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BROTHERS IN ARMS

By Laura Blumenfeld March 9, 1997

They were shot within minutes of each other. They were brothers, once, but that was 4,000 years ago, back when the family quarrel began. Now, Yonatan and Fayez were strangers, aiming assault rifles at each other in the dark.

"Kadimah!" Yonatan commanded in Hebrew. Charge. He had the unkempt, handsome look of a garden grown wild. Strain nettled his eyes, and his brown curls were overgrown, looping down the back of his neck. "Forward!" he ordered his troops. "Through the doors!"

Fayez, the Palestinian leader of the guerrillas, opened fire.

It was July 4, 1976, a damp African night, at a remote airport in Uganda. Anthills rose to the height of men. Yonatan leapt in front of the passenger terminal, directing his commandos. Palestinian gunmen held 105 hostages inside, hijacked on an Air France plane the week before. An Israeli rescue squad had flown to Entebbe, disguised as a convoy of Ugandan soldiers, wearing mottled army khakis and green berets.

"We've come to take you home!" an Israeli soldier yelled to the hostages, in English and in Hebrew.

Passengers in the hall were lying on the floor on mattresses. Some began to howl. Others froze. A woman dropped her bridge hand and dove on top of her 13-year-old son; she heard him recite the prayer he had recently learned in school -- the one you say just before you die. A man yanked a blanket over his head, as if the mildewy wool could shield him from the bullets. Somebody shouted, "A miracle!"

A moment before, Fayez had been sitting on a box outside the terminal, his Kalashnikov resting against a low stone wall. He had broad, commander's shoulders and a bootblack mustache. His features lined up thickly, every bone strong. Only his smile was thin and light. Fayez was talking to his subordinates in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The deadline was in 12 hours: If the 53 pro-Palestinian prisoners were not released by noon, the gunmen would begin executing hostages. Suddenly, Fayez heard shots beyond the tall grass along the runway. He clamped hold of his gun and lunged toward the sound.

The midnight sky over the banks of Lake Victoria pulsed orange, as Israelis blew up Ugandan planes on the tarmac. Windows shattered. Hand grenades shredded walls. The air was burnt and coppery with the smell of blood.

A single slug pierced the skin below Yonatan's right collarbone. It sliced through him sideways, exiting his left hip, shearing open everything in its path. There wasn't much blood on the ground. He bled to death inside himself. Fayez's body was drilled with so many holes the men who buried him stopped counting.

Fayez, 40, had been a founder of the PFLP. He was a hero to his people. His wish was to die in Palestine. He told his younger brother, Rasmi, back home in Hebron that if he died abroad, to bury him in Palestine. "If you can't," Fayez Jaber said. "Throw me in the Jordan River."

He never made it there. His bones lie in Africa.

Yonatan, 30, was buried with honors in Jerusalem's military cemetery. The commanding officer was the only Israeli soldier to die in the operation. The defense minister hailed him as one of the most promising young men in the army. Television crews filmed Yonatan's grieving family. They captured his 27-year-old brother, trembling with sorrow. He had the same dimpled chin and confident jaw as Yonatan. It was the first time the Israeli public would see the face of Binyamin Netanyahu.

It began with a pregnant woman. Sarah desperately wanted a child, but for years she couldn't conceive. Finally, when she thought she might be too old to get pregnant, she gave birth to a son, named Isaac.

She should have been happy. But during the barren years, her husband, Abraham, took a lover, Hagar. Hagar bore Abraham a son, Ishmael.

Now there were two sons in one house. They quarreled. Who had the rights of the firstborn? Who would inherit the larger share? Ishmael would shoot arrows toward his little brother, and say he was only joking. Sarah churned with resentment. She insisted that Abraham banish Ishmael and his mother from their home.

She got her wish. The family split, and according to verses in both the Koran and the Bible, Ishmael became the father of the Arab people; Isaac became the father of the Jews. Four thousand years later, their descendents are still fighting, over the same birthright. Over the same scrubby grass and stones and moss. Both claim Abraham's inheritance.

They are stuck inside a story, in an ancient grudge between brothers. Even the language both sides use -- Throw the Arabs into the desert! Throw the Jews into the sea! -- is biblical in its intensity.

"It shows you that the problem of peace is more complex than most people think," says Binyamin Netanyahu, with an ironic laugh. "Anyone who has a historical awareness understands the enormousness of the issues concerned."

Some think the story line will scroll on forever, round and round through generations. They say it can never be a tale of compromise, because it is about survival: two sons, one small house. Others believe that it is possible to change the shape of the narrative, and create a new Middle East, by a fair division of the property. The new Israeli prime minister teeters between the two.

When Netanyahu was debating the strategic Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territory in Hebron, he could be seen pressing his palm against his forehead, as if the battle raged not at the table before him but inside his head.

He is not a religious man, but soon after Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 war,Netanyahu couldn't help marveling at all the place names from the Bible. Jews once ruled there; but they were conquered by the Romans, and then banished from their homeland for 2,000 years. As they straggled around, in Diaspora, all they had was a book. Netanyahu's grandfather, a rabbi in Warsaw, could only read about Jericho, Bethlehem and Hebron, where Binyamin and his brother, Yonatan, now ambled. The verses came to life; they were tramping through a pop-up book. Binyamin recalls the joy of climbing the foothills of Shiloh, the first capital of the biblical Israelites. His feet burned and his shirt stuck to his back, but a thought breezed through him: We had come back.

Rasmi Jaber also liked to hike with his older brother. Fayez would lead Rasmi on treks to the Dead Sea and through the orange groves of Jericho. Fayez would take his brother's elbow and instill a simple message about the place his people had owned for as long as memory. "He would say, This is our land. This is our father's land,' " says Rasmi.

Whose father's land -- Fayez's or Yonatan's? To answer that question, the Palestinian and the Israeli left their homes in the summer of 1976 and traveled 2,300 miles to kill each other. Bibi and Yoni

The prime minister knows the best way to lance a blister on the foot.

Thread a needle with thick thread and pierce the bubble. Pull the needle through and snip the thread, leaving half an inch dangling on either side. Keep the thread inside the blister overnight, to absorb the fluid. Next morning, slip it out. Cured.

"Very important," Binyamin Netanyahu says, resting his ankle on his knee. "Try walking with one of these things opened."

He is sitting at a table in a conference room, dressed in a pinstripe suit and black dress shoes. It has been 30 years since his older brother Yonatan taught him how to pop boot blisters.

Yonatan dispensed the advice when Binyamin joined the army, along with this: Your feet and your back are your most precious possessions. It isn't painful learning how to parachute, just buckle down your fear and jump. An occasional fistfight is okay, but remember -- "He who delivers the first blow, wins."

"An older brother is a like a surrogate parent," Netanyahu says. To each other, they were Bibi and Yoni. "The little ducklings, and he's the big duckling."

Bibi waddled after Yoni from the day he could walk, scouting the fields near their home in Jerusalem, hunting for ladybugs and turtles, learning the names of poppies and cyclamen and tulips. And later, learning what to read -- Plato, Ayn Rand, Nietzsche and Poe.

During high school, the Netanyahus lived near Philadelphia, where their father, a historian, taught at Dropsie College.

"How tall are you? How do you look? Send me a color photo," Yoni wrote, like a doting mother, in a letter to Bibi from summer camp in 1963. When Bibi enlisted in the Israeli army, he rose to the rank of captain. Later, he recruited his older brother to join his anti-terrorism unit, the elite force that raided Entebbe.

The brothers were intense, ambitious and insular. "I miss you terribly," Yoni wrote during one of their army separations. "I didn't miss anyone at home as much as I missed you. I think the reason may be that you're the only true friend I ever had and the fact that I think I reached a perfect understanding with you."

Yoni confided to his girlfriend, in a letter about Bibi: "I love him more than anyone else in the world." No matter that Bibi sometimes neglected to write. "Bibi exists and that {is} enough for me."

Bibi believes Yoni could never have made it in the world of politics because of his idealism.

The prime minister is a creature of the surface, a smooth-talking -- critics say shallow -- lily-pad politician. His sentences skitter like flat stones across an issue. Usually, he welcomes interviews. But answering questions about his brother, Bibi stumbles. He reaches, again and again, for the tray of danishes behind him. He checks his watch and rattles his knees. The words for Yoni are stored at a different level, sunken, somewhere safe, below the surface.

Often, in his prime minister's office, Netanyahu will take a break from his duties, and pull down from his shelf a collection of Yoni's letters. He keeps them behind his desk, with a dozen books about his brother's last mission. Bibi will page through the words his brother wrote at Harvard while listening to Brahms, or in the field under a halo of mosquitoes.

"It makes me feel . . ." Netanyahu chokes and gropes for the word. " . . . deeply."

He slaps his hand on the table, turns, and rushes from the room. Fayez and Rasmi

Rasmi Jaber wasn't expecting any visitors. He sits outside his restaurant in Hebron on a sunny afternoon, across from the Tomb of the Patriarchs. Inside the tomb, three years ago, an Israeli doctor opened fire on a room of Muslims kneeling in prayer, killing 29. Today, smoke from grilled meat curls around Jaber as he watches stray donkeys, and Jewish settlers, stroll by.

"My brother?" he says, as if someone shook him from a nap. There were five brothers in all. Rasmi was the youngest. But the pucker between his eyebrows says that he knows which one. He slides a hand across his brown flannel shirt and reaches inside the pocket over his heart.

"Here," he says, fishing out a piece of paper. Fayez. A sepia-toned, 3-by-2 snapshot with scalloped edges. "He became a martyr at Entebbe," says Jaber.

Fayez was 12 years older than Rasmi. Taller and stronger -- once Rasmi saw him fight five men at once -- Fayez was more of a father to him. He would sit with Rasmi in the vineyard, their hands dipping into the same pot of rice, and instruct him on the three things in life one must protect: religion, land and a woman's virtue.

Fayez taught him how to do it -- target practice with a pistol. "He told me the most important thing is to shoot quickly," says Jaber. Once while Fayez was driving, he rolled down his window and told Rasmi, watch. He fired a shot -- the other hand on the wheel while the car rolled forward -- and took down a bird.

"He taught me how to love our homeland," Jaber says. "Nothing else is important. It doesn't matter if you're poor."

They grew up a few streets away from here, in the white stone house where Jaber still lives. The five brothers slept together, lulled by their mother's tales, on a cracked concrete floor, on a pile of woolen blankets. Fayez never finished elementary school, but he liked to read: Marx, Stalin, a history of the Algerian revolution. He would sneak out at night, they guessed, to help the Palestinian cause.

Fayez left the country in the '60s, became active in Arab nationalist causes, lived in Jordan and Syria and landed in Egypt. There he married and became the chief operations officer of the PFLP, number two to Wadiya Hadad.

"When he gave orders, thousands would be with him," Jaber says. He sweeps his hand across an imaginary crowd.

The plaza in front of Jaber is nearly empty -- a couple of Israeli soldiers cawing over their radios, some wet clay pots hardening in the sun. The Jaber family owns Abraham's Mosque, the souvenir shop next-door. But the sign is listing on its hinges, and dust grizzles the olive wood camels. These days, not too many tourists come to visit the tombs of Abraham and Isaac. People are afraid of violence.

"Isaac and Ishmael -- there is a solution," Jaber says. He has a plan to end the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis. Jews who settled here from Germany should go back to Germany. Those from Russia, go back to Russia, and so forth.

"We have a real solution," Jaber says, pleased. "Everybody has to take what is his."

He holds his big brother's snapshot between two fingers. The thin, bird-wing smile is lit on Fayez's lips, his chin tipped, nodding approval. Beni and Ron

The Davidson brothers clambered onto an Air France jet in Tel Aviv, setting off for their uncle's house in Los Angeles. It was to be their first visit overseas, a bicentennial cross-country tour. Beni, 13, and Ron, 17, had read about America in their encyclopedia and picked out their favorite sights: Zion National Park, Las Vegas and the Air and Space Museum in Washington.

It was June 27, 1976. The first leg of the trip would take them to Paris, with a stopover in Athens. On the ground, in Greece, their mother, Sarah Davidson, polished her nails pink. Their father, Uzi, read. The boys drank Cokes and played chess on a magnetic board.

Eight minutes after the takeoff from Athens, they heard a scream in the forward cabin. Two young Arab men thumped by, waving automatic pistols. "This is the Che Guevara brigade of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine," a voice announced over the loudspeaker in accented English. "I am your new commandant. This plane is renamed Haifa. You are our prisoners."

Uzi Davidson pulled out his Israeli military papers, chewed them up, and spit them in an empty Coke can. A few people around them wailed, but mostly it was quiet.

"It was a fear that made you quiet," recalls Sarah Davidson. The terrorists forced the pilot to fly to Libya and then on to Uganda.

After they landed, Beni and Ron saw a group of Ugandan soldiers. The boys were delighted; they thought the Ugandans were there to free them. The 256 passengers and 12 crew members were herded from the airbus into the terminal. Good, the Davidsons thought, we can rest here before heading home. But inside the hallway, a new group of Arabs surrounded them and started giving orders.

The leader of the Palestinians had arrived at Entebbe in a white Mercedes. He had instructions from his superior, Wadiya Hadad, to meet the airbus here. He had just come from Kuwait, where he visited his brother for what he thought might be the last time. When he left, he asked for photographs of his nieces and nephews.

Sarah looked at him. He was a large man, impressive, with a broad forehead. His name was Fayez Jaber; someone said he came from Hebron. She reached over to her sons and drew them close. A Mother's Pain

Cela Netanyahu cradles the magazine cover with Bibi's face on it, as if she were rocking him. Her face glows in the lamplight, in a corner of the living room where she raised him, the lined smile of a mother whose boy has grown up well.

In Cela's other hand, she holds a book of Yoni's letters and begins to read out loud. After a few minutes, she sighs and lays the book in her lap. The spine is beginning to break.

"Now it's 20 years, and we're still in this quandary," she says. Her white hair is piled softly on her head. Her eyes are pretty, still, at 84. "There isn't a day or an hour we don't refer to Yoni, or think about him. He closed the circle of our family." Just recently, toasting her grandson at his bar mitzvah, she said, "Everyone's here, except Uncle Yoni."

Cela is a lawyer, an intellectual who guards her dignity, who never speaks publicly about her children. But this Friday evening, as the orange kumquat tree in her garden fades to gray, she talks a little bit. Her husband, Benzion, 88, is away in the States. Outside, in the streets of Jerusalem, people are drifting home from synagogue for the Sabbath dinner.

"Bibi is not driven by Yoni's death," she says. "His beliefs come from the family."

Benzion was a member of a right-wing group that espoused the right to settle within Israel's biblical borders, on both sides of the Jordan River. If you show any weakness, he believed, you're finished. His influence on Bibi was strong. "The PLO is committed, sinews and flesh, tooth and nail, to the eradication of Israel by any means," Bibi wrote in his 1993 book "A Place Among the Nations."

Above all, Benzion infused them with the credo of family loyalty. The youngest Netanyahu brother, Iddo, recalls that when he was 15, Bibi presented Yoni with the classic Talmudic dilemma: "You're in the desert with another person, and you only have one canteen of water," Bibi said. "You would each need to drink all the water in the canteen to save yourself. You can't split the water. What would you do, take it for yourself or give it to the other person?"

Yoni paused. And then he offered this answer: It would depend on who the other person was. "If it were Iddo, let's say, I'd give him the water."

Cela glances down the hallway to a window at the back of the house. She wears a floral housedress and a red, crocheted shawl. The boys used to jump in through the window, tracking in mud. She enters the dining room, where a copper bust of Yoni peers down at her.

The drawers are stuffed with pictures. It's too painful to look at them, though. Hesitantly, she bends over and cracks open a cabinet. She doesn't usually go in there; she dusts but tries not to look. She finds a pair of Yoni's dented dog tags and his chess set, rattling black and white plastic pieces, and a poster commemorating the daring Entebbe rescue.

She was proud at the time. But there was something else. Futility.

"I was angry. What for?" Why did the government refuse to exchange the hostages for the 53 Palestinian prisoners? "Thousands of prisoners are released today," she says. Indeed, recently Binyamin Netanyahu set free 31 Palestinian women prisoners. The prime minister confided to a friend how searing the decision was, in light of what happened to his brother.

"For that, Yoni had to be killed!" Cela's voice rises. "It wasn't worth it."

She has witnessed enough in her lifetime to believe the Arabs will never be satisfied. Peace? "Ridiculous," she says, bitterly. She clicks the cabinet shut, and straightens her back.

"There will be peace," she says. "If we don't exist." The Blood Still Flows

A two-foot color portrait of Fayez watches over the living room.

"He's been dead 20 years, but he lives with us still," says Hiyam Jaber, Rasmi's wife. "Fayez was the rose of the family," she says. Hiyam knows Islam forbids taking oaths, but she can't help swearing by her cousin all the time, "In the name of the life of Fayez."

She has freckles and long, dark hair, and sweeps gracefully over the stone floor in slippers and a purple crocheted dress. She is carrying a tray of sweet, grainy coffee. Two boys cling to her side. They look puzzled; what's Entebbe?

"You have a hero -- Uncle Fayez," Rasmi tells his sons. The 9-year-old, Wadiyah, is named after Fayez's commanding officer.

Fighting Israelis has become a family tradition. Fayez's father, Abd El Rahim Jaber, sold wood for a living, but nationalism was his hobby. Of his five sons, two were killed in skirmishes. One was deported to Jordan in 1970 and returned just last summer. Rasmi says he has been jailed seven times.

And then there is Rasmi's eldest son, Hani, sentenced in 1993 by the Israelis to a 195-year prison term.

"Hani killed a settler," says the 9-year-old, in a tender voice.

"Killed?" Jaber says, raising an eyebrow. "Settlers beat him. He tried to defend himself." Jaber says his brother killed the settler later, in retaliation for his mistreatment.

"They beat him," the boy repeats.

They all spill outside, and climb up to the flat rooftop. The house where Fayez grew up sits on a hill between the Jewish enclave and the Tomb of the Patriarchs. Below them, a path winds toward the center of Hebron. Wadiyah points his finger at a pile of stones, a hundred yards down the path. On the wall above the heap, Hebrew graffiti says: "Erez Samuel, murdered here on his way to prayer."

This is the man Hani stabbed.

"Hani continues in the same way as Uncle Fayez," Jaber tells the boys.

His 6-year-old son, Muatassem, dressed in miniature army fatigues, has his own story to tell. One day, recently, he scampered over to the army post below, and surprised an Israeli soldier while eating his lunch. He hit the soldier, and the soldier laughed at him.

"I beat him cause they took my brother Hani," Muatassem says, his mouth full of cookies. He used a toy plastic sword.

"And when you grow up?" his mother asks.

"An iron sword," he says, crumbs flying.

After Hani killed the Israeli, Israeli settlers hammered a metal plaque onto the stone wall of the Jabers' house. It is a quote from Deuteronomy: "He will avenge the blood of his people, wreak vengeance on his enemies."

Muatassem can't read Hebrew. But it's a message he has already learned. A Reprieve

All week, the problem of the hijacked plane hung over Yoni, but he was deep in the Sinai desert on another mission. It was Thursday, July 1. There was not enough time to prepare and launch a rescue in Uganda before the terrorists said they would kill the hostages and blow up the plane.

An hour before the deadline, the Israeli cabinet announced it would discuss the release of Palestinians. Soon after, Yoni received a call from headquarters. Come back, immediately. By 10 p.m. he was out of the desert, back at his office desk, scribbling out a plan of assault.

At the Entebbe airport, the French ambassador to Uganda shouted at a distance from the terminal, "The Israelis are willing to negotiate!" Fayez sprung up from his chair and whooped, "Israel has surrendered!" The hijackers extended their ultimatum by 72 hours.

Sarah Davidson remembers how the tension eased that night. Two days before, the terrorists had released the non-Israeli hostages. Those who remained believed they would be shot at noon. Now Davidson had three extra days of life. And though she didn't usually talk to her captors, on this night she did.

"You could have taken a piece of the country in '48," she said to Fayez. In 1947, the United Nations proposed a plan to partition Palestine. "But you refused and fought us."

Fayez suggested that Davidson's Polish parents go back to Poland. "Palestine is not yours," he said. "There is no place for you."

He spoke to her in broken English. It wasn't a frightening voice, Davidson recalls: "I don't want to say he sounded sympathetic, but the more I thought about it, I thought if we had just met in a different situation, we could sit down and talk."

After all, the solution is so reasonable -- divide the land. "There is room for two nations here," Davidson says today, from her home near Tel Aviv.

"Just like in every inheritance, there is enough money for both sons." Sharing the Harvest?

How different from the sons of the imagination. According to legend, God chose Jerusalem to build his holy site because it celebrated an act of brotherhood. Two brothers, it was said, inherited their father's property peacefully. Each worked a field of wheat. The bachelor brother thought, "I don't have anyone to feed except myself." And at night he'd crouch like a thief and throw his wheat on his brother's pile. The married brother thought, "When I'm old, my sons will support me. He has no one." Each night he tossed armfuls of grain to his brother's side. This place became the Temple Mount.

Today, the earth around the Temple Mount is cracked, and pecked by crows. Stringy kittens rub against the butts of soldiers' rifles; Muslims and Jews watch each other suspiciously. In September when Netanyahu opened a new exit to an archaeological tunnel along the Western Wall, Palestinians rioted. Seventy-nine people were killed in three days of gun battles.

So much for Netanyahu's literary, biblical attachment to the land. The riots slapped him with a hot welt of reality. In January, he handed over 80 percent of Hebron to Palestinian rule, withdrawing from the city of his forefathers. But he kept the prize portion of city -- containing the grave of Abraham -- for the Jews.

It was Abraham's grave, in fact, that brought Isaac and Ishmael back together, later in life. The sages say that once the land was divided between them, the brothers reconciled, and that when their father died, they buried him together.

Netanyahu's political rival, Shimon Peres, believes such an amicable resolution is possible today -- partition and coexistence. "I'd rather make the mistakes of naivete than the mistakes of paranoia," Peres says. "I say Ishmael has hands not only to shoot but also to applaud."

But Netanyahu knots his fists and says: "I want to see a change of heart, a reconciliation with Israel's existence."

How different from the sons of the imagination. The brothers of the Jerusalem legend woke every morning and found, to their amazement, that their sheaths were the same size as the day before. This went on until one night they caught each other, secretly exchanging their bounty. They wept and hugged in the moonlight. Old Wounds

Two brothers remain. One lives in Jerusalem and is the prime minister. The other lives 45 minutes south, in Hebron, and sells kebab.

"I don't accept an equal symmetry there," Netanyahu says, "because what the hijackers did, the terrorists, it was evil. It was not a legitimate military action. You had terrorists who sought to threaten the lives of over 100 innocent, men, women and children, for the simple reason that they were Jews. And you had a very courageous Israeli force that risked its life to extract these innocent people from the jaws of extinction."

A snapshot of Fayez is placed before Netanyahu on the table. The face means nothing to him, he says, glancing away. He doesn't recognize the name.

Rasmi knows Bibi's face well. And he heard on television that Yoni lead the assault at Entebbe. He found a certain neatness in it: "His brother is dead for him; my brother is dead for me."

When Jaber learned from a neighbor that Fayez was shot, he felt something explode inside his skull. He flew to Cairo, to Fayez's wife. They sat in a tent, visited by so many mourners that the grass was trampled to dirt.

The family has considered shipping Fayez's remains home, he says, "but to bring him over is to reopen our wounds."

There are moments, Netanyahu says, certain events, that puncture him. "It's an immediate probing of the wound. You have permanent scar tissue on the soul. And something reopens the wound."

Like the helicopter crash last month. Two army helicopters collided, killing 73 soldiers. Netanyahu sat in his black swivel chair at his office and imagined all the phones jangling through the country: "Some of them would get the absolving telephone call from their sons, and others would get a horrific phone call that would change their lives forever."

He rocketed back to that night in 1976, when his brother, Iddo, called with the news. Bibi thought it was the worst moment of his life. He was wrong; telling his parents was worse. He drove to their house, an all-night trip. At 11 a.m., Cela glimpsed Bibi through the window, walking up the path.

"It's Yoni, isn't it?" she said, rushing out.

At a funeral in Jerusalem last month for one of the helicopter pilots, Netanyahu stood by the soldier's 8-year-old sister. He tried to think of ways to comfort her, patting her head, but he knew it wouldn't help. So he simply stood there, and cried. The pilot was named Yonatan; his mother was pregnant during the Entebbe raid. "Both of them are buried on this mountain, in the holy land, in the holy city," Netanyahu said in a eulogy. "Both of them served the country, both of them gave their lives." He concluded tearfully, "We will not forget Yonatan. In his name we will try harder."

And so will Jaber. "I hope Fayez didn't die for nothing," he says. After all, the Israelis failed to release Palestinian prisoners. "I hope we find other people to continue his way."

As for Netanyahu, says Jaber, if he ever comes face to face with him: "If Netanyahu says your brother attacked at Entebbe, I would say your brother attacked at Entebbe."

Netanyahu pictures a more succinct exchange: "Well, I would say the reasonable thing -- don't hijack airplanes anymore."

The prime minister has made no secret of his aversion to shaking hands with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. Some Israelis say it is because he holds him responsible for Yoni's death. Netanyahu dodges the question. He says that when expedience demands a meeting with Arafat, "I try to think, more than feel."

Netanyahu is asked whether he thinks of Arabs and Israelis as brothers. He hedges. "Well, I'd like to think of them as my partners in peace, and I definitely think of them as my neighbors," he says. "History has ordained that two of us live in this narrow strip of land between the Jordan and the sea."

And the lesson from that history?

Jaber says, the eternal lesson: "Hope for peace, expect war." A War Without End?

August 17, 1968, from a letter from Yonatan Netanyahu to his parents: "A kind of sadness has overtaken me which doesn't leave me . . . "I've no doubt that war will come. Nor do I doubt that we will win. But for how long? Until when? We can't wipe out the Arab people; they are too many and have too much support. Of course we shall go on striking them again and again and again, and we shall be fully justified in delivering a more powerful blow each time. Knowing this makes us feel good, but the good feeling is mingled with sadness. We're young and we were not born for wars alone. I intend to go on with my studies; I want to do so and I'm interested in doing so. But I can no longer see this as my main mission in life. Even if studying is the right thing -- right for me and right for Israel -- this isn't the important matter at this time. Deep within my being I'm convinced of this. That's the sadness I referred to earlier, the sadness of young men destined to endless war." A Tomb for the Ages

Inside the Tomb of the Patriarchs stands a pregnant woman, one hand draped over her belly, the other holding a prayer book. Merav Magen, 23, is due to give birth today.

The Israeli settler came to the tomb to pray for perhaps the last time before she delivers her first child. She silently recites the afternoon service, "Blessed art thou, oh Lord -- God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob . . ."

Pigeons flutter against the domed ceiling. The walls are carved with gold Arabic calligraphy, papered over by taped-up Hebrew signs. Even in the walls, there is strife. After her prayers, Magen rests on a wooden bench, her belly round under her long blue dress, her back leaning against the metal grate of Abraham's tomb, her eyes fixed across the room, on Sarah's monument.

"In a sense, it's all Sarah's fault," Magen says, with a smile. "And the struggle continues until today." She lets out a little laugh, but the walls of the room are thick, old stone and it bounces back on her.

CAPTION: Binyamin Netanyahu, left, and older brother Yonatan, the only Israeli commando killed in the Israeli raid on Uganda's Entebbe Airport, July 4, 1976.

CAPTION: Palestinian Rasmi Jaber, right, and older brother Fayez, the Palestinian guerrilla leader who also died at Entebbe.

CAPTION: Above, brothers Yoni, left, and Bibi Netanyahu, in a photo taken around 1970. Left, Bibi and his surviving brother, Iddo. Bibi thought the worst moment of his life was when Iddo called with the news of Yoni's death. He was wrong. Telling his parents was worse.

CAPTION: Rasmi Jaber, standing in front of the Tomb of the Patriarchs. When he learned his brother Fayez was shot at Entebbe, he felt something explode inside his skull. He now understands what he considers the eternal lesson: "Hope for peace, expect war."