

JERUSALEM'S SIGNIFICANCE TO WORLD JEWRY

The Covenant and the Promised Land

The biblical account of God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants begins with a territorial imperative:

The Lord said to Abram: Go from your country, from your birthplace and from your father's home, to the land which I will show you. I will make you a great nation, I will bless you and will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and will curse those who curse you; through you will all the families of the earth be blessed.¹

The promised land is thus not incidental to Israel's covenant with God, but lies, as an essential component, at its very foundation.² Within the promised land, the borders of which were never constant and fluctuated historically,³ the city of Jerusalem occupies

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1. Genesis 12:1-3. The "covenant between the pieces" (*berit bein ha-betarim*) in Genesis 15 also specifically incorporates the promise of the land. Cf. especially Genesis 15:18-21. All translations of passages from the Hebrew Bible are mine. For a history of the various and conflicting claims to the promised land, cf. James Parkes, *Whose Land: A History of the Peoples of Palestine* (Taplinger, New York, 1971).
 2. For a discussion of the concept of the covenant, and the correlative concept of the election of Israel, see my article "The Concept of the Chosen People: An Interpretation" in *Judaism, A Quarterly Journal* (forthcoming).
 3. In many cases, the descriptions of the borders are vague, and reflect a general ideal rather than a concrete existential situation. For example, in Genesis 15:18-21, Abram (later Abraham) is told that "I have given this land to your seed, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates river". (The "river of Egypt" here, according to many scholars, cannot mean the Nile but must refer to Wadi El-Arish, which forms the boundary between the land of Israel and the Sinai desert). In other cases, such as the later descriptions of the extent of David and Solomon's kingdom, many of the remote eastern and northern territories presumably refer to neighboring areas subdued by David and

a position of special prominence and significance.⁴

What is so special about Jerusalem? The question of Jerusalem is so emotionally charged that it was excluded from the Camp David accords. Precisely because Jerusalem arouses so much passion on all sides in the current debates, we need to reflect on its significance.

Let us first briefly review the history of Jerusalem, and the implications of that history for the modern claims to the city.

Jerusalem: Historical Survey

Jerusalem was first mentioned in Egyptian texts of the nineteenth century before the common era. The Tel El-Amarna tablets of the fifteenth century before the common era include letters from the king of "Urusalim" (Jerusalem) to the king of Egypt. Traditionally, the first Jewish connection with Jerusalem is that of Abraham, who was blessed by "Malki-Tzedek, the king of Shalem"⁵. The

which owed him political support and taxation, rather than areas that were geographically or demographically an integral part of the Israelite state. At other times, especially in the period of the Second Temple, the territory included in or controlled by the Jewish State (Judah or Judea) was generally considerably smaller than its extent either in the earlier First Temple period or in the modern State of Israel since 1948 (the "Green Line", i.e., the armistice lines of 1949) and since the Six Day War of June, 1967. In short, there are many areas of "biblical Israel" which have never been controlled or claimed by the modern State of Israel, and conversely, the borders of Israel reflect armistice and cease-fire lines in the several Arab-Israeli wars since 1948, and in some cases include areas which were not generally under Jewish control in ancient times. Contemporary attempts by Arabs in the current Israeli-Arab conflict to cite such biblical passages as proof of alleged Zionist "imperialist" designs on the territory of surrounding countries are therefore both historically inaccurate and politically irrelevant to the very real problems of region.

4. Therefore, while today there is widespread disagreement among many Jews in general, and Israelis in particular, regarding the question of territorial compromise in the areas controlled by Israel since the Six Day War of June, 1967 (Judea and Samaria, or the "West Bank"; Gaza; and the Golan Heights), there is an overwhelming consensus regarding the city of Jerusalem: Jerusalem must never again be divided (as it was from 1949 until 1967), the city must not be internationalized, but it must remain united, under Jewish sovereignty, as the capital of the State of Israel.
5. Genesis 14:18-20.

"Akedah", Abraham's "binding" and attempted sacrifice of his son Isaac,⁶ took place on Mount Moriah, which later Jewish tradition associates with the hill in Jerusalem ("Mount Zion") upon which the first and second Temples stood.⁷

When the Israelite tribes, led by Joshua, entered Canaan, they were unable to conquer Jerusalem, at that time a Jebusite city. Biblical descriptions of the tribal boundaries in that period show that Jerusalem was neutral territory, between Benjamin to the north and Judah to the south.⁸

Jerusalem's geography and topography are vital to an understanding of its political and strategic importance. The city is situated on the continental divide which bisects the country. The major in-land highways, from Judah in the south to Samaria and the Galilee in the north, and from the western coastal plain by the Mediterranean Sea to Jericho and trans-Jordan in the east, intersect in Jerusalem. The high ridge of Mount Scopus and the Mount of Olives divides the country agriculturally and commercially as well. From Jerusalem west to the Mediterranean coast lie the green "Harei Yehudah" (Judean Hills); but most of the rain, which is often scarcely ample even in the best of times, does not cross the divide, and so from Jerusalem eastward to the Jordan Rift, Jericho and the Dead Sea lies the barren "Midbar Yehudah" (Judean Desert) and the Aravah (arid desert).

Therefore, whoever controls Jerusalem, controls the traffic, communications and commerce of the central heart of the country, today as in ancient times.

6. Genesis 22

7. In II Chronicles 3:1 the association of the Temple Mount with Mount Moriah is explicit: "Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah." Cf. below, note 14.

8. In Joshua 15, the boundaries of Judah circumvented Jebusite Jerusalem, and approached "the ridge of the Jebusite, which is Jerusalem from the south" (Joshua 15:8). "The children of Judah were unable to expel the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem, and the Jebusites dwelled with the children of Judah in Jerusalem until this day" (Joshua 15:63). Thus also the boundaries of Benjamin, which skirted the city (Joshua 18:16, 27). In Joshua 10, we see that the Israelite forces led by Joshua defeated the alliance of five Canaanite kings led by Adoni-Tzedek, king of Jerusalem and killed the kings, but the city of Jerusalem itself was not conquered. Cf. Joshua 12:10.

King David recognized this fact. He had already served as king of the southern tribe of Judah for seven years, based in Hebron, when the northern tribes of Israel accepted him as their king.⁹ David also understood that the united monarchy required a neutral national capital, and that his southern Judean capital of Hebron could not serve as the center for the union of north and south.

David's first act as king of the united monarchy was therefore to attack Jebusite Jerusalem with soldiers from "all of Israel" (north and south) under his command.¹⁰ He had, however, only limited forces at his disposal, and David was therefore unable either to breach the city walls or to maintain a prolonged siege (as the Babylonians would do in the sixth century before the common era, and Romans would do in the first century of the common era). In a move somewhat reminiscent of the Greek capture of Troy from within centuries later, David and his small band of men succeeded in climbing up a vertical water shaft (which still stands), leading from the Gihon spring in a cave in the Kidron valley to the center of the city high on the ophel ridge, and was thus able to take Jerusalem by surprise, from within.¹¹

Jebusite Jerusalem, which now became known as "the city of David"¹² was quite small, and was situated on the top of the Ophel ridge, an area today covered to a large extent by the neighborhood of Silwan.¹³ David purchased the land to the immediate north of the

9. Cf. II Samuel 5:1-5 and I Chronicles 11:1-3.

10. I Chronicles 11:4 specifies that "David and all of Israel went to Jerusalem". The version of the story in II Samuel 5:6 says that "David and his men went to Jerusalem", but does not specify that the men were southern Judeans.

11. This shaft (the "tzinnor" referred to in II Samuel 5:8) seems to have been regarded by the Jebusites as impregnable, and was therefore either unguarded or guarded by "the blind and lame" described as mocking David from the Jebusite heights: "David will not enter here" (I Samuel 5:6).

12. Cf. II Samuel 5:7-9. "David captured the fortress of Zion, which is the city of David... David dwelled in the fortress and called it the city of David". The parallel version in I Chronicles 11:4-7 differs slightly: "David captured the fortress of Zion, which is the city of David... David dwelled in the fortress; therefore they called it the city of David".

13. Silwan is the Arabic name for the area. The Hebrew name, Shilo'ah, is found in the Bible (cf. Isaiah 8:6, Nehemiah 3:15). In the Greek New Testament, it is called Siloam (cf. John 9:7, 11). In 1884 Jews from Yemen settled in part of the area, but following attacks by their Arab neighbors, they were forced to abandon their houses in 1936.

city,¹⁴ and built an altar on the site upon which his son Solomon subsequently built the Temple.¹⁵ From the perspective of Jerusalem in David's day, the Temple Mount was the high ground of the ridge on which the city stood, and the Temple was, in effect, the acropolis of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem thus became "the city of David", the capital of the united monarchy. David was a military genius, who anticipated military and political problems that leaders thousands of years later also faced. He chose a central location, which was neutral in terms of the northsouth tribal rivalries, for the new national capital, much as George Washington did when proposing the site for the American capital.

David's son Solomon continued the process of political centralization based in Jerusalem, by redistricting the country into twelve administrative departments, each headed by a governor (*nitzav*).¹⁶ The boundaries of these new administrative departments cut across the old tribal lines, and thus effectively undermined the traditional local centers of authority, while enhancing the authority of the central government in Jerusalem, much as Napoleon did when he redistricted France from the old Provinces into the modern Departements.

Jerusalem expanded greatly in the following centuries, first as the capital of the united monarchy, and then as the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah. The old walls of the City of David, even as extended to include the Temple Mount in the north, were no longer adequate, and were enlarged to encompass the new neighborhoods on the hills to the west and north of the original city. Second and third walls were added in Second Temple times, and with the renovations of Herod (who ruled from 37 until his death in 4 before the common era) and his grandson Agrippa (who died in 44 of the common era), Jerusalem reached its apex of size and magnificence, only to be de-

14. Cf. II Samuel 24: 18 ff. and I Chronicles 21:18 ff. It is highly significant that David having conquered the city, refused to confiscate this land. The site for divine worship had to be purchased fairly in peace, and could not be taken in war.

15. Cf. II Chronicles 3:1. In this verse the site is explicitly identified as Mount Moriah. Cf. above, note 6.

16. The twelve governors and their respective districts are enumerated in I Kings 4:7 ff.

stroyed a few decades later by the Romans in the Great Jewish Revolt.

Even after the destruction of the Temple and the devastation of Jerusalem in the year 70 of the common era, many Jews continued to live in Jerusalem, and the Romans continued to recognize the country as "Judea" (Judah) and the city as "Hierosolymita" (Jerusalem). But a generation later, the Jewish population of the country rebelled under the leadership of Bar Kokhba against the imperial Roman forces. Bar Kokhba's rebellion also ended in tragic and bloody defeat in the year 135 of the common era, and now the Romans, under the emperor Hadrian, decided to put an end to the Jews and Judaism. They plowed Jerusalem under with salt, trying to obliterate its very physical traces, and in its place the Romans built a new city, Aelia Capitolina, the walls of which are the basis of the sixteenth century Ottoman Turkish walls of the Old City of Jerusalem to this day. Hadrian built a temple to Jupiter on or near the Temple Mount, and prohibited all Jews, upon penalty of death, from entering the city or even from coming within sight of it. It was at this time, in the year 135 of the common era, that the Romans deliberately changed the name of the country from "Judea" to "Palestina", after the ancient and no longer extant biblical enemies of Israel, the Philistines.

Here we learn a fundamental lesson about the role of Jerusalem in Jewish history: what happens to Jerusalem happens to the whole land of Israel, and thereby to the entire Jewish people. The Romans attempted to destroy Judaism and the Jewish people. The land was given an alien name, as was the city of Jerusalem, and Jews were excluded from the city.

"Aelia Capitolina" was never a native name for the city, and "Palestina" (Palestine) was never the name of the country according to its natives. The simple historic fact is that there never were people before modern times, natives of the country, who called themselves "Palestinians". "Palestine", as we have noted, is a foreign name, imposed upon the country by foreign conquerors, the Romans.

At no time in all its history has the land been ruled by its natives as a separate integral territory and independent country except under the Jews, in ancient and modern times (in the time of

the first Temple, in the time of the second Temple, and since 1948 in the modern State of Israel). Under all other rulers, and at all other times, the land was never a discrete political unit; rather, it was regarded merely as a province or district of a larger political unit or empire. Even under Arab rule in the Middle Ages, the land was nothing more than a province of Syria or Egypt respectively. The Ummayyads, based in Damascus, and the Abassids, based in Baghdad, regarded the land as a somewhat remote and relatively unimportant province. The Fatimids and Mamlukes similarly controlled it from Egypt. Under the Ottoman Turks (who were Muslims but not Arabs, of course), the land was but one of ten "Sanjaks" of the "Pashalike of Damascus".

Indeed, it is significant that there is no word in classical Arabic for this land. It is simply called "A-Sham", meaning Syria. The Arabic word "Filastin" is a modern version of the European "Palestina" and does not appear in any of the classical Arabic literature - because the Arabs and other Muslims never regarded the country as a distinct unit with a name of its own.

Just as the Jews have been the only natives of the country ever to regard it as a distinct political unit, and not merely as a part of a larger empire, and just as the country has only been independent and governed by its natives in all its history under Jewish sovereignty, so it is that only under the Jews has Jerusalem been the national capital of the country. In Roman times, the administrative center was Caesaria on the northern Mediterranean coast, as it was later under the Crusaders. Under the Ummayed and Abassid Arabs, to the extent that there was any administrative center, it was Ramleh (near modern Tel Aviv) and not Jerusalem.

To reiterate the historical argument: as it goes for Jerusalem, so it goes for the country and the Jewish people. Only under Jewish sovereignty has the country been independent and governed by its natives, and only under Jewish sovereignty has the city flourished as the national capital of an independent country.

Jerusalem and Christian Claims

Now we come to the religious claims to Jerusalem. It follows from the history of Jerusalem that the religious claims to the city of Judaism, Christianity and Islam differ fundamentally and qualitatively.

For the Christians, the city of Jerusalem, like the land of Israel as a whole, is important as the "Holy Land" and not as their homeland. The Christians never regarded Israel or Jerusalem as their spiritual center, despite its being "the cradle of Christianity" because of Jesus' life. From early Christian times (459 of the common era), Jerusalem was but one of five Patriarchates (the others being Alexandria, Antioch, Byzantium and Rome). With the exception of the Byzantine and Crusader periods, the Christians never controlled the land. Moreover, the Crusader control was tenuous, and generally did not extend to the hinterland.

Christian interest was and remains fundamentally derivative. Of primary interest was not the land *per se* but holy places associated with miraculous events in the life of Jesus. The general sanctity of the land thus derives from its being the locale of Jesus' life and mission. To this day, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem are regarded by Christians as being endowed with the greatest sanctity and significance, and it was the liberation of such "holy places" from the "infidels" (i.e., the Muslims) that was the slogan of the Crusades. However, there is no specific religious, political or national interest of the Christians in the country as a homeland or in Jerusalem as their capital and center. The Christians, as has been noted, like the Romans, maintained Caesaria as their administrative capital. In demographic terms, with the possible exception of the Byzantine period, the Christians never represented more than a small minority of the inhabitants of the country.

Jerusalem and Islamic Claims

Islamic claims to the land, especially to Jerusalem, need to be treated seriously, especially in light of the demographic majority of Muslims in the country as a whole until the early twentieth century, and in Jerusalem until the second half of the nineteenth century.

Although, as we saw above, classical Arabic has no distinctive name for the country, it does have a distinctive name for Jerusalem, which it calls "Al-Quds" ("The Holy").

There is a passage in the Qur'an which is addressed to the Jews (*Bani Isra'il*, the children of Israel) and which establishes the religious basis for Islamic interest in Jerusalem, "The Holy":¹⁷

Glory to (God) who took his servant by night from the Sacred Mosque (Masjid Al-Haram, in Mecca) to the Farthest Mosque (Masjid Al-Aqsa), whose surroundings we have blessed, that we might show him some of our signs.

The text of the Qur'an here¹⁸ then continues to assert that the Jews twice rebelled against God, causing the destruction of the first and second Temples, and that the Jews will be punished for their sins unless they repent, and that the Qur'an is the guide to righteousness. The Jews have thus lost their rights to Jerusalem, specifically to the Temple Mount, and the Muslims, by accepting the Qur'an as the true path, are now entitled to this sacred site.

The specific reference in this passage is to the *Isra'*, Muhammad's night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, which is traditionally associated with the *Mi'raj*, Muhammad's ascent to heaven. The "farthest mosque" is Al-Aqsa, the large Friday mosque¹⁹ located on the southern end of the Temple Mount.²⁰ The *Mi'raj*, in turn, is associated with the stone²¹ covered by the golden Dome of the Rock (*Qubbat A-Sakhra*)²² in the center of the Temple Mount.

Because of these sacred associations, the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik bin Marwan built the Dome of the Rock in 688-691 of

17. Qur'an, Sura 17:1. English translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (Lahore, 1934).

18. Qur'an, Sura 17:7-9.

19. *Masjid jami'* in Arabic. These are large mosques used for public worship on Fridays.

20. The Temple Mount is called *Haram A-Sharif*, the "Noble Sacred Place" in Arabic.

21. The stone is actually the bedrock peak of the Temple Mount. So far as is known, it was on this precise spot that Solomon built his Temple and upon which the Second Temple later also stood.

22. The Dome of the Rock is sometimes erroneously called the Mosque of Omar ('Umar). Unlike the Al-Aqsa Mosque, however, the Dome of the Rock is not a Friday mosque at all, but, as we shall see, a site for pilgrimage, and it was not built by Omar. The mosque established by Omar stands adjacent to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on the hill northwest of the Temple Mount which the classical Christian churches associate with Golgotha.

the common era. His considerations were partially political. A rival claimant to the caliphate controlled Mecca and Medina. Since one of the five fundamentals of Islam is the *Hajj*, the mandatory pilgrimage to Mecca, 'Abd al-Malik feared that his subjects would begin to come under the influence of his Meccan rival. He therefore sought to divert pilgrims to Jerusalem, where the radically designed octagonal Dome of the Rock enabled them to circumambulate a sacred rock, as is done at the *Ka'aba* in Mecca. Jerusalem, accordingly, is *thalith al-haramain*, the third of the Holy Places (after the two Holy Places of Mecca and Medina). Jerusalem's special status (albeit inferior to that of Mecca and Medina) had already been recognized by Muhammad, who initially decreed that the direction of prayer (*qiblah*) face Jerusalem; only later did Muhammad change the *qiblah* to Mecca.²³

The religious importance of Jerusalem, and especially the Temple Mount to Muslims must be respected, as must Christian interests in their holy places. Nevertheless, the Muslim claims, like those of the Christians, are less to the city as such, since it never served as their religious or national capital, than to specific holy places within the city.

And yet, in a sense the Muslims do assert religious claims to the city and the land as a whole. In Islam, the world is divided into *Dar Al-Islam* (the abode of Islam, i.e., territory controlled by Muslims and in which Islamic law is enforced) and *Dar Al-Harb* (the abode of war, i.e., territory to be converted to the abode of Islam). The problem is that territory in the abode of war can and ultimately must, be converted to the abode of Islam. But any territory once in the abode of Islam must always be Islamic, and can never legitimately revert to the abode of war, even if non-Muslims temporarily control it. Jerusalem, and indeed the entire Land of Israel, have historically been, at various times, part of *Dar Al-Islam*. From a Muslim religious perspective, therefore, all of Israel, including and especially Jerusalem, must properly revert to Islamic sovereignty, and the liberation of such territory is *jihad* (holy war)

23. Qur'an, Sura 2:142-150.

Jerusalem and Jewish claims

Nevertheless, Jewish religious claims are objectively of a different type and on a different level. The Jewish interest is not merely in Jerusalem as the site of miracles in the life of Jesus or Muhammad respectively, as in Christianity and Islam, but in the city *per se* as the spiritual and national center of Jewish life, and as the capital of the Jewish State today as in ancient times: not just the site but the city.

Space does not permit even a representative sampling of the hundreds or even thousands of Jewish sources expressing the exiled people's yearning for Zion. The Jews were removed from the heart of Zion, but Zion was never removed from the Jewish heart. Only the Jews wrote, and only the Jews could conceivably have written, Psalm 137, "by the rivers of Babylon":

If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand be paralyzed.
Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth,
If I do not remember you,
If I do not elevate Jerusalem above my greatest joy.

Only Jewish liturgy is replete with references to a return to Zion and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. One example will suffice, from the central prayer recited thrice daily by every observant Jew:

Return compassionately to Jerusalem, your city Rebuild it as an eternal building soon in our day Blessed are you, Lord, the builder of Jerusalem May our eyes behold your compassionate return to Zion. Blessed are you, Lord, who returns his presence to Zion.

Only the Jews conclude their two most sacred ceremonies – the fast day of Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) and the *seder* (order of service) on the evening of Passover – with the words, *La-Shanah Ha-Ba'ah Bi-Yerushalayim* ("Next year in Jerusalem"). To this day, only the Jews, wherever in the world they may be standing, turn in prayer toward Jerusalem.

This brings us to the national and demographic claims to Jerusalem. The religious rights of Christians and Muslims to their sacred

places in Jerusalem must be respected, and these rights can be assured by Israel's continuing to guarantee them free access to their holy sites, as it has done in both law and practice. However, in addition to the religious considerations, Jewish claims are specifically national. Jerusalem is not, and never has been, the national center of Christianity or Islam. Their respective empires had various capitals (Rome, Byzantium, Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, etc.), but the center has never been Jerusalem. Jerusalem is, and always has been, the national center of Jewish life. Jewish religious festivals are simultaneously national and agricultural celebrations. The Jewish calendar is attuned to the seasons of the Land of Israel, and wherever the Jews may be, their prayers change in the spring and fall to reflect the dry and rainy seasons of Israel. To put it bluntly, if you are an anti-Zionist, you cannot be at home in the traditional Jewish liturgy, with its focus on Zion. Jewish religion and nationality are historically inseparable, and eliminating the one destroys the other.

For Christians, Jerusalem can always be the focus of pilgrimage. For Muslims, Jerusalem can always be "the third of the Holy Places". But for the Jews, there is only Jerusalem, first and last, not merely as a religious site to visit on pilgrimage, but as their national capital city in which to live.

On a demographic level, it is certainly true that Muslims have constituted a clear majority in Jerusalem for as many centuries as the Jews before them. And yet, the Jewish absence from Jerusalem was not voluntary. They were repeatedly expelled, most recently in 1948 from the Old City's Jewish Quarter by the Jordanian Arab Legion.

• Without engaging in detailed demographic studies, we can simply summarize the situation as follows. Since the last third of the nineteenth century, the Jews have constituted a clear and ever growing majority of Jerusalem's population, a majority that now exceeds 75% of the city's inhabitants. The first neighborhoods outside the walls of the Old City were Jewish neighborhoods over a century ago. The growth of the Arab population, at least in good part, was also due to Jewish growth. The higher standards of living and greater job opportunities made possible by Jewish immigration

to the country as a whole, and to Jerusalem in particular, led to Arab immigration from surrounding countries in the years preceding statehood. Over a century of Jewish majority, and yet, many countries, even those generally friendly to the State of Israel, still refuse to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish State.²⁴

The Moral and Political Implications of the Claims to Jerusalem

The religious, historical, national and demographic arguments are employed by the various sides to their own advantages. Arab irredentists claim all of the land (including Jerusalem) in the name of *Dar Al-Islam*. Jewish irredentists claim the whole land, including Jerusalem, in the name of *Eretz Yisra'el Ha-Shelemah*, the greater or "complete" land of Israel, based on biblical promises. The irredentist claims of both sides, Jewish and Arab, are obviously irreconcilable.

Therefore, in the years preceding and following World War II, the leaders of the Zionist movement and of the *yishuv* (the organized Jewish community of British Mandatory Palestine) repeatedly and formally accepted the principle of territorial compromise, namely partition. Despite changing historical circumstances and political ideologies, no subsequent Israeli governments, not even those of the right wing parties, repudiated that commitment. Unfortunately, in the years before Statehood in 1948, and in the years ever since, the Palestinians and the surrounding Arab countries have been unwilling to make the same commitment. Those exceptional Arab leaders like King Abdullah of Trans-Jordan (Jordan, after their uni-

24. In this context, one should note that even the American government, one of Israel's most reliable allies, to this day has never recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, or even as Israeli territory. The U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem reports directly to the State Department in Washington, D.C., and not through the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv. American documents, such as passports or birth certificates of Americans born in Jerusalem, list the place of birth as "Jerusalem" or "Israel", but never as "Jerusalem, Israel". The U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem serves residents of Jerusalem and the West Bank (Judea and Samaria). Residents of the rest of the country are served by the Tel Aviv embassy. American government representatives are still routinely prohibited from participating in Jewish functions in the eastern neighborhoods of Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv is still routinely referred to by the Americans as Israel's capital.

lateral annexation of the West Bank) and President Sadat of Egypt, who were willing to make such a commitment (covertly, in the case of Jordan; overtly, in the case of Egypt) paid for it with their lives. Whether Israeli-Arab negotiations since the Madrid conference of 1991 are indicative of a true and fundamental shift in Arab willingness to make such a commitment today remains to be demonstrated. From an Israeli perspective, what is at stake is nothing less than the survival of the State of Israel and its Jewish population.

This, then, brings us back to our original question. Why is Jerusalem so special? Why, if Jews are willing to consider, under the appropriate circumstances, some kind of partition of the Land of Israel as a whole, are they so uniformly unwilling even to contemplate any redivision of Jerusalem, as it was during the years 1948-1967? Here is the point at which the moral and political ramifications of the claims to Jerusalem become paramount.

Many Jerusalemites had experiences similar to mine, in those days of the division of Jerusalem. I remember living as a boy in the southern Katamon neighborhood of Jerusalem (just down the hill from where my family and I live today), where the border lay along the train tracks, a couple of hundred meters from our door. If my friends and I kicked our football too far, over the tracks, and would have been foolish enough to attempt to retrieve it, we would have risked getting shot. There were high, ugly block walls at the end of Jaffa and Mamilla streets (among others), to prevent the Arab soldiers on the Old City walls from sniping at Jewish traffic and pedestrians. The United Nations ran the only crossing point, the Mandelbaum Gate, for non-Jewish tourists alone. In those years, the Berlin Wall aroused worldwide repugnance. But walls, barbed wire and minefields in Jerusalem aroused little worldwide notice and less protest for nineteen years.

And then, suddenly, in the Six Day War of June, 1967, the city was reunited. The walls and barbed wire were torn down immediately, and the minefields were quickly cleared. When, shortly after the war, I visited the Temple Mount, I found a Jordanian army camp on the northern side of the "Noble Sacred Compound", so sacred to Muslim and Jew alike. Arab houses had been built in the middle of the 2,000 year old Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives, using grave stones with Hebrew inscriptions for paving

stones and building blocks. Arab villages on the outskirts of Jerusalem had no electricity or running water, and the Old City of Jerusalem enjoyed these vital utilities only intermittently, a few hours, two or three days a week. I emphasize that these are not facts I read about in books; these were personal experiences of mine, and of all other Jews capable of remembering what life in Jerusalem was like over twenty-five years ago.

On a moral and political level, therefore:

1. The religious rights of the Muslim and Christian communities can be guaranteed by continuing to assure free access to their respective holy site. Jewish rights, however, were never respected, even in the years before Statehood.

2. Jewish national rights to their capital require Jewish sovereignty over all of the city, and this follows logically from over a century of Jewish majority.

3. Under Arab control, Jews were expelled from the Old City and other eastern sections of the city, and were totally denied access to other Jewish sites (including to the Hebrew University and Hadassah Hospital on Mount Scopus). The Arabs deliberately desecrated and destroyed Jewish holy places under their control. Having violated their obligations, they thereby lost their moral claim to control again any part of the city.

4. Whatever else may be said of Israeli rule since 1967, no one can deny that Israel has ensured free access to Christians and Muslims, including to Arabs from countries technically at war with the Jewish State.

5. On a theoretical level, it is wonderful to contemplate the ideal, heavenly Jerusalem. However, on a practical level, we who live in the real, earthly Jerusalem cannot overlook such basic municipal services as electricity, water, sewage, garbage collection, etc. It is only since the city has been united and modernized under Israeli rule that much of Jerusalem, including the Old City, has become a fit place to live.

6. To redivide the city would be barbaric as well as impractical, and would mean subjecting all its citizens, Jews and Arabs

alike, to impossible living conditions. It would also place the Jewish inhabitants dangerously under Arab guns, as they were for nineteen years after statehood, and for the years of Arab riots and pogroms preceding it.

7. To suggest internationalization, which neither the Jews nor the Arabs desire, is to ignore the lessons of history. Remember Danzig between the two World Wars. The United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 of 29 November, 1947, the "Partition Resolution", Part III:D, proposed only a temporary international regime for a period of ten years, after which "the residents of the City (would) express by means of referendum their wishes as to possible modification of the regime of the City."

8. To suggest a bi-national status is to ignore the very real tensions between Jews and Arabs, and is to forget the one experience in binationalism in the Middle East, in Lebanon, a country which no longer exists except on paper. It is also to ignore the similarly unhappy experiences elsewhere in the world, of countries and cities torn apart by the failure of bi-nationalism.

In short, if the Arabs have lost their moral claim to control even parts of the city by their behaviour over nineteen years, the Jews have reaffirmed their moral claim to the city by their behavior since 1967, even and especially in the recent difficult years of the *intifada* (the Palestinian "uprising"). Israel has demonstrated that Jews can govern not only efficiently a city that never before was effectively run, but that they can also govern fairly, respecting the religious rights of Christians and Muslims alike.

These, then, are some of the reasons for the overwhelming consensus among Jews regarding the future of Jerusalem as a united city, under Jewish sovereignty, and as the capital of the State of Israel, while respecting and fostering non-Jewish minority religious rights.

The philosopher Judah Ha-Levi (1085-1141), the greatest Hebrew poet of the Middle Ages, concluded his philosophical defense of Judaism, the *Kuzari*, by stating that "Jerusalem can only be rebuilt

when the Jews yearn for her to such an extent that they cherish her stones and dust." If Jews and their friends today took more seriously that commitment to rebuild Jerusalem, the real, earthly Jerusalem might more closely approximate the ideal, heavenly Jerusalem, and the climactic words mandated by Jewish tradition might yet come true: "La-Shanah Ha-Ba'ah Bi-Yerushalayim!" - "Next year in Jerusalem!"