A FACE FROM JERUSALEM

Imran Al-Shawish

Ka'ak Seller on Salah al-Din Street



At a corner on Salah al-Din Street, Imran Al-Shawish – now 57 years old – stands from the early hours of the morning in the exact spot where his father once stood. Imran never completed his schooling; he left Silwan School in fifth grade to join his father, having spent his early childhood walking behind the colorful cart, painted in Jerusalem's typical green and red, learning the ways of the craft and of people before he ever learned the ways of school.

Today, as a father of three sons and two daughters and a grandfather to seven, he still carries in his hands the aroma of bread that is as old as Jerusalem itself.

Imran is not just a ka'ak seller; he is the son of a long line of bakers who used to bring their *ka'ak* from the famed, wood-fired Al-Razzam Bakery in the Old City. Here, Jerusalem ka'ak was born, merging a traditional kneading technique with ancient stone, the dampness of the oven, and the heat of fire. The result is ka'ak that is unlike any other in the world.

People come to Imran by the dozens... Some buy ten pieces, others twenty, and some bring "travel bags" just to fill them with ka'ak and send them to loved ones abroad. For a "*ka'aka* from Salah al-Din" is not just bread – it is a piece of homeland.

From six in the morning he stands beneath his licensed awning, with the Fulbright Research Center behind him and a beautiful Jerusalem scene before him, at the intersection of two main streets. Cars pass by specifically for him, especially on Fridays, Sundays, and holidays, because *ka'ak* with eggs, falafel, hummus, and fava beans is not just a meal ... it is a Jerusalem ritual that opens both the table and the memory.

Imran Al-Shawish is not merely a *ka'ak* seller but the keeper of Jerusalem's aroma, carrying the city's bread and spirit through three generations.