

AEK Bio Script (for *Jerusalem to Elkader*, Lesson Three; updated November 2021)

(Slide 41; Bio 2) Abd el-Kader was born in 1808 near the city of Mascara, Algeria. His father, Muhyi ad-Din, was a respected religious leader, and his early life was spent learning the skills to follow in his father's footsteps. He became a brilliant religious and academic scholar, as well as a gifted horseman.

(Slide 42; Bio 3) At the time of Abd el-Kader's birth, the Regency of Algiers was part of the Ottoman Empire (point to Regency of Algiers on slide). At its height, the Ottoman Empire circled much of the Mediterranean Sea, but by the 19th century, the empire was greatly weakened, and the Ottomans were pulling out of northern Africa. France (point to France) was anxious to hurry the remaining Ottomans along and establish a presence themselves. France attacked the port city of Algiers in 1830, and this image shows that the Ottomans have now left Algeria (point to image on right).

The tribes of northwest Africa asked Abd el-Kader's father to lead the fight against the French; Muhyi ad-Din suggested instead his 25-year-old son. (Slide 43; Bio 4) In 1832, Abd el-Kader was recognized as Emir, or Commander, of the Faithful.

Abd el-Kader won the loyalty of most tribes in western Algeria, and the next several years were marked by French *and* Algerian victories... and two treaties. During this time, Abd el-Kader became known internationally as a leader of great courage, intelligence, and decency.

(Slide 44; Bio 5) One of the most interesting aspects of the Emir's military career was his insistence that French prisoners be treated humanely. For Abd el-Kader, war was not a reason to ignore his deep religious beliefs about decency and the value of human life. In insisting upon humane treatment of prisoners, he is credited with creating a model that would eventually become the Geneva Convention on Human Rights.

(Slide 45; Bio 6) In 1846 the founders of a new town on the banks of the Turkey River in Iowa chose to name it Elkader, in honor of the Emir's courage and spirit.

(Slide 46; Bio 7) Ultimately, of course, the French war machine proved too much, and in 1847, Abd el-Kader decided that the price of continued fighting had become too high. Part of the agreement he made with the French was that he and his extended family would leave Algeria forever, on the condition that they could live in a predominately Muslim city in Egypt or Palestine.

The French government broke its promise to Abd el-Kader, keeping him and his extended family prisoners in France for nearly five years. During this time, visitors came from all over France to

meet the famous prisoner and were moved by Abd el-Kader's intellect and sincerity. He continued to be an international celebrity.

(Slide 47; Bio 8) This is the Chateau of Amboise, near Paris, where Abd el-Kader and his entourage were held for most of the five years.

Finally, in 1852, Abd el-Kader and his extended family were liberated. They settled first in Bursa, Turkey. Three years later, they moved to Damascus, Syria. (Slide 48; Bio 9) During the 1860 Syrian Civil War, Abd el-Kader and his Algerians saved the lives of over 10,000 Damascus Christians. (Slide 49; Bio 10) In recognition of his courageous actions, the French bestowed on him the Legion of Honor. (Slide 50; Bio 11) On behalf of the United States, President James Buchanan sent the Emir a gift of two Colt pistols.

(Slide 48; Bio 12) In 1873, based on faulty information, the *New York Times* prematurely eulogized the Emir. In that column they wrote, "The nobility of his character, no less than the brilliancy of his exploits in the field, long ago won for him the admiration of the world... Abd-El-Kader deserves to be ranked among the few great men of the century."

Abd el-Kader died in Damascus in 1883, at the age of 78. His remains were taken back to Algeria in 1966, following the country's success at winning--finally--independence from France.