

Expanding the Conversation

A Series by Joseph (Yossi) Alpher

Issue 3

Jerusalem in Israeli-Palestinian Relations



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Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish life, Jewish longing, and Jewish prayer from time immemorial. But it also plays a vital role in Muslim and Christian life. Moreover, its significance in the Israel-Arab peace process is not only religious, but is also of a national symbolic nature — it is the capital of Israel and is claimed by the Palestinians as a capital. Jerusalem is a municipal issue as well: it is Israel's largest city, but fully one-third of its residents are Palestinian Arabs who boycott its elections and vote in Palestinian Authority elections. As the true political hot potato of the Israel-Arab peace process, discussion of Jerusalem in Israeli-Palestinian final status talks was first mandated at Camp David I in 1978, but only initiated at Camp David II in July 2000, where it soon contributed to deadlocking the talks.

This essay offers a brief historical and religious look at the elements of dispute in Jerusalem, explains the evolution of the city's current borders and the role it plays in the peace process, then explores the positions of the key parties to the conflict and the options and guidelines for a solution.

For Jews, Jerusalem is of both religious and national importance. According to Jewish tradition, the patriarch Abraham raised the knife here to sacrifice his son Isaac; some believe Isaac's son Jacob rested his head here during his prophetic dream. King David established his capital here around 1000 B.C.E. His son,

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JERUSALEM

ANCIENT RELIGIOUS-NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE



The Wailing Wall and the Dome of the Rock mosque in the Old City of Jerusalem.

“Jerusalem is Israel's largest city, but one-third of its residents are Palestinian Arabs.”

Solomon, built the Temple on Mt. Moriah, and Jerusalem accordingly became the focus of yearly pilgrimages by Jews. While access to the Temple itself was highly restricted, the Temple Mount was the focus of Jewish life.

Since the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., Jewish law, or *halacha*, has forbidden entry by Jews to most parts of the Temple Mount, where the ancient Holy of Holies was located, and where “heavenly Jerusalem” and “earthly Jerusalem” meet. The Western (or Wailing) Wall, a buttress of the Temple Mount that has survived, is a focal point of Jewish religious life and a central site for prayer.

Throughout Jewish history, attempts to restore or maintain Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel have focused on establishing Jerusalem as the national-religious capital. Jerusalem has never been the capital of any other country. Since 1967, the Temple Mount and the Wall have become a symbol of renewed Jewish sovereignty for religious and secular Jews alike. From ancient times, Jews pray in the direction of Jerusalem, and mention of the city is central to Jewish prayer.

Jerusalem is significant for Christians because it is here that, according to Christian tradition, Jesus was tried, crucified, buried, and resurrected. Most Christian churches have major representations in Jerusalem, with the Catholic and Greek Orthodox playing the leading role. But Jerusalem is not the center of any branch of Christianity. About 40,000 Arab Christians remain in the West Bank and Gaza, out of which 10,000 live in Jerusalem. Most Palestinian Arabs belong to the Eastern denominations.

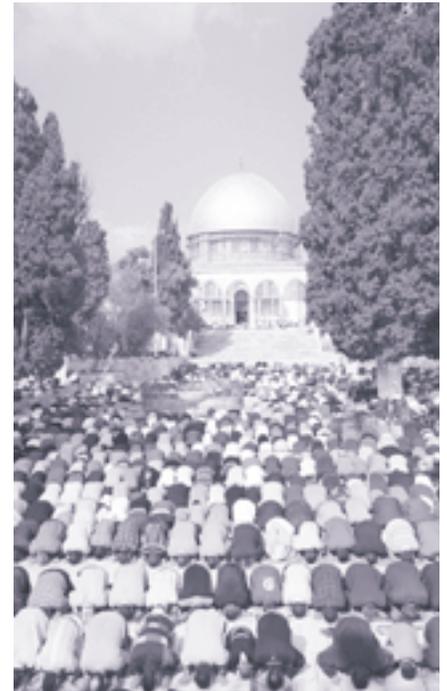
Jerusalem (*al-Quds*, the Holy, in Arabic) is the third holiest city of Islam, after Mecca and Medina. According to Muslim tradition, it was on the Temple Mount that the Prophet Mohammad, after stabling his winged horse, *al-Buraq*, at the Western Wall, rose to heaven to be instructed by the prophets before returning to the Arabian Peninsula. Accordingly, both the Wall and the Temple

Mount have been designated *awaqf* (sing. *waqf*), or Islamic endowments, since the conquest of Jerusalem by Caliph Omar Ibn al-Khattab in 638 C.E. Some strict Islamic thinkers extend the *waqf* concept to all of Jerusalem, and even to the entire Land of Israel/Palestine — a key factor in the rejection of Israel's right to exist by the extremist Arab/Muslim camp. *Al-Haram al-Sharif* (the Temple Mount) holds two ancient mosques, *al-Aqsa* and the Dome of the Rock. In the early Islamic community, Jerusalem was the direction of prayer for Muslims, later to be replaced by Mecca.

Since at least the mid-19th century, Jews have constituted the largest community in Jerusalem. During the pre-State days of the Jewish *Yishuv* (community) in Palestine, Jewish access to the Wall was hotly contested by Muslims, who were awarded custodianship by the British in 1929. That controversy sparked riots and pogroms by Arabs that, in effect, constituted the beginning of the violent stage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Between 1948 and 1967, when Jordan ruled East Jerusalem, it prevented Jewish access to the Wall and many Jewish sites were desecrated.

After Israel conquered the Old City in the June 1967 Six-Day War, it leveled a North African Muslim neighborhood adjacent to the Wall, installed a large plaza for prayer and ceremonial gatherings, and turned over administration of the Wall to Jewish religious authorities. But it allowed the Islamic Endowments Authority — initially Jordanian-appointed, more recently a PLO institution — to continue to administer the Temple Mount. Over the years, Israeli archeological digs and restorations, and the Muslim installation of an additional, underground mosque on the Temple Mount, have been sources of heavy tensions, as have isolated violent attempts by extremist Jews and Christians to destroy the mosques in order to usher in the age of the Third Temple and/or the Messiah.

The holiest sites in Jerusalem, and the center of so much tension and passion over the centuries — the Temple Mount, the Wall, and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher — cover a total of some



Thousands of Muslims pray in front of the Dome of the Rock during the month of Ramadan.

50 acres, or about one-half the size of the Vatican. But there are hundreds of additional, lesser sites of religious significance to Jews, Muslims, and Christians scattered throughout Jerusalem.

JERUSALEM IN THE ARAB-ISRAEL CONFLICT

In the years leading up to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, British and international proposals to partition Palestine between the Zionist and Palestinian national movements generally opted to bestow upon Jerusalem some sort of international status. This reflected recognition of the extreme sensitivity of the Jerusalem issue for a large part of the world. The 1947 UN Partition Plan also designated an expanded Jerusalem, including Bethlehem, as a *corpus separatum* or separate, internationally administered entity. Israel accepted the plan but the Arabs did not, and Israel soon found itself fighting, then secretly negotiating, over the fate of the city with Jordan (then the Emirate of Transjordan) — leading to its partition between Israeli West Jerusalem and Arab East Jerusalem. Israel soon established its capital in the western part of the city (the Jordanian capital remained in Amman). It was attached to the rest of the state by a corridor that was secured in 1948 through fierce combat. At this time, Israel's Jerusalem encompassed some 38 square km. Jordanian Jerusalem — essentially the Old City and a few adjoining neighborhoods — took up only 6 square km., roughly equivalent to Central Park in Manhattan.

Jerusalem's Old City.



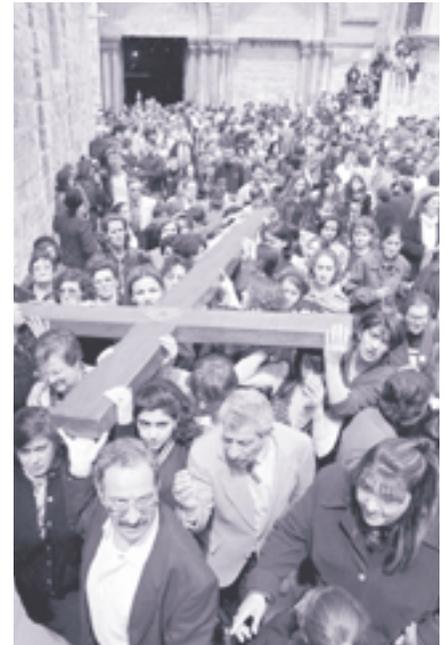
When, in 1967, Israel successfully thwarted Arab designs to destroy it and conquered large tracts of territory, it immediately offered the defeated Arab states a return of occupied lands in exchange for peace agreements. But it also distinguished between the Sinai and the Golan, territories captured from Egypt and Syria whose sovereignty it did not dispute, and those lands (the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem) won from Egypt and Jordan, that had been part of Mandatory Palestine, wherein no Arab sovereignty had previously been recognized. Israel acted quickly, on June 28, 1967, to annex East

Jerusalem. This was accomplished by the Knesset through laws that permitted the government to “extend Israeli law” to unspecified conquered areas and to expand Jerusalem’s municipal boundaries. Israeli legal experts are not of one mind as to whether this precisely constitutes annexation.

At the time, Israel was operating under the assumption that, as in 1949 and 1956, the Great Powers would shortly issue a joint ultimatum to Israel to abandon its territorial conquests and withdraw to pre-war borders without a political settlement. The political leadership — Israel’s first government of national unity, including what are today Labor and most of the Likud — sought at least to annex East Jerusalem with its Jewish holy sites and present the world with *a fait accompli*. Even if all other territorial conquests had to be abandoned and the region again plunged into cross-border tension, Israel would hold onto its most sacred places, to which it had returned after 2000 years.

A hastily convened special committee appointed by the government drew new boundaries for the city, based on the perception that Israel would soon withdraw from the rest of the West Bank, and would have to defend the Old City, the Temple Mount, and the Mount of Olives against hostile Arab military emplacements situated in close proximity. Hence, new municipal boundaries were drawn through isolated Arab villages along hilltops east of the city, and Jordanian emplacements that had been used by snipers shooting at outlying Jewish neighborhoods were incorporated into the city, as was an airstrip north of the city at Kalandia. All told, an additional 70 square km. were added to the city — to the north, east, and south — that included several outlying Arab villages like Sur Baher, and even a refugee camp, that had never before been considered parts of Jerusalem.

The government of Israel, in concert with the Jerusalem municipality, commenced immediately building Jewish neighborhoods in the newly annexed areas, with the aim of fortifying its foothold in the expanded city. When large scale Jewish settle-



Christians reenact the "Footsteps of Christ" along the Via Dolorosa on Good Friday.

United Jerusalem?

During 34 years of Israeli rule over united Jerusalem, neglect of the Arab neighborhoods has been chronic. A series of Jerusalem municipalities and Israeli governments has systematically avoided appropriating the funds and investing in the concentrated planning that might conceivably have given Jerusalem's Arab residents a sense of "belonging" to the unified capital of Israel. The result has been near total alienation of Jerusalem's Arabs, to a point where Israel's record of administering Arab East Jerusalem appears totally indefensible.

According to the *Statistical Yearbook of Jerusalem*, the Municipality, and the Jerusalem Institute of Israel Studies:

- In 1967, there were 3.42 Israelis for each residential unit in West Jerusalem, 4.56 Palestinians per unit in the East. In 1999, there were 3.2 Israelis per unit (a slight improvement), in contrast with 7.08 Palestinians per unit — a drastic increase in crowding. There are 1.8 Palestinians per room in the East, compared with 1.1 Israelis in the West.
- Of the 70 sq. km. Israel annexed in East Jerusalem in 1967, 35% has been expropriated (almost exclusively from Palestinians) for the construction of new Israeli neighborhoods. Of the remaining 45 sq. km., 60% remains unplanned; of the planned areas, 40% is designated green open spaces where development is prohibited. Less than 8% of the lands of East Jerusalem are available for private sector Palestinian development.
- Between 1991 and 1997, 89% of all building permits issued were in the Israeli sector. At the same time, while only 17% of building violations were in the East, 67% of all administrative demolition orders issued were in the Palestinian sector.
- The Municipality's new NIS 600 million "Development Budget" allocates only 8% to East Jerusalem, which contains half the city's area and a third of its population.
- There are 36 libraries in West Jerusalem, and 4 in East Jerusalem; 43 community centers in the West, and 5 in the East; 20 social services offices in the West, and 3 in the East; the Municipal Department for Sports allocates NIS 273,000 to the East out of a total budget of NIS 23.7 million.

ment activity began in the West Bank after 1977, one key rationale was the need to flank enlarged Jerusalem with additional Jewish population centers, and to expand the Jerusalem corridor so as to make it more defensible. Thus, Ma'ale Adummim, to the east, rapidly became the largest West Bank settlement, while Givat Ze'ev to the north and the Etzion Bloc settlements to the south helped create an ever-larger Greater Jewish Jerusalem.

The anticipated Great Power ultimatum that Israel abandon the West Bank was never issued. Instead, UN Security Council Resolution 242 became the basis for a territories-for-peace agreement. As Israel moved into that process with the Arabs — beginning at Camp David in 1977, through Madrid in 1991, into the Oslo process with the PLO in 1993, and in a peace agreement with Jordan in 1994 — Israel's mainstream parties nevertheless evinced a unified position regarding Jerusalem, centered on the slogan "united Jerusalem, eternal capital of Israel," that sanctified the expanded borders.

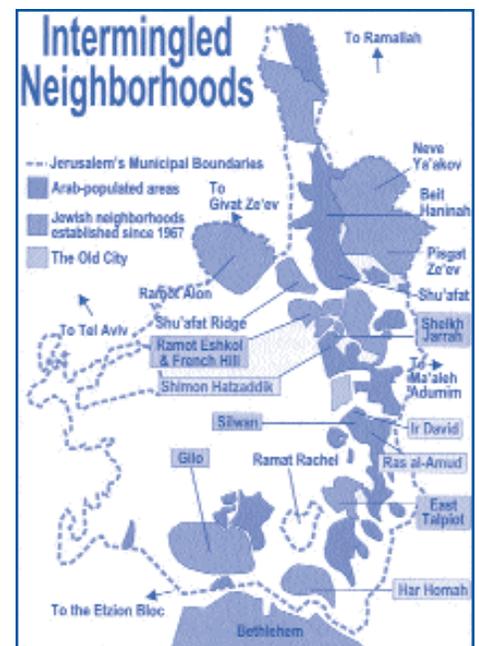
In enlarging municipal Jerusalem in 1967, Israel took control over the city's Muslim and Christian holy sites, to which it ensured freedom of access and worship to a degree unprecedented in the city's history. But Israel also annexed some 69,000 Palestinian Arabs, who now constituted 26% of the city's total population of 266,000. Just as it left the Temple Mount under Arab Muslim authority and avoided flying the Israeli flag there, Israel also limited its own sovereignty in East Jerusalem, imposing only municipal citizenship on its Arabs, and allowing Jordan (followed by the Palestinian Authority) to remain in charge of education, travel papers, and provide some additional municipal functions for Palestinian Jerusalemites. Technically, Israel also offered full national citizenship to Arabs in East Jerusalem. But complex residency, language, and other requirements deliberately rendered this a practical impossibility for all but a handful of persons annually. In any event, most Palestinians in Jerusalem did not seek Israeli citizenship.

Since 1967, repeated Israeli governments and Jerusalem mayors have blatantly neglected the city's municipal development and placed harsh constraints on Arab residency in the city. For example (figures based on official Israeli statistics), since 1967 the government and municipality have sponsored fewer than 600 new Palestinian housing units, compared with 45,000 for Jews. In 1996 the municipality's per capita expenditure for Jews was \$900, and for Arabs — \$150. In 2000, 57% of Jerusalem's Arab population lived below the poverty line. In West Jerusalem, there are 2371 trash dumpsters; in East Jerusalem, 49.

Nevertheless, East Jerusalem has continued to serve as the commercial, cultural, and political center of West Bank Arab life, and has attracted a growing Arab population. By 2000, Jerusalem's 200,000 Arabs constituted 32% of the city's population. Reliable projections placed this figure at 40% for the year 2020. Already today, there is numerical parity (about 550,000 Jews and an equal number of Arabs) within a 20 km. radius of the Temple Mount, including both Israeli and West Bank territory.

As we move to a discussion of the key political actors' positions regarding the main issues of contention in Israeli-Palestinian peace talks on Jerusalem, it is important to note the realities of the situation on the ground today, in 2002. Israel has successfully realized its annexation and expansion goals for Jerusalem in the physical sense. It is no longer possible to effect a demographic-geographic separation between Jewish Jerusalem and Arab Jerusalem. This reality stands in marked contrast to the principle of separation that generally informs Israeli governments' peace policies with the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Yet Israel has failed in efforts to unify the city politically and socially. Even as it has surrounded much of Arab Jerusalem with Jewish neighborhoods, it has not found adequate municipal, economic, or political solutions for Jerusalem's growing Palestinian population; indeed, it has avoided imposing upon them its total sovereignty.

“In 1996, the municipality's per capita expenditure for Jews was \$900, and for Arabs — \$150.”



“East Jerusalem has continued to serve as the commercial, cultural, and political center of West Bank Arab life, and has attracted a growing Arab population.”

After the advent of the Oslo peace process in 1993, the PLO supplanted Jordan as provider of educational and religious services in Arab Jerusalem, and even developed a law-enforcement and juridical presence there, despite — and alongside — Israeli rule. But, in August 2001, following a horrific Palestinian suicide bombing in Jerusalem, the Sharon government retaliated by seizing Orient House and additional PLO and PA offices in East Jerusalem and nearby Abu Dis.

This act gave some temporary satisfaction to those Israelis who seek a way of demonstrating to Palestinians that terrorism jeopardizes their political assets. Orient House has over the years carried out Palestinian diplomatic and municipal functions, and has come to symbolize Palestinian political aspirations in Arab East Jerusalem. But closing it down appeared to violate Israeli commitments made within the framework of the Oslo process — Foreign Minister Peres’ letter to Norwegian Foreign Minister Holst of October 11, 1993, refers to “all the Palestinian institutions of East Jerusalem” and commits Israel to “not hamper their activity.” As such, it sent Palestinians the signal that the peace process no longer constituted an objective of the current Israeli government.

The attempt to close down Palestinian offices that provided services to Jerusalem’s 200,000 Arabs did not reflect any new Israeli government desire or capacity to manage the Arab neighborhoods itself. This is one reason why previous Israeli governments, including that of Netanyahu in 1996-99, had permitted extensive PLO administrative presence in East Jerusalem, which has been rolled back since August 2001.

It is striking to note that, since the beginning of the *Intifada* in September 2000 and until August 2001, the PLO presence in Arab Jerusalem helped maintain relative calm there. For example, the controversial Israeli projects to erect Jewish neighborhoods in Ras al-Amud and Har Homa were not singled out for attack. In this regard, the Israeli move against Orient House was liable to trigger additional Palestinian violence, rather than

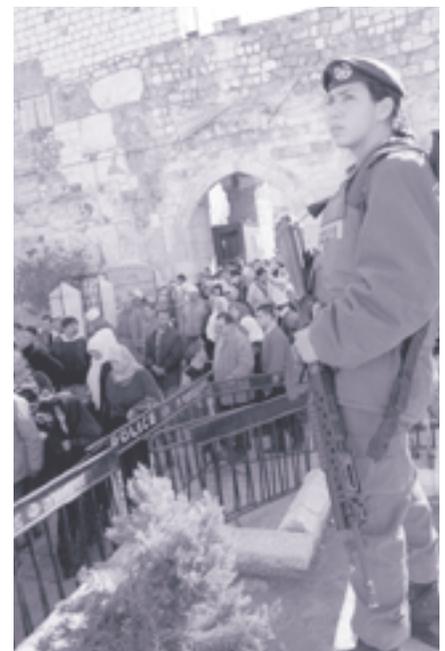
reduce it. And the PLO would undoubtedly find ways and means to replace Orient House with less formal but equally effective facilities that compensate for Israel's conscious incapacity to administer and absorb a sub-city of 200,000 Palestinians.

In some ways, it is fortunate for Israel that Jerusalem's Arabs have by and large refused to exercise their right to participate in municipal elections; combined with the city's growing ultra-orthodox Jewish population, they could constitute a ready non-Zionist majority. Nor has the world at large recognized Israel's annexation — though this fact is mitigated in Israeli eyes by the world's refusal even to recognize West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, before or since 1967.

The official, bipartisan *Israeli* slogan “united Jerusalem, eternal capital of Israel” never fully corresponded with either the facts on the ground or Israel's declared willingness to negotiate the Jerusalem issue. Even prior to negotiations on Jerusalem at Camp David II, Israeli governments and leaders on the left and the right had indicated a readiness at limited compromise on Jerusalem. At the national, symbolic level, a Palestinian state could place its capital just beyond the current municipal borders, for example at Abu Dis, and call this *al-Quds*. At the religious level, the autonomy enjoyed by *al-Haram al-Sharif* could be formalized in a political agreement: a similar arrangement could be applied, for that matter, to Christian holy sites. At the municipal level, Jerusalem mayors encouraged Palestinians to accept a degree of local, borough-type autonomy, and hinted that a final status agreement could comprise a more developed municipal autonomy scheme.

Still, all Israeli governments and mayors continued to champion the concept of ongoing Israeli sovereignty within the expanded 1967 borders. Indeed, as the Oslo process developed and lands in the West Bank and Gaza were turned over to the PLO, the Israeli line on Jerusalem appeared to harden, and the most

POSITIONS PRIOR TO CAMP DAVID II



An Israeli soldier watches over Muslims during Friday prayers as they leave the *al-Aqsa* mosque.

telling attack on a politician was the accusation that he “would divide Jerusalem.” Yet Israel also acknowledged that Jerusalem would have to be negotiated, if and when all the other (implicitly, more negotiable) final status issues were resolved, if ever the parties wished to end their conflict; alternatively, discussion of Jerusalem would be postponed by mutual agreement and the conflict left in abeyance. An additional Israeli political goal regarding Jerusalem, which presumably could only be achieved through a settlement, was to achieve international diplomatic recognition for Jerusalem as its capital.

Notably, Israel’s million strong Arab citizens (who are, after all, Palestinians) have in recent years become extremely active in promoting Jerusalem as an Arab and Muslim center. This reflects the growth of an Islamic fundamentalist movement along with a heightened Palestinian national consciousness generated by the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

The *PLO* has been very consistent in insisting that Israel withdraw to the pre-1967 partition border, or Green Line, in Jerusalem, and that an *al-Quds* that includes East Jerusalem and the Old City become the capital of the state of Palestine. Whereas in final status negotiations held prior to Camp David II it evinced a readiness to compromise on other issues — territory, settlements, security, refugees — it maintained a hard line on Jerusalem. This was due to two factors. First, in light of the sensitivity of the Jerusalem issue, both sides were reticent to discuss them in preliminary negotiations lest they derail negotiations or were leaked to the press. Secondly, PLO Chairman Arafat argued that Jerusalem, unlike other final status issues, concerns the Arab and even the Muslim world — some one billion strong — and that he was not free to compromise regarding Islamic rights. One interesting nuance in the Palestinian position in recent years was a proposal put forward by some Palestinian politicians to place the entire Old City, including the holy places, under some sort of international regime.

After 1967, the *Arab world* disputed primary responsibility for Muslim interests in Jerusalem. Until the advent of the Oslo process, Jordan claimed patronage. Saudi Arabia never recognized Jordan's role. Morocco heads the Jerusalem Committee of the Islamic Conference. (The monarchs of Jordan and Morocco claim a special role regarding Jerusalem by virtue of being direct descendants of the Prophet Mohammad; Saudi Arabia's status derives from its rule over the even holier Muslim sites of Mecca and Medina). Since the advent in 1993 of the Oslo process, the PLO, by establishing a physical and political presence on the ground in the West Bank and even, informally, in Jerusalem, has become the undisputed claimant to the Muslim holy places. Yet it cannot ignore the collective will of the Muslim, and particularly Arab worlds, regarding Islamic interests in the city.

The *United States* has never officially recognized West Jerusalem as Israel's capital, nor has it recognized the annexation of East Jerusalem. As with the territorial issues, it holds that the fate of Jerusalem must be negotiated in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 242, which under the American (and Israeli) interpretation leaves room for territorial adjustments.

In contrast with this official position, the U.S. Congress has called upon the president to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. This demand is opposed by the State Department, and American presidents have repeatedly invoked a national security waiver to avoid taking this action. A series of U.S. administrations have cited the argument that moving the embassy prior to a successful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would preempt the status of Jerusalem, thereby prejudicing a negotiated outcome of the issue.

The *Christian world* has no unified position on Jerusalem. The Vatican — the most outspoken of representative Christian bodies — negotiated agreements with both Israel and the PLO in recent years in an effort to heighten a maximum degree of church autonomy and protection of church interests. Essentially, it seeks an inter-

“The United States has never officially recognized West Jerusalem as Israel's capital, not has it recognized the annexation of East Jerusalem. It holds that the fate of Jerusalem must be negotiated in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 242.”

nationally guaranteed “special status” for the holy sites of all three religions in Jerusalem. But the influence of the Christian churches, exercised through the Great Powers, has waned considerably since the 19th and early 20th centuries. Today, essentially, it is Israel and the PLO that will decide the fate of Christian holy places in Jerusalem. In the one critical precedent— the transfer of Bethlehem to Palestinian Authority control in accordance with the Oslo agreements in 1995 — all the major churches readily acquiesced to Yasir Arafat’s official patronage over the Church of the Nativity.

CAMP DAVID II

The two-week summit held at Camp David in July 2000 provided the first opportunity for official Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on Jerusalem. The result was a radical revision of traditional positions.

Camp David II was held following a series of negotiations (the “Stockholm track”) that succeeded in narrowing Israeli-Palestinian differences on virtually all final status issues except Jerusalem. At Camp David II, in an effort to close the negotiating circle, the Barak government reportedly offered to turn over to full Palestinian sovereignty the outlying Arab villages/neighborhoods of Jerusalem, and to partial Palestinian sovereignty (or autonomy) the inner strip of Arab neighborhoods adjacent to the Old City area. The Palestinian capital would be located in Jerusalem. Israel agreed to discuss a variety of American proposals for shared rule over *al-Haram al-Sharif* and Palestinian rule over the Muslim and Christian quarters of the Old City.

The PLO reportedly agreed that Israeli Jerusalem continue to comprise the Jewish neighborhoods built since 1967 in annexed east, north, and south Jerusalem and in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, and that Israel annex to Jerusalem the settlements of Ma’ale Adummim and Givat Ze’ev. It agreed that Israel would retain *de facto* if not *de jure* control over the Western Wall. But it

refused even to discuss any plan that did not give it full sovereignty over all Arab residential areas and Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem, including in the Old City and the Temple Mount. Perhaps more significantly, PLO Chairman Arafat publicly queried the validity of the age-old Jewish link to the Temple Mount. These were among the principal issues that caused the summit to end inconclusively.

While both Israel and the PLO could claim that all proposals made at Camp David II were now “null and void,” these proposals altered the parameters of any further discussion of a Jerusalem settlement. An Israeli government had abandoned the traditional “united Jerusalem” position that had constituted a consensus in Israeli politics for over three decades. The PLO had abandoned its insistence on a return to the pre-1967 lines in Jerusalem, and had acknowledged that a future Jewish Jerusalem would embody large tracts of West Bank land and hundreds of thousands of Israelis who had settled beyond the Green Line. It also agreed to relinquish, permanently, control over the Wall, also considered holy to Muslims.

The Temple Mount remained the main focus of controversy: it is apparently too sacred and central to the national and/or religious narrative of both sides for either to compromise its sovereign claim there. Indeed, as an essentially religious or spiritual issue, its “solution” appears to defy accepted notions of political sovereignty. In this connection, one key lesson of the failed talks drawn by both sides was rather astounding: despite 34 years of Israeli rule over the Temple Mount/*al-Haram al-Sharif*, Palestinians and other Muslims had no clear understanding of the site’s central significance for both religious and secular Jews. This fact, like the inconclusive nature of the talks themselves, can in many ways be attributed to the two sides’ careful avoidance, until Camp David II, of any detailed, authoritative Israeli-Arab discussion of the religious significance of Jerusalem to both sides.

“The Temple Mount remained the main focus of controversy at Camp David. It is too sacred and central to the national and/or religious narrative of both sides for either to compromise its sovereign claim there.”

THE AFTERMATH OF CAMP DAVID II



Palestinians throw shoes at Israeli police at the entrance to *al-Aqsa* Mosque, July 2001.

During the months following Camp David II, President Clinton spearheaded an effort to narrow the gap on Jerusalem. In accordance with his proposals, Israel essentially agreed to recognize Palestinian sovereignty over all Arab-inhabited parts of Jerusalem. But the parties could not agree on the status of the Temple Mount, and there remained controversy concerning arrangements inside the Old City with regard to security restrictions and access to the Jewish Quarter via the Armenian Quarter, and concerning the overall administrative and sovereign status of the “sacred core” — the Old City and the Mount of Olives.

The intractable nature of the final status issues, and particularly Jerusalem, eventually became the catalyst for violence. In late September 2000, Likud leader Ariel Sharon carried out a heavily guarded visit to the Temple Mount in order to demonstrate his opposition to the concessions contemplated in Jerusalem by Prime Minister Barak since Camp David II. The next day, a Friday, the eve of *Rosh Hashanah*, the Jewish New Year, large scale violent demonstrations broke out among Muslims praying at the mosques on the Mount, thereby launching the *al-Aqsa Intifada*, or uprising.

While the *Intifada* was the product of a complex web of factors, Jerusalem was clearly the immediate catalyst. The deadlock over Jerusalem at Camp David II had been generated due to lack of adequate preparation and apparent lack of comprehension on all sides of the depth of the issues. There is a direct causal link between Camp David II and the controversial Sharon visit, wherein the clash of narratives and core values between Israelis and Palestinians over Jerusalem, and particularly the Temple Mount, nourished a gathering frustration on both sides. Here it is instructive to recall that the aforementioned 1929 riots erupted over the status of the Western Wall alone. In 2000-2001, the violence derived from the status of the Temple Mount itself.

Within Israel, frustration over the peace process and the *Intifada* contributed, in early 2001, to Sharon’s election as prime minister.

Sharon's peace policies specifically precluded any near term renewal of negotiations over final status issues like Jerusalem. In any event, the ongoing violence of the *Intifada* appeared to postpone such negotiations for the foreseeable future.

One Jerusalem-related issue deemed likely to become particularly controversial even without a peace process is the prospect of occupancy by Israelis of additional homes at Har Homa and Ras al-Amud in East Jerusalem. By focusing violent *Intifada* activity against Israeli settlements, the Palestinians succeeded in early 2001 in persuading the international community, spearheaded by the Mitchell Commission report, to press for a total freeze on settlement construction. This would be applied not only in the West Bank and Gaza but also in East Jerusalem where, as we have seen, Israeli building schemes have had a far-reaching effect on the ability to reach a final status agreement. Hence, controversy over Har Homa or Ras al-Amud could yet become a catalyst for additional Palestinian-Israeli violence or deterioration in Israel-Arab relations.

In view of the complexity of the Jerusalem issues and the sensitivities of both sides, and in light of the rather remarkable readiness to compromise displayed at Camp David, there appear to be three possible ways to deal with Jerusalem when an active peace process is renewed:

- *Ethnic partition.* Israel would concede to the PLO full sovereignty over all Arab neighborhoods, including in the Old City (with possible security modifications in areas directly abutting Jewish neighborhoods). Israeli Jerusalem, *Yerushalayim*, would retain all Jewish neighborhoods, including outlying settlements like Ma'ale Adummim, along with the Jewish Quarter and Western Wall, and would be recognized by the Arabs and the rest of the world as the capital of Israel. East Jerusalem, *al-Quds*, would become the capital of the new state of Palestine. Some form of sovereignty — shared sovereignty, “functional sovereignty,” “ver-

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

tical sovereignty” (Palestinian sovereignty over the mosques, Israeli over the land beneath them that contains the ruins of the Temple), or “sovereignty of God” — would apply to the Temple Mount and possibly to other areas in the Old City. This mosaic of two interlocking capitals would be administered as a single municipality. This is more or less the “Clinton solution.”

- *Partial solution.* Israel and the PLO would agree on ethnic partition throughout most of the city and its environs, and to the emergence of a Palestinian capital in *al-Quds* and recognition of Israel’s capital in *Yerushalayim*, but would in effect agree to postpone discussion of the fate of the “sacred core” of the city — essentially the Old City and the Mount of Olives— until some future date or future circumstance. In this instance, the PLO would presumably refuse to declare an “end of conflict” as Israel desires.

- *No solution.* If the two sides cannot agree even partially on Jerusalem, the alternatives are to negotiate all other final status issues, or to seek a new interim solution that deliberately postpones the sensitive final status issues (not only Jerusalem but the refugee/right of return problem as well) until calmer times. In 2001, Israeli Prime Minister Sharon indicated his preference for an interim solution, while PLO Chairman Arafat insisted on negotiating all final status issues, including Jerusalem.

The lessons of the Camp David II experience, and in many ways of the preceding three years, would appear to point to the following necessary guidelines for a successful resolution of the Jerusalem issue:

- Israel should recognize that the borders it drew for Jerusalem in 1967 are anachronistic. The military defense of Jerusalem no longer depends on occupying adjacent Arab villages.

- Israel should divest itself of its manifestly unsuccessful and counterproductive rule over Jerusalem's Palestinian Arabs, and aspire to a large, Jewish Jerusalem.
- Israel shouldn't rule over Christian and Muslim holy sites.
- Israel should insist on Arab acknowledgement of the Hebrew roots of Jerusalem on the Temple Mount.
- Palestinians should accept Israeli rule over greater Jewish Jerusalem and recognize the equal status of Jewish and Muslim holy places in the Old City under a special regime.
- Both sides should act to ensure that *Yerushalayim/al-Quds*— inseparable geographically — is administered jointly, so that the city is not again redivided physically.

Assuming some sort of solution is reached, Israeli governments are pledged to present it to the public for approval, in a referendum or new elections. The PLO must gain the approval of the Muslim world for any arrangements reached regarding *al-Haram al-Sharif*. In both cases, the extreme sensitivity of the Jerusalem issue areas — religious, political, municipal, national, and symbolic — appears, sadly, to ensure that religious and nationalist extremists will continue to use Jerusalem as a fighting cause. It will be up to the moderate majorities in both societies to constrain the extremists.

Fate has determined that the ostensibly incompatible national-religious narratives of two peoples and two religions clash at a single, critical spot: the Temple Mount/*al-Haram al-Sharif*. The challenge of Israeli and Palestinian moderates is to either reconcile those two narratives or find a way for them to coexist. A readiness on the part of both Israel and the PLO to recognize and honor each other's sacred values and historical legacies will help contain extremism from overtaking the region.



Jewish American students pray at the Wailing Wall, summer 2001.

Photo Credits: Agence France Presse, pages 4-5 and 7; Getty, pages 11 and 16; KRT, page 19; Ha'aretz, map page, 6; Jerusalem Report map, page 9.



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Summary: Jerusalem in Israeli-Palestinian Relations

- Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish life, Jewish longing, and Jewish prayer from time immemorial. King David established his capital here around 1000 B.C.E. His son, King Solomon, built the Temple on Mt. Moriah.
- Jerusalem also plays a vital role in Muslim and Christian life. According to Christianity, Jesus was tried, crucified, buried, and resurrected in Jerusalem. According to Muslims, it was from the Temple Mount that the Prophet Muhammad rose to heaven to be instructed by the prophets.
- The most contentious issue in solving the conflict over Jerusalem is who controls the Temple Mount/*al-Haram al-Sharif*, which both Jews and Muslims consider holy. This is one of the key factors that led to the breakdown of Camp David II.
- Any solution to the issue of Jerusalem will have to address the fact that this is a city with a mixed population of Arabs and Jews. By the year 2000, Jerusalem's 200,000 Arabs constituted 32% of the city's population.
- Since 1967, Israeli governments and Jerusalem mayors have neglected the Arab sector of the city and placed harsh constraints on Arab residency in the city. For example, since 1967, fewer than 600 new Palestinian housing units have been permitted compared with 45,000 for Jews.
- Israeli governments have pledged to present any compromise solution on Jerusalem to the public for approval, in a referendum or new elections. The PLO must gain the approval of the Muslim world for any arrangements reached regarding the Temple Mount/*al-Haram al-Sharif*.
- At Camp David, Israel reportedly agreed to Palestinian sovereignty over the Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem and agreed to discuss sovereignty for the Palestinians over the Muslim and Christian quarters of the Old City, including a form of shared control over the Temple Mount. In return, the PLO reportedly recognized that Israeli Jerusalem would include neighborhoods built in parts of the city annexed after 1967 including large settlements like Ma'aleh Adummim and Givat Ze'ev.
- The previous point is a radical revision of traditional positions. An Israeli government had abandoned the traditional position of a "united Jerusalem" under Israeli sovereignty, recognizing the profound importance of the city to Palestinian Arabs. The PLO abandoned its insistence on a return to the pre-1967 lines in Jerusalem and recognized that a future Jewish Jerusalem would encompass parts of the West Bank settlements along the Green Line.