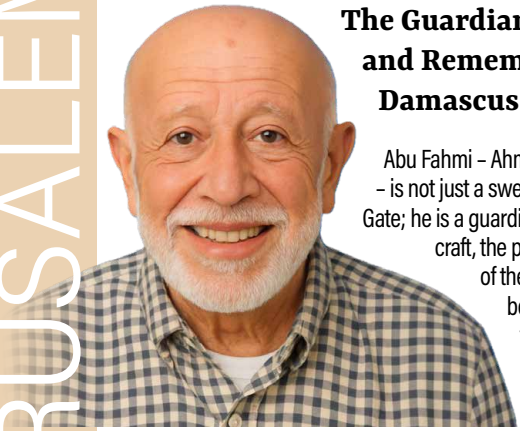
A FACE FROM JERUSALEM

Abu Fahmi

The Guardian of Sweetness and Remembrance at Damascus Gate



Abu Fahmi – Ahmad Taqash, 80 years old – is not just a sweets seller at Damascus Gate; he is a guardian of the roots of the craft, the place, and the heritage of the forefathers. He was born in Jerusalem, inside the walls of the Old City, and received his primary and middle education at Jami' Lulu itself, right where his current corner is located. There, he studied under Shaykha Fatima, one of the old educators of the Old City who raised generations on reading, writing, and proper conduct. Between those walls, his first sense of the city was formed, and the values he still lives by took shape. For him, the Old City is the lung through which he breathes.

He has spent nearly five decades with the same cart, the same stall, and in the same corner under the historic dome of Damascus Gate, making harisa, barazek, ka'ak, ma'moul, and the distinctive qarshalla using the original Damascene methods he inherited from his father and ancestors. People from all over Palestine – from the north, from the occupied interior – return to him, bypassing modern shops, because he offers the flavor of the homeland, the taste of authenticity, and because his presence makes them feel that Jerusalem is still alive, steadfast, and sustained by its people.

Abu Fahmi is a witness to the history of Damascus Gate before the occupation: when it was the Arab transportation hub in the gate's square, where cars arrived from Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Morocco, and where groups of pilgrims entered during Ramadan and the holidays. To him, this place has always remained "the world's gateway to Jerusalem" and the window of the soul onto its history.

As his family grew – seven daughters, two sons, and forty-five grandchildren – he moved to live outside the walls, but he continues to return every morning to his corner, as if his heart were tied there.

And despite more than 200,000 shekels in fines imposed by the occupation municipality to force him away, he has remained steadfast and unyielding, because Damascus Gate, for him, is not just a place of livelihood, it is an identity, a memory, and a right that cannot be sold.