



Jerusalem: Israel's Eternal Capital



Its fate affects not only Israelis, but also diaspora Jews like myself. The fact that I do not live in Jerusalem is secondary; Jerusalem lives within me. Forever inherent in my Jewishness, it is at the center of my commitments and my dreams.

Jerusalem, for me, is above politics. Mentioned more than 600 times in the Bible, Jerusalem, anchored in Jewish tradition, is the national landmark of that tradition. It represents our collective soul. It is Jerusalem that binds one Jew to another. There is not a prayer more beautiful or nostalgic than the one which evokes the splendor of its past and the shattering and enduring memory of its destruction. The Jewish soul carries within it the wound and the love of a city whose keys are protected by its memory.

Each time I revisit the city, it is always for the first time. What I feel and experience there I feel nowhere else. I return to the house of my ancestors; King David and Jeremiah await me there....To compromise on territory might seem, under certain conditions, imperative or at least politically expedient. But to compromise on history is impossible.

– Elie Wiesel, Nobel Laureate

New York Times, January 24, 2001

Jerusalem:





Israel's Eternal Capital



Jerusalem: Israel's Eternal Capital is a significant milestone in the growth of the international grassroots movement to keep Jerusalem united. Anyone who reads it will immediately appreciate its importance in setting the record straight.

This study-guide is dedicated to the generous support *One Jerusalem* has received from Ronald S. Lauder and Natan Sharansky. These two friends have been with us from the beginning and we continue to grow in influence because of their dedication to the cause of a united Jerusalem.

Along the way, many people have been part of our movement; I want to mention a group of stalwarts:

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Aaron Gutfreund, Michael Weinstein, and the team at iPractical Computing for rebuilding and upgrading our website and believing in the cause.

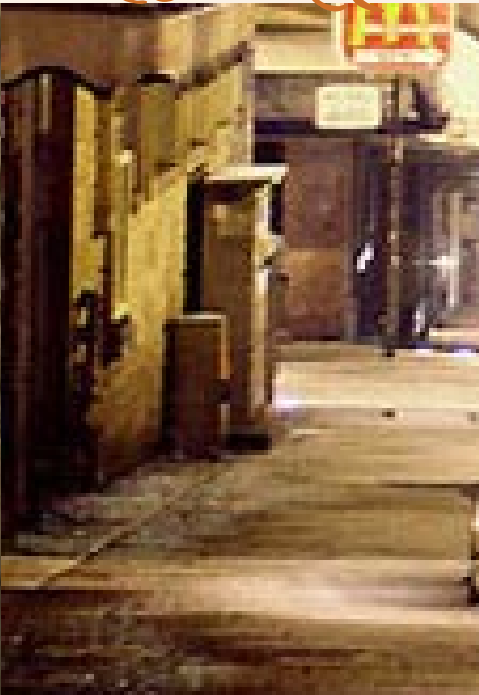
Allen Roth, President
One Jerusalem

Acknowledgments



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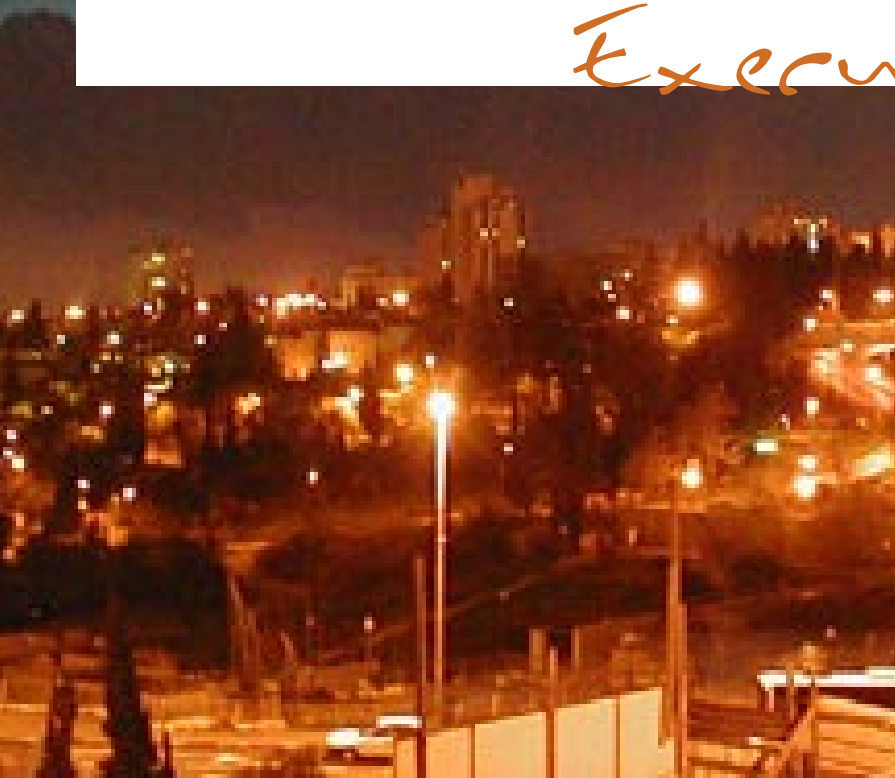
- The Jews are the only community that has continuously sought to maintain a presence in Jerusalem ever since King David made it their capital 3,000 years ago. At every point in the city's history, Jews either lived in Jerusalem or died trying to. Even during the perilous times of Roman expulsion, Jews continued to attempt to return to Jerusalem.
- By the beginning of the twentieth century, Jews numbered 45,000 of Jerusalem's 65,000 residents.
- International law, from the Balfour Declaration and the League of Nations, has recognized the "historic rights" of the Jewish people to Jerusalem.
- Ancient documents and artifacts confirm Jerusalem as the ancient Israelite capital where the Holy Temple stood. Even the earliest Muslim names for Jerusalem refer to it as the site of the Temple of Solomon.
- Jerusalem has never been a capital for anyone other than the Jewish people.
- Since June 1967, for the first time in 2,000 years, people of every religion are legally allowed to worship freely at all of Jerusalem's holy sites. Jews can now pray at the Western Wall and erect



synagogues without periodic violence, vandalism, and arson; Christians, Armenians, and Muslims enjoy more freedom than ever before.

- The deep Israeli and Jewish attachment to Jerusalem was emphasized by the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin who said in 1995: “If they told us that the price of peace is giving up on a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty, my reply would be ‘let’s do without peace.’”

Executive Summary



- A divided Jerusalem has always been a violent Jerusalem. As the Palestinian Authority gained footholds in Jerusalem and surrounding neighborhoods, these soon became bases for Palestinian gunmen to snipe at Israeli civilians and for terror cells to grow and launch operations against nearby Israelis.
- The most recent Palestinian campaign of violence, aimed at weakening the Jewish commitment to Jerusalem, has had the opposite effect, stimulating a large groundswell of grass-roots support, mobilized to make sure Jerusalem is never divided.



8 *If I forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy.*

(Psalm 137)



Some 25 centuries ago, the Jewish community made this extraordinary promise: never to forget Jerusalem. Even as Babylonian tyrants forcibly removed them from their sacred capital, massacring many and exiling more, decreeing that never again would they return, the Jewish people collectively vowed that they would keep Jerusalem with them.

Lest the Jewish community forget, they pledged to lock the city in their memories, invoke it in their prayers, rediscover it in their studies, and hold it in their hopes. They would chant “Next Year in Jerusalem” and they would pray for the city’s peace (Psalm 122). And one day, no matter the obstacles or the odds, they would return.

More extraordinary than the promise was the fact that the Jewish people kept it. There was perhaps the only example in history of a people vividly recalling a place upon which many had never laid eyes, a place that thousands of Jews perished simply trying to glimpse. Jerusalem sustained diaspora Jewry, its mere memory keeping Jews from despair in

the face of torture and oppression, and from assimilation in the wake of dispersement.

Simply stated, the Jewish people's relationship to Jerusalem is one that transcends time, space, and other physical constraints. The attachment remains constant in the psyche, spirit, and practices of the Jewish people wherever they may be. The twelfth century Jewish scholar and poet, Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi, perhaps most poignantly expressed this concept in his lament that "my heart is in the East, even as I remain mired in the West."

Perhaps less known, even to many identifying Jews today, is that some Jews fulfilled this promise more immediately, returning to Jerusalem under the pain of death or imprisonment in order to restore and continue the Jewish presence there. In fact, Jews are the only community that has continuously returned to Jerusalem ever since King David established it as their capital three millennia ago. In every period in history, over the past three millennia, Jews either dwelled in Jerusalem or died trying to.



No other community shared this attachment to the city. It is perhaps for this reason that even prominent non-Jewish observers of the Zionist return could scarcely deny Jerusalem's central place in Jewish identity. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said: "Let the Jews have Jerusalem, it was they who made it famous." Or, as Sari Nusseibeh, the Palestinian Authority's former Minister of Jerusalem Affairs, stated: "I would be blind to disclaim the Jewish connection to Jerusalem."¹

Introduction

Jerusalem remained for all Jews the dream of rebirth, the hope of continuity, and the manifestation of both their particularity as a people and the universality of their values. Most importantly, it remained their capital, even as they languished in exile.





The Jewish Presence in the City



Three thousand years ago, the Jewish people established Jerusalem as the geographical center of the Jewish nation and the spiritual locus of its heritage. Resting on a mountaintop at the heart of the ancient Kingdom of Israel, laying directly between Judea and the northern tribes, the site of this mystical city had long been preordained. As it was surrounded by the people of Israel, so it was ensconced in their liturgy and faith. This was the site where Abraham had come to sacrifice his son Isaac; the “House of G-d” discovered by Jacob; and the “Good Mountain” longed for by Moses in his final plea to enter the Promised Land. Yet, to the rest of the world, the place was unknown.

That changed when King David, early in his reign, established Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. He brought the Ark of the Covenant to reside in its walls. His son, King Solomon, soon erected the Holy Temple, enshrining Jerusalem as the permanent resting place of the Ark and the embodiment of holiness on earth.

Jerusalem’s prominence grew as its leaders ruled from within it. Foreign dignitaries visited to pay tribute, while other

travelers came to gaze in awe. Three times each year the land was abuzz as the ancient Israelites made the required pilgrimage to the Temple Mount to celebrate the Jewish festivals (not unlike the pilgrimage that Muslims would later make – to Mecca).

From that point on, Jerusalem remained the eternal capital and heritage of the people of Israel. Even when Jews were forcibly removed into exile from the ancient Land of Israel, they never severed their link to their holy capital. To this day, Jewish synagogues are built facing Jerusalem. Three times each day observant Jews turn toward the Temple Mount in prayer. The Jewish summer months of Tammuz and Av include an annual three-week period of mourning when religious Jews forsake music and various forms of entertainment and celebration to commemorate the destruction of their two Temples centuries ago. (It is said that Napoleon Bonaparte arrived in Jerusalem on the 9th of Av to find the local Jews in mourning. He left the region with a newfound respect for the Jewish nation, impressed that such a genuine outpouring of grief was for the Temples destroyed thousands of years

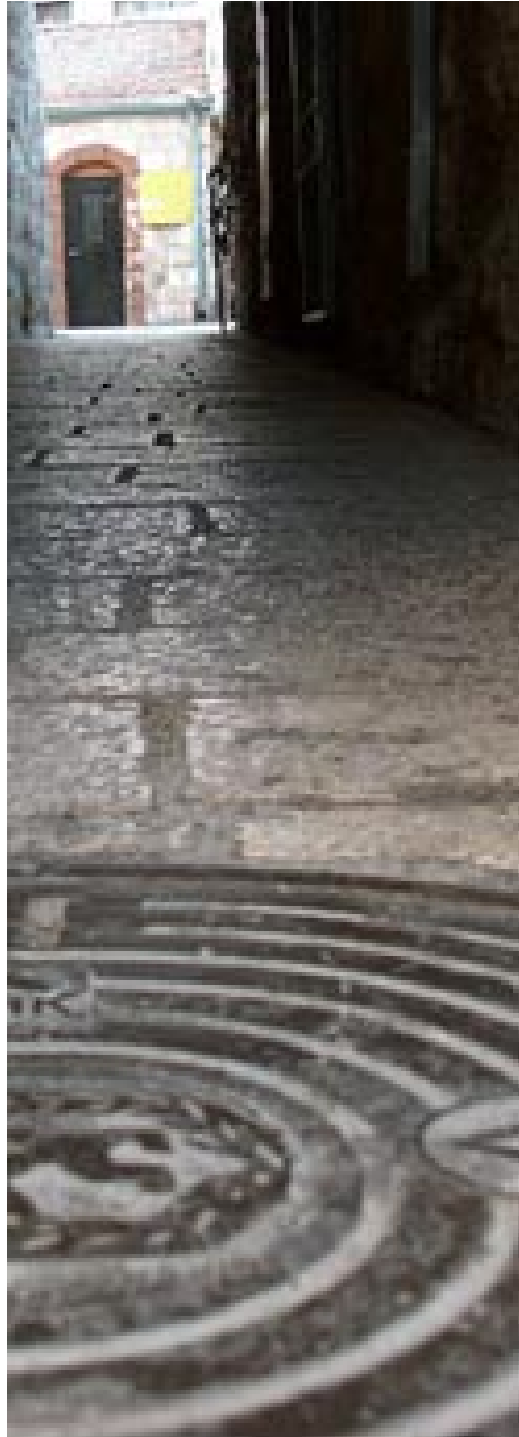
earlier.) Throughout the year, religious Jews saying grace after a meal or a snack recite a prayer for the restoration of Jerusalem. Even in the midst of a wedding ceremony, Jewish tradition prescribes that the groom break a glass – during this moment of great personal joy – to serve as a reminder of the destruction of Jerusalem. Thus, never does Jewish life stray far from the memory of the holy city.

Following each exile, the Jewish people moved to reestablish their presence in Jerusalem whenever and wherever physically possible. Twice Jewish leaders returned from exile and reestablished Jerusalem as their capital, once under Roman rule and later under the Byzantines. Each time they were ultimately expelled by governors determined to erase the Jewish connection to the city and thereby quell any potential incursion. The Roman Emperor Hadrian forbade Jews to live in Jerusalem, renaming the city Aelia Capitolina. He even went so far as to rename the entire Holy Land “Syria-Palestina,” later shortened to “Palestine,” in a declared attempt to eradicate the Jewish identity of the land.

But the attempt failed. Long after the Roman Empire's demise, through the Dark Ages and medieval times, the Jewish people remained true to their land, as Jerusalem remained the center of their faith. Through the centuries of exile, Jews risked their lives to return to their capital.

By contrast, no other faith or ethnic group has ever claimed the city as its capital. Islam, which for a time maintained a dominant presence in the city, placed higher priority on Mecca and Medina. Christianity favored Caesarea, whenever its faithful dominated the Holy Land.

During the Byzantine era, Christian rulers sought to maintain and enforce the Roman edict forbidding Jews from living in the city. Jews were allowed to enter but once a year, on the 9th of Av, to commemorate the destruction of their Holy Temples. In the few instances in which they tried to remain longer, scores of Jews were murdered by Byzantine soldiers and neighbors.



In 614 CE, Jews played a substantial part in the Persian invasion of Jerusalem “as a nation with its own stake in the victory, since they regarded the war as a struggle for national liberation.”² When the Persians defeated the Byzantines, Jews reestablished a community in Jerusalem, erecting synagogues and restoring ancient neighborhoods. Their return was short-lived, however. The new Jewish community was massacred by the resurgent Byzantine Emperor Heraclitus in 622 CE.

Nevertheless, Jews remained determined to return. In the wake of the Muslim conquest in 638 by the Caliph Umar al-Khattab, who was one of the first four Orthodox caliphs, Jews were once again allowed back into the city. They established two “Jewish Quarters,” one directly north of the Temple Mount and one to its south. Jews even worked on the Temple Mount as guards.

Jews were largely tolerated and even protected during the subsequent Umayyad period, though they were kept in separate quarters and repeatedly taxed. Umayyad rulers were far more concerned with undermining the dominance of their rivals in the holiest Muslim

cities of Mecca and Medina. As a result, they launched a campaign to establish Jerusalem as a center for Islam: In 691, Caliph Abd al-Malik of the Umayyad dynasty constructed the Dome of the Rock on the site of the Jewish Temple, a shrine designed to compete with the grand structures of Arabia. In 715, the Umayyads constructed a mosque near the shrine, known as the Al Aqsa Mosque.

The Jewish communities were allowed to live in peace during the period, and were even granted some control of areas near the Temple Mount, which the Umayyads still recognized as the site of the Jewish Temple. In 750, the Umayyads were defeated by a rival Muslim power, the Abbassids, based in Baghdad. The new rulers were somewhat less sympathetic to the Jews, and the community endured some intermittent persecution during that time. Still, the Jewish community remained intact and Jews continued to settle in Jerusalem, particularly with the simultaneous decline of the Babylonian center of the Jewish diaspora.

In 863, the rabbinic seminary known as Yeshivat Eretz Israel moved from Tiberias to Jerusalem and became the central Judaic



decisor for the entire Middle East region. Indeed, as the Gaonic period of diaspora Jewry began to unfold, Jerusalem remained home to a Gaon – the religious leader – right up until the rabbinic reign of Evyatar Ben Eliahu Hacoen in 1112. The Jews continued to reside in the two “Jewish quarters,” despite the periodic persecution of the Crusades.³

Jewish religious life in Jerusalem was rejuvenated in 1267 when the noted Spanish Jewish scholar and biblical commentator Rabbi Moses ben Nachman (1194-1270), or Nachmanides, immigrated to Israel. He settled in Jerusalem and founded a synagogue on Mount Zion. The synagogue later moved to an area in what is now the Jewish Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem, where it continues to serve the Jewish community to this day.⁴

A major wave of Jewish resettlement in Jerusalem came in the wake of the Spanish Inquisition. Fleeing the massacres, torture, and forced conversions of Europe, Jews flowed into Jerusalem and established new synagogues and institutions of leadership. The community remained intact through the 1500s, as described by the legendary Jewish chronicler Joseph

HaCohen. It continued to grow through the 1600s, when a new community was established by the rabbi and leader known as Yehuda HaChasid. In the 1700s, waves of Sephardic Jews settled in the city under the leadership of Rabbi Gedaliah of Siemiatycze.

By 1855, the Jewish quarter had become so overcrowded that it could no longer sustain the thriving Jewish population. Sir Moses Montefiore bought a plot of land across from Mount Zion and built Yemin Moshe, the first significant Jewish enclave outside the city walls. Other Jewish neighborhoods outside the Old City soon followed: Nahalat Shiva (1869) near Jaffa Road, Me'a Sha'arim (1875), Kiryat Neemana (1875) across from the Damascus Gate, and Kfar Shiloah (Silwan) (1884).⁵ When Mark Twain visited the city in 1867 he noted that the Jews were one of Jerusalem's major populations.

Yet all of this Jewish activity in Jerusalem paled in comparison to the influx of the late 1800s, as a new grassroots movement mobilized and brought to life the long-held dream of a massive return to Zion, the symbolic



name of Jerusalem (and which also signified the entire Land of Israel). When thousands of Jews immigrated in what became known as the Hibbat Zion (Lovers of Zion) movement in the 1880s, the Jewish community once again became the single largest community in the city of Jerusalem.

In 1864, the Jewish majority in the city numbered 8,000 (together with 4,500 Muslims and 2,500 Christians), according to British records. Fifty years later, Jews numbered 45,000 out of a total population of 65,000. Finally permitted to live in relative peace, the Jewish people had once again become the dominant population in their ancient capital.

The Jewish majority persisted in Jerusalem right up until Israel's War of Independence in 1948, when surrounding Arab armies invaded the Holy Land and, as the Babylonians, Romans, and Byzantines before them, forced Jews from their homes and a community from its city.

Great Britain became the first modern country to recognize the unbroken link between the Jews and their homeland and the untold suffering that their displacement had caused them. In the Balfour Declaration of 1917, Britain officially acknowledged the right of the Jewish people to restore their national home on the land of ancient Israel, which by then had become the decaying Ottoman Province of Palestine. Writing to the Zionist Federation on behalf of Great Britain's government, the Foreign Secretary, Lord Balfour, said: "His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object."⁶

The League of Nations subsequently affirmed the commitment set forth in the Balfour Declaration when it issued its Mandate for Palestine. The League, the source of international legitimacy eventually succeeded by the United Nations, recognized "the historic connection of the Jewish people with Palestine"



International Recognition



and called for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." It is noteworthy that the League did not exclude Jerusalem or any other area of Mandatory Palestine from its recognition of Jewish rights to the land. Indeed, of all the areas in the Mandate territory, Jerusalem boasted the largest and most dominant Jewish presence at the time of the declaration.

The United Nations inherited this legal designation from the League of Nations.⁷ Then, on November 29, 1947, the United Nations adopted Resolution 181 ("The Partition Plan"), which called for a Jewish state, encompassing primarily the Jewish population along the coast, to exist alongside an Arab state in Palestine.

The Partition Plan declared Jerusalem a temporary "*corpus separatum*," a separate entity, whose ultimate status would be voted upon by its residents. At that time, the Jews were the majority in the city. The Partition Plan, then, would have led to Jewish sovereignty over Jerusalem by majority vote.

The surrounding Arab countries were determined to strangle the nascent Jewish state in its cradle and prevent the Jewish majority of Jerusalem from reaffirming its claim to the city. The Arab states rejected Resolution 181 in word and deed, sending armies to overturn its provisions by expelling the Jewish population from Jerusalem and Palestine and driving them “into the sea.” The UN Protective Force, stationed in Jerusalem as part of Resolution 181, stood idle and allowed the Arab invaders to charge into the city. While the Arab armies failed to destroy the Jewish state, they besieged and attacked the Jews of Jerusalem in the spring of 1948.

Abdullah el-Tel, commander of Transjordan’s Arab Legion in Jerusalem, reported in May 1948 that the “Jewish Quarter has been destroyed,” making “the return of the Jews to this place impossible.” Indeed, el-Tel considered this “defeat of the Jews to be the most serious blow to have befallen them, particularly in terms of their morale, since they were cut off from the Western Wall and the Jewish Quarter for the first time in 15 generations.”

The Arab Invasions

Immediately upon their occupation of the Jewish Quarter, the Arabs indiscriminately blew up synagogues, rabbinical schools, and other buildings. Remaining synagogues and other holy sites were used as stables and garbage dumps. John Phillips, a *Life Magazine* photographer-reporter accompanying the Arab Legion, documented the destruction of the Jewish Quarter in the June 7 and 28, 1948, issues of the magazine. Phillips observed that on May 28, 1948, “Palestinian hangers-on burst in and reduced [the Jewish Quarter] to smoking ruin after the beaten Jews gave in.” He noted that “[h]ad any Jew decided to remain in the Old City, he would have been homeless within hours and probably dead by nightfall.”

Throughout the nineteen years of Jordanian occupation, the Jewish Quarter of the Old City remained in ruins, substantially razed to the ground.

Jews were barred from the entire Old City, and thus from Judaism’s holiest site, the Temple Mount and its remaining Western Wall.



They were left only to gaze, across the morose no-man's land, past Jordanian snipers, at their beloved city. They could do no more than pray: "Next year in Jerusalem."

Israel's miraculous liberation of the Old City in 1967 brought an answer to their prayers. Few Jews will ever forget the emotional report from Israeli paratroopers liberating the Old City: "The Temple Mount is in our hands!"





The unification of Jerusalem was quickly followed by the restoration of the Old City's Jewish Quarter to the grandeur and beauty that had been the hallmark of Jerusalem for ages. Newly built and painstakingly restored synagogues, rabbinical schools, community centers, private homes, and public squares now grace the area, overflowing with visitors and tourists.

The remainder of the “new city” of Jerusalem has now also been transformed into a spectacular, thriving urban center. The panorama of the city is marked with tall hotels and office buildings, its streets replete with shops, cafes, synagogues, and schools, all of which merge into a golden buildingscape that shimmers against the backdrop of the Judean hills. Tourists of all faiths continue to flock to Jerusalem – drawn by its history, character, and beauty.

The Rebirth of Jerusalem



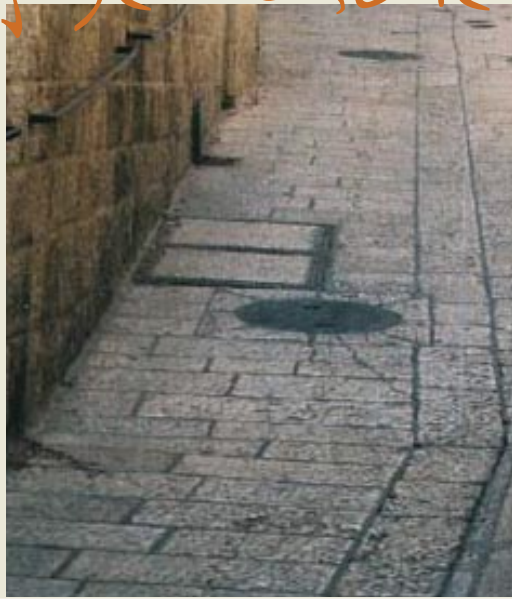
The war launched by the Arab states in 1948 ended with the armistice agreement of 1949. The newly established armistice lines were to become a point of reference for many who envisioned the putative boundaries of the Jewish state, as the blueprint of the Partition Plan receded into history. The 1949 map, at odds with Resolution 181, served as the new basis for the UN's official induction of Israel as a member-state.

Transjordan had seized the eastern half of Jerusalem as part of the attempt by the Arab states to expel the entire Jewish presence from the Land of Israel. Legally, then, Transjordan's occupation of the city and the West Bank was illegitimate under international law. (The United Nations Charter, in its rejection of "the acquisition of territory by force," enshrined the principle that no territory could be won legitimately in a war of aggression, such as that launched by the Arab states in 1948.)

In 1967, Arab armies again massed on Israel's border with the declared aim of



The Legal Status of Jerusalem



destroying the entire Jewish state, and Israel fought a defensive war to repel the imminent Arab invasion. In Jerusalem, the conflict mirrored the larger war: the Jordanians ignored Israeli warnings to refrain from initiating hostilities, and fired the first shots at Israeli targets. Israeli forces fought back, eventually seizing the Old City and the Temple Mount. Because Israel captured the Old City and other parts of eastern Jerusalem (and the West Bank and Gaza as well) in self-defense, its rights are recognizable under international law and its presence remains legal.

In November 1967, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 242, calling for territorial compromise involving some, unspecified amount of land seized by Israel in 1967 in exchange for "secure and recognized boundaries" and a "just and lasting peace." **Significantly, Resolution 242 does not require that Israel withdraw from Jerusalem or any other specific territory;** the text merely calls for some of the territory held by Israel to be compromised in return for the establishment of secure and recognized

boundaries. Israel has already withdrawn from a majority of the territory that it occupied in 1967, having ceded the entire Sinai Peninsula to Egypt under the Camp David accords and having turned over significant areas of the West Bank and Gaza to Palestinian Authority control. Regretfully, Israel has yet to enjoy “secure and recognized boundaries” or to see a “just and lasting peace.” Israel’s presence in Jerusalem, however, remains lawful under United Nations Security Council Resolution 242.⁸

It is important to note that the earliest legal instruments of the twentieth century relating to Jerusalem – the Balfour Declaration and the League of Nations Mandate – did not purport to grant Jews a new right to reconnect with their homeland. They *recognized* the “historic” right of the Jewish people to that land. Those rights, in other words, were understood as historically enshrined, predating any legal review of them. Indeed, the most fundamental rights ever cited in international law – such as the right of a country to its sovereign territory or the right to defend against invasion – are recognized as natural and pre-existing. The UN Charter can



merely recognize and affirm them; it cannot grant these rights. Similarly, no nation’s right to its capital is subject to affirmation or approval by the United Nations or its parent organizations. They are rights that belong exclusively to the subject nation, and are not conditional on the approval or ratification of any other nations.

The Jewish people decided millennia ago to establish Jerusalem as their capital. They continue to effect that choice to this day. No nation or legal authority may deny that choice.



Religious Freedom



For most of the past 2,000 years, freedom of worship in Jerusalem has been severely limited. Access to holy sites was parceled out hierarchically, subject to the benevolence or whim of the authorities then in power. Roman rulers and their Byzantine successors forbade Jewish residence in the city. Ottoman rulers and later local Muslim governing authorities forbade Jews from bringing Torah scrolls and other prayer artifacts to the Western Wall. When Jews tried to bring a Torah to the Wall in 1929, neighboring Arabs rioted and murdered dozens of Jews.

Under Jordanian rule (1948-1967), Jews were marched out of the Old City as prisoners, while their homes were destroyed. During that time, no Jew was able to worship at the Western Wall, despite an armistice agreement which had specifically provided that right. Christians, for their part, were barred from buying land and thereby expanding their presence in the city.

By contrast, when Israel established sovereignty over Jerusalem in June 1967,

all of the city's holy sites became freely and equally accessible to worshippers of all faiths for the first time in centuries. Indeed, within days following Israel's victory in the Six-Day War, the Israeli Knesset enacted the Protection of Holy Places Law of 1967, which to this day provides that: "The Holy Places shall be protected from desecration and any other violation and from anything likely to violate the freedom of access of the members of the different religions to the places sacred to them or their feelings with regard to those places."

Under the protection of Israeli law, the Christian presence in Jerusalem has undergone a rebirth: a new Armenian sanctuary was erected in Jerusalem and has become an architectural and theological landmark. A Mormon temple was built on the slopes of Mount Scopus. Christian sites like the Church of the Holy Sepulcher or the Garden Tomb, believed to be the burial place of Jesus, continue to flourish. Muslims, meanwhile, enjoy an autonomous, religious administration for their holy sites, particularly the Waqf that presides over the Temple Mount. All of these sites are well guarded by Israeli authorities to



ensure security and stability for all worshippers. For the first time in the city's history, Muslims, Christians, and Jews all enjoy equal freedom of worship in the Old City. Jews, for their part, can finally pray at the Western Wall of the ancient Temple, Judaism's holiest place on Earth, and establish synagogues in the Old City where they can pray in peace.

Over recent decades, Palestinian opponents of Israel have sought in many ways to undermine and deny the Jewish connection to Jerusalem. When the Clinton-Arafat-Barak negotiations at Camp David approached a climax – with the very real possibility that a negotiated settlement would be reached, including plans for Palestinian administration over parts of Jerusalem – Yasser Arafat suddenly lashed out at Jewish claims. He stated at one press conference: “The Temple didn’t exist in Jerusalem, it existed in Nablus.”⁹ On another occasion, both he and his successor, Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), denied that the Western Wall was a Jewish holy site, referring to it instead as the site of el-Buraq (the place where, according to Islamic folklore – not the Koran – Mohammed was believed to have hitched his steed). On another occasion, Arafat announced: “The ruins of the Temple don’t exist! Our studies show that they are actually Greek and Roman ruins.”¹⁰

President Clinton’s liaison to the Middle East peace process, Ambassador



Disclaiming
Jewish History



Dennis Ross, recounted how Clinton lost his patience with Arafat when the Palestinian leader – presented with an offer of everything the Palestinians demanded at Oslo, including a divided Jerusalem and a Palestinian state – responded by challenging Israel’s claim to the Western Wall. It was at that point, Ross later said, that the Clinton team knew the peace process was over.

Tragically, the official web site of the Palestinian Authority’s Ministry of Information continues this line, asserting that “all historic studies and archeological excavations have failed to find any proof” for the “claim” that the Western Wall is part of the Jewish Temple.

These claims are most astonishing, given the obvious scientific, archeological, and historical evidence that they ignore. The Jewish presence in Jerusalem, and that of the ancient Temple, is attested to not only by the continued memory of the Jewish people, but by independently assessed archeological evidence as well. The MMT scroll (*Miqsas Ma’aseh Torah*) found in the Dead Sea caves



of Qumran and dating back to the period of antiquity refers in breathtaking detail to the structure and rituals surrounding the ancient Jewish Temple in Jerusalem.¹¹ Engravings found as far away as Gamla in the Golan Heights, dating back to early antiquity, affirm the Jewish presence in Jerusalem and the site of the Temple. The celebrated Aramaic stele discovered at Tel Dan refers repeatedly to the “House of David.” All of this, of course, merely adds to testimony established by the very structures visible in the city today.

Archeological remains of the eighth century BCE Judean monarchy provide tangible evidence of that Jewish community, which thrived in Jerusalem at the time of King David and the First Temple. The tunnel of the ancient King Hezekiah bears witness to his reign, as does the Broad Wall, constructed in the eighth century BCE, which corroborates the accounts of its construction by the prophets Nehemiah and Isaiah. The Tower of David, located near the Jaffa Gate, reveals the fortress built by the Hasmonean kings, a Jewish dynasty that reigned from the mid-2nd to the mid-1st centuries BCE.



The Western Wall – perhaps the most recognizable Jewish site in Jerusalem – is an authentic remnant of the Second Temple that existed from 350 BCE until 70 CE. The commonly recognized portion of the Wall is but a fraction of the entire 2,000-year-old Temple Wall. Archeological digs begun more than a century ago and continued to this very day have revealed more of the Wall underground, spanning more than five hundred yards to the north – into today’s so-called Muslim Quarter – and demonstrating prior Jewish residence in that area. Excavations in areas now claimed by Palestinians show other fascinating remnants of the glorious Second Temple edifice that previously graced this site.

More surprising is that earlier Muslim authorities acknowledged the Jewish link to Jerusalem, including the Holy Temple. In 1930, the Supreme Muslim Council affirmed the link between the Dome of the Rock and Solomon’s Temple, stating: “This site is one of the oldest in the world. Its sanctity dates from the earliest time. Its identity with the site of Solomon’s Temple is beyond dispute.”

Indeed, Jerusalem's original Muslim name was *Medinat Bayt al-Maqdis*, which means "the city of the holy house," a direct translation of the Hebrew phrase for the site of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem (though the Koran itself conspicuously never mentions Jerusalem).¹² The word *maqdis* resembles *mikdash*, the Hebrew term for "holy site." The Arabic name gradually became abbreviated to *al-Quds*, a derivation of the Hebrew *kaddosh*, still rooted in the original reference to the holy house, or the Temple. It was only in recent decades, when Jerusalem's legal status became politically and diplomatically contested, that the Jewish roots of the city and the site of the ancient Temple were openly challenged by prominent members of the Palestinian Arab community.



The Israeli attachment to a united Jerusalem goes beyond the 3,000-year bond between the city and the Jewish nation, beyond legal rights and a Jewish majority and those who were forcibly expelled in 1948. Jerusalem, as a place and a symbol, has been the hope that sustained the Jewish people throughout centuries of persecution.

There has never been a time in the history of the Jewish diaspora when Jews did not risk their lives to return to Jerusalem or at least longingly pray: “Next Year in Jerusalem.”

The late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin reflected the deep Jewish attachment to Jerusalem when he said in 1995: “If they told us that the price of peace is giving up on a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty, my reply would be, ‘let’s do without peace.’”

On another occasion, Rabin explained the meaning of Jerusalem for him and for



Israeli sovereignty
Over a United Jerusalem
Benefits the City



Israel: “My Jerusalem is the focus of the Jewish people’s yearnings, the city of its visions, the cradle of its prayers. It is the dream of the return to Zion. It is the name millions murmur, even on their deathbed. It is the place where eyes are raised and prayers are uttered...In Israel, we all agree on one issue: the wholeness of Jerusalem, the continuation of its existence as capital of the State of Israel. There are no two Jerusalems. There is only one Jerusalem. For us, Jerusalem is not subject to compromise, and there is no peace without Jerusalem. Jerusalem, which was destroyed eight times, where for years we had no access to the remnants of our Temple, was ours, is ours, and will be ours – forever.”

For Israelis like Rabin, the attachment runs so deep that it defies explanation. To a more detached observer, however, several important factors explain the importance of Israeli sovereignty over a united Jerusalem.

Israel’s administration of Jerusalem since 1967 has enhanced the peace of the city and, for the first time in centuries, preserved religious freedom for adherents of all faiths. Any division



of the city would promptly threaten that religious freedom. Every time Jerusalem has been held, in part or in full, by foreign religious authorities, its sanctuaries and holy sites were restricted, and violence or discrimination befell those not in the ruling party.

But the arguments for dividing Jerusalem underscore a more fundamental, recent dynamic: The demand for Israel to relinquish part of its sovereignty, despite the legitimacy and prevalence of its rights and the munificence with which it has governed, is driven by opposition to the Jewish presence in Israel altogether.

Throughout the twentieth century, Jerusalem's Arab rulers and invaders openly opposed a Jewish presence anywhere in the city. They never joined the international community, even partially, in recognizing the legitimacy of Jewish and Israeli claims to Jerusalem or to any part of Israel. As a result, any Arab presence in Jerusalem that bordered on Jewish holy sites has been openly hostile to Jews, attacking the Jewish community with violence and threats. This was true when the Jews were a peaceful majority throughout the first half of the twentieth century; they were massacred in the 1920s, and finally were besieged and cut off in 1948 during the Arab attempt to expel the Jews from all of Jerusalem and Israel.

Unfortunately, this Palestinian stance persists today. The autonomous Muslim administration of the Temple Mount, empowered by Israel after 1967, has used the site to preach hatred against the Jewish "infidels," with the imam regularly invoking anti-Semitic themes in his weekly sermons.



A History of Arab Hostility



Muslim religious leaders have provoked violent attacks on Jews praying at the Western Wall continually throughout recent decades.

The Waqf – the Administration for Muslim Religious Endowments on the Temple Mount – has been working to destroy any archeological traces of Jewish presence at Judaism's holiest site. In the fall of 2000, the Waqf banned the Israel Antiquities Authority from the site. Immediately afterwards, the Muslim authorities began digging on the Mount and trucked 13,000 tons of rubble, containing First and Second Temple period artifacts, to local garbage dumps. These actions have been denounced by archeologists of all faiths as criminal. Indeed, since the 1990s, Waqf officials have razed, destroyed, or bulldozed structures and surfaces from the ancient Temple period, including a half dozen underground passageways, to pave the way for what they called new mosques and emergency exits. Searchers combing the discarded rubble have discovered Hasmonean engravings and pottery dating back to the eighth century BCE.

In recent years, Palestinian localities near Jerusalem have been used to launch attacks on neighboring Jewish communities. The Jewish Jerusalem neighborhood of Gilo remained for months under constant attack from snipers shooting from nearby Beit Jala, until the Israeli army was ordered to enter that area.

From the early years of the Oslo Accords, when the Palestinian Authority's presence in Jerusalem gradually increased, the city became the site of bloody anti-Jewish massacres. On February 25, 1996, a Palestinian suicide bomber dispatched by Hamas blew up a No. 18 bus near Jerusalem's central bus station, killing 26 passengers. On March 25 of that year, another No. 18 bus bomber exploded in downtown Jerusalem on Jaffa Road, murdering 19 passengers. Since the Oslo Accords were signed in September 1993, terrorists have killed more than 1,300 people in terrorist attacks like these, with many more attempted. Every one of these attacks was carried out by Palestinians who were openly armed and trained in areas under Palestinian Authority jurisdiction.

The PA, for its part, has refused to confront the institutions, factories, and training camps under its jurisdiction that ordered, armed, and enabled these homicidal missions; indeed, the PA oversaw the establishment of a shrine to one such massacre, "celebrating" the bombing of a Jerusalem pizzeria. Arafat himself beseeched publicly: "May Allah give me the honor of being one of the martyrs for holy Jerusalem."¹³ Israeli military investigations also unearthed checks he had signed to the families of homicide bombers.

After the Café Hillel bombing in Jerusalem in September 2003, in which seven civilians were murdered and 50 injured, Arafat told a large Palestinian audience: "Our people will not capitulate and will not kneel down until one of our boys or one of our girls raises the Palestinian flag over the domes and churches of Jerusalem." The crowd chanted in response: "To Jerusalem we are marching, martyrs in the millions."¹⁴

At the Camp David talks in the summer of 2000, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak proposed to place Jerusalem on the

negotiating table, something no previous Israeli government had considered. He offered direct Palestinian control in the city, including full administration of Palestinian neighborhoods and even administrative control over the holiest Jewish site, the Temple Mount, and parts of the Old City. If sharing the city was a Palestinian goal, this expansive proposal was expected to be welcomed warmly by the Palestinians. Instead, the Palestinians launched a wave of violence, instigated and militarized by the PA.

Early on, some Palestinian commentators – including the Palestinian poet Mohammed Darwish – pointed to the supposed "weakness" of the Zionists, expressing the belief that more violence and "martyrdom" would drive Israelis from their holy sites in the city. They echoed the sentiments of an increasingly popular Osama Bin Laden, arguing, "the Westerner loves life and will cower in battle."¹⁵

Instead, Jewish resolve to hold on to their ancient capital resurfaced with renewed vigor and momentum. In the winter of 2001, at the height of the violence, nearly 400,000 people gathered outside the walls



of Jerusalem's Old City for One Jerusalem's inaugural rally, where they reaffirmed the vows made by the Jewish nation on the banks of the rivers of Babylon, never to forget Jerusalem. To that ancient vow they added a renewed commitment never to relinquish their capital again. Natan Sharansky, who said the dream of Jerusalem sustained him through years of imprisonment in the Soviet Gulag, declared that Jerusalem "belongs to the Jewish people, and to history, not to any single one of us...we have no right to part with it."

Just as a divided Jerusalem has historically given rise to violence, so the image of a truly united Jerusalem has evoked the dream of peace. Every week, as Jews welcome the Sabbath, they pray for peace to return to the sacred city: "Peace be within thy walls and prosperity within thy palaces" (Psalm 122). At other times they revisit the ancient prophecy: "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne...and all the nations shall be gathered unto it" (Jeremiah 3-17).

Amen. And so may it be.

Question:

How old is the Jewish connection to Jerusalem?

Answer:

More than 3,000 years. Jews have always sought to return to Jerusalem when they were not forcibly prevented from doing so.

Question:

Isn't Jerusalem also holy to Christians and Muslims?

Answer:

Both Muslims and Christians have holy sites in Jerusalem, but only Jews see it as their sole spiritual capital. For Muslims, Mecca and Medina, and for Christians, Rome or Canterbury, play similar roles.



FAQ

Question:

Did the 1947 Partition Plan call for dividing Jerusalem?

Answer:

No. It called for separating Jerusalem from the rest of Palestine, and having its residents eventually vote on the city's final legal status. In the interim, it was to have an international administration. At the time, the largest community in Jerusalem was Jewish, so the resolution, which was rejected by the Arab states, would have effectively established Jewish sovereignty in Jerusalem.

Question:

Did UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, the "peace process" resolutions, call for dividing Jerusalem after 1967?



Answer:

No. The resolutions do not even mention Jerusalem at all. They call for negotiating on some territory captured by Israel in the war (for example, the Sinai Peninsula), in the context of reaching “secure and recognized” boundaries in the region. All states involved in the conflict (Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and Israel) are called upon to recognize each other’s sovereignty and boundaries. This has not yet happened.

Question:

Is Jerusalem worth sacrificing for peace?

Answer:

The choice has never existed. Dividing Jerusalem is historically and politically more likely to lead to violence and war than keeping it united. Those Palestinians for whom Jerusalem is a sticking point tend to be those who oppose Israel’s existence unconditionally.

Question:

Can the Jewish connection to Jerusalem be proven?

Answer:

Yes. The Old City itself contains structures, stones, tunnels, and pathways that archeologists have confirmed were the products of the ancient Jewish civilization in Jerusalem. Additional archeological evidence throughout Israel, from the caves of Qumran to the Golan Heights, refer directly to ancient Jewish Jerusalem. No serious archeologist or historian, anywhere in the world, doubts the connection.





Question:

Did the issue of Jerusalem destroy the Camp David negotiations?

Answer:

No. Yasser Arafat refused to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict regardless of what Israel offered. The violence that erupted as the negotiations fell apart was pre-planned months earlier, a fact confirmed by Palestinian Information Minister Imad al-Faluji and PA Justice Minister Freih Abu Middein in 2000.

Question:

Did Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount spark the violence?

Answer:

No. Palestinian officials have publicly admitted to the role of the Palestinian leadership in organizing the violence. This has been confirmed by the current Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas, as well as former PA Security Minister Jibril Rajoub. An independent U.S. government investigation led by Sen. George Mitchell concluded in 2001 that Sharon's visit was not the cause.

Question:

Why do Palestinians refer to Jerusalem as "*al-Quds*"?

Answer:

It is a derivation from the Arabic phrase *Bayt al-Maqdis*, which means "the holy house," an early Muslim reference to the ancient Jewish Temple. The word *maqdis* became *quds*, which, like the Hebrew *kadosh*, means "holy."

Question:

Is Palestinian anti-Jewish violence in Jerusalem aimed at removing Israeli sovereignty?

Answer:

Anti-Jewish violence in Jerusalem predates the question of Israeli sovereignty. In the 1920s, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Faisal al-Husseini, instigated bloody riots against Jews praying in Jerusalem, massacring Jewish worshipers and residents, burning synagogues, and destroying Jewish institutions. He later officially embraced Hitler and Nazism.

Question:

Do the Oslo Accords of 1993 call for negotiating on Jerusalem?

Answer:

The Oslo Accords referred to Jerusalem, refugees, and the legal status of Palestinian communities as matters to be settled in the last stage of the negotiations over the permanent status of the disputed West Bank and Gaza Strip. However, the Oslo framework broke down with the Palestinian violence in 2000 when Yasser Arafat refused to compromise with Israel on anything and launched a war of terror attacks on Israeli civilians.

Question:

Does Israel plan to destroy the Al Aqsa Mosque and other Muslim holy sites to make way for their Temple?

Answer:

Never. Israel has codified its commitment to religious freedom

and equality for all worshipers in Jerusalem. In fact, Muslims and Christians are freer under Israeli sovereignty than at any time in Jerusalem's history, and will remain so. When a tiny band of extremists devised a plot against one of the Muslim shrines some 15 years ago, the Israeli government arrested and prosecuted them.

Question:

How much of today's Jerusalem was part of ancient Jewish Jerusalem?

Answer:

Jews lived throughout the Old City and in the surrounding valleys and hills. Especially central was the City of David, now a neighborhood just beyond the Old City walls known as Silwan. Jews also lived in the area of the Mount of Olives. Until 1948, the Jewish Quarter in the Old City was nearly three times its present size, encompassing much of what today is called the Muslim Quarter. Arab forces attacked the Jewish community in 1948, forcing them out and redrawing the boundaries of the city.

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It is incumbent on us who know the history and the centrality of Jerusalem in the lives of the Jewish nation to pass this knowledge along to future generations. Given recent campaigns to distort the truth about Jerusalem, One Jerusalem's survey of the Nation of Israel's capital should be a part of the curriculum of every student and adult. I commend Jerusalem: Israel's Eternal Capital to all those who want to learn the truth.

– Benjamin Netanyahu

Former Prime Minister and Finance Minister

Jerusalem has always been the center of the Jewish physical and spiritual world. This pamphlet explains why this is so and highlights its continued importance in the battle for Jewish survival and revitalization. It is a must read for all Jews, and non-Jews as well, who wish to have any cogent understanding of the current struggles that swirl about the future of the Holy City.

– Rabbi Berel Wein

With many European and Third World states pressing to divide Jerusalem again, Jerusalem: Israel's Eternal Capital could not have come out at a better time. It not only establishes that the Jewish people have had the longest historical links to Jerusalem, but also that only Israel, with its long-standing commitment to freedom and democracy, can guarantee universal access and security to all the holy sites of the world's great faiths.

– Ambassador Dore Gold

Formerly Israel's permanent representative to the United Nations

