

IN MEMORIAM

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Ibrahim stood in Dar al Islam. He came to treasure the way the Qur'an values the intellect, and worked for a recovery of study and knowledge among Muslims. He practiced the spiritual disciplines bequeathed to the faithful, praying and chanting at home and with friends and in Mosques in various parts of the world. He worked at the compassion central to the faithful Muslim's understanding of the divine, knowing that is what God has called each of us to. It was not easy. The terror of history offers a mixed invitation. And perhaps most of all, Ibrahim anchored his life and work in the hospitality we read about in the Hebrew Bible, the hospitality we see in the life of the Prophet and his companions and in the very best of Arab culture and Palestine society. In our common work through the Ronning Centre from 2008 to 2011, many of us have seen the fruit of his long and demanding journey. When Israel invaded Gaza in January 2009 I watched with horror. Surely there must be alternatives. On the second day I called my colleague and friend. We sat together saying nothing. It was a long, active silence. After an hour or so Ibrahim spoke. He talked of his experience of the trauma of colonization as a child in Nazareth and as a student at Birzeit University. Then he told me that as a young scholar he came to fear that the relentless suffering of the Palestinian people would turn his heart to bitterness and anger, and that in this way he, too, would be colonized and rendered impotent. Now in his fifties, as he watched what was unfolding in Gaza he feared his soul would wither if he did not begin to work and speak with renewed vigour about the struggle of the Palestinians.

In 2010, when we were working with our friends at The Istanbul Foundation for Science and Culture in Turkey, we took one of our long meandering walks at night through the streets and along the harbour of the city of the world's desire. After midnight we refreshed ourselves in one of the little kiosk

restaurants on the lower level of the bridge across the Golden Horn. I sat looking towards the Rustem Paşa Mosque. The moon on its night journey rose over the mosque and glimmered on the water. Such moments fill one with gratitude for being in life, for friendship, and for the wonderful work that has been laid before us. Ibrahim talked of his intellectual formation, his early valuing of Marx and critical theory. Then he turned the conversation to speak about his renewed relationship to the disciplines of Islam, about the language of gratitude and wonder it offers and what it means for us to bow before the Maker of the worlds. Finitude meets the Eternal and we are filled with gratitude, and hospitality becomes our natural habitation. Or so it was for him in both his intellectual and spiritual life, in the life he shaped with Fatima and their two children, Yasmin and Yusuf. Always when we invited scholars to come to Edmonton and join in our work he and Fatima would invite a wide range of people into their home, people from various wings of Islam and other faiths, students, professors, engineers, imams and musicians, all those who make up a vital community of friendship. Many were asked to speak a few words and others to chant and play the music of the human heart. Here faith and reason, scholarship and piety, friends and strangers moved easily together. And now, every time I read the narrative of the Hospitality of Abraham and Sarah, my memory moves back to the Dar al Islam he made with Fatima. May his memory be Eternal.