes a proof that Palestine is an original pure constituent of the Bilad al-Sham's (the Levant's) culture, not only by foods and drinks, but also by civilization.

### 3.3 The Commercial Level

Daher al-Umar succeeded in turning the importing agricultural Palestinian community to a marketing and an exporting agricultural community. During his reign, cotton's agriculture developed in the northern coasts of the country. For that reason, he established khans in Akka (Acre) to store the cotton. The most popular khan is Khan al Shawarda. In other words, cotton

<sup>15</sup> Nassralla, Ibrahim (2014). *The Lanterns of the King of Galilee*, p. 542.



agriculture was monopolized and he prevented French merchants from buying it directly from the peasants as it used to be before. Accordingly, he increased the cotton agriculture with the help of peasants and exported the cotton to French merchants and got a large profiting income for the Palestinian peasants and relatively at a low price for French merchants. All the profits he gained from cotton revenues increased the budget of country with money which was invested in building Palestinian cities and constructional projects.

*“Opening it’s gates to traders from Russia, Italy, France, and Malta, the city was filled with cotton and wool textiles, sugar, weapons, paper, and glassware, and the ships that had brought these goods would sail away laden with cotton, linen, wool, soap, wheat, oil, and sesame.”<sup>16</sup>*

Akka developed quickly until it became an international commercial center. It also became a focal point for emigrants from the nearby villages. In addition, the residence of some Greek Orthodox citizens from Cyprus in Akka made it easier for agriculture to develop. Akka became a glamorous lively and energetic town.

### 3.4 The Educational – Human Level

Anyone who reads this novel-epic and analyzes Daher al-Umar's epic personality, will find that he is an exceptional leader who has unlimited vision, while his behavior embodied a coherent ethical and valuable system which achieved justice, values of liberty and human integrity for all the citizens of the homeland equally and without discrimination . Briefly, Daher al-Umar was an Arab Palestinian Project for achieving liberty, unity and independence, which means that he had a profound consciousness of identity and its aspects, dimensions and its thorough components. Perhaps this part in the novel summarizes the educational values that Daher al-Umar called for:

*“The worst idea anyone ever had was to be a war hero. There are a thousand other ways to be a true hero. This war was imposed on us, and we aren’t fighting in order to be heroes. Rather, we’re fighting in order to be human (...) All we want is to be human. My dream is for you all to be heroes after this siege is over. Heroism means building your country in safety, planting your trees in safety, and not being afraid of your children because they are free from danger. Every man will be a hero when he can roam the streets however he pleases, without anyone harassing him, insulting his dignity, stealing his children’s daily bread, or encroaching on his freedom. I dream of the day when a woman can walk alone through the city or the countryside and be honored and respected by all in the knowledge that she is a heroine, flanked by the spirits of hundreds of heroines and heroes. I want every one of my people, from Lake Tiberias to the sea of Acre, to be a fearless hero. True heroism means for you to be so safe that no other kind of heroism is required.”<sup>17</sup>*

<sup>16</sup> Nassralla, Ibrahim (2014). *The Lanterns of the King of Galilee*, p. 324.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 131.



In another part of the novel he says: "From the moment we stepped outside Tiberias, we swore that injustice and degradation would have no place where we set our feet that fear would have no place where our hearts beat."<sup>18</sup> He also emphasizes that a human's maturation process which provides inspiration for integrity requires full consideration.

### 3.5 The Religious Level

Four churches were built in Nazareth with Daher al-Umar's help and contribution, which are: the Greek Catholic Church which is called a chapel, the Maronite Church in the Old Market, an old church which both churches, the Annunciation Church and the Greek Orthodox Church, were built upon in Mary's Well in Nazareth. This old church was renewed during his regime.

There is an amusing story of this church which says that Daher al-Umar stopped next to the church while he was going to al-Mansi Village in Jezrael Valley (Marj Ibn Amer), so he committed himself to lighten the church forever if he won the battle he was about to wage. When he returned back triumphantly, he dedicated lands of planted olive trees, which still exist in al-Mjedel and in other places, only for that church. Thus, the oil contributed highly to lighten the church.

Building mosques is undoubtedly an achievement. In this context, Daher al-Umar built a mosque in Der Hanna, and also a church -20 meters from it, and thus, the Adhan (which is a call for prayer due to Islamic rituals) and the churches' bells produced a sense of harmony which represented a unique Palestinian hymn which cooperated, and will always cooperate Palestinians in their different religions.

Identity, which Daher al-Umar struggled to achieve and implant, was not of only one dimension, neither of a limited vision based on religious, national or ethnic aspects. It was an identity based on clear and precise awareness of common social reality, concurrent history, and culture with its all interwoven components.

Because of his awareness on that identity he didn't not hesitate to kneel himself in front of the Church of Annunciation asking Mary for victory.

Daher and his forces headed out for al-Mansi at dawn. When he came to the church of the Annunciation, he stopped his horse, and the Nazarene army stopped behind him. He dismounted and walked toward the church (...) He said: "*Daughter of Imran, whom, besides God, can I trust more than you? If you should grant me victory over my enemies' I will remember your gracious favor toward me till my dying day, and your servant Daher will provide oil for your lantern for all time to come*".<sup>19</sup>

Daher al-Umar had a clear level of awareness that an interwoven Palestinian identity should exceed the religious and ideological convictions. To indicate that, a Christian is not "the other". A Shiite is not "the other" too. For Daher al-Umar, the real "other" is the Ottoman invaders that must perish.

Daher al-Umar summarized his evaluation of Ottoman rulers over the country by that they are nothing more than a "single greedy minister". This progressive awareness on

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 198.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 260.

understanding religion as an embodied behavior is what caused Daher al-Umar to tell his brother, Saed the following:

*"What you believe doesn't matter to me. What matters to me is what you would do with your belief: Do you build or tear down? Do you wrong others or treat them with fairness Do you act with loyalty or with perfidy? Do you rob or do you enrich? Do you love or hate? Do you tell the truth or tell lies? Do you liberate or enslave? Do you plant or uproot what's been planted? I swear to God, Saed: if two men stood at the door to my heart- a just man who belonged to some religion other than my own, and an unjust Muslim- I'd let the first one in and send the other one away."*<sup>20</sup>

#### 4. Summary and Conclusions

The study comes to the conclusion that the novel presents a unique personality which Ibrahim Nasrallah considered a project for unification, peace and accomplishments on different bases and aspects. Since the beginning, he combined mythical and metaphorical aspects with realistic facts and truths in order to foreshadow that the novel is about an exceptional and unique baby who is brought to life. His mother died simultaneously. His stepmother, who was barren, could not suckle him, while he refused any other woman to suckle him. Hence, Najma decided that "Halima" the white horse would suckle him. Thus, the white horse and the baby consolidated into one since he was born. The baby and his stepmother, Najma, who honors the land insists on walking barefoot across the sand in order not to lose her commitment to it, also consolidated. Then, Najma who honors and glorifies the land, and Halima, who is a symbol of power, beauty, eternity and graciousness both consolidate into Daher al-Umar's character, whose survival was just a challenge to death, and a victory for 86 years.

Najma emphasizes the strong relationship between Daher al-Umar and the white horse:

*"Horses have a dignity about them that human beings are incapable of comprehending. Horses grieve, but don't let on. They hurt, but without breaking, Daher. It's as though what passed from the white mare to you wasn't just her milk. But you need to remember that in the end you're a human being, not a horse!"*<sup>21</sup>

The novel ends with Najma's permanence in Al Hadiya Village, in which, the events of the novel *Time of White Horses* occur. By this end, Ibrahim Nasrallah ensures the historical sequencing. That is, when the reader reads the footnotes, he will recognize that by reading *Time of White Horses* he will follow history through a chronological order of events, and its development based on different aspects; religiously, politically, socially and educationally.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 243.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 125.

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