



“Zajal” in Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve

Briefing about the history of the Lebanese “zajal”

“Zajal” is an art of folk literature and a traditional form of Arabic poetry in the Lebanese dialect. Zajal is semi-sung and is often improvised. It is usually performed in the format of a duel, or a debate between “zajjalin” (Poets who improvise the zajal) to the rhythm of accompanying musical instruments, mainly the “daff” (tambourine) and sometimes the darbuka. The “zajjalin” are accompanied by the “Reddadi”, a chanting chorus who repeats key verses recited by the poets. In informal events, the audience itself takes this role.

Apart from being a poet and a performer, “Al-Zajjal” needs to be quick-witted, audacious, and eloquent. Depending on the context, the “Al-Zajjal” can sing about beauty, homeland, nature, love... his verses can mourn a dead, celebrate newlyweds, or praise someone - including oneself.

There are several genres of Lebanese zajal, following musical meters and poetic prose, and sometimes slipping classical rules of written poetry; to name a few: Maanna, Muwachah, Erradi, Qasid, Moustahilet, Mukhammas Mardud, Dalaona, Aataba, Mijana and the Chrouqi...

Zajal is a very popular form of oral poetry, closely related to Lebanese customs and traditions, especially in the mountains where it witnessed major developments in the past century. Several poets would join together to form a *jamqa* (zajal group), and contests were organized between the groups, mostly in rural areas, with thousands of people attending.

Today, the Lebanese zajal is inscribed as a UNESCO "Intangible Cultural Heritage" since 2014.

A celebration of the “Myth of Adonis and Astarte” by the two poets: Danny Sfeir and Joseph Khalil About our “zajjalin”:

- Joseph Khalil: he is from the town of Qehmez, one of the local villages in the Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve. He has been writing and singing Zajal poetry since his childhood, and he loves this art a lot because it connects him with his roots, land and ancestors, and he considers it an integral part of his history.

- Mr. Dany Sfeir, head of the *jamqa* “fer2et al noujoum” (team of stars), who stands along the most acclaimed poets of Zajal in Lebanon, and who participated in many zajal performances in Lebanon and abroad - Mr. Khalil Khalil from Qehmez, who has a wide expertise in Zajal, is accompanying us as a choir, and he’s friends with most of the Zajal poets in Lebanon.



1- Maanna

معنى

Joseph

O Jabal Moussa, how rich you are still
Planted with lilies and irises
I was asked to exchange your soil for treasures
I refused and said I would not exchange it for all the money in the world

جوزيف

قَدَّيشْ بَعْدَكَ يَا جَبَلْ مُوسَى غَنِي
مَزْرُوعْ فِيكَ الزَّنْبِقَةَ وَالسُّوسَنَةَ
مَيَّيْ انْطَلَبْ اِبْدُلْ تَرَابِكَ بِالْكَنُوزِ
رَفَضْتُ وَقَلْتُ مَا يَبْدُلُو بِمَالِ الدِّينِي

Rfaḏt w elēt mā bebedelō bmāl lē dēni

رَفَضْتُ وَقَلْتُ مَا يَبْدُلُو بِمَالِ الدِّينِي

Dany

O our mountain, God has loved us more
And after your formation, he sheltered us in your shadows
At your peak, they said that Moses the Prophet has stood
He received God's commandments from our God

داني

اللَّهُ زِيَادَهُ يَا جَبَلُنَا حَبْنَا
وَمِنْ بَعْدِ تَكْوِينِكَ بِظِلِّكَ صَبْنَا
وَعَا قِيمَتَكَ قَالُو وَقِفْ مُوسَى الْكَلِيمِ
تَسَلَّمْ وَصَايَا رَبَّنَا مِنْ رَبَّنَا

Tsallam waṣāyā Rābēnā mēn Rābēn

تَسَلَّمْ وَصَايَا رَبَّنَا مِنْ رَبَّنَا

Joseph

Oh love that lives on within the whispers of silence
You will provide subsistence to the heart of the smitten lover
And Adon will remain the god of lovers
And the most beautiful goddess of love is Astar

جوزيف

يَا حُبِّ يَا عَايشْ بِهَمْسَاتِ السُّكُوتِ
بَيْتَقِي لِقَابِ الْعَاشِقِ الْوَلَهَانَ قُوتِ
وَأَدُونِ رَحْ يَبْقَى إِلَهَ الْعَاشِقِينَ
وَأَجْمَلِ إِلَهَةَ حُبِّ هَيِّيْ عَشْتَرُوتِ

W ajmal elāhet ḥōbbē hēyyī 'Ashtāroot

وَأَجْمَلِ إِلَهَةَ حُبِّ هَيِّيْ عَشْتَرُوتِ



Dany

O Jbeil, our towns are proud of you
And the poet declares in your land his position
And before Adonis, they were falsifying
The true love that people never did justice
And when Astarte's lover slept by the river
The true love, people knew it

داني

يا جبيل فيكي ضبا عانا بيتشرفو
والشاعر بيعلن بأرضك موقفو
ومن قبل أدونيس كانوا يزيفو
الحُب الحقيقي والبشر ما تنصفو
ولما غفي عالنهر عاشق عشتروت
الحُب الحقيقي الناس صاروا يعرفو

El ḥobb el ḥa'ī'i l nāssī ṣārō ya'erēfoo

الحُب الحقيقي الناس صاروا يعرفو

Joseph

Adon and Ishtar in authentic love
A tale from the Phoenician generation, to this generation
No matter what the history writes or states
An unparalleled love story of two

جوزيف

أدون مع عشتار بالحُب الأصيل
حكاية من الجيل الفينيقي لهيك جبيل
التاريخ مهما يكتب ومهما يقول
قصة غرام اثنين ما إلها مثل

Oṣṣet gharām tnāyne mā elehā mātheel

قصة غرام اثنين ما إلها مثل

Dany

Whom our Lord chose as a beauty icon
She couldn't complete the journey with her love
And in honor of our lovers in her memory
And hearts are ignited with love
They must dedicate two statues in Jbeil
In the name of the Loyalty to Adon and Ishtar

داني

اللي ربنا آية جمال اختارها
مع حبها ما كتلت مشوارها
ونا نكرموا عشاقنا بتذكارها
وقلوب شعلت بالمحبة نارها
بجبيل تمثالين لازم يعملو
باسم الوفي ل أدون ولعشتارها

Besmel wafā l Ādōnē wēl 'Īchtārēha

باسم الوفي ل أدون ولعشتارها



2- Erradi

قرّادي

Joseph

I'll tell you the story of a historical tale
A story of love, longing and adoration
And the origin of the story is the city of Jbeil

جوزيف

رح خبركن خبريّة عن قصّة تاريخيّة
قصّة حبّ وشوق وعشق وأصل القصّة جبليّة

Osset ḥobb w Chaw' w 'ech' w aṣl l ossa jbeyleyyī

قصّة حبّ وشوق وعشق وأصل القصّة جبليّة

A story from years ago that many people were interested in
A story of crazy lovers the story of Adon & Ishtar
They lived their life as lovers and left a souvenir behind
And they will remain the most beautiful since the Phoenician era

في قصّة من ماضي سنين
قصّة عشاق مجانيين
عاشو بالعمر محبين
ورح يبقو أجمل حلوين
انشغلو فيها ناس كتار
قصّة أدون وعشتار
وتركو للعالم تذكّار
من عهد الفينيقيّة

Osset ḥobb w Chaw' w 'ech' w aṣl l ossa jbeyleyyī

قصّة حبّ وشوق وعشق وأصل القصّة جبليّة

Dany

O Adon, at any chance your love deserves to be honored
God spoke about whom he meticulously designed Ishtar
Your body laid down and your blood flowed on the Ibrahim river's
And your shadow is still reflected casted on the water surface

داني

يا أدون بكل مجال
عن عشتارك الله قال
جسمك مال ودمك سال
وبعدو طيفك مثل خيال
بيلقلو حبك تكريم
مصممها بإيدو تصميم
عضقة نهر ابراهيم
مبين عا وج المية

Osset ḥobb w Chaw' w 'ech' w aṣl l ossa jbeyleyyī

قصّة حبّ وشوق وعشق وأصل القصّة جبليّة

Joseph

جوزيف



O Adon, with love and longing how lucky is the soil that embraced you
And the muddy river was turbid by your blood

And this valley from the bottom to the top was often worried about you
And the well-mannered people called the valley after you

يا أدون بحبٍ وشوق نَيْال التراب لضمِّك
والنهر الكان كلو روق كان معوكر من دمِّك
وهالوادي من تحت لفوق ياما عتلاني همِّك
والناس الي كلن ذوق سمّو عا إسمك هبي

Osset ḥobb w Chaw' w 'ech' w aṣl l ossa jbeyleyyī

قصة حبّ وشوق وعشق وأصل القصة جبليّة

Dany

داني

O Ishtar, in God's creation you were the title of the principles
Over the most beautiful years your love for Adon was pure

Your gentle and tender heart was full of Jealousy and affection
We have not seen this tenderness in any of the beauties until today

يا عشتار بهالتكوين كنت للمبدا عنوان
ول أدون بأحلى سنين الحب الصافي حبك كان
وقلبك كان برقة ولين غيري وحنية مليون
لليوم بكل الحلوين ما شفنا هالحنية

Osset ḥobb w Chaw' w 'ech' w aṣl l ossa jbeyleyyī

قصة حبّ وشوق وعشق وأصل القصة جبليّة

Joseph

جوزيف

O the gorgeous Ishtar people have always loved you
You have been admired and appreciated and you were known all over the world

The most beautiful picture you can imagine and no matter how skilled the artist is
He cannot alter with this divine image

يا عشتار الحلوة كثير حبوكي الناس من زمان
نلت إعجاب وتقدير ومعروفي بكل البلدان
أجمل صورة بالتصوير ومهما يتفنن فنّان
ما بيقدر يعمل تغيير بهالصورة الربانية

Osset ḥobb w Chaw' w 'ech' w aṣl l ossa jbeyleyyī

قصة حبّ وشوق وعشق وأصل القصة جبليّة

Dany

داني



O Adon, you have secretly and openly shown your love for Ishtar
A long time has passed since this story and your legend remains a memory
Frustrated, Lovebirds are flying from tree to tree
And every day they sing a song to you by the river

يا أدون بيسرٍ وجهرٍ حُبِّكَ بَيَّنْتُو لِعِشْتَارِ
وصارَ القُصَّةُ إلها دهرٍ وبعُدو تاريخك تذكَّارِ
عصافير الحُبِّ من القَهرِ بَتَنْتَقَلُ بَيْنَ الأشجارِ
وكل يوم علا هاك النهرِ بيغَنُّوْلك غنِيَّة

Osset ḥobb w Chaw' w 'ech' w ašl l ossa jbeyleyyī

قِصَّةُ حُبِّ وشوقٍ وعشقٍ وأصل القِصَّةِ جبيليَّة

3- Mouwachah

موشح

Dany

داني

Oh river, your tears have flowed and you have never forgotten the day
The lovers went to you for the last time

يا نهر دموعك ساحو وما نسييت نهار
العشاق العندك راحو بأخر مشوار

El 'ochā' l 'andak rāḥo b ākher mechwār

العشاق العندك راحو بأخر مشوار

I love being by your side every night
As long as you protect your admirer who protects your love back
I shall redeem you by my blood and soul and I will become Adon
In this era would you be my Ishtar

بحبِّ بكل لياليك
شرط تصوني لهاويك
بدمي وروحي بفديك
بهاالعصر انكثو فيك
عجنبك كون
لحكك بيصون
ويعمل أدون
نكوني عشطار

El 'ochā' l 'andak rāḥo b ākher mechwār

العشاق العندك راحو بأخر مشوار

Joseph

جوزيف



Adon, whose only ambition was your love
 He offered his soul for you and he died in the valley
 And People kept visiting the river in the beginning of May
 Where the water color turned into red from the blood of his wounds

أدون لكان طموحو
 قدّم كرمالك روجو
 ومطرح ما بدم جروجو
 ضلّو عالنهرو يروجو
 حبك بالذات
 وبالوادي مات
 انصبغو الميات
 بأول أيار

El 'ochā' l 'andak rāho b ākher mechwār

العشاق العندك راجو بأخر مشوار

Dany

داني

Those who were raised on values and principles through faith and fasting
 They loved and did not hide their love and never feared to be judged
 And who dared to face his God is still until today,
 Mentioned lengthily among those who admire him

يألي عالمبدا تربو
 حبو وحبين ما خبو
 وأدون لواجه ربو
 ذكرو بين البيحتو
 بايمان وصوم
 وما خافو اللوم
 بعدو لليوم
 نشرة أخبار

El 'ochā' l 'andak rāho b ākher mechwār

العشاق العندك راجو بأخر مشوار

Joseph

جوزيف

You, who stole my mind with your magic
 Through the artisanal belt around the most beautiful body
 Each time in front of me you tighten your belt
 I feel my heart squeezed under the belt

يألي عقلي دوختيلي
 بالزئار التشكيلي
 كل ما مزة مقابيلي
 بشغر قلبي عصر تيلي
 بسحرك عنجد
 عا أجمل قد
 الزئار انشد
 تحت الزئار

El 'ochā' l 'andak rāho b ākher mechwār

العشاق العندك راجو بأخر مشوار

4- Chrouqi

شروقي



Dany

From the beginning, the Creator has given his commandment
To live with love and purity, and to remain loyal
The love is the origin of the world, and it never collapses
Unless the hearts betray the commitment

There are two lovers that started their journey from here
They celebrated loyalty to make things easier
They lived happily and contentedly, but time can be treacherous
Made the lover overlook his wounds
And the hearts of every boy and girl are on fire
They became lovers and entered the atmosphere of love and its madness
If they do not have the loyalty of Adon to Ishtar
My advice to them is not to be lovers

داني

من الأصل وصّى الخليفة خالق الأبرار
يعيشو بمحبّة وطهارة والوفى يصونو
والحبّ أصل الدني والحبّ ما بينهار
إلا انكانو القلوب العهد بيخونو
في عاشقين ابتدو من هون بالمشوار
وكانوا يخيّو الفدى تا أمورن يهونو
عاشو بسعادة وهنّى بسّ الزمن غذار
خلّو الحبيب علا جروحو يغمّض عيونو
وكل شبّ هوي وصبيّة قلوبهن عا نار
عشّاق صارو وبعوّ الحبّ وجنونو
ان ما كان عندن وفي أدون مع عشّاق
مّني نصيحة لهن، عشّاق ما يكونو