

Religious Narratives on Jerusalem and Their Role in Peace Building

Proceedings
of an interreligious conference
held October 20th, 2009 in Jerusalem

FOREWORD

The question of Jerusalem is one of the major points of contention in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict and surely one of the most difficult to solve. Apart from the political and territorial questions involved, the situation is further complicated by the fact that all three monotheistic religions, Islam, Judaism and Christianity, lay claim to the Holy City.

Although called the “City of Peace” in Hebrew (Yerushalayim), and “the Holy One” (al-Quds) in Arabic, tensions and clashes over the holy sites in Jerusalem return periodically and bear the danger of sparking a fire in the whole Middle East. Religion is playing a predominantly negative role in this conflict, exacerbating discord rather than promoting coexistence. In this divided city, Arab and Jewish groups are largely self-segregating and mostly do not cooperate with each other.

Though it is the place where the three Abrahamic faiths meet within the realms of a geographically extremely small space, the psychological, cultural, and physical barriers between the religions remain seemingly unbridgeable. These barriers are strengthened by a lack of knowledge of the other side’s history, religion and narrative. In order to tear down these barriers and to allow Jerusalem to live up to its promise of a City of Peace, it is essential to create awareness for the narratives of the three religions.

This publication is the outcome of an inter-disciplinary and inter-religious conference in Jerusalem titled “Religious narratives on Jerusalem and their role in peace building”, which was organized by the German Development Service in cooperation with al-Wasatia and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Ramallah.

The conference brought together a wide range of religious and academic authorities of the three religions, as well as interfaith dialogue

Editor:

Konstanze von Gehlen (German Development Service)

Conference organizational team:

Konstanze von Gehlen (German Development Service), Mohammad Dajani (al-Wasatia) and Felix Dane (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Ramallah)

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activists. The discussion aimed at examining the current discourse on the different Muslim, Christian and Jewish narratives pertaining to the question of Jerusalem as well as the possible role of religion in bringing about the vision of Jerusalem as the City of Peace.

Konstanze von Gehlen

Advisor
German Development Service

Prof. Muhammad Dajani

Founding Director
Al-Wasatia

Felix Dane

Director
Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung
Ramallah

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page 7	Introduction: Religious Narratives on Jerusalem: Potential for Moderation in the Tense Relationship between Religion and Politics? Christiane Amari
Page 29	Diverging Narratives as Part of the Conflict; Converging Narratives as Part of the Solution Zeina Barakat
Page 41	Muslim Attachment to Jerusalem (Al Quds Al-Sharif) Munther Dajani
Page 51	Jewish Religious Narratives on Jerusalem and Their Role in Peace Building Yehuda Stolov
Page 63	Religious Self-Restraint as a Positive Contribution to Easing Tensions in Jerusalem Ophir Yarden
Page 83	Jerusalem from a Christian Perspective and Its Role in Peacekeeping Ulrike Wohlrab
Page 95	The Vision of the New Jerusalem in the New Testament Book of Revelation (Rev 21,9-22,5) Margaretha Gruber
Page 103	Interfaith in Jerusalem – from Talk to Action? Robin Twite
Page 111	Recovering the Holiness of Jerusalem: A New Approach to an Old Conflict Henry Abrahamovich, Moshe Amirav
Page 121	Jerusalem: The City of Dreams, Hopes, and Peace Mohammad Dajani
Page 139	List of Contributors

INTRODUCTION

Religious Narratives on Jerusalem: Potential for Moderation in the Tense Relationship between Religion and Politics?

Christiane Amari

The city of Jerusalem – in Hebrew Yerushaláyim, meaning City of Peace, and in Arabic Al Quds, meaning the Holy – is referred to as ‘the Holy City’ worldwide. This is due to its unique amplitude of religious sites of the three monotheistic religions, reflecting that Jerusalem faced the reign of Jews, Christians and Muslims in its more than 3000-year-old history. While Jerusalem today covers an area of 125,1km², the Old City, bearing holy sites like the Dome of the Rock, the Western Wall or the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, only amounts to 900m². With Jews rushing to the Western Wall, Muslims hastening to the Temple Mount and Christians walking down the Via Dolorosa, it is a kaleidoscope of the multi-faith character of the city.

Among the reams of difficulties policymakers face who intend to solve the decade-lasting Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the question of Jerusalem’s status has always been a special one, considered the most complicated issue to solve. This assessment is underlined by the fact that in several negotiation efforts to solve the conflict, such as Camp David, the question how to deal with the holy sites, mainly the

Temple Mount, was not even prepared for in advance. It had been considered such a “hot potato” that it was thought “advisable not to bring it up until all other problems had been solved.”¹ That the Camp David negotiations failed in the end due to the disagreement about sovereignty over the holy places suggests that the status of Jerusalem with its religious symbols and sacred areas to the three monotheistic religions seems to remain the heart of conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

Time and again the unresolved issue of the holy sites is the reason for arising tensions. It bears the capacity to generate conflict and downright invites to be misused for political purpose – the Temple Mount has become a preferred scenery for these kinds of play. Mahdi Abdul Hadi pointed this out quite clear: “Jerusalem’s holiness complicates any attempt to solve the Jerusalem question and is often used or manipulated to attain non-religious goals.”² This indicates that, although the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is widely seen as a political conflict and accordingly dealt with, the religious dimension is indeed a big part of the problem that urgently needs to be solved. On the other hand the fight over the religious sites in the Old City seems to be a less concrete but more symbolic one – sometimes ostensibly focused on to avoid tackling the real obstacle preventing a comprehensive solution on Jerusalem: The political question of West and East Jerusalem, of both sides claims to Jerusalem as their capital and the efforts to manifest this claim through a certain policy.

As discussions of the religious and the political issue of Jerusalem are often led isolated and parallel to each other it is the explicit aim of

1 Moshe Amirav: Lessons from Camp David, Financial Times, 18.10.2007

2 Mahdi Abdul Hadi: Jerusalem – Religious aspects, PASSIA, 1995, p. 5

this paper to combine both aspects. It shall shed light on the question whether the religious narratives of Judaism, Christianity and Islam have an impact on the political sphere and if so, what a constructive influence would look like.

Three on One-Religious Narratives on Jerusalem

The idiosyncrasy of Jerusalem is the city being subject to three different religious narratives and two concurring national narratives – all of them generally judged as mutually incompatible. As Zeina Barakat outlines in her introductory paper to this volume, the purpose of narratives in conflict environments is to demonize and delegitimize the other party and to emphasize the rights and legitimacy of one’s own claims. This is exactly to be witnessed in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The central question to all those dedicating their work to support a peaceful and just solution to the conflict is therefore how to escape the vicious circle of exploiting narratives to stop further fuelling the flames of conflict.

This exactly is the mechanism the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) and the German Development Service (DED) try to interrupt within the framework of their dialogue-project on narratives, in which the conference “Religious Narratives on Jerusalem and their Role in Peace Building” took place. Dr. Yehuda Stolov, Executive Director of the Interfaith Encounter Association in Jerusalem, emphasized in his contribution that from his point of view there is often not even a bad interaction between Israelis and Palestinians, but none at all. Therewith he brought to the bottom line what a lot of the other participants witness

as well in their daily work: A lack of communication that consequently leads to a lack of knowledge of each other's historical perception and the lack of understanding each other's behaviour. This is precisely the starting point of the joint KAS-DED project: Based on the assumption that knowing the narrative of "the other party" contributes to an enhanced mutual understanding and accordingly helps to deescalate the situation, both project partners regularly bring multipliers from the national as well as religious sphere together to enable an exchange and a discussion of each others narratives. As narratives are not only a static product of education, experience and imagination, but may also change according to what religious or political authorities announce, the project attempts to positively influence the tenor of the public discourse between Jews, Muslims and Christians as well as between Israelis and Palestinians. This will in an ideal case not only stimulate the reflection of the own perception within each community but thus also lead to a moderation of narratives that in the end influences people's attitudes and determines their identity.

For Jews the biblical Mount Moriah, today known as the Temple Mount, is the holiest place on earth. First mentioned in the book of Genesis it has always been associated by the Jewish people as the place where they are closest to God. It is the place where David's son, King Solomon, built the first temple, also known as Solomon's Temple. After the destruction by the Babylonians the Second Temple was rebuilt there and reached its most magnificent form during the reign of King Herod. Both temples have been the centre of Jewish life and the sanctity remained with the site after their devastation. In today's daily practice Jews are urged not to step on the Temple Mount

due to the holiness of the place. That is why they pray on the Western Wall, a relict of Herod's massive retaining wall, to get as close as possible to the place where the Holy Temple stood.

The Christian narrative on Jerusalem bases on two central elements: The life and the death of Jesus Christ. Viewed as the Messiah and the Son of God, Jesus Christ is the central figure in Christianity and spent several years of his lifetime in and around Jerusalem. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Old City marks the place of Jesus Christ's grave and thus is the destination of hundreds of thousand pilgrims each year, reaching the height during the Easter celebrations. The Holy Sepulchre is the endpoint of the Via Dolorosa which marks the way Jesus had to walk down with the cross, from the residence of Roman governor Pontius Pilate to the place of his Crucifixion. Among many other places in and around Jerusalem, which are connected to Jesus Christ's life and ministry, these are the most significant ones.

For Muslims Jerusalem is the third holiest city in Islam next to Mecca and Medina. That roots in the Holy Scripture, the Quran, and the conveyed tradition of the prophet Mohammed, the Sunna. The Temple Mount is assumed to be the destination of Mohammad's Night Journey, the Isra', that started from Mecca, and the Dome of the Rock is supposed to be the place of Mohammed's ascension to heaven afterwards, called Mi'raj. Furthermore it has been the original direction of prayer for Muslims before it changed to Mecca. According to the Sunna, acts of worship are a lot worthier in Jerusalem than elsewhere and after their pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina believers should head for Jerusalem. Today the Al-Aqsa mosque is the site of Islam's third holiest shrine.

The Jewish as well as the Muslim claims on Jerusalem are not only

of religious character, but also of political, geographic, economic and cultural nature. Both communities seize the city as a symbol of national identity and inalienable rights. Driven by the fear to lose ground in Jerusalem in the hard fought political and territorial quarrel, the Jewish as well as the Muslim attachment to the city is highly emotional and closely linked to the question of political status. Volitional or not, this also influences the religious narratives on both sides. Narratives always reflect the state of mind towards a certain topic and it is simply difficult to shut them off against impacts of closely connected spheres. Both the Muslim and the Jewish narrative are damaged by problems of deformation, driven by the efforts of certain interpreters to assert that the counterpart has no religious attachment to Jerusalem. These voices do not only discredit the value of the religious narratives but also make it impossible for the other side to accept that narrative.

The Christian community is somehow crushed between Jews and Muslims in this conflict. This is not only due to the relatively small amount of Christian believers living in the region compared to Jews and Muslims. Most of the visitors coming to the Christian Holy Sites in the Old City are indeed pilgrims. Both in Israel and in the Palestinian Territories the Christians only constitute a small minority of the inhabitants. Combined with the political dimension the relation between Jews and Muslims attained, this contributes to a marginalization of Christians regarding the attention they receive in this triangle. On the other hand, the relative national neutrality of Christian churches in Jerusalem, of which many are maintained by European organizations, constitutes a precious value in itself.

All presentations given on the religious narratives of Judaism, Islam

and Christianity on Jerusalem during the conference emphasized the peaceful vision inherent in the Holy Scriptures of each religion, for instance the concept of 'Peace of Jerusalem' (Psalm 122:6) or the vision of the 'New Jerusalem' in the New Testament (Rev 21,9-22,5). Discussants showed mutual recognition and respect to all people believing in God, accepting each community's claims on Jerusalem. Acknowledging that all three monotheistic religions are in itself diverse and include exclusive as well as inclusive verses it is remarkable that all panellists invited to talk about the highly competitive case of Jerusalem stressed the peaceful concepts of coexistence inherent in their religion as the only possible solution to the conflict. That this is not the conventional pattern emerging on gatherings like this was outstandingly illustrated by the fact that panellists as well as moderators expressed their surprise about the absence of an expected hot tempered or even aggressive atmosphere during the meeting.

A Tenuous Relation-Politics and Religion in Jerusalem

As pointed out in the beginning, religion constitutes a part of the problem in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Since it is part of the problem, it also has to be part of the solution. But up to now the capacity of religion has never really been taken into account during the countless attempts to solve the conflict. All discussants at the conference finally agreed that the peaceful concepts of coexistence in Judaism, Christianity and Islam are the key to solve the Jerusalem question that is politically stuck at the moment.

This consequently leads to two central questions: How can the three moderately interpreted religious narratives on Jerusalem contribute to a solution that necessarily has to be agreed upon on the political level? Do they have the capacity to positively influence the development of a political agreement on Jerusalem? To answer these questions it is necessary to shed light on the political situation in Jerusalem and the role religion turned out to play in it in the past.

The Current Political Situation

After the military victory in the Six Day War 1967 Israel decided upon a policy of unification of Jerusalem. According to Moshe Amirav, former advisor to Ehud Barak on Jerusalem, this policy included six main objectives that were sought to be accomplished for the successful unification of the city: The international recognition of Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem, the settlement in all of Jerusalem, a uni-national city, a prosperous economic centre, the “Israelization” of the city’s Arabs and the separation of the Holy Places from political struggle.³ The entire Israeli policy on Jerusalem since 1967 has to be seen in the light of this unification attempt, whereas the territorial aspect received by far the highest attention. After declaring that policy the Israeli government quickly started to establish physical facts on the ground through extensive settlement activity in the Eastern part of the city and by dividing and encircling the immediate periphery of Jerusalem, mainly Arab villages, with Jewish settlements. Important to recognize is, that the main decisions concerning the Israeli Jerusalem

3 Moshe Amirav: The Disintegration of the Jerusalem Unification Policy. In: Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture, Vol 14, No 1, 2007.

policy have always been dealt with on the governmental level and not within the municipality. The former mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, was, for example, one of the hardest critics of the settlement activity in Greater Jerusalem.

The territorial policy heavily challenged the Palestinian vision of East Jerusalem as an inseparable part of the Palestinian Territories and the political, religious, geographical and cultural capital of future Palestine. Thus it produced an Arab backlash – the construction of thousands of unlicensed housing units in East Jerusalem in the 80’s and 90’s. The outlined developments, the antagonism distilled to the political and territorial claim, determined the atmosphere in the city during the last decades and also made the latest headlines on Jerusalem. During the last three years there has been another surge in settlement activities in East Jerusalem. Settlements as the E1 and E2 areas cut East Jerusalem off from the Westbank, squashing the hopes of a two-state-solution. Additionally the Israeli government, in line with right-wing settlement organizations like Ir David Foundation or Ateret Cohanim, strongly attempts to consolidate and expand Israeli control over the Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan and the historic ‘Holy Basin’ surrounding the Old City, including house demolitions and eviction of Palestinian families. The policy seemed to have reached a new climax and hence became subject to a very critical report of the European Union⁴, which was one of the main reasons for the development of European-Israeli relations “from bad to worse in 2009”.⁵

The Palestinian reaction to this policy is rather affective and far more a matter of principle than pragmatic. East Jerusalemites usually stay

4 Barak Ravid: EU envoys: Israel trying to sever East Jerusalem from Westbank, Haaretz, 2.12.2009

5 Gerald M. Steinberg: Resetting Europe-Israel relations, Jerusalem Post, 11.01.2010

away from polls not to legitimize the territorial annexation and not to acknowledge the Israeli sovereignty, often following the call of the Palestinian National Authority or religious leaders to boycott the elections. That is on the one hand comprehensible, but on the other hand also the reason why no one in city politics loses a vote in ignoring the needs of the Palestinians. For instance, compared to their share of population, constituting one third of the city's inhabitants, their neighborhoods receive a disproportionately small amount of money, about a tenth of the total budget. This is not going to shift as long as behavioral patterns remain the same.

The Israeli policy on Jerusalem is not likely to change at the moment, neither under the right-wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu nor under the new mayor Nir Barkat, who declared to support the policy and avowed himself to the indivisibility of Jerusalem. Notwithstanding, it is no secret that the "experiment of forcibly binding Israeli and Palestinian Jerusalem has (...) failed".⁶ Moshe Amirav even dedicated himself to a whole book, "Jerusalem Syndrome", on analyzing the failure of the unification policy.⁷ There are no signs of acceptance of the unification on the Palestinian side. In contrast, the policy deepened the rift between both communities, enhanced tensions and confrontations. The interaction between both sides takes place on a very low level of integration. It is rather a system of coexistence with the least contact necessary that emerged.

6 Gershom Gorenberg: A city united against itself, *The American Prospect*, 10.10.2008

7 Moshe Amirav: *Jerusalem Syndrome: The Palestinian-Israeli Battle for the Holy City*, Sussex Academic Press, 2009.

The Role of Religion in the Conflict

Daniel Seidemann, attorney and founder of Ir Amim, an Israeli NGO that dedicates its work to an equitable and sustainable future of Jerusalem, stressed during an UN-meeting on the Jerusalem question that the Old City and its religious sites form the "volcanic core" of the conflict.⁸ This is false and true at the same time. On the one hand false, because the holy sites are not an obstacle per se to a just and peaceful solution of the conflict. They could easily be put under international control, a policy even supported by Israeli officials after the War of Independence 1948. The current arrangement of administration is also rather pragmatic. Since the occupation 1967 Israel claims full sovereignty over Jerusalem and its holy sites, but allows de facto control of the daily affairs on the Temple Mount to the Waqf, the Muslim religious trust. On the other hand, Seidemann's assessment is true because the holy places are intentionally misused by both sides as a trump card in the political struggle to be played at the right time. The example of Camp David mentioned in the beginning excellently illustrates that mechanism. In the end "it was Arafat's and Barak's stubborn insistence on sovereignty that prevented an agreement"⁹ at Camp David. So, finally the negotiations did not fail due to a conflict inherent in religion preventing a solution concerning the holy sites, but because of both sides' attempts to see their own flag fly on the Temple Mount for political purposes.

The real conflict carried out in and about Jerusalem during the last decades has never predominantly been about religion. The crucial

8 See <http://www.un.org/news/press/docs/2009/gapal1130.doc.htm>

9 Aryeh Dayan: Dossier Spécial: Que s'est-il passé à Camp David? Institut Européen de Recherche sur la Coopération Méditerranéenne et Euro-Arabe, December 2002, p. 2

struggle has been about national aspirations on both sides and therefore is mostly one about power and control over territory. The religious struggle, culminating in the quarrel about overlapping claims of holiness on the Temple Mount, takes place on a much lower level of confrontation. It is not the core of the conflict. But it is strongly exploited by politicians as justification in order to strengthen their position in the national struggle.

Religion touches people in a much more emotional way than political arguments do. It always creates a tense mixture to interweave both spheres, politics and religion. But in the special case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Jewish and Muslim claims over the Temple Mount it is the most explosive combination imaginable.

Even though or presumably because of that the behavioural pattern of politicians exploiting religion for their purpose is prevalent in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Analyzed from the perspective of political science this phenomenon may simply be considered as an act of political craftsmanship in which religion is used as one tool among many. On the Israeli as well as on the Palestinian side one can witness the efforts to use religion to divide rather than to unite, driven by the interest to solidify the support for one's own position.

The risk this exploitation carries Prof. Mohammad Dajani denotes in calling the process "politics hijacking religion".¹⁰ Politicians on both sides are, at least up to now, mostly devotedly secular people. While they are for sure aware of the potential force of religion – because it enables an emotional access to people that politics usually lacks – they often do not seem to assess the dimension the issue carries. The lack of in-depth knowledge of the Holy Scriptures leads to misinterpretations

¹⁰ Personal interview with Prof. Mohammad Dajani, 4.12.2009, Jerusalem

and consequently to a mobilisation of the public in an exclusive and inciting way not intended by the religious sources.

The mixture of religion with power politics is, the other way round, also appealing to extremist religious leaders. In combining their harsh preaching with political postulations they try to gain influence in political questions and thus contribute to the exploitation of religion. The average believer who has no deepened knowledge of the Scriptures heavily depends on what religious leaders preach and usually follows the misreading, not being aware of any inaccuracy. Because religious authorities reach a broad audience the consequences of such behaviour are far-reaching. As one of the Muslim conference participants put it: "If Imams pray 'The Jews are the enemy and God is angry with the Christians', how can the believers think in terms of peace then?"

It is quite self-evident that the outlined developments influence the Jewish and Muslim narrative on Jerusalem in a way that does not contribute positively to a peaceful solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Idle Capacity-The Potential of Religion for Moderation

As explained above, there is a long history of political abuse of religion in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which, in terms of intention as well as concerning the output, has to be described as destructive. Bearing in mind the amicable concepts of coexistence presented at the conference, all meeting in a vision of a peaceful Jerusalem, there consequently seems to be a huge backlog to use religion in a positive

way in this conflict. Daniel Seidemann correctly calls this approach a “virgin territory”, whose perpetration might even turn it into a “mine field” if it comes to bring together high-ranking religious leaders from the three monotheistic religions.¹¹ But there are already some rare but promising attempts in this field.

One institution that could contribute to the mutual understanding as well as to the enhanced linkage between religion and politics in a constructive and peaceful way is the “Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land”. Formed 2005, the Council consists of Muslim, Jewish and Christian leaders in the Holy Land, who dedicated themselves to “prevent religion from being used as a source of conflict, and instead serve the goals of just and comprehensive peace and reconciliation.”¹² They want to address differences “through dialogue rather than through violence” and, which is even more important, “strive to bring this message to our respective communities and political leaders that they may embrace this approach accordingly.” The goal of monitoring media for insulting representations of any religion addresses another important issue. In upcoming clashes, especially those concerning the Temple Mount, the media often played a critical role and contributed to the escalation of the conflict.

The approach to step the educational path and to work together with educators and academics is of same importance. Only through these channels a broader audience within Israeli and Palestinian population can be reached by the message of mutual respect and cooperation. Narratives strongly define people’s views and attitudes towards certain events. Thus they also shape their identity. Any attempt to emphasize

11 Personal interview with Daniel Seidemann (Ir Amim), 7.12.2009, Jerusalem

12 Council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land, Communiqué November 2007, [http://www.elcjh.org/resources/statements/CouncilPublicStatement131007\(4\)%5B1%5D.doc](http://www.elcjh.org/resources/statements/CouncilPublicStatement131007(4)%5B1%5D.doc)

the reconciling aspects of religious narratives therefore has to be channelled to reach and change people’s minds. The power of change lies in education that has to take place in schools and universities as well as in Synagogues, Mosques and Churches. The media act as an important distributor in this regard.

Religious leaders are the most credible agents to spread the peaceful message of religious narratives on Jerusalem – simply because they possess the authority to interpret the Holy Scriptures. Another remarkable advantage in embedding religious leaders in attempts to contribute to a peaceful solution of the conflict is that they do not depend on constituencies as politicians do. Religious leaders do not have to worry about being reelected and losing their chair, thus they can easier give up ingrained positions or break new ground. At the same time they are of such importance because of their function as multipliers in sending messages to their communities.

The ultimate question brought up on the conference was how to address the non-liberals in each society. On the Israeli as well as on the Palestinian side there are well-known circles of people who usually take part in dialogue meetings and conferences. But those are already committed to a just solution of the conflict and convinced of the necessity of common agreement to solve political and religious dissonances. There is no need to convert the converted. The central issue is how to reach those people and engage in dialogue that are up to now reluctant to accept religious pluralism in Jerusalem and at large refuse to acknowledge all parties’ claims. In this context religious leaders have to play a central role.

First of all, they have the capacity to reach a broad audience within

their communities, most obviously with their weekly sermons. Secondly, their position gives them the natural authority they need to successfully spread the message of reconciliation in Jerusalem. Only religious authorities, basing their peaceful message on the ultimate origin of each religion, the Holy Scriptures, and using the language and symbols of religion, have the power to convince radicals whose conviction rests upon misinterpretation of these sources. The example Dr. Alick Isaacs gave in his presentation when he told how he confronted a right-wing settler with a peace-demanding quotation from the Holy Scripture and received an outraged and embarrassed silence as an answer quite well illustrates the effect of this approach. The aim must be to initiate a dialogue and to give thought-provoking impulses based upon religious sources as the only promising way to effectively long for a change of people's mind.

An example on the Palestinian side of how to systematically approach this change of mind is the work of the Wasatia-Movement. Wasatia is a term deriving from the Holy Quran and means moderation, centrism, and balance. The Wasatia-Movement dedicates itself to broaden the knowledge of this concept in politics, education and society. To this end, for instance, the movement offered workshops for imams and sharia-judges and taught them about this Islamic concept. As the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land does, they also focus on media work, having in mind their crucial role. For instance, reports about influential sheiks or imams that preached cooperation instead of confrontation cannot be overestimated in these tense surroundings.

In an emotionally charged conflict environment it is admittedly difficult to pursue this promotion of peace-emphasizing narratives on a long-

term basis. As practitioners in this field know, there is a lot of stubborn and obstinate resistance to overcome, sometimes against people's better judgments but sometimes also against different agendas. While the efforts within one community often 'only' suffer from their lack of popularity, the attempts to bring members of both communities, Israelis and Palestinians, together, often end up in a frustrating deadlock. Against that background it is obvious that local actors need sustainable support from external actors. That does not only apply to international governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions, which could mainly encourage the efforts by providing the framework conditions, but especially to religious institutions worldwide that could enhance the efforts content wise. Possible stakeholders are also churches like the Vatican which, due to their relative neutrality, could exert the role of a facilitator more powerfully than so far.

However, the question occurs if the spread of religious narratives does not only contribute to an enhanced mutual understanding between people but also might influence the political situation. According to Moshe Amirav, who served several years as advisor to Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kollek, religious leaders have never been involved in the Jerusalem policy.¹³ In the current deadlock situation, in which not even negotiations take place between Israelis and Palestinians, this is not likely to change. Strategic political goals are set and the agenda will not be endangered by embedding new actors in the game.

But politicians depend on constituencies. To a certain extent their actions reflect what they assume is in the voter's interest because they want to be reelected. If it is manageable to change the mood within the population, that will automatically influence politicians' behavior and

¹³ Personal interview with Moshe Amirav, 7.12.2009, Jerusalem

force them to modify their rhetoric as well as their actions.

Several weeks ago the celebrations of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the wall took place in Berlin. This outstanding historic event led to the end of the Cold War and hence changed the whole world order. The Cold War defined world politics over centuries and scarcely anybody could imagine its dissolution in advance. This monumental event, unexpected as it was, had been initiated by a broad civil nonviolent movement. The peaceful, so called ‘Monday demonstrations’ attracted week by week more and more people. In the end hundreds of thousand of people came together every Monday after the peace prayer in church to express their request for a peaceful political change. The pressure they exerted finally led to the opening of the wall through the political regime of the German Democratic Republic. The Christian churches that already started to organize the weekly peace prayers in the mid-80’s played a central role in these incidents. Most notably, it is their merit that the protests remained peaceful and nonviolent.¹⁴

Although the political circumstances cannot be compared in detail, the events that took place in Eastern Europe in 1989 are a shining example of the power that civil movements, initiated by religious institutions, can develop.

Conclusion

Religion caused many of the most brutal and bloody wars on earth, just to mention the crusades or the Thirty Years’ War in Europe. At the same time all monotheistic religions, namely Judaism, Christianity

¹⁴ Cf. Klaus Koschorke: *Falling walls. The Year 1989/90 as a turning point in the history of world Christianity*, Wiesbaden 2009

and Islam, praise forgiveness and peace. That illustrates on the one hand up to what extent religion is exploited and co-opted in terms of accumulating and maintaining power. On the other hand, the full potential of religion to deescalate and settle conflicts, based on the concepts of peace, charity and forgiveness, is not tapped in many cases. It is illusionary to try to extract religion from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; hence its impact has to be channeled in a way to use it as part of the solution.

Notwithstanding, in political conflicts as the Israeli-Palestinian one religion and their narratives can never replace politics as a means to resolve the quarrel. Political disputes require political solutions. But religion holds the potential to sow the seeds for such a solution in changing the mood within the population. Up to now religious narratives have widely been used as an instrument to inflame the conflict. With the same emphasis they could be used as means to prepare the environment for a settlement of parts of the conflict to reverse the tendency of negative exploitation into a positive influence. The conference revealed that concerning the question of Jerusalem these attempts would be fruitful; though it cannot be denied that on the political level fronts are extremely hardened on this issue. But as Abramovitch put it, the case of Jerusalem is “too important to be left to the politicians”.¹⁵ Therefore, religious leaders should be encouraged to assume their responsibility and capacity to spread concepts of peaceful coexistence and to play an active and self-confident role in shaping public opinion in this sense. Religion has always been used by political leaders and the enduring efforts are not about to change. But if religious

¹⁵ Abramovitch, Henry, and Moshe Amirav: *Recovering the Holiness of Jerusalem: A new approach to an old conflict*. Published in this volume, p. 109

authorities defy these attempts and succeed to broaden the knowledge of moderate concepts they may be successful in pushing back the other side's influence on public opinion. Attempts in this regard should deploy the high evocative power of religious narratives on Jerusalem to engage the enormous potential of the 'silent majority' in the midst of society. The necessary change of minds to alter the atmosphere within the population towards their neighboring counterpart can be reached only if a broad range of socialization agents, from religious institutions via media through schools and families, internalizes the religious demands for peace and moderation.

On the political level a two-state-solution including the division of Jerusalem into two capitals - as postulated by the Middle East Quartet consisting of the UN, EU, US and Russia - is the only conceivable scenario that will lead to ending the conflict-defined life in the city. The Jerusalem question can only be fully solved if also on the political level the rights and claims of both people, Israelis and Palestinians, are mutually recognized by each other as a basis for an agreed solution. Though the vision of West and East Jerusalem, each being the capital of an Israeli, respective Palestinian state, governing one's own affairs in sovereignty seems hard to reach in the current situation of political stalemate. The fact that the conflict has persisted for more than sixty years does not create outstanding optimism to achieve a mutually accepted solution in the foreseeable future. However, the Cold War or the Apartheid Regime in South Africa had prevailed over decades as well and hardly anyone had anticipated the way they were finally overcome – in both cases initiated by a civil movement which created a momentum that finally caused corresponding decisions on the political

level. Religious narratives on Jerusalem carry the potential to pave the way for such a development. The chance to promote them, in spite of extremely adverse circumstances, should not be forfeit.

DIVERGING NARRATIVES AS PART OF THE CONFLICT; CONVERGING NARRATIVES AS PART OF THE SOLUTION

Zeina M. Barakat

Introduction

Contemporary Muslim-Jewish narratives on Jerusalem are marred by problems of bias in tone, style, substance, vocabulary, and language. The traditional narratives of each side make strenuous efforts to assert that the other has no religious attachment to Jerusalem. This throws some shadow on their credibility, validity, and value. Moreover, they create interaction between Jews and Muslims. This paper aims at exploring the concept of narratives and their significance in shaping identities of “self” and “other” in the conflict and in constructing obstacles to conflict resolution. It will look into the role and uses of the term that left their imprint on collective memory and perceptions. It will attempt to investigate the power of social and individual memory in shaping narratives, and in molding and interpreting culture. It studies the dynamics in which narratives are transmitted and transformed to newer generations.¹

The issue of narratives raises many multifaceted perplexing questions: What constitutes a ‘narrative’? Can narratives be science? What do

¹ For an introductory book to help readers understand “what narrative is, how it is constructed, how it acts upon us, how we act upon it, how it is transmitted, how it changes when the medium or the cultural context changes, and how it is found not just in the arts but everywhere in the ordinary course of people’s lives,” see, H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, second edition 2008).

we want to disseminate through the use of narratives, for whom do we want to disseminate, and for what purpose? Do national narratives need to conform in structure and content in detail? What is the role of narrative in shaping the culture and history of the conflict? How do the national and ethnic settings affect narratives? How are the Jewish and Muslim narratives on Jerusalem constructed? Why and how do the Jewish and Muslim narratives on Jerusalem conflict and contrast sharply from each other? Why do they deny each others narrative? How should we deal with sharply clashing narratives, discard, reject, or ignore them? What is the response to each narrative? Why do Jews and Muslims object to their respective national interpretation? Is there a solution to the conflicting religious claims on Jerusalem and is this solution attainable? Does there exist at the present a definitive narrative that both sides share or can agree upon, or can live with? Will there ever be just one “shared narrative” that both conflicting parties agree upon? What role do narratives play in interjecting change overcoming the hurdle to conflict resolution and how could that lead to a cooperative relationship?

The hypotheses here are:

- Learning each others narrative helps creating more understanding and tolerance towards each other.
- Sharing narratives increases the participants’ ability to work cooperatively at present and in the future.
- Relating to each others narratives humanizes the face of the enemy.
- Knowing the others narrative opens up new approaches on own narrative.

The Concept of Narratives

The entry of the term ‘narrative’ to the social science lexicon is somewhat old though its entry to the political science lexicon is new.² Cutting across many disciplines, narrative is becoming an integral part of history, psychology, sociology, literature, religion, politics, film, theatre, even daily conversations and everywhere in the ordinary course of people’s communications. Narratives are an account of events or series of events, real or invented; stories that, unlike (most) plays and poems, are characterized by the presence of a narrator³ or an agency that tells and transmits the story.⁴ In his landmark essay on narrative, Roland Barthes asserts: “Narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting, stained-glass windows, cinema, comics, news items, conversation”.⁵ Narratives range from the shortest accounts of events, as in Julius Caesar’s remark, “I came, I saw, I conquered,” to the longest historical or biographical works, as well as diaries, novels, epics, short stories, and other fictional forms. The formal aspects of narratives include narrative situations, narrative techniques and modes, the temporal and spatial organization of events and the representation of characters. In religion or politics, narrative implies that the story being told by one side may not be identical to the story told by the other and are designed to support certain positions that, once endorsed by a critical mass of people, become national narratives.

² See: Robert Scholes, Robert Kellogg, and James Phelan, *The Nature of Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

³ See: Homi Bhabha (editor), *Nation and Narration* (London; Routledge, 1990).

⁴ For a very useful compilation of definitions of the terms used in narrative theory, see, Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

⁵ Roland Barthes, “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives,” in Susan Sontag (editor), *A Barthes Reader* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), p. 251.

Narratology is the critical and theoretical study of the numerous forms of narrative discourse.⁶ The narratological approach is characterized by its overriding concern with narrative structure, and the close attention it pays to the effects that this structure has on the shaping and unfolding of narratives.⁷ Narratology as a theoretical school evolved in France in the 1960s and 1970s, however, its origins are found in the seminal study of Russian folktales by Vladimir Propp, entitled *Morphology of the Folk Tale*, published in Moscow in 1928.⁸ In his book, Propp distinguished between two crucially different aspects of the study of narrative, naming them *fabula* and *sjuzhet*. The *fabula* is the content of the story, and the *sjuzhet* designates the form that the telling of the tale imposes upon that content. Propp argued that the latter was of paramount importance, and that the study of narrative form was the only viable methodological approach for comparative analysis of folk tales.⁹

Narratives may be divided into different categories such as follows:

- a. individual narratives versus collective narratives;
- b. national narratives [how we see ourselves] versus reflexive narratives [how we see others];
- c. soft narratives [historical] versus hard narratives [religious and political];
- d. mythical narratives versus real narratives;
- e. static narratives [peace] versus dynamic narratives [conflict]

⁶ See: Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, revised edition, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

⁷ David Rudrum, "Narratology," *The Literary Encyclopedia*, (London: The Literary Dictionary Company, June 2006).

⁸ Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folk Tale*, (Moscow: 1928); translated by Laurence Scott, *Morphology of the Folk Tale* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1968).

⁹ *Ibid.*

f. legitimate versus illegitimate narratives.

Whenever conflict arises, narratives diverge and multiply. Their dual purposes are to demonize and de-legitimize the other; and to emphasize the rights, legitimacy, and justice of one's claims. The sharper the conflict, the wider the narratives diverge, and the more the competing narratives would clash. In the dispute over who "owns" Palestine, Israelis and Palestinians brandish arguments from history going back to antiquity. Bayan Nweihed al-Hout, in her book, *Filastin: al-qadeya, al-Shaeb, wal-Hadarah* [Palestine: the Cause, the People, and the Civilization] published in Beirut in Arabic ١٩٩١, claims a long historical presence for the Palestinian national identity that goes back to the Canaanites.¹⁰

Moreover, with time the prevailing dominant national narratives may change, evolve, and fluctuate, particularly in situations of crises. While some narratives change over time, others usually remain static. Palestinians deny that Jews are a nationality and view Judaism as a religion that encompasses different nations. In turn, the Zionists argue that the Palestinians were simply Arabs living in Palestine and as such ought to be absorbed by the Arab nation. Narratives are not mutually exclusive and one side may have more than one narrative making the resolution of the conflict more complex.

Narratives shape social knowledge. They are the product of experience, imagination, and memories. Memories contain social and personal narratives. We remember what we experience, what our leaders, parents, grandparents, and teachers tell us, and their images and stories are incorporated into our own memories. In his book, *The Search for*

¹⁰ Bayan Nweihed al-Hout, *Filastin: al-qadeya, al-Shaeb, wal-Hadarah* [Palestine: the Cause, the People, and the Civilization], (Beirut: 1991).

God at Harvard, Arie Goldman tells the advice he received from his great-aunt Minnie. “Remember, she whispered in my ear at a family gathering shortly before I left for Cambridge, you can study all the religions, but Judaism is the best.”¹¹ When I read it, it reminded me of what my grandmother used to tell me, “Of all religions, Islam is the best.” I am certain that somewhere out there, there is one charming grandmother whispering in the ears of her Christian grandson, “Remember, Judaism is good, Islam is no-good, but Christianity is best.”

History, Memory, and Narrative

According to Mary Chamberlain in her book, *Narratives of Exile and Return*,

“what we remember and recall is not random, but conforms and relates to this social knowledge of the world. Memory and narrative are shaped by social categories, by language and priorities, by experience and tense, by choice and context. They are shaped also by imagination, by dreams and nightmares, hopes and fantasies which, however private they may feel, are moulded by culture.”¹²

Exposure for a long time to the same narrative creates and shapes people’s views and attitudes in a manner more consistent with the narrative version than meant to be delivered by the sender, yet not reality itself. People are strongly influenced by what narrative they hear, which is later reflected on their attitudes, actions, and positions

¹¹ Arie Goldman *The Search for God at Harvard*, New York: Random house, 1991), p. 5.

¹² Mary Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile and Return* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2005), p.10.

towards these events. Powerful narratives can mobilize the conscience of a nation, compelling governments to move in the direction of image narratives to depict rosy pictures in the minds of its citizens.

So far, the past has always been present in the Arab-Israeli conflict and history, as well as religion, has always been an integral part of its politics. While the Palestinian narrative depicts Israel as the manifestation of imperialism and colonization, the Israeli narrative depicts Israel as the manifestation of God’s promise, as well as a political need responsive to statelessness. Although the past does not recede from awareness, narratives rush it to the front. Through the narratives, the ghost of the past continues to haunt the present. The past narratives continue to rekindle the present narratives. “Whoever controls the past controls the future; whoever controls the present, controls the past,” wrote George Orwell in his novel 1984.

Why are peacemakers concerned with narratives? Their interest is derived from the strong link among the three variables: narratives, conflict and conflict resolution. You cannot brush narratives aside. Narratives play a big role in perpetuating the conflict or in creating the proper environment to reach a resolution to the conflict. The way narratives are constructed, fashioned and disseminated in society through its socialization agents – the family, school, religious institution, peer, and media, - as well as by the political ruling elite result in the perpetuation of the conflict setting one community against the other instead of creating a climate conducive for peace. The conflict would continue if the narratives are not altered or modified so that they do not depict the other negatively. It is the premise of the book, *Shared Histories: A Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue*, “that how the two

sides understand - and misunderstand – their own and the ‘other’s’ history has a profound influence on their ability – and inability – to make peace.”¹³

Both Israelis and Palestinians have maintained static narratives because what their historians and leaders tell them seems logical to them. Both peoples have a living memory of their own narratives and it has become taboo to criticize the dominant narrative and thus public debate is not tolerated or accommodated. In absence of a common sense approach to the issue of narratives, the emotional approach dominated the discourse and the diversity of the narrative; the Jewish narrative being somewhat more homogenous than the Palestinian narrative.

Rather significant in a narrative is, what is not said instead of what is being said. Who is the other? What is his history, culture, traditions, religion, motivations, etc.? Why does he feel that way?

The construction of collective memory and narrative is very difficult to decompose. One of the biggest impediments in changing tracks from war to peace is the collective memory that stands as an obstacle to reconciliation and coexistence.

A new generation on both sides has been raised on believing and on being strongly committed to the national narratives taught at schools and at home, even though many may be just myths constructed by the elder generation. This new generation has no positive memory of the experience of living with the other.

Each side’s own historical descriptions of the conflict are loaded with diametrically different interpretations of past and future. Rouhana and Bar Tal describe the contrasting, incompatible versions of the conflict

¹³ Paul Scham, Walid Salem and Benjamin Pogruend, *Shared Histories: A Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue*, (Jerusalem: Panorama, 2005), p.1.

held by the protagonists: “The narratives of the two communities are in total clash as to the root causes of the conflict, the meaning of the historical developments, and the role played by the ingroup and the outgroup during the various stages of the conflict.”¹⁴ While the 1948 Arab-Jewish war is remembered by Israelis as ‘the War of Independence/Liberation’; in contrast, the same event is remembered by the Palestinians as the ‘Catastrophe/Nakba.’ Rouhana and Bar Tal depict how each narrative negates the other:

“According to the Palestinian narrative, the Jewish settlers occupied the land, and Palestinians were dispossessed and displaced. The Palestinian narrative views this influx as an invasion of foreigners who took over the country from Palestinians and in the process pushed out Palestinians, making them refugees in the neighboring countries. According to the Zionist narrative, the land was liberated and redeemed in a process of national revival. The Jews gathered their exiles in the land of their forefathers to establish their state, which was attacked by hostile, non-accepting Arabs at its birth. As an outcome of Arab aggression and defeat, the Palestinians became refugees.”

How can we deal with two inconsistent accounts of a historical narrative?

As Sari Nusseibeh responds, “It stands to reason that only one of the two accounts is true, while the other is false, or that they are both false.

¹⁴ Rouhana / Bar Tal 1998: p. 763

Both cannot be true.”¹⁵ Nonetheless, Nusseibeh raises the question: “Is there one truth and only one possible account of it, or is there nothing out there but a set of (possibly inconsistent) different narratives, reflecting different perspectives or contexts?”¹⁶

Israelis and Palestinians need to confront their own narratives and to evaluate their significance in shaping identities of “self” and “other” in the conflict. The study of narratives aims at bringing deeper awareness of the events that play a role in shaping individual and collective consciousness. It is hoped that the mutual exposure to each other’s narrative and perspectives will serve the purpose of further educating us about our own narrative as well as the narrative of the other.

Conclusion

New studies ought to question the implicit assumptions that traditional narratives propagate. Although national narratives are not required to meet certain standards of “impartiality” and “objectivity,” yet, the question remains, should they meet the requirements of “honesty,” “fairness,” and “impartiality”? Yes, they ought to. Conflicting narratives perpetuate conflict and create a hostile environment conducive to the perpetuation of conflict. Thus it becomes essential to set up the “rules of engagement”, and then to assess whether each national narrative meets the basic requirements of those rules, in order to create an environment conducive to peace. The only hope for peace lies in looking at each other and seeing one another as real individual human beings and we reach there when our national narratives show empathy of each other rather than demonize and dehumanize the other.

¹⁵ Sari Nusseibeh, “A Formula for Narrative Selection: Comments on ‘Writing the Arab-Israeli Conflict,’” *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 3, no. 1 (March 2005), p. 89.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 91.

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MUSLIM ATTACHMENT TO JERUSALEM (AL QUDS AL-SHARIF)

Prof. Dr. Munther S. Dajani

Introduction

Jerusalem appears in the Jewish Bible 669 times and Zion (which usually refers to Jerusalem and sometimes the Land of Israel) 154 times, or 823 times in all. The Christian Bible mentions Jerusalem 154 times and Zion 7 times¹. In contrast, the name of Jerusalem is not specifically mentioned in the Holy Qur'an though several Qur'anic passages are interpreted to refer to Jerusalem, some as the site of the Last Judgment. The historian S. D. Goitein notes that the geographical dictionary of al-Yaqut mentions Basra 170 times, Damascus 100 times, and Jerusalem only once. The city never served as capital of a sovereign Muslim state. The questions this raise: Can one conclude from all this that "Jerusalem" is not important to Islam? How did Jerusalem become important in Islam, and to Muslims? Where does Jerusalem fit in Islam and Muslim history?

This paper will attempt to answer these questions. It will discuss the significance of Jerusalem in Islamic core sources (The Holy Quran and the Sunnah), Muslim history, culture, and traditions.

Muslim Attachment to Jerusalem

Jerusalem is one of the three holiest cities for Muslims, next to Mecca and Al-Madinah². Muslims all over the world and from all Islamic sects

¹ Daniel Pipes "The Muslim Claim to Jerusalem," Middle East Quarterly, (September 2001).

² See: Sheikh Abdel Hamid al-Sayeh, *Ahamiet al-Quds fi al-Islam* [The Significance of Jerusalem in Islam] (Beirut: Arab Institute, 1990); Kamel Jamil Asali, *Makanet Bayt al-Maqdis lada al-Arab wa al-Muslemin* [The

revere the Holy City naming it “El-Quds (Kuds) al-Sharif” meaning in Arabic “The Noble Sacred Place, and calling the surroundings of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock (al-Sakhrāh al-Musharrafah) - Al-Haram Al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary).³

Palestinian scholar Ghada Talhami, asserts, “There are other holy cities in Islam, but Jerusalem holds a special place in the hearts and minds of Muslims because its fate has always been intertwined with theirs.”⁴

Jerusalem in the Holy Quran

a) Jerusalem as the First Qibla

In early days of Islam Muslims prayed towards Jerusalem. Thus, Jerusalem was the first qibla (direction of prayer) of Islam during the entire Meccan period and the first 16 months of the Madinah period⁵. Later, the Holy Quran instructed the faithful no longer to pray toward Jerusalem but instead to pray in the direction of Mecca. The Quranic passages begin by anticipating questions about this change:

{The Fools among the people will say: “What has turned them [the Muslims] from the qibla to which they were always used?”} [Surah 2; Verses 142-52]

The Holy Quran then provides the answer:

Significance of Jerusalem for Arabs and Muslims] (Amman: University of Jordan, 1988); Sharab Mohammed, Al-Quds [Jerusalem] (Amman: Al-Ahliyah Publishing, 2006); Ghazi Yassin, Makanet al-Quds wa al-Masjid al-Aqsa al-Diniyah [The Religious Significance of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque for Arabs and Muslims] (Amman: Mu'tah University, 1996).

3 The Dome of the Rock, a glorious monument of architectural skill, was built by Umayyad Caliph Abdel Malek (685-705) and Al-Aqsa Mosque was built by his heir Umayyad Caliph al-Walid (705-715). The Umayyad caliph built Islam's grand structure, the Dome of the Rock, right on the spot of the rock upon which Abraham wanted to sacrifice his son and Noah rested his ship. This remarkable building is one of the most holy monumental sacred Islamic shrine, it is one of the few that still stands today in roughly its original form.

4 Ghada Talhami, “Jerusalem in the Muslim Consciousness,” *The Muslim World*, 86 (1996): 229.

5 Khaled Fahdawi, *al-Quds fi Qulub al-Muslemin [Jerusalem in the hearts of Muslims]* (Amman: Al-Awa'el Publishing, 2006).

{We appointed the qibla that to which you were used, only to test those who followed the Messenger [Muhammad] from those who would turn on their heels [on Islam].} In other words, the qibla served as a way to test the faith. From then on, Mecca would be the direction of prayer.

b) Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey (Al Isra' wal Mi'araj)

The sanctity of Jerusalem for Muslims is derived from the tradition that Jerusalem was the city to which Prophet Muhammed had made his nocturnal journey on his miraculous winged steed, Buraq; and from Jerusalem, he ascended to the seven levels of heaven.⁶

The Holy Qur'an, in the first verse of Chapter 17 entitled ‘The Children of Israel’ describes the Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey to heaven (isra’):

{Glory be to He who took His servant (Prophet Mohammed) for a journey by night from Al-Masjid Al-Haram (the Sacred Mosque in Mecca) to Al-Masjid el-Aqsa (the Furthest /Distant Mosque), the neighborhood whereof We have blessed, in order that We might show him some of Our signs. Verily, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.} (Al-Isra' Surah; verse 1)

This Qur'anic passage was first revealed, in about 621. The location of the Dome of the Rock is seen by Muslims as the exact area where Muhammad's Night Journey and ascension to heaven (called in Arabic Isra' and Mi'raj) took place⁷. He tethered his steed to the western wall. The “furthest mosque” is believed to be in Jerusalem. Muhammad's Night Journey and his subsequent visit to heaven took place from the very rock from which Abraham wanted to sacrifice his son, Noah rested

6 Mohammed Baiumi, *Al-Isra' wa al-Mi'raj* (Mansura, Egypt: Dar al Ghad al-Jadid, 2005); Abrahame E. Milligram, *A Short History of Jerusalem* (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1998), p. 57.

7 Sheikh Mohammed M. Sharawi, *Al-Isra' wa al-Mi'raj* (Beirut: Modern Library, n. d).

his ship, and Jesus ascended to heaven. In this journey, the Prophet met with other prophets and led them in prayer. During the Miraj, the Prophet is reported to have received from Allah the command of five daily prayers (Salat) that all Muslims must perform⁸.

So complete is the identification of the Night Journey with Jerusalem that it is found in many publications of the Qur'an, and especially in translations. Some state in a footnote that the "furthest mosque" "must" refer to Jerusalem. Others take the step of inserting Jerusalem right into the text after "furthest mosque." This is done in a variety of ways. The Sale translation uses italics: "...from the sacred temple of Mecca to the farther temple of Jerusalem."

The Asad translation relies on square brackets: "...from the Inviolable House of Worship [at Mecca] to the Remote House of Worship [at Jerusalem]."

The Behbudi-Turner version places it right in the text: "...from the Holy Mosque in Mecca to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Palestine.

Some Muslim texts maintain that the story of Prophet Muhammad's mystical Night Journey to Jerusalem may not be a physical experience but a visionary one.

c) Jerusalem as Land of Prophets and Blessings

The Muslim attachment to Jerusalem does not begin with Prophet Muhammad, it begins with the prophets David, Solomon, and Jesus, who are also revered prophets in the Holy Quran.

i. In the narrative of Abraham and Lut: {"And We saved him and Lut to the Land blessed to humanity."} (Al-Anbia /Prophets

⁸ Yusuf Qardawi, al-Quds Qadiet kul Muslim [Jerusalem the Cause of each Muslim] (Beirut: Islamic Office Publishing, 2003).

Surat; verse 71)

ii. In the narrative of Moses: {"And We inherited the people who were weak East and West land of which We blessed."} (Al-Araf Surat; verse 137)

iii. In the narrative of Solomon: {"And to Solomon is the wind which blows under his command to the land which We blessed its surroundings."} (Al-Anbia /The Prophets Surat; verse 81)

iv. In the narrative of Sheba; {"Between them and the cities We have blessed, We placed roadside hamlets so that they could journey to and fro in measured stages. We said: "Travel through them by day and night in safety."} (Sheba Surat; verse 18)

v. In the narrative of Muhammad when He describes Al-Aqsa Mosque: {"...the neighborhood whereof We have blessed."} (Al-Isra' Surah; verse 1)

vi. In The Fig / Al-Tin Surah when the Holy Quran says: {"By the fig, and by the olive, By Mount Sinai, and this inviolate land."} (The Fig Surah; verse 1-3)

Jerusalem in the Sunnah

The sayings of Prophet Muhammed (hadith often translated into English as "Traditions") make Jerusalem critical to the Islamic faith; many hadiths extol Jerusalem's sanctity. Accounts of the prophet's sayings and doings were very favorable to Jerusalem. A hadith for Prophet Muhammad states: "There are only three mosques to which you should embark on a journey: The sacred Mosque (Al-Haram al-

Sharif in Mecca), my Mosque (in Medina), and Al-Aqsa Mosque (in Jerusalem). The person who starts procedure for pilgrimage or umra from Al-Aqsa Mosque shall have all his/her sins forgiven. Jerusalem is the land of the ingathering. Journey to it and worship there, for one act of worship therein is equivalent to 1,000 acts of worship elsewhere.” Another hadith for Prophet Muhammed states, “Whoever dies in the sanctuary of Jerusalem is as if he/she attained paradise, and for the person who dies close by, it is as if he/she had died in the City.”

In Islamic traditions, devout Muslims are required to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem after their pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca and Medina⁹. Muslims believe that a prayer recited in any Mosque of Jerusalem is equivalent to forty prayers elsewhere. If Muslims cannot travel to Jerusalem, then they ought to provide oil for the lamps of the Sacred City. It is believed that as long as these lamps are burning, the donor is remembered in the prayers of the angels.

Jerusalem in Islamic History

Second Caliph ‘Umar’s visit to the city after the Muslims conquest in 638, identified the “rock” and its surroundings as the “furthest mosque” referred in the Holy Qur’an. According to Muslim historians, a converted Jew, Ka‘b al-Ahbar, suggested to Caliph ‘Umar that Al-Aqsa Mosque be built by the Dome of the Rock. Caliph ‘Umar asked him: “Where do you think we should put the place of prayer?” “By the rock,” answered Ka‘b.

The first Umayyad ruler, Mu‘awiya Bin Abi Sufian, chose Jerusalem as the place where he ascended to the caliphate; he and his successors

⁹ Mahmoud Abdel Halim, Bayt al-Maqdis fi al-Islam [Jerusalem in Islam] (Cairo: Al-Azhar University, 1988).

engaged in an ambitious construction program – religious edifices, palace, and roads – in the city. But Jerusalem in Islam has always been primarily a city of faith not a political capital¹⁰.

In 715, the Umayyads built in Jerusalem, the Furthest Mosque (al-Masjid al-Aqsa, Al-Aqsa Mosque). The construction of the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque, underlay the glorification of Jerusalem among the Muslims and the Islamic sanctification of Jerusalem. The Umayyads cast aside the non-religious Roman name for the city, Aelia Capitolina (in Arabic, Iliya) and replaced it with Al-Quds (The Holy) or Bayt al-Maqdis (The Sacred Shrine). The Arabic literature praises the “virtues of Jerusalem.”

The Crusaders during their 90-year rule (1099 - 1187) banned both Jews and Muslims from the city. As the effort to retake Jerusalem from the Crusaders grew in about 1150 the Muslim leaders roused jihad sentiments through the heightening of emotions about Jerusalem. They stressed the sanctity of Jerusalem and the urgency of its return to Muslim rule. When Saladin (Salah ad-Din) led the Muslims to victory over Jerusalem in 1187 and recaptured the city from the Crusaders, he wrote in a letter to his Crusader opponent, that the city “is to us as it is to you. It is even more important to us.”¹¹ Under the rule of Saladin, Jerusalem regained once again its religious glory; Muslim places of worship which had been desecrated by the Crusaders were restored, Christians were guaranteed rights of worship, and the Jewish community was allowed to return to the city, and the Jewish culture flourished in the city.

Saladin’s descendants (known as the Ayyubi dynasty, which ruled until

¹⁰ Rafiq Shaker Natsheh, Al-Quds al-Islamieh [Islamic Jerusalem] (Al-Riyad, Saudi Arabia: Dar Thaqif Publishing, 1996).

¹¹ Ali Slabi, Salah Eddin Al-Ayubi [Salah Eddin Al-Aubij] (Cairo: Dar Ibn Jouzi Publishing, 2007).

1250) initiated an ambitious construction and restoration program in Jerusalem. Islamic monuments, libraries, schools, and mosques, as well as Sufi convents were built in the city.

In the 1930s, the Palestinian leader and mufti of Palestine Hajj Amin Husayni made Jerusalem central to his anti-Zionist political efforts. Husayni brought a contingent of Muslim notables to Jerusalem in 1931 for an international congress to mobilize global Muslim support on behalf of maintain the Islamic character of the city. He engaged in fundraising in several Arab countries to restore the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque; his efforts did succeed in procuring funds to restore these monuments to their former glory¹².

Conclusions

The sanctity and significance of Jerusalem in Islamic tradition and history cannot be denied. In September 1969, fire at Al-Aqsa Mosque was the impetus to convene twenty-five Muslim heads of state and establish the Organization of the Islamic Conference. On a number of occasions demonstrators in the Muslim world took to the streets shouting: “We will sacrifice our blood and souls for you, Holy Jerusalem;” also, yelling: “We sacrifice our blood and soul for Al-Aqsa.” Muslim and Arab leaders have often asserted that among their top priorities is the restoration and protection of the Holy City. Surveys of American Muslims find Jerusalem to be their most pressing foreign policy issue¹³. In Lebanon, the fundamentalist group Hizbullah depicts

12 Al-Tha'albi, Abdel Aziz, *Khalfiyat al-Mua'tamar al-Islami fi al-Quds* [The Background for the Islamic Conference in Jerusalem] (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1988).

13 See: “American Muslim Organizations Emphasize Muslim Rights in Jerusalem,” July 10, 2000, a statement endorsed by American Muslim Council, American Muslim Foundation, American Muslims for Jerusalem, Council on American-Islamic Relations, Islamic Association for Palestine, Islamic Circle of North America,

the Dome of the Rock on everything from wall posters to scarves and under the picture often repeats the slogan: “We are advancing towards Jerusalem.” Hasan Nasrallah, the leader of Hizbullah declared in a major speech: “We won’t give up on Palestine, all of Palestine, and Jerusalem will remain the place to which all jihad warriors will direct their prayers.”¹⁴ Similarly, the Islamic Republic of Iran has made Jerusalem a central issue, following the dictate of its founder, Ayatollah Khomeini, who remarked that “Jerusalem is the property of Muslims and must return to them.”

If Jerusalem is for Jews and Christians a place so holy that not just its soil but even its air is deemed sacred¹⁵, the city is the place whose very mention reverberate awe in Muslims’ hearts.¹⁶ The spiritual significance of Jerusalem to Islam, Christianity, and Judaism makes it essential to maintain this multi-religious and multi-faith character of this City of Peace keeping it an open city in which the faithful from all three religions journey to pray in its holy places.

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14 See: Martin Kramer, “Redeeming Jerusalem: The Pan-Islamic Premise of Hizbullah,” *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World*, ed. David Menashri (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1990).

15 See: Bernard Wasserstein, *Divided Jerusalem: The Struggle for the Holy City* (London: Profile Books, 2001). Wasserstein notes that “political considerations have played a significant part” in all three of the major monotheistic traditions’ focus on Jerusalem. (p. 13)

16 See: Ibrahim Hooper, “Jerusalem Belongs to All Faiths,” *The Washington Post*, Oct. 16, 1996.

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JEWISH RELIGIOUS NARRATIVES ON JERUSALEM AND THEIR ROLE IN PEACE BUILDING

Dr. Yehuda Stolov

Jewish Religious Narratives on Jerusalem

In the Jewish sources Jerusalem is presented as the most special city in the world. It is the main point of connection between God and the whole of creation, the center of the universe and the place from which the whole process of creating the world began. These special attributes obviously result in Jerusalem being the most spiritual place in the world. But, as it is in many occasions in the Jewish narratives, there are strong reciprocal relations between the spiritual and the physical, therefore the high level of spirituality is manifested also in the physical realm.

Consequently, not only that Jerusalem is the focal point of the Jewish existence and worship:

If one stands [for prayer] abroad – one faces the Land of Israel and prays; if one stands in The Land – one faces Jerusalem¹

Jerusalem is the most beautiful city of the world and more than that – holds most of the total beauty which exists in the world on the whole:

Ten parts of beauty are in the world – nine in Jerusalem and one in all the world²

¹ Maimonides, Repetition of the Torah, Laws of Prayer 5,3

² Avot Derabbi Nathan, Chapter 5

Moreover, Jerusalem is the center of the whole world:

This world is like a human eyeball: the white part – is the ocean surrounding the entire world; the black part – is the world; the pupil – is Jerusalem³

And not only in this world is Jerusalem so special, but even when the heavenly worlds are considered:

Rav Nachman said to Rav Yitzhak: what does it mean when Hosea writes (11,9): “the Holy One in the midst of thee; and I will not come in fury” – because the Holy One is in the midst of thee – I will not come in fury?! He responded: “Rabbi Yochanan said: God said – I will not come into Heavenly Jerusalem before I come into Earthly Jerusalem”⁴

The uniqueness of Jerusalem is manifested in many ways. For example: the Sages of Blessed Memory report ten miracles that were constantly happening in Jerusalem. Some of them relate to the natural reality and are indeed remarkable:

Ten miracles were done to our fathers in Jerusalem: it never happened that a woman miscarried due to the smell of the sacrifices’ meat, the meat of the sacrifices never smelled badly, ... never was a person bitten [by a snake or scorpion] in Jerusalem, ... never a fire broke in Jerusalem⁵

But perhaps more remarkable are the social miracles:

Never a man said to his friend “I did not find an oven to roast my Pesach sacrifice”, Never a man said to his friend “I did not find a bed to sleep in Jerusalem”, Never a man said to his friend “the place is too

3 Derech Eretz Zuta, Chapter 9, Mishna 26

4 Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Taanit, 5a

5 Avot Derabbi Nathan, Chapter 35

tight for me to sleep in Jerusalem”⁶

The Sages describe an indeed miraculous social reality. One has to bear in mind that in the Three Pilgrimage Festivals – Jews from all over the land, and even from abroad, would gather in Jerusalem. Especially crowded was the eve of Pesach, in which every family had to sacrifice a lamb in the Temple and these lambs had then to be roasted, not prepared in any other way, before eaten by the family. Still, the Sages report that not only there was enough room for everyone objectively, which would have been miraculous enough, but no one even complained about a subjective feeling of lack of room.

This directly relates to the next special quality of Jerusalem, which plays with the Hebrew root .ג.ב.נ that includes meanings of connecting together and of friendship:

“Jerusalem, that art built as a city that is compact together (Psalms 122,3)” – a city which makes all Israel friends”⁷

Anyone who knows the Jews and how they like to disagree with each other, from the time of the Bible till today, can appreciate how remarkable this is and as a result deeply appreciate the power Jerusalem hold.

However, the social significance of Jerusalem does not stop at the Israelite nation – it includes the whole of humanity.

Already King Solomon, when the First Temple was inaugurated, prayed:

“Moreover concerning the stranger that is not of Thy people Israel, when he shall come out of a far country for Thy name’s sake-- for they shall hear of Thy great name, and of Thy mighty hand, and of Thine

6 Ibid

7 Jerusalemite Talmud, Tractate Hagiga 3,6

outstretched arm--when he shall come and pray toward this house; hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to Thee for; that all the peoples of the earth may know Thy name, to fear Thee, as doth Thy people Israel, and that they may know that Thy name is called upon this house which I have built.”⁸

And the Sages add that:

“In the future of Jerusalem, all nations and all kingdoms will gather in it.”⁹

Which is unsurprisingly consistent with the prophecy of Zechariah that even those who fought in the last war against Jerusalem, will later acknowledge its importance and will come to it in pilgrimage:

“And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.”¹⁰

It is interesting to note that not only in the end of days, but from the very beginning – since the time the Torah was delivered, after the exodus from Egypt, the Feast of Tabernacles (“Sukkot”) had a strong universal aspect of atonement for the whole of humanity. Already in the desert, and then during the times of the First and Second Temples, during the seven days of the Feast – seventy bulls were sacrificed¹¹, in order to atone for the seventy nations of the world. As the Talmud says:

Rabbi Elazar said: “Those seventy bulls for whom? – for the seventy nations...”

Said Rabbi Yohanan: “Woe to the nations, who lost and don’t know

⁸ 1 Kings 8, 41-43

⁹ Avot Derabbi Nathan, Chapter 35

¹⁰ Zechariah 14, 16

¹¹ Numbers 29, 12-34

what they lost; as when the Temple existed – the altar would atone them, and now who will atone them?”¹²

We can summarize by saying that in the vision which the Jewish narratives present for Jerusalem, as the Jewish sources reveal, Jerusalem is a city that miraculously brings people together and a focal point for relations of mutual care between the nation of Israel and other nations of humanity.

It is important to stress here that the obligation to love and care for all, goes beyond any national or religious borders and overwhelmingly includes all spiritual as well as physical aspects of being. Rabbi Abraham Yitzhak Kook writes:

“Love of creatures should be living in the heart and soul ... love of all nations, the desire for their uplifting as well as spiritual and physical revival, and hate should be confined only to the evil and filth there is in the world¹³ ... love of human, which has to spread over all of humanity in its entirety, despite all differences in religions and beliefs, ... it is required ... to learn as much as possible their nature and qualities, in order to know how to base the love on applicable foundations”¹⁴

Current Reality of Jerusalem

How much of this harmonious vision is reflected in the reality of today? If we are reflective and honest I believe we should say that some of it is indeed present, but we still have a long way to go before we realize the full envisioned harmony. For many people this will be a surprising

¹² Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sukkah 55b

¹³ Midot Raiah (Attributes by Rabbi Kook), Love, 5

¹⁴ Ibid, 10

description of the reality. Many people believe that Jerusalem is as far as can be from being the “City of Peace”. Some may say even it is closer to a war zone than to a city of peace. However, careful examination of the reality reveals a different picture. It is indeed a fact that many violent actions took place in Jerusalem, for example during the years of the Intifada. But it is also a fact that the perpetrators of these violent acts were, nearly in all cases, coming from the outside of the city. Only a small percentage of the violence was performed by Jerusalemites and we can say that as a rule the friction between the residents of the city remained very low.

Does this constitute Jerusalem as the City of Peace? Yes and no. In the current reality, the lack of friction is achieved with the high price of practically total lack of interaction. The various communities of the city live in separate neighborhoods. Each of the neighborhoods usually has its own well defined communal character, with its people hardly having any interaction with members of other communities. A story that nicely illustrates this reality happened to me many years ago, on the first day of an international conference that took place in Jerusalem¹⁵. In a tour of the city, we arrived at the Kotel (=Western Wall) Plaza at the time of Jewish and Muslim afternoon prayers. Since the Muslims did not know the way, I escorted them to the gate of Al Aqsa and then headed back to pray the Jewish prayer, facing many Muslims rushing for the Muslim prayer puzzled by my existence there. When the Muslims finished their prayer, they came back to meet the group and faced the astonishment of the security people in front of a Muslim clergy wanting to enter the Kotel Plaza. Reading this story one may think that the two places were very distinct from each other and

¹⁵ <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/iea-reports/message/145>

that making the parallels meet took a big effort, but in fact they were only some one minute walk from each other.

The different communities live parallel lives and they do not clash with each other because they don't interact at all. The present situation can be described as “passive peace” – lack of mutual violence depending on the overall mutual relations being passive.

Of course, this reality is not sufficient, and on two levels. On the first level: passive peace is hard to sustain. When the basic attitude towards the other, or numerous others, is for the most part negative, governed by prejudices that lead to fears and mistrust – the passive peaceful relations can stand in front of fewer challenges. In cases when a “tsunami” of inter-communal violence floods the country, Jerusalem's communities may join it, at least for a while – as happened in the beginning of the Intifada, for example. Moreover, even when the macro level is calm, these negative attitudes allow, on the micro level, personal misunderstandings to deteriorate quicker into negative behavior.

On the second level: from a Jewish perspective we can not fulfill the vision we have called for in the above mentioned narratives without harmonious ongoing interaction between the communities, and people, of Jerusalem.

For both levels – it is essential to help the existing “passive peace” evolve into “active peace”.

The Role of Religion in Peace Building

A special example for the active role religion can, and should play in peace building is given by the Interfaith Encounter Association (IEA)¹⁶ - special in its approach and special in its outreach.

The Interfaith Encounter Association works for some eight years to build the human infrastructure of peaceful inter-communal relations, for true and sustainable peace, in the Holy Land. It continuously grows and already includes thousands of people, of nearly all parts of the political spectrum, as well as walks of life, ages, genders etc. These people represent real outreach as the vast majority of them have met 'the other' for the first time in the framework of IEA's programs.

The basic understanding that drives IEA's approach is that in the Holy Land in general, and in Jerusalem in particular, peace is predominantly a grass-roots process. When people of different communities never live more than a few tens of kilometers from each other – and many times live just a few meters from each other – agreements between governments, if they are to be sustainable, can not be the first and main step but an advanced one, which is built upon real and significant improvement in the pattern of inter-communal relations. When friction is always a possibility and where the interface exists for masses of people to start waves of violence – the only way to sustain peace is by first building the good relations between people and communities, based on mutual understanding, respect and trust. In the context of these relations people and communities will have not only the general desire for peaceful relations but also the actual trust in the other community's good will and therefore the faith that these relations can

¹⁶ www.interfaith-encounter.org

be achieved and sustained.

This leads to the second understanding: in order to build these good relations, opportunities must be provided for meaningful and constructive interaction. These interactions will have the dual role of actually building the good inter-communal relations and at the same time training people and communities in interaction that is both active and peaceful.

In order for the interaction to be constructive, we first need to suspend the default conversation that both Israelis and Palestinians engage in automatically if not directed otherwise, namely arguing about politics. In order to develop constructive conversation, first we need to make sure that this conversation is postponed to a later stage, both for being superficial and for being divisive (as well as for being anyway unrealistic before the good relations are built). Then an alternative should be introduced in the form of active interfaith dialogue.

Interfaith dialogue has three major advantages that make it a most effective means to achieve the desired goals. Most essential is the nature of the religious and inter-religious discourse, both from the perspective of its themes and from the perspective of the way the themes are tackled. The nature of this discourse takes the conversation to a deeper and more intimate level of sharing from a place of profound existential significance – for both religious and non-religious participants. As a result, the interaction goes beyond exchange of information on the intellectual level, and includes multi-dimensional encounter of additional levels, such as the spiritual, emotional, ethical and other dimensions of existence. The second advantage is that, as can be expected, many similarities are unveiled between the various

traditions, which encourages closeness. And perhaps most significant is the advantage of this discourse in enabling people to discuss differences in a way that not only does not threaten the conversation, but helps construct it. In this way participants are training themselves to develop friendships with people they disagree with.

It should be noted that these advantages exist only in active interfaith dialogue, or: interfaith encounter. These advantages characterize active interfaith interaction between people in programs that stress conversations between participants. Many “traditional” interfaith activities lack this element due to their wish to convey correct teaching about the different faiths. Consequently they focus on panels of experts who teach passive audiences. Unfortunately, there is no way to secure both accuracy and interaction that builds relations in grassroots programs. Therefore, while traditional interfaith programs lack relations-building, interfaith encounters make it possible for inaccurate information to flow. Each approach has its strengths and weaknesses.

Another meaningful note is that while this work had to be done even if it was as hard as many think, it is again and a gain a nice surprise to notice how easy this work is, when taking this approach. Participants from all communities go very quickly and very smoothly, even at the peak of the Intifada, into this setting, which is like a “promo” of the potential bright future. It does not take long before they are confident that this future can be realized.

The Interfaith Encounter Association is a constantly growing social movement for change¹⁷. In its eight years of existence it realized more than 700 programs, including 28 Israeli-Palestinian weekend retreats of interfaith encounter, continuously running since 2002. It formed 31 on-going groups throughout the country, including: 10 groups in Jerusalem, 4 groups with West Bank Palestinians, among them two unique groups that bring together Settlers and Palestinians¹⁸.

Like a body that grows through the multiplication of its cells, it is the vision of IEA to form hundreds and thousands of on-going groups of interfaith encounter – groups open to everyone, groups for women, groups for young adults, groups for professionals of various professions, groups for educators, groups for communal religious leaders etc. The ultimate goal is that every citizen will have an easily accessible encounter group, a group which is both close to his home and close to his heart. Each of these groups will act as a generator of change that will transform the inter-communal relations in the group’s communal scope to be more and more harmonious. Altogether they will build peaceful relations between all Holy Land communities, which will work as a solid infrastructure for sustainable peace.

From the perspective of the Jewish narrative this will be an important part of the process of re-unveiling the true miraculous nature of Jerusalem.

¹⁷ See: <http://www.interfaith-encounter.org/2008%20Annual%20Report/2008Report.pdf> and: <http://www.interfaith-encounter.org/2008%20Annual%20Report/DataSheet2008.pdf> as well as: <http://www.interfaith-encounter.org/annual%20reports.htm>

¹⁸ See for example: <http://www.interfaith-encounter.org/Reports/IPD-Gush%20092909.htm> and <http://www.interfaith-encounter.org/Reports/IPD-Adama%20062509.htm>

RELIGIOUS SELF-RESTRAINT AS A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO EASING TENSIONS IN JERUSALEM

Dr. Ophir Yarden

Introduction

A caricature in the Haaretz newspaper¹ during the El-Aqsa Intifada which bore the caption “No God, No Terror” demonstrated the popular conception that our conflict has religion at its root. That the Israel-Palestine conflict is not, inherently, a religious conflict, but rather a national-territorial conflict is taken as an axiom which is beyond the scope of this article to prove.² Nevertheless, religion has the potential—often realized—to exacerbate the conflict. Religion knows how to use the language of absolutes and religious narratives easily yield the perspective and chauvinistic claim “it’s mine” in a variety of phrasing:

- It was promised to me (first)
- It was mine in the past
- We are more deserving and entitled

¹ Drawn by Dudu Geva and published on or about 10 March 2002. As of this writing, the caricature may be viewed at http://www.acpr.org.il/nativ/articles/2002_3_yoman.pdf (p. 15).

² We may note the pronounced Christian role in Palestinian nationalism as evidence that one side is Arab rather than Muslim. This was well put by Khalid Mishal: “The conflict between Palestinian Arabs and Jews is a modern phenomenon, which began around the turn of the 20th century. Although these two groups have different religions (Palestinians include Muslims, Christians and Druze), religious differences are not the cause of the conflict. It is essentially a struggle over land.” *The Guardian*, 31 Jan. 2006, Debate & Comment, p. 26. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/jan/31/comment.israelandthepalestinians> (Accessed 17 Jan. 2010)

The narrative of the Promised Land is well known. The book of Genesis tells us that God told Abram/Abraham: “I shall give all the land you can see to you and your descendants forever.” (Gen. 13:15) An example of this attitude, as applied to Jerusalem, can be seen in the following traditional Jewish text:

“This is one of three places which the nations of the world cannot defraud the people of Israel and say to them ‘this is stolen property,’ and these are they: the tomb of the Patriarchs, the Temple site and the burial site of Joseph. The tomb of the Patriarchs, for it says “Abraham paid out to Ephron the money ... four hundred shekels of silver,” (Gen. 23:16), the Temple site, for it says “So David paid Ornan for the site 600 shekels’ worth of gold.” (I Chron. 21:25)³ and the site of Joseph’s burial, for it says “and he purchased the parcel of land ... for one hundred kesitas”⁴

The questions we shall address here are: Is that the only Jewish religious perspective? Is Judaism able to contribute something which can calm and ameliorate the conflict rather than pouring more religious oil on the flames of conflict? Can religious self-restraint contribute to easing tensions?

The Temple Mount – Al-Haram A-Sharif

We will turn our attention to the Temple Mount, known to the Muslim world as al-Haram a-Sharif, a focal point of religious veneration for Jews and Muslims. For Jews it is the site of both the first and second

³ This idea would be mentioned in an interview by the Minister of Religious Affairs, Dr. Zerah Warhaftig, in Aug. 1967, at the time of the government’s first addressing the future status of the Temple Mount. Nadav Shragai, *The Temple Mount Conflict*, (Jerusalem 1995) p. 32. (Hebrew)

⁴ Midrash Genesis Rabbah (Albeck edition) 79:19.

Temples, destroyed in 586 B.C.E. and 70 C.E. respectively.⁵ For Muslims it is al-Masjid al-Aqsa (the furthest mosque), Muhammad’s destination in his night journey (al-isra’) as alluded to in the opening verse of Sura 17 of the Qur’an.

The Temple Mount came under Israel’s control with the conquest of Jerusalem’s Old City on 6 June 1967. Jews had been unable to approach this site – or even the adjacent Western Wall – for the 19 years of Jordanian rule and its liberation was greeted with much excitement by the Jewish world. The words of Colonel Mordechai Gur over the army communications network “Har ha-bayit b’yadeinu, the Temple Mount is in our hands” became one of the strongest memories of the war and was evocative of the site’s rich past.⁶

It might have been expected that the Temple Mount would become a site for Jewish prayer, but this was not to be the case. The normative understanding of halakha (Jewish law) prohibits Jewish presence on the Mount. As a result, only hours after the conquest Israeli Radio broadcast a caution of the Chief Rabbinate not to ascend the Mount. The Chief Rabbinate Council convened to endorse Chief Rabbis Unterman’s and Nissim’s ban on the last day of the Six-Day War and subsequently 300 other rabbis added their signatures to the decree.⁷

⁵ Identification of the Haram a-Sharif with the location of the Temples is well established even if a small minority of scholars locate the Temple on the Mount but not at exactly the same place as the Dome of the Rock, e.g. Asher S. Kaufman, “Where the Ancient Temple of Jerusalem Stood,” *Biblical Archeology Review*, Volume IX, No. 2, (March/April 1983), pp. 40-58. O. Grabar in the *Encyclopedia of Islam* refers to the Haram as “the former Temple area” and indicates that “this platform can be assumed to have been a Herodian creation for the Jewish Temple.” “al- haram al- SHarif.” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2010. Brill Online. Brigham Young University. 18 January 2010 <http://www.brillonline.nl.erl.lib.byu.edu/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-2712> Among the more interesting works which support this connection are Nassar O. Rabbat, “The Meaning of the Umayyad Dome of the Rock,” *Muqarnas* 6 (1989), pp. 12-21. See also Andreas Kaplony, “The Mosque of Jerusalem (Masjid Beyt al-Maqdis),” in Oleg Grabar and Benjamin Z. Kedar, eds., *Where Heaven and Earth Meet: Jerusalem’s Sacred Esplanade*, (Jerusalem and Austin, Texas, 2009), pp. 101ff.

⁶ Nadav Shragai, *The Temple Mount Conflict*, (Jerusalem 1995) p. 21. (Hebrew)

⁷ Yoel Cohen, “The Political Role of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate in the Temple Mount Question,” *Jewish Political Studies Review*, Volume 11:1-2 (Spring 1999). <http://www.jcpa.org/jpsr/s99-yc.htm>.

The Halakhic Reasons for Prohibiting Jews' Ascent to the Temple Mount⁸

While the details of halakhic (Jewish legal) reasoning are beyond the scope of the present work, it is important to note that the prohibition has been accepted across the breadth of religious Judaism in a rare concurrence of opinion. Among those who have accepted the prohibition of Jewish ascent are: the council of Israel's Chief Rabbinate, all important decisors of Jewish law in both the Haredi ("ultra-orthodox") community as well as those of the religious-Zionist camp.

A brief outline of widely accepted reasons for the prohibition includes:

- All Jews are tainted with the impurity associated with contact with a dead body, from which no purification is possible in our era.
- The stringent ruling that one should not ascend even to the (apparent) extensions of the original Temple Mount from the days of the Hasmoneans or Herod is an application of the biblical commandment to revere the Temple.⁹ Extreme reverence led to prohibiting ascent to the entire esplanade as a safety margin.
- Ascent to the late second Temple period additions to the Mount was also prohibited lest people err and go beyond the permitted regions.
- Jews ascending the Temple Mount would be seen as provocative and might possibly result in heightened religious tensions and

8 Amnon Ramon, "Beyond the Western Wall: The Various Attitudes of the State of Israel and the Jewish Public towards the Temple Mount (1967-1999)", in Yitzhak Reiter, ed., *The Sovereignty of God and People: Sanctity and Political Centrality on the Temple Mount*, (Jerusalem, 2001), pp. 119-120. (Hebrew)

9 "You shall keep My sabbaths and venerate My sanctuary: I am the ETERNAL." (Lev. 19:30)

possibly even bloodshed.

- A Jewish return to the Temple Mount would be "forcing the end" and preempt developments which would best be left to God.



Figure 1: Chief Rabbinate's Warning Sign at Entrance to Temple Mount

Jewish legal self-restraint regarding ascending the Temple Mount can be summed up in the words of Deputy Supreme Court President Menahem Elon:

"This approach, which is unique to Judaism – that the more sacred the place or matter, the greater the obligation to maintain one's distance from it and not to tread within its bounds – is not a reflection of a desire for distance, but rather an expression of affinity and esteem."¹⁰

10 H.C.J. 4185/90. English translation in the *Catholic University Law Review*, Vol. 45 (1996), p. 908.

The Internal Jewish Struggle over the Temple Mount

Despite the broad consensus prohibiting Jewish ascent to the Mount, there were dissenting voices. One was that of Shlomo Goren, Chief Rabbi of the army in 1967 who believed that the available historical-archaeological knowledge of the ancient Temple sufficed to permit Jews to ascend the mount in a manner permissible by the halakha. With messianic fervor, Goren believed that Jewish control of the Temple site trumped all other considerations.¹¹

He advocated Jewish presence and prayer on the site and acted accordingly, seeking to reintroduce Jewish ritual on the Temple Mount widely and immediately.

The Muslim community was not the only entity which saw Jewish prayer on the Mount as provocative. Defense Minister Moshe Dayan acted in the opposite way. Believing that the Muslims should be allowed to maintain religious control of the Haram he ordered the removal of an Israeli flag which had been erected there. On Saturday 17 June, one week after the war's end, he met with the Supreme Muslim Council in the al-Aqsa Mosque to confirm the Waqf's religious control of the Muslim holy sites and to state that Jews would not be permitted to pray on the Temple Mount.¹²

On the 9th of Av, the anniversary of the Temples' destructions which fell on 15 August in 1967, Rabbi Goren and followers managed to pray the afternoon service on the mount and Goren announced his plans to hold a Yom Kippur service there as well. His subsequent

11 N. Shragai, *The Temple Mount Conflict*, p. 29.

12 N. Shragai, *The Temple Mount Conflict*, p. 25-26. Gershom Gorenberg, *The End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount*, (New York, 2000), p. 103.

intentions were thwarted by Dayan and Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin.¹³ Waqf authorities responded to Goren's prayer by closing the Mugrabi Gate to the Temple Mount.¹⁴

With this provocation the government established its ministerial committee for matters of the holy sites. The committee struggled with its desire not to have Jews pray on the Temple Mount and its desire not to say so in so many words. The committee's decision was that "when Jews ascend the Temple Mount to pray the security forces will direct them to the Western Wall." This ambivalence would continue to characterize the government's approach for many years.¹⁵

In the meantime, less than three weeks after the war's end, Israel enacted the Protection of Holy Places Law which guarantees "freedom of access of the members of the different religions to the places sacred to them."¹⁶ For Rabbi Goren and those who sought to conduct Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount, Israeli law now seemed to overrule Dayan's prohibition and possibly even that of the government.¹⁷

Over the next two years individuals and groups of Jews sought to pray on the Temple Mount with varying degrees of success. Muslim harassment and the police's protective restrictions often thwarted these prayer attempts. An appeal to the High Court of Justice in April 1969, requested that the police be required to protect Jewish worshippers from harm and disturbance whilst praying on the Temple Mount. After lengthy deliberation and with varying analyses the five justices ruled

13 Y. Cohen, *The Political Role of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate*.

14 N. Shragai, *The Temple Mount Conflict*, p.33.

15 N. Shragai, *The Temple Mount Conflict*, pp. 31-32, 37.

16 "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." Protection of Holy Places Law, 5727-1967, L.S.I. (Laws of the State of Israel), vol. 21, p. 76. The law was adopted by the Knesset on 27 June 1967. <http://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/HolyPlaces.htm> (Accessed 20 Jan. 2010)

17 Goren became Israel's Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi in 1972. Y. Cohen, *The Political Role of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate*.

unanimously that the government was permitted to prohibit Jewish prayer on the mount. As long as the situation was likely to cause a “serious disruption of public safety” and until the Minister of Religion established regulations for Jewish prayer, Jews would not be allowed to pray on the mount.¹⁸

No such regulations were forthcoming, but Jews continued to attempt to pray. In one incident 40 members of the Betar youth movement were arrested after praying on the Temple Mount on 8 May 1975, which was the eve of the anniversary of the site’s 1967 “liberation.”¹⁹ Justice Ruth Orr surprisingly acquitted the group and pointed her judicial anger at the government:

“If I hadn’t heard it with my own ears I would not believe that the prohibition for Jews to pray on the Temple Mount exists only since Israel has ruled [The dispute among rabbis] does not diminish whatsoever the legal right of every Jew to pray on the mount according to the Protection of Holy Places Law... Despite the elapsing of eight years since the law’s passage, and despite the Minister of Religion’s having established various regulations implementing the law ... including regarding the Western Wall, regulations have yet to be made for the right of the adherents of the different religions for access and legal prayer on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in a manner in which they will not disturb one another’s rituals... It would be appropriate for the Minister of Religion to exercise his authority promptly ... and establish such regulations explicitly clarifying who has the right to

18 H.C.J. 22268/ Nationalistic Society v. The Minister of Police, 24(2) Sup. Ct. Dec. 141. N. Shragai, *The Temple Mount Conflict*, pp. 35-36.

19 N. Shragai, *The Temple Mount Conflict*, p. 281. Known as “Jerusalem Day,” 28 Iyyar on the Hebrew calendar was proclaimed an Israeli holiday by the government on 12 May 1968, two weeks before the first anniversary. In 1998 the Knesset passed the Jerusalem Day Law officially making Jerusalem Day a minor Israeli holiday. <http://www.knesset.gov.il/holidays/heb/jer.htm> (Hebrew) (Accessed 20 Jan. 2010)

pray, where and when. This is both his right and his obligation ... and the sooner he does so the better.... There is no doubt that such clarification would reduce disturbance to the public order....”²⁰

The government continued to abstain from issuing the regulations demanded by the court and the court continued to uphold the de facto prohibition of Jewish prayer whenever the police judged it to be dangerous to the public order. In a 2004 ruling Chief Justice Barak wrote: “The point of departure, agreed upon by all sides, is that every Jew has the right to ascend the Temple Mount and to pray there. This is part of the freedom of religious ritual.” Nevertheless he accepted the police’s claim that they could not maintain public order were this right to be exercised, writing “But like all rights, the right of access to the Temple Mount is not absolute; it can be limited.” Summing up the problems and the tensions Barak continued: “However, the hostile community [Muslims] must not be given a “veto” over the exercising of this right [by Jews]. Nonetheless, we must take into consideration the unique characteristics of the Temple Mount.”²¹

The status quo is that overt Jewish worship at the Temple Mount, in groups or by individuals, in practice is forbidden to avoid disturbances and to maintain public order. However visits by Jews are allowed, as is outwards non-visible prayer.²²

Jewish – Muslim tensions regarding the Temple Mount developed under the surface as well. In 1982 workers of the Ministry of Religious affairs, working in a tunnel to the west of the Mount, came across a sealed gate. Breaking through the gate led to a chamber beneath

20 Cited in N. Shragai, *The Temple Mount Conflict*, pp. 282-283.

21 H.C.J. 2697/04 (citing an earlier ruling 2725/93)

22 N. Shragai, “No moving Jewish lips in prayer on Temple Mount, says Dichter,” *Haaretz*, 3 Jan. 2008. (Accessed at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/940710.html> on 26 Jan. 2010)

the Temple Mount. Rabbi of the Western Wall Yehuda Getz and now Chief Rabbi Goren hoped to establish a Jewish presence under the Mount. When their actions became known a physical confrontation with Muslims ensued and the opening was sealed by the police.²³

During the 1990s there was increased popularity of activities of the Movement for the Establishment of the Temple and other groups which promoted Jewish rights on the Mount. In the context of evolving negotiations with the Palestinians the issue was further politicized. Many rabbis of the Council of Rabbis of Judea and Samaria came to believe that the available historical-archaeological knowledge of the ancient Temple sufficed to permit Jews to ascend the mount in a manner permissible by the halakha and felt that this should be implemented. What's more, they called upon rabbis to ascend themselves and to lead their communities in doing so. Among the political motives for this new stance was the feeling that while the Muslim community was developing the Haram the Jews were giving the impression "proclaiming before the entire world that – perish the thought – we have no interest in the Mount."²⁴

Recent Developments – Increased Jewish Ascent to the Temple Mount

In recent years the idea that Jews may visit the mount in accordance with halakha has emerged from the marginally held view of a small minority of rabbis. In February 1996, the Council of Rabbis of Judea, Samaria

23 G. Gorenberg, *The End of Days*, p. 125. Gorenberg suggests that the rabbis dreamed of finding the lost Ark of the Covenant.

24 Rabbi Daniel Shilo, spokesman for the Council of Rabbis of Judea and Samaria, writing in 1997. Cited in A. Ramon, *Beyond the Western Wall*, p. 123-4.

and Gaza (Yesha), ruled that "Jews are permitted and even encouraged to enter the Temple Mount."²⁵ By 2007 the idea of ascending the Mount gained increased acceptance, popularity and publicity with the widely reported ascent of 30 leaders of religious-Zionism who called upon their tens of thousands of followers "to ascent the Mount in purity" on the upcoming Jerusalem Day, the 40th anniversary of the Mount's 'liberation.'²⁶ Of particular significance was the visit of prominent Rabbi Moshe Tendler, on July 3, 2008 which led to the reiteration of the ban on Jews' entry by ultra-orthodox rabbis.²⁷

Already in 1995 Benjamin Netanyahu had made a campaign promise of allowing Jews to pray on the Mount.²⁸ The issue of Jewish access to the Mount became more overtly political with the publication of the February 2006 decision of the Council of Rabbis of Judea, Samaria and Gaza that "if masses of Jews began to enter the Mount in order to pray, it would be harder for the Israeli government to transfer sovereignty over the site to the Palestinian Authority."²⁹ This group of rabbis went even further when they recently called for the banning of Arabs from Temple Mount.³⁰

Developments on the Jewish side have been met with increasingly strident claims from Palestinian sources denying any Jewish connection

25 Motti Inbari, "Religious Zionism and the Temple Mount Dilemma—Key Trends," *Israel Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Summer 2007), p. 29.

26 Neta Sela, "Tens of Religious-Zionist Rabbis Ascend the Temple Mount," *YNET*, 13 May 2007 <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3399173,00.html> (Accessed 10 Jan. 2010)

27 The ultra-orthodox unanimity may be ending. On 16 May 2007 N. Shragai reported "Ex-chief rabbi opposes new moves to visit Temple Mount," *Haaretz* <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/860322.html>, and on 24 Aug. 2008 "Haredi rabbis: Renew ban on Jews entering Temple Mount," <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1014524.html>. But just the month before he had written "The ultra-Orthodox rabbinical consensus on banning the entry of Jews to the Temple Mount is showing cracks," in "Ultra-Orthodox prohibition on entering Temple Mount splinters." 8 July 2008. <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1000050.html> (All accessed 10 Jan. 2010)

28 Jerusalem (Newspaper), 28 Apr. 1995. Cited in A. Ramon, *Beyond the Western Wall*, p. 117.

29 M. Inbari, *Religious Zionism and the Temple Mount Dilemma*, p. 40.

30 "Yesha rabbis urge banning Arabs from Temple Mount," *YNET*, 25 Oct. 2009, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3795182,00.html> (Accessed 15 Jan. 2010)

to the site or the equation of Haram a-Sharif with the Temple Mount. The roots of this phenomenon are not new but the development is stark. While a guide booklet to the site published by the Supreme Moslem Council in the 1920s and 30s stated that the “[Haram’s] identity with the site of Solomon’s Temple is beyond dispute” this is widely denied today. For example on the web site of Al-Quds University one can read that the notion that “the present Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa compound is the same location of the ‘Temple Mount’ or ‘Mount Moriah’” is just “an assumption.”³¹ This attitude is held not only by the masses. Temple denial is attributed to Palestinian leaders Ahmed Qurei³² and Yasser Arafat, who was reported as saying that the Temple was not in Jerusalem but in Nablus.³³

While denial of the Mount’s history is unfounded, Palestinian concerns for the Mount’s future can be easily understood in light of the activities of the various groups whose agendas go beyond Jewish prayer on the Haram. They include:

- Agitating for the construction of the Third Temple or for expanded Jewish access to the Mount. These groups include. The Movement to Rebuild the Holy Temple,³⁴ The Temple Institute, The Temple Mount Faithful and others
- Cornerstone laying ceremonies for the Third Temple
- Discussion of building a synagogue on the Temple Mount³⁵

31 Basem Ra’ad, http://www.alquds.edu/gen_info/index.php?page=jerusalem_history (Accessed 15 Dec. 2009)

32 Aaron Klein, “Official leading peace talks claims Israel trying to ‘invent’ historical Jerusalem link,” World Net Daily, 6 Nov. 2008 on the site of the Temple Institute: <http://www.templeinstitute.org/archive/09-11-08.htm> (Accessed 1 Feb. 2010).

33 Dennis Ross, “Camp David: An Exchange,” The New York Review of Books, 20 Sept. 2001 (Volume 48, Number 14). <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/14529> (Accessed 1 Feb. 2010)

34 N. Sela, “Temple Now: The Movement for the Building of the Temple Accelerates,” Maariv/NRG, 4 August 2009. <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/54/ART1/925/672.html> (Accessed 24 Jan. 2010)

35 M. Inbari, Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount: Who Will Build the Third Temple?, (New York, 2009), p. 24.

- Agitation for the removal of the Dome of the Rock, including the plans of the Jewish underground in 1984 and depictions of the haram with the Dome replaced by an image of the temple³⁶

Jewish concerns were further raised as a result of the Waqf’s construction projects on the Haram. In 1996 underground areas known as “Solomon’s Stables” were renovated and opened as the Marwani Mosque, large enough to accommodate thousands of worshippers.³⁷ The Waqf employed bulldozers to reopen a twelfth-century Crusader entrance as an emergency exit in 1999. This was seen by many Israeli archaeologists as rampant disregard for the Jewish history of the site, but understood by some as a necessary price to pay so as not to upset the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.³⁸ (Unfortunately, the result thus far has been neither archaeology nor peace.)

The extent to which some Jews became concerned by the widespread denial of the identification of the Haram with the Temple Mount can be seen from the enthusiasm with which Temple advocates present allegedly suppressed Muslim admission of this historical fact. The Temple Institute website proudly presents its copy of the Official 1925 Supreme Moslem Council (Waqf) Guide Book to the Temple Mount, highlighting its statement “[The Haram’s] identity with the site of

36 Such an image was presented in 1997 by Yasser Arafat at a meeting of the Islamic Conference Organization in Pakistan. Ethan Bronner, “Portent In A Pasture? Heifer’s Appearance in Israel Stirs Hopes, Apocalyptic Fears,” Boston Globe, 6 Apr. 1997, p A1. One news report described the distribution of “hundreds of thousands of copies of a photo-montage of the Temple on the Temple Mount.” <http://www.har-habayt.org/aruz7.html> (Accessed 24 Jan. 2010) As of this writing, an image of this type can be seen at: <http://26.hashem1.net/images/templebuild.jpg>. Indeed, Rabbi Goren spoke of destroying the Dome of the Rock at the time of Israel’s conquest on June 7. Shragai, The Temple Mount Conflict, p. 29-30.

37 Bill Hutman, “Solomon’s Stables open to Moslem worshippers today,” Jerusalem Post, 11 Oct. 1996. (Accessed at <http://www.templemount.org/stables.html> on 31 Jan. 2010)

38 Kristin M. Romey, “Jerusalem’s Temple Mount Flap,” Archaeology, Volume 53 Number 2, Mar./Apr. 2000. <http://www.archaeology.org/0003/newsbriefs/flap.html> (Accessed on 31 Jan. 2010)

Solomon's Temple is beyond dispute".³⁹ A similarly oriented site presents the Waqf itself as "debunking" Palestinian-Muslim Temple denial.⁴⁰ Most tellingly, when Al-Quds University president Sari Nusseibeh recently wrote that the shrines of the Haram – and indeed Muhammad's night journey itself – were due to the pre-existing holiness of the site (to Jews),⁴¹ it was highlighted as an amazing admission by Temple advocates and in the general Israeli press.⁴² Further it was reported in the Israeli media that Nusseibeh went into hiding after publishing this revelation, presumably in response to threats from extremists, though this was denied.⁴³

The popularity of Jewish ascent to the Temple Mount with religious motivation has increased in the last decade. Israeli police reported that after the Haram was reopened to non-Muslim visitors in February 2003 (having been closed by the Waqf during the al-Aqsa intifada) some 70,000 Jews had entered the site by October 2004, including some mainstream religious Zionist rabbis. This amounts to an average of 6,000 Jewish visitors each month amongst which dozens, if not hundreds, engage in individual prayer. This seems to be due to the influence of the ruling of the Council of Yesha Rabbis of February 1996 encouraging Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount."⁴⁴

39 <http://www.templeinstitute.org/wakf-1925-guidebook.htm>

40 <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/127428>

41 Sari Nusseibeh, "The Haram al-Sharif," Oleg Grabar and Benjamin Z. Kedar, eds., *Where Heaven and Earth Meet: Jerusalem's Sacred Esplanade*, (Jerusalem and Austin, Texas, 2009), p. 372.

42 Shalom Yerushalmi, "Sari Nusseibeh Confirms the Jewish Connection to the Temple Mount," *Ma'ariv*, 27 November 2009. <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/54/ART1/971/818.html> (Hebrew) (Accessed 2 Feb. 2010)

43 That Nusseibeh had not been in hiding was confirmed in a personal communication by Prof. Mustafa Abu Sway, author of another essay in the same volume and a colleague at Al-Quds University.

44M. Inbari, *Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount*, p. 1 and *idem.*, *Religious Zionism and the Temple Mount Dilemma*, p.42. Individual silent prayer is the only form of Jewish ritual permitted by the police. I have been told of religious tour groups whose guides recite Psalms while pretending to point to and explain various aspects of the Temple Mount.

Towards a Better Future

The traditional Jewish position prohibiting Jews from ascending the Temple Mount has contributed to moderating the tensions over the Temple Mount. There are still leading rabbinic voices which adhere to the this position including the haredi (ultra-orthodox) communities, Israel's Chief Rabbinate, Rabbis Shlomo Aviner, Zvi Tau and Naftali Rothenberg.⁴⁵ But despite these voices, Jewish religious ascent to the Temple Mount is becoming ever more normative as well as increasingly politicized.

The increased Jewish appetite to ascend the Mount has not come about in a vacuum. As we have seen, it has been a result a number of factors, including Muslim-Palestinian actions and statements which were perceived as threatening and provocative. Increased religious Jewish visitation to the Mount is, in turn, seen as threatening and provocative by Palestinians and Muslims. Removing the Temple Mount/Haram a-Sharif from the circle of escalating tension is only likely to transpire as a result of reciprocity. It is lamentable that a peace process was not concluded before the recent escalation. That not having transpired we can only seek to make the best of an increasingly difficult situation.

The traditional prohibition is today undermined by a significant number of rabbinic authorities permitting ascent to the Temple Mount. Modern historical-archaeological research can tell us enough about the location of the ancient Temple to permit Jews to ascend the Mount in a manner permissible by the halakha. To undo this is impossible. However, the

45 Inbari, *Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount*, p. 26. See: N. Rothenberg, "Do not Ascend the Mount," *YNET*, 3 August 2008. <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3576778,00.html> (Hebrew) (Accessed 25 Dec. 2009) in English: "Beware of Going up the Mountain," *Common Ground News Service*, 15 Oct. 2009. <http://www.commongroundnews.org/article.php?id=26535&lan=en&sid=0&sp=0>. (Accessed 19 Oct. 2009)

prohibition was also based on a desire to avoid provocation, heightened religious tensions and bloodshed. These concerns certainly remain relevant today and should be emphasized.

While it may not be possible –or even desirable- to outlaw Jewish visits or prayer at the Mount other steps could be taken. A policy which would prohibit, due to their dangerous provocative nature, activities to advance cornerstone laying ceremonies for the Third Temple or actions promoting the building of a synagogue could be circumscribed.

A significant Muslim *quid pro quo* could contribute to Jews continuing to behave in a more moderate manner and might make the traditional stringent limitations on Jewish ascent to the Mount more palatable. Fortunately, there are mutual concessions which can be made. Archaeologically unsupervised excavation and construction on the Haram and the denial of Jewish historical connections to the Mount function as irritants to Jewish sensibilities as Jewish prayer and Temple activism do for Muslim feelings.

We may hope that the leadership on both sides will be able to reach an understanding according to which some of the sensitivities of the other would be taken into consideration. Guidelines could be established for archaeological supervision of work on the Mount and in near-by areas. Leading Palestinian and Muslim figures could state – even more publicly – that they acknowledge the Jewish historical connection to the Mount (without prejudicing the future of the Haram). Jewish leaders could call for moderation and self-restraint in Jewish visitation to the Mount.

These steps are not trivial and would be exceedingly difficult to achieve. Nonetheless, movement in this direction seems to be the only way of

ratcheting down the tensions which engulf the Temple Mount.

Would such measures be authentically Jewish? Yes, Judaism contains a cautionary strand which warns us not to take our possession of or presence in sacred space for granted. A widely respected medieval rabbinic voice cautions us that our mere presence in the Holy Land is tenuous and can be maintained only with most cautious behavior:

“One who commits one sin in the Land of Israel is punished far more severely than one who commits all manner of sins elsewhere. This is because God constantly watches over the land, his eyes never leave it, and his providence is permanently there. One cannot compare one who defies the King in his palace to one who defies him from afar. For the land is “a land that consumes its inhabitants” (Numbers 13:32). Likewise, the verse states: “That the land vomit not you out also as it vomited out the nation [that was before you]” (Leviticus 18:28). The land spews out transgressors.”⁴⁶

Another Rabbinic text, regarding the tomb of the patriarchs and matriarchs in Hebron, teaches that even the acquisition of territory in the Promised Land must be accomplished with humility:

Take note of Abraham’s humility! He was promised by God to inherit the land for his descendants forever, and now, when looking for a place to bury his wife, he must pay an extraordinary price to buy it. In spite of that, neither did he doubt nor did he challenge God. Not only that, but he even spoke to the people in humility.⁴⁷

46 Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg, *Responsa* [ed. E.M. Bloch], Berlin, p. 5. English translation is based on Aviezer Ravitzky, “The Land of Israel: Desire and Dread in Jewish Literature,” in Gerrit Glas, et. al, eds., *Hearing Visions and Seeing Voices, Psychological Aspects of Biblical Concepts and Personalities*, (Springer Netherlands, 2007), p. 155.

47 *Midrash HaGadol*, *Hayei Sara* 23:4 (Margoliot ed., p. 382). Interestingly this site has been mentioned as one at which procedures to accommodate both Jewish and Muslim prayer have been established. For example, see Justice Ruth Orr’s ruling (Jerusalem Magistrate’s Court, criminal case 1488/75) given on 28 Jan. 1976: “Why did the government [of the State of] Israel see fit, via the military governor, to organize prayer in the Tomb of the Patriarchs, but did not see fit to do so on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem...?” See note 21, *supra*..

Judaism contains open, inclusive messages for the non-Jew. The prophet Isaiah teaches us that “The earth is the Eternal’s and all that it holds, the world and its inhabitants” (Psalms 24:1). And most importantly “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples” (Isaiah 56:7).

These non-possessive and non-exclusive verses are the basis of an alternative Jewish vision. Jews who hold an open, pluralistic and sharing approach towards both their city Jerusalem and towards their fellows must lead the way in educating other Jews as to the legitimate, historic and spiritual connections of Muslims and Christians to the holy city. Emphasis on those teachings in Judaism which have a positive view of these sister religions can help Jews to develop appreciation for Christian and Muslim bonds to the holy city and to their rights both to live there and to worship in and to exercise control of their holy sites, including, but not limited to, the Haram a-Sharif.

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JERUSALEM FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE AND ITS ROLE IN PEACEKEEPING

Reverend Ulrike Wohlrab

Asking about the role of Jerusalem in Christianity, the answer seems to be that it is the most important place on earth. Apart from the birth of Jesus Christ, which is related to Bethlehem and celebrated on Christmas, all the other important Christian festivals originate in Jerusalem. Christians commemorate the preaching of Jesus to his disciples, for example, on the Mount of Olives, from where Jesus entered the city riding on a donkey on palmsunday¹. To this day, they celebrate Palm Sunday with an enormous procession from Beth Fage on the eastern side of the Mount of Olives to the church of St. Anna in the Old City.

Yet it is not only the Jerusalem of Jesus that is in the center of Christian traditions. The ancient Jerusalem, as depicted in the Old Testament, is as important as the stories about the city and its people witnessed by the New Testament. The traditions, delivered by the church fathers, emphasize the importance of the town, like the reports of the first pilgrims from the 4th century do². They round up the image of Jerusalem in Christian tradition. Since the earliest days of Christianity and until today, a steady stream of believers arrives in the city. Even in

¹ The teaching is situated on the Mount of Olives for example in Mark 13,3. for the coming to Jerusalem see Matthew 21,1-11; Mark 11,1-11; Luke 19,28-40.

² The importance of Jerusalem as a Christian city manifests itself in the building of churches in the 4th century, see Max Küchler. Jerusalem. 1118. One of the first Pilgrims we know of is Etheria and she has described her experiences in detail.

the future, the heavenly Jerusalem will play one of the most important roles in Christian visions of the end of the world and the beginning of the new one³.

The importance of Jerusalem in Christianity is selfevident, if one considers the religious festivals connected to the city. It is the place where the crucifixion and the resurrection (Easter) took place⁴. From the Mount of Olives, Jesus rose into heaven (Ascension)⁵ and the coming of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost)⁶ is believed to have taken place here. In the Christian mind, whether the believer comes from Europe, the Americas or Africa, whether he follows one of the comparatively new Christian churches all over Asia or is a local Palestinian or Hebrew speaking Christian, these founding miracles and festivals of Christianity originate in Jerusalem. But apart from this common ground, every congregation, visiting group and every individual makes diverse experiences and conclusions. The Christian perspectives on Jerusalem are consensual and diverse at the same time.

Just to allude to this point a little further: All Christians are celebrating Easter. But already the date Easter will be celebrated, differs almost every year, depending on the calendar, on which the denomination is relying. Not only the time for celebration is different in the diverse Christian groups, but also the rituals are celebrated in different ways. For example, a pilgrim from Asia or Western Europe might find it very difficult to understand what is going on during the ceremony of the Holy Light on good Saturday, which is one of the most important rituals in Orthodox Christianity.

³ Apocalypse 21,9-27.

⁴ Mark 15 and parallels.

⁵ Acts 1,4-11.

⁶ Acts 2.

On the other hand, not only Orthodox believers are amazed by the holy ceremonies and the amount of pilgrims in the city for Easter each year. The same is true for Western Christians seeing the world through the eyes of enlightenment, whether they want to or not. Still the atmosphere of Jerusalem is drawing them into the churches and suddenly the differences between Eastern and Western Christians, between Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox seem to be a lot less important. This is why Jerusalem is important for the whole of Christianity. It is hope, which Jerusalem symbolizes for Christian believers worldwide, that the experienced closeness of the different denominations in one city will help us to overcome the theological differences that divide Christianity.

For Christians, Jerusalem is not only the city where a lot of important churches are located but it is also a revelation of faith. The country itself is called the fifth gospel. Especially in Protestant theology, as on every mountain, in every wadi, in all the streets of the Old City or under one of the comparatively new olive trees on the Mount of Olives, the thought of Jesus and his disciples, the foundation of faith comes to those who give themselves to the will of God in the here and now, in the place, where Jesus gave himself to the Father's will⁷. In this town a Christian believer experiences that his faith did not originate in a vacuum and that it is not only a myth. That is why the city will always remain important for Christianity.

It is not only the pilgrims from all over the world who come with different perspectives, their experiences of course differ also from those of the Christians who belong and live here. The perspective on Jerusalem is very different whether you live in the city or just look onto

⁷ in the Garden of Gethsemane

Jerusalem from afar. Jerusalem's Christians, who make their daily lives here must necessarily have different religious feelings and images from those, who have imagined but never seen the place. Jerusalem is the place famous in legend, literature, poetry, music and painting. It is the place of religious ceremony and instruction heard by children, referred to everyday in two-thousand years of Christian culture everywhere. One wonders what pilgrims experience, when they finally arrive in Jerusalem for the first time. How do imagination and reality, religious vision and conviction resolve in their experience?. This question brings the poem by Cavafy to mind: „...and if you find her poor, Ithaca won't have fooled you, for the reward was in the journey”⁸.

Nowadays more than 50 churches and Christian communities are believed to exist in the city and its surroundings. Christian churches of all persuasions and from all places wish to establish a presence here. Perspectives on Jerusalem include not only the phenomenon of the pilgrims, churches and communities, they also have to view the situation of the local Christians.

Most of the local Christians in this area are Greek Orthodox (a little more than one third), the Melkite (Greek Catholic) and other, with Rome united churches, constitute another third of the Christian population. The last third splits between the so called Latins (Roman-Catholic) and “all the others”. „All the others“ in this case means on one hand the Armenian-Orthodox, the Syrian-Orthodox, the Coptic and Ethiopian Christians (e.g., the ones that did not accept the results of the concilium of Chalcedon 451) and on the other hand the Anglicans, the Lutherans, the Baptists and the Reformed⁹.

⁸ Constantin Cavafy, Ithaca, 1911.

⁹ The actual numbers of local Christians is hard to determine. For hints see: The Sabeel Survey on Palestinian Christians in the West Bank and Israel. Historical Demographic Developments, Current politics and

So Jerusalem is the place on earth where the diversity of Christianity is displayed best. The Pilgrims are welcomed and able to follow services in the communities in their own language and tradition, Arabic, Hebrew, Ethiopic, Egyptian, Syriac and many modern languages. Bearing in mind the importance of the holy places for the individual believer and his congregation and the number of visitors to these sites every day, Christians enjoy peace among themselves in Jerusalem. An important mean to that aim is the status quo of 1852 which keeps the balance between the different denominations in difficult times and times of pressure, especially at the most important church, the church of the Holy Sepulchre. This agreement was imposed on the Christians by the Turkish rulers at that time. Some Christians see the necessity of the Status quo as the weak point in Christian coexistence in the Holy City. But to be realistic, it is important, especially if one is living in Jerusalem. Therefore, one has to admit that there are too many people at the same time and place, who want to pray and sing. Order is needed, even if it seems as if one tried to regulate the Holy Spirit.

Maybe the status quo could be a good example for coexistence of the different religions in the Holy City. One has to stop the many initiatives that try to gain land, buildings and influence only for their party. It is true that the status quo was initiated by the Turkish rulers, but the Christians alone might never have been able to achieve this goal. The same is true for Jews, Christians and Muslims living together in this city. If there was an outside power setting the situation at this moment as a new status quo, maybe all three religions would accept the decision because it could bring peace, the peace all of us are longing for. The only problem is that there is no one placed outside of the conflict who

could make the difficult decisions for us, if it comes to the question of Jerusalem. The people of Jerusalem need to get together and work on something like the status quo, in order to help this city to get peace. The Muslims, Jews and Christians are living here together. And the diversity of Christian denominations and other religions in the city is not a new phenomenon. From the beginning of Christianity, Jerusalem is depicted as an international and multi-religious city and the early Christians were people from different backgrounds and with different mother tongues. Citing from Acts chapter 2: „And they were all full of the Holy Spirit, and were talking in different languages, as the Spirit gave them power. 5 Now there were living at Jerusalem, Jews, God-fearing men, from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound came to their ears, they all came together, and were greatly surprised because every man was hearing the words of the disciples in his special language. 7 And they were full of wonder and said, Are not all these men Galilaeans? 8 And how is it that every one of us is hearing their words in the language which was ours from our birth? 9 Men of Parthia, Media, and Elam, and those living in Mesopotamia, in Judaea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, 10 In Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and those who have come from Rome, Jews by birth and others who have become Jews, 11 Men of Crete and Arabia, to all of us they are talking in our different languages, of the great works of God.“

The idea of the melting pot has been inherent in Jerusalem's identity since centuries. It is not only the different Christian denominations that have to be taken into account if we talk about Jerusalem, but also the other religions that come into perspective if one is living in

Jerusalem. Especially next year, when not only all the Christians will celebrate Easter at the same Sunday, but also Pessach is celebrated at the same time, pilgrims will see: christian traditions in other parts of the world may be rich, but Jerusalem with its long cultures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam living together in one city lends special color to those festivals originating here. And in some years, Christians have to cope with the fact that on Good Friday the joyous festival of Purim is celebrated in the Jewish neighbourhoods and moods are far from being on the same level.¹⁰ But it is not only the times of rituals that show that there are more than members of only one religion sharing this city. Also in the tradition one can see the influence the different religions had on each other. For example, when one enters the Katholikon of the church of the Holy Sepulchre, one will see a little wooden construction. This is the navel of the world, the center of everything. Christian tradition adopted the idea of the navel as the center of the world from Talmudic narratives and shifted the location of this legend from the Temple Mount / al-Haram al-Sharif to their most important holy site, the church of the Holy Sepulchre. The same happened to the legend of the grave of Adam that Christians believe to be under the Golgotha, thereby explaining the theological topic of redemption with a narrative easier to understand than dogmatic sentences.

In other parts of this world, it seems almost unbelievable that Jerusalem can be the center of the world or that there is a grave of Adam. But in Jerusalem, this seems to be organically woven into traditions over the long years of Christian presence and nobody is surprised about these legends.

¹⁰ That was the case for example in the year 2005 when according to the Jewish calendar a second adar was inserted and Purim celebrated comparatively late in the year.

Therefore, Jerusalem is also one of the best places to learn about the roots of Christianity and about religious tolerance. It is not only for the Christians to learn tolerance but also for the majorities around them. The Jewish and Muslim believers have to learn to act with tolerance towards this small minority in the region, because the well being of the minorities says a lot about the well functioning or malfunctioning of the culture of the majority.

Some say that soon Jerusalem will be like a Christian Disneyland. But for Christianity it is eminent that in the future the holy places are not empty churches, only visited by tourists who are guided through once vivid places like through a museum. It is important that there are believers praying and living in this cradle of Christianity. Therefore, the dropping numbers of local Christians are a question of deep concern to the whole Christian world. This issue should be alarming for the Jews and Muslims, sharing the city with the Christians, too. There were 31,000 Christians counted at the end of the forties of the last century, in the year 2000 there were only 14,000 left and today, the number of Christians in Jerusalem is estimated to be less than 10,000 members of the different churches all together.¹¹

The pilgrims coming to Jerusalem express their hope that the local Christians will be able to survive the political conflict and donate a lot of money, in order to show their solidarity. And they have something important to learn during their visit. For many groups, it is the first time that they actually visit a place where Christianity is the minority of the population. For the first time, they realize how it feels not to be part of the majority. So Jerusalem can help to put various difficulties into perspective, for example the European nations' attempt to further

¹¹ See: The Sabeel Survey.

the integration of their Muslim inhabitants.

The church, as all over the world, follows also in Jerusalem its duty to build not only churches and monasteries, but hospitals and schools in which children, independent of their faith, are welcome to attend, in order to keep up its charitable mission. In this perspective Jerusalem is not different from other places in this world. The duty of the church stays the same.

Still we hope that the city will change the visitors and thereby influence the coexistence of different peoples and religions in a positive way.

But Jerusalem is not only the place of festivals. By rereading the texts, every Christian in this city has to come to terms with the question of the theological meaning of the holy sites for the individual, for the congregation and for Christianity worldwide. These insights are often not congruent and differ from pilgrim to pilgrim and from one local Christian to another. Jerusalem is a personal and a collective experience, it is equal but different at the same time.

Some pilgrims articulate that they were struck by the ordinariness of the architecture built over the holy places, the noise and push of the other pilgrims. For the natives, the ancient familiarity they have with these places and what took place in there is going beyond belief and imagination into the organic nature of their lives. And they might come to the conclusion that the Kingdom of Heaven is not measured in architecture or romantic imaginings but here and now, in everyday life, after all. Other pilgrims or local Christians draw strength for their faith from the joint prayer with so many hundreds of people at the same time and do not see any of the problematic aspects of the crowdedness of the holy sites.

Distant Christian spectators on the other hand might find all this emotion, this attempt to locate the Holy Spirit geographically in a ceremony and in a place, a bit superstitious. They might prefer to read the scriptures in quiet meditation, removed from wherever they might be, wherever their personal life takes them. Yet they come, perhaps to capture a mood from some part of the place, some old church, street or wall, some view over the city and its hills, some understanding of its air and light before leaving the physical reality for their personal, spiritual journey. They might do so in the Protestant church of the Redeemer, opposite the Holy Sepulchre or, as Jesus did with his disciples, by withdrawing from the city to find solitude and quietness on the Mount of Olives.

There are always several ways to look onto the city and therefore the Christian perspectives on Jerusalem are consensual but differ at the same time.

A Christian pilgrim may contemplate the often unhappy present of Jerusalem and reflect on the words of the prophets before Christ in psalm 122, 6-7: “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! May they be secure who love you! Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!”.

But Jerusalem is not only its hills, history, buildings, cultures and religions. For Christians, Jerusalem is a metaphor for the Kingdom of God. So, that same pilgrim might also hear the words of Christ, here in the cradle of Christianity, the city where the Prince of Peace said: “ My peace I give you. My peace I leave with you „¹², the mystical peace that passes all understanding and the true knowledge that comes with it.

¹² John 14,27.

Christians all over the world hope that there will be signs of peace coming from Jerusalem to the world, as the light of Christmas travels every year around the world, as the light of Easter morning is passed from hand to hand. To sustain the positive atmosphere in the city and to act as witnesses of the gospel, every January Christians celebrate a week of prayer for the unity of Christianity in Jerusalem and the whole world. Every day during this week, Christians pray in one of the churches together, everyone is invited, no matter, if the prayer is held in the Protestant, Catholic or Orthodox church. This week is a sign of hope for Christians worldwide, who suffer because of their theological differences. So we hope that Jerusalem will be an example to the nations of living together in peace.

Is there another city with so much diversity on so little space not only among Christians, but also among Jews and Muslims?

Here we can see the Mount of Olives, the Holy Sepulchre, the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif and ponder some of the main issues of interreligious dialogue. The world looks at Jerusalem.

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THE VISION OF THE NEW JERUSALEM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOK OF REVELATION (REV 21,9-22,5)

Prof. Margareta Gruber

One of the most fascinating religious narratives of the New Testament is the visionary view of the New Jerusalem that descends from heaven to earth. This vision is to be found in the Book of Revelation which is the last book of the New Testament. Therefore this vision can be understood as the keystone of the Sacred Scripture, the two in one canon of the Bible. The Book of Revelation is one of the latest scriptures of the New Testament, it originated in Asia Minor at the end of the first century. The text is therefore looking back on the destruction of the Temple and the Holy City in the year 70 and also refers to the separation of the Christian and the Jewish community, which had been completed by now.

The seer however, to whom we owe this prophetic text, is enrooted in the Jewish tradition and his images are referring to the Hebrew Bible. Nevertheless he can be seen as part of that movement in early Judaism which expected the end of time and which nevertheless had not given up the concrete city of Jerusalem after the catastrophe in the year 70. In order to see the New Jerusalem with the eyes of the seer; I quote the central part of his vision from the Book of Revelation, Chapter 21,9-22,5¹:

¹ Translation: The New Jerusalem Bible

- ⁹ One of the seven angels came to speak to me and said, ‘Come here and I will show you the bride that the Lamb has married.’
- ¹⁰ In the spirit, he carried me to the top of a very high mountain, and showed me Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down out of heaven from God.
- ¹¹ It had all the glory of God and glittered like some precious jewel of crystal-clear diamond.
- ¹² Its wall was of a great height and had twelve gates; at each of the twelve gates there was an angel, and over the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; ...
- ¹⁴ The city walls stood on twelve foundation stones, each one of which bore the name of one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.
- ¹⁵ The angel that was speaking to me was carrying a gold measuring rod to measure the city and its gates and wall. (...)
- ¹⁷ He measured its wall, and this was a hundred and forty-four cubits high -- by human measurements.
- ¹⁸ The wall was built of diamond, and the city of pure gold, like clear glass.
- ¹⁹ The foundations of the city wall were faced with all kinds of precious stone: (...)
- ²¹ The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate being made of a single pearl, and the main street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass.
- ²² I could not see any temple in the city since the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were themselves the temple,
- ²³ and the city did not need the sun or the moon for light, since it was lit by the radiant glory of God, and the Lamb was a lighted torch for it.

- ²⁴ The nations will come to its light and the kings of the earth will bring it their treasures.
- ²⁵ Its gates will never be closed by day -- and there will be no night there-
- ²⁶ and the nations will come, bringing their treasure and their wealth.
- ²⁷ Nothing unclean may come into it: no one who does what is loathsome or false, but only those who are listed in the Lamb’s book of life.
- 22:1 Then the angel showed me the river of life, rising from the throne of God and of the Lamb and flowing crystal-clear.
- ² Down the middle of the city street, on either bank of the river were the trees of life, which bear twelve crops of fruit in a year, one in each month, and the leaves of which are the cure for the nations.
- ³ The curse of destruction will be abolished. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city; his servants will worship him,
- ⁴ they will see him face to face, and his name will be written on their foreheads.
- ⁵ And night will be abolished; they will not need lamplight or sunlight, because the Lord God will be shining on them. They will reign for ever and ever.

What does the seer see and what does he want the readers of his text to see?

He does see a city – a new polis; he speaks about it in visionary terms but thinks of it in a very concrete way. The focus is not on escapism – escaping the world and seeking something new and better above - but on a new view on a human society with an urban character on

this earth. The new city of Jerusalem is the accomplishment of the prophecy of Jesaiah chapters 65 and 66 (Jes 65, 16b – 66, 24): it is God's paradisiacal garden, gigantic and big, glorious, precious and light-flooded, with the throne of God in its center, that is the spring of life and with God's people that has been extended to all nations. Only idolaters and violators are being excluded. Death and harm have been overcome. The promised peace will be substantiated in the vision of the New Jerusalem.

For John, God's presence is in the whole of the city in which the separation between the holy and the profane does not exist any more. This is a new approach if one looks at the concrete city of Jerusalem as well as to all other cities including the Christian cities with their domes and cathedrals: In the New Jerusalem there is no Holy Place where the presence of God can be fixed in an exclusive way. It is God Himself in his being who is present among the people in the temple. This is very provocative, for Christian and for Jewish ears: it is however not to be understood as to criticize the cult but to radicalize it. The focus is not on places but on relations. It is a new way to meet and to communicate with God and among people that is evoked by the images of the book.

Therefore not only God has no "house" but also people don't have houses in this city; there are only streets and gates being mentioned as the biblical and oriental places of communication. Everything is movement in light, free and unhindered; you see fearless encounter and exchange in streets of "pure gold like transparent glass". The wealth of all peoples and all cultures are being brought to this city which does not have to exclude and to demarcate anything or anybody

and therefore does not have to close its gates neither by day nor by night. This means that in this city every nation has the right of abode. This text, written in the first century in the context of a destroyed city of Jerusalem, has to be understood as political theology, as a rejection of the claim to world supremacy of the Roman empire and all other claims to power that are not oriented towards God's will.

There are no luminaries any more for the only source of light is the Glory of God, is God Himself in his presence full of power and light. "The light of the city is the lamb" (Rev 21,19); for the Christian prophet this is Christ, crucified and risen in the city of Jerusalem. That gives a hint to the "dynamo" so to say of the New City, the centre of its energy: the new way of communication and community can only exist out of one source: the love and commitment of God Himself who wants to integrate His whole creation in His movement of love and life and so transform it to what is called the New Jerusalem, the Bride of God.

This promised figure of completion speaks with a powerful voice to our present experiences with borders and limitations and in light of the insolvable questions posed by a multicultural society and the migration of people in the world and also in this city.

The vision of the New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation will not give us concrete recommendations for actions because history is part of human beings' free way of acting, but with the authority of the Holy Scripture it shows theological perspectives for acting within the frame of this history. I want to state these perspectives in four points:

1. The city coming from heaven is radically new, but it is new creation: The forthcoming God is God who remains true to his creation.

The chaos with its monsters, Satan and death, are definitely defeated. „Paradise Lost“ has been opened again. The ambivalence of human cities, which are afflicted by violence and fratricide has been overcome. The benefits of a culture of all nations will be a peaceful part of it. This final aim, the Telos is spiritual and material, individual and collective.

2. This figure of completion is linked with Gods acting within history. The vision shows a community of all mankind in which the covenant with Noah is being accomplished.

The vision confirms Jerusalem as the chosen place for God's rest and the place of peace for his chosen people. And it sticks to it in spite of the destruction of the concrete City of Jerusalem and the separation of Christian communities from their Jewish origins. For the Christian prophet it is the death of Christ prefigured by the prophets that opens community with God to all nations. Yet he does not think this in terms of substitution, but connected to Israel.

3. The Jerusalem we live in now is like most other cities of this world not a garden of peace. It is lacking peace, joy, justice and life according to God's creation. What we see therefore is a vision, an utopia of a world to come. This world however does not evolve from the afterworld, but is coming from heaven to earth and therefore is conceptualized as earthly. Like the present Jerusalem, the New Jerusalem is standing on the Mount of Zion, the place where according to the Scripture people are coming to when they seek God. Therefore

the present city of Jerusalem remains important for the vision. It is this present Jerusalem that is the focus of hope that there will be a definite coming to peace of Israel and of all people on earth. This hope will lead to a new ethos that expresses itself in concrete actions.

4. With the vision of the New Jerusalem, the Christian canon of the Holy Scriptures is ending. The bible tells the narrative of Gods history with mankind. Therefore the vision at the end of this narrative marks the goal of the history of mankind and of Israel's history of the covenant. It does so in an eminent positive promise. And God Himself is giving his word for its fulfilment. Therefore the book itself states that nothing may be added to this promise and nothing may be taken from it (Rev 22,16).

Therefore we may conclude: The New Jerusalem is not the promise of things coming in the afterworld even if the full realisation is coming after the end of space and time; the New Jerusalem is a basic promise given to our time which is suffering from dark and scaring images and to this city of Jerusalem with its beauty and its anguish and pain.

The germ of this New City has been laid into the earth with the grain, which is the lamb being slain.

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INTERFAITH IN JERUSALEM – FROM TALK TO ACTION?

Robin Twite

Jerusalem today is, sadly, a city where it is extraordinarily difficult to promote interfaith harmony and cooperation. Though the three monotheistic faiths for whom the city has a unique significance share many of the same beliefs and venerate many of the same prophets, yet their narratives are very different. Their adherents today find it difficult to respect the sentiments of those of other faiths living in the city, just as they did in the past when Jerusalem went from the control of one faith to another often after violent conflict. The very depth of feeling towards the Holy City strengthens the wish to hold it all, to marginalize those of other faiths, and celebrate complete control.

Today some religious leaders seem intentionally to fan the flames of conflict rather than help to put them out. A vociferous minority of rabbis in the synagogues and sheiks in the mosques use the powerful rhetoric at their command to stress the uniqueness of their claims to the city and denigrate the claims of the “other”. While the leaders of the local Christian community tend to be more restrained, their reticence may well derive from their sense of weakness (not more than three percent at the very most of the population of Israel and the Palestinian Authority areas are Christian), rather than a wish to accord the narrative of the other faiths a respect equivalent to that they give their own. Those who look to the Christian presence in Jerusalem to mediate between the different faiths are likely to be disappointed. The

Christians are simply not sufficiently confident to do so.

This situation is not, of course, a new one. Indeed even within faiths in Jerusalem there have been, and still are, deep rooted confrontations. It is only in the last few decades that representatives of different Christian churches have ceased from violent confrontation over their rights in the Holy Sepulchre; while to this day followers of Reform and Conservative Judaism face hostility from those who adhere to a more traditional form of the Jewish faith. Religion is, it seems, more often a cause of discord than of peace in Jerusalem and the “merging” of the political and social conflict between Israelis and Palestinians over the future of the city and its political future with the rival religious claims of the more extreme adherents of Judaism and Islam have created a heady and unstable climate.

In these circumstances it is not surprising that the advocates of interfaith harmony have had difficulty in making themselves felt. There are, of course, interfaith organizations based in the city and working in the whole of Israel. In the nineteen-fifties the philosopher and educationalist Martin Buber established the Israel Interfaith Association which has worked for years to promote interfaith harmony; in the early nineteen-nineties a group of religious leaders and scholars set up the Inter-Religious Coordinating Council for Israel which has similarly been active for two decades; while some ten years ago the activist Yehuda Stolov founded the “Interfaith Encounter Association” with the same end in mind.

All three of these organizations do excellent work but it is strictly limited in scope. Those working within them are for the most part liberal Jews - members of the Reform and Conservative movements - together with a number of so-called “Modern Orthodox” who, while

strict in their observance, are more open in their views than the majority of the traditional Orthodox in the city; “Western” Christians, that is Catholics and Protestants from Europe and North America working in religious institutions in the city who have been influenced by the ecumenical movement; and the occasional Moslem cleric or layman who is prepared to risk a degree of disapproval from his community for taking part in such efforts. The majority leaders of the three faiths in the city, and in Israel as a whole have not been prominent in interfaith activity in the last few decades though there have been notable exceptions such as Rabbi David Rosen, formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland and today active in promoting relations between Jews and those of other faiths in his capacity as Director of the Department for Religious Affairs at the American Jewish Committee and in a variety of international forums, or Bishop Younan of the Lutheran Church in Palestine. It is clear though that interfaith activity in the Holy Land has been restricted to relatively small numbers and has not embraced more than a handful of significant religious leaders.

However, early in the twenty-first century there were signs that faced with increasing violence both in Jerusalem itself and in the region as a whole, leaders of religious communities were beginning to shift their attitudes and think of ways in which interfaith cooperation might reduce violence. These had a significant result when in 2002 the Archbishop of Canterbury initiated contacts between religious leaders in the region which ultimately lead to a meeting in Alexandria attended, among others, by the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, the Grand Sheik of Al-Azhar University, Egypt, leading Moslem clerics from Palestine, the heads of several Christian Churches in Jerusalem, and leaders of international organizations concerned with interfaith relations. At this

meeting the participants signed the “Alexandria Declaration” which clearly stated that the various faiths they might reasonably claim to represent in the Holy Land, were opposed to violence and wished to cooperate to prevent it.

The Declaration, as could have been expected, attracted a good of positive attention in the media. It signaled an intent of the part of senior religious leaders from the Holy Land supported by “outsiders” such as the Archbishop of Canterbury, to use their influence to help calm the region.

The results of the “Declaration” have, however, been somewhat disappointing. Some leaders who had signed the Declaration undoubtedly found on their return to their communities that their congregations were less enthusiastic about working with those of other faiths than they were themselves and moderated their enthusiasm as a result. Others were reluctant to convert the goodwill contained in the “Declaration” into action. They tended to withdraw from active involvement. Yet others were content to think of themselves as a “pressure group” and wait for a suitable moment to intervene in a quiet and undemonstrative manner, should the occasion demand it.

Given that, if one is to credit the Declaration, many significant religious leaders support interfaith activity. What, if anything, can be done to make of their support a more positive tool for creating an atmosphere of goodwill in Jerusalem? There is, it seems, a need for those who believe in interfaith harmony to exert themselves and to put energy and resource into what they believe in. It is not enough to sign declarations, however great the goodwill these represent.

It is evident, for example, that all the existing interfaith organizations to which reference has been made above, suffer from a sad lack of funding.

It would be a positive break-through if the representatives of the major faiths, influential rabbis with access to funding from their communities, leading sheiks and imams working with the Waqf, patriarchs from the Eastern Churches in Jerusalem, and representatives of the Catholic and Protestant Churches were to provide funds with which the interfaith organizations could better carry out their mission. The funds could be used to provide the means with which the meaning of Judaism could be explained to Moslems, of Islam to Jews, etc. Properly financed interfaith activity could promote genuine interaction and dialogue. Funds could be channeled through the existing organizations without the need to create a new one.

Another positive move might be for those who champion interfaith harmony to establish an interfaith center in Jerusalem managed jointly by Christians, Jews and Moslems. The center could provide offices for interfaith organizations, meeting and seminar rooms, and equally important social services, for example a good restaurant and a swimming pool - a place in other words where those who believe in understanding and cultivating friendship with those of other faiths could meet. There are all too few such places in Jerusalem today. To give interfaith endeavours a “local habitation and a name” would symbolise the wish of those who believe in the positive contribution of religion to peace to demonstrate their conviction. Such a center should be situated on the “seam” between the areas occupied mainly by Jews and those occupied mainly by Arabs and might in due course become home to a membership organization bringing together members of the existing interfaith organizations into one powerful whole.

Extending the range of interfaith influence could also be done by undertaking charitable work in the name of the three faiths. For

example, there is a great problem at the moment in the region as a result of traumas suffered by ordinary citizens due to violence. The resources with which to help traumatized individuals are grossly insufficient in Palestine and insufficient in Israel. An interfaith initiative sponsored by all three faiths and designed to help sufferers from trauma which relied on qualified professionals, both local and international (who might be prepared in some cases to give their services at well below market rates), would both fulfill a social need and demonstrate the fact that the three faiths can work together to serve the needs of the community as a whole.

Of course this type of activity requires both resolution and funding. It will not be easy for religious leaders to appear as sponsors of initiatives such as this together with those who many in their communities regard as suspect at best and enemies at worst. It will not be easy to find funds and get communities to agree to spend money not to their perceived short term advantage but on long term programs designed to help men and women of whatever faith. But to take practical action, to give real leadership, this is the challenge that today lies before those men and women of goodwill who lead religious communities in Jerusalem.

In the last year a new initiative has sought to build on the understanding laid out at Alexandria. The recently (2007) created "Council for Religious Institutions in the Holy Land" aims to bring the Christian, Jewish and Moslem leaders in the region and in Jerusalem into a closer relationship. Its secretariat is provided by "Search for Common Ground" (a Washington based NGO with an office in Jerusalem) and it has already indicated that its members will work jointly to protect the Holy Sites and promote educational activity. This is a positive initiative and it is to be hoped that its work will gradually extend to

activities such as those I have briefly outlined above, and that it will cooperate closely with existing interfaith organizations. At all events its initial statements indicate that its members hope to go beyond religious dialogue into the field of action.

Jerusalem, as the English poet and mystic William Blake wrote two hundred years ago, should be a symbol of mankind's desire for a better world. In his powerful poem "Jerusalem" he wrote of creating a spiritual city. It is, perhaps, too much to hope that today's Jerusalem can aspire to being the city of Blake's dreams but it can be a different city from that of today where conflict is endemic. Jerusalem needs both to celebrate the narratives of its three great religions and to symbolise the fact that they can, in spite of all the odds, live in harmony together.

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RECOVERING THE HOLINESS OF JERUSALEM: A NEW APPROACH TO AN OLD CONFLICT

Dr. Moshe Amirav & Dr. Henry Abramovitch

A Spiritual Solution for Holy Jerusalem

The conflict over Jerusalem, whose very name means “peace”, remains intractable unto this very day as a long, tragic chain of failed attempts to achieve political solutions. The conflict is viewed almost exclusively as a struggle between the political interests of Israelis and Palestinians, and their leaders have sought political compromise while neglecting to address the religious dimension of the conflict.

Negotiations at Camp David, at which Moshe Amirav was present as Prime Minister Barak’s advisor on Jerusalem, broke down on the status of the Holy Places and specifically whose flag should fly from Temple Mount. They felt, “let us first achieve a political compromise and then we can deal with the holy spaces”.¹

We believe that all such political solutions for Jerusalem are doomed to fail. In our view, to use a Talmudic phrase, the opposite is true. First, we need to deal with the holiness of Jerusalem and its sacred sites in an inspired and innovative way. Once a new spiritual arrangement is developed that deals with Jerusalem’s holiness, then a new political vision for Jerusalem (and the entire region) may emerge and spread out from the Center ‘like the ooze of oil crushed’, to use Gerald Manley

¹ Amirav 2009

Hopkins' phrase from his poem *God's Grandeur*. Then political discourse will change from "us and them" to "Yes, all of us!"

We believe that the solution to the Holy Places and the holiness of Jerusalem should lie with religious and spiritual leaders who know these places best. The involvement of spiritual leaders of the three monotheistic communities will expand the discourse in the search for peace in Jerusalem. Their vision can provide a wider scope of definition and range of solutions to the conflict than is available to politicians. This umbrella group would include representatives of Muslim, Christian and Jewish communities in Jerusalem and internationally. Drawing on their traditions, the leaders may be inspired to find creative solutions for that will embody aspects of their traditions: reconciliation/love of the enemies and loving your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19) or the vision in the Quran Sura 60:7 (al-Muntahanah): "It may be that God will ordain love between you and those whom you hold as enemies. For God has power over all things; and God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful." To our knowledge, no such initiative has ever been attempted.

Where is Holy Jerusalem?

Jerusalem consists of many neighborhoods, most of which are ethnically distinct. In general, it is not difficult to create a separation necessary for two capitals for two peoples. The difficulty lies with Holy Jerusalem. Where is Holy Jerusalem? The holy section of Jerusalem comprises less than 0.5% of the municipal borders, less than 2 square kilometers in total. This holy basin runs from Mt. Scopus to the Mt. of

Olives through the Hinnom Valley and includes parts of the Old City. The key issue is the status of this sacred center or axis mundi that all believers know link heaven and earth, humanity with divinity.

Doing Away with Sovereignty

The sticking point in all negotiations until now has been the pivotal issue of sovereignty. The difficulty with sovereignty is that it requires that only one power controls access to the Holy Places. As a result, sovereignty is a zero sum game, in which there are winners and losers: whatever I get is at your expense and vice versa. It is based on power and exclusion and has nothing sacred about it.

Though most politicians cannot imagine a world without sovereignty, there are intriguing examples of shared sovereignty: The South Pole is shared by five nations, the Aland Island is shared between Sweden and Denmark, or the Rome Convention of 1957 which made possible the establishment of the EU, as well as others.

What we need is some practical form of "divine sovereignty"² to use the phrase Amirav developed in his negotiations with Feisal Hussein for the status of Jerusalem. Who can create a divine sovereignty for the Haram el-Sharif, the Wailing Wall, the Holy Sepulcher – Israelis & Palestinians? The Quartet on the Middle East? The Arab League? The Muslim League? The UN? None of these. Rather, spiritual leaders who understand best and most profoundly the significance of holiness of Jerusalem may create a divinely inspired solution.

Andrew Samuels has suggested that the best results in seminars are

²Amirav 2009

attained when individuals with a proven track record of not getting along to teach together. Thus, concerning the peace negotiations, we would seek to include not just leaders who are people of goodwill, but enemies who are nevertheless willing to sit together.

Misunderstanding God

There is a story in which Martin Buber, the great philosopher of dialogue, who was also active in Jewish-Arab reconciliation, tells. He was on a long train journey with a devout fellow Jew and they came to speak of the story in the Book of Samuel where King Agag begs for his life saying: “Surely the time for bitterness has passed.” (I Samuel 15:32). But Samuel the prophet rejects his plea and strikes him down in cold blood. Buber said: “I cannot believe in a God that would countenance such bloodshed.” “So what do you believe?” he was asked with anxiety and anger. Buber replied: “I believe that Samuel misunderstood God!”³ All those who speak for violence or bloodshed have misunderstood God and give Him a bad name. Surely Allah, Christ, “Kadosh Baruch Hu” wants His creatures to live together in the Divine attribute of loving kindness.

Psychology of Surplus

Putting the divine in the center of the conflict has another benefit, which is to move the conflict from a psychology of scarcity to a psychology of surplus. Psychology of scarcity is based on an inner feeling that

³Buber 1973: p.52f

there is not enough to go round – if you do not grab, you will be left with nothing and hungry. The freier or “sucker” anxiety that pervades Israeli society is based on this scarcity anxiety; as does the fear that if one recognizes the suffering of the other, it will somehow come at one’s own expense.

The call to prayer, Allah Akhbar highlights the spiritual dimension of the psychology of surplus. God is great. Allah has no limits. This spiritual attitude is one in which the divine is provided for all; no one will be left out or go hungry. What one gets is a gift at no one else’s expense. Our response is not anxiety but thanksgiving. Thus we cannot emphasize enough the crucial importance of the psychology of surplus.

Learning about Each Other’s Jerusalem

To achieve this spiritual breakthrough, we propose a number of practical activities that may help in creating a fertile group atmosphere for these spiritual leaders.

The first task is that each spiritual leader learns in depth the narratives, traditions, hadith, midrash and halacha, gospels and traditions of Church Fathers on Jerusalem. We do not propose the usual stimulating lectures as in a conference format but a technique taken from group dynamics. The group divides up into pairs: a Muslim with a Christian, Christian with a Jew etc. Each participant tells the other of their traditions, of their Jerusalem. When the group reassembles, the Muslim tells of the Christian Jerusalem, the Christian of the Jerusalem of the Jews and so forth. This technique creates a profound, personal understanding of

the other and how important Jerusalem is to them.

Learning from Success

A second, more cognitive approach deriving from problem-solving theory is for the group to study in depth successful case studies of peacemaking and resolution of religious conflict. Scandinavians used to be among the most war-like people in the world and yet they have not had a war for almost 200 years. How did this happen? France and Germany fought a series of horrendous wars until structural changes were made which evolved into the EU. Recently, a synagogue in Europe was used as a mosque. Sister Carey, an English nun and nurse, built a unique structure near Ein Karem that was at once a mosque, church and synagogue. We do not suggest that these cases can be applied directly to Jerusalem but, symbolically, immersion in the success stories is an important part of the creative process akin to the gathering of information phase before the inside experience of a new discovery.

Challenging Fantasy

Third, another important step in the process is exposing and discussing fantasies such as the fantasy that the other will disappear. This powerful, archetypal fantasy is based on the primal wish for family intimacy without the intrusions of disruptive strangers. At a deeper level, it involves the projection of the shadow, all those parts of me

that I reject or dislike, onto the other who is perceived as hostile and dangerous. The less one knows of the other, the easier it is to project something on him. Unless this fantasy is challenged and processed, we will always secretly want Jerusalem just for ourselves.

Dream Sharing

Another suggestion derives from psychoanalysis and it involves “dream sharing”. Everyone dreams every night and often remembers dreams. Each spiritual tradition has fascinating things to say about the significance of dreams. What we are suggesting is that spiritual leaders tell their dreams in the group setting. Dream sharing is an act of intimacy and can be done in various ways. One technique is the “social dream matrix”.⁴ Usually it is carried out as the first activity in the morning. The chairs are arranged in a large spiral and people tell about their dreams. Others do not try to interpret the conflicts and wishes of the individual or the dream’s personal meaning but rather how these dreams reflect aspects of the collective. Dream work may have an extra benefit. Jung wrote about little dreams and big dreams. Little dreams are the usual dreams that reflect issues in one’s own personal psyche. For example, if someone dreamed that he was standing giving a talk at a conference and suddenly realized that he was wearing no clothes, it would be understood as a performance anxiety dream. Big Dreams, in contrast, are dreams that deal with the collective, the family, nation or even the world.⁵ Joseph’s dreams of sheaves and stars bowing down to him are excellent examples of what seemed to be little dreams turned

⁴Lawrence 2003

⁵Jung 2002

out to be big dreams. We are awaiting a big dream about Jerusalem.

Joint Symbolic Action

Finally, once the group begins to form a coherent vision, they can initiate joint symbolic action. Recently, Yehuda Stolov, the director of the organization Interfaith Encounter Association, facilitated a visit of Israelis and Palestinians, at the request of the later, to Yad va-Shem, the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem. Although the Israelis been there many times, it was an exceptional and moving experience to be there together with Palestinian comrades. One moment stood out. The guide who spoke English, Arabic and Hebrew asked us: “Which European country saved 100% of its Jews?” None of us knew. The answer is a Muslim country: Albania. For a moment we all shared a vision of Jews and Muslims living together as brothers’ keepers.

Isaiah’s Vision

We cannot know what restoring holiness to Jerusalem will bring or what arrangement will emerge. That is up to the Men (and Women) of God. One thing we can say is that it will not be a final status resolution – but rather it will be a part of an ongoing process of enacting reconciliation and love of enemies – a process that helps making the divine manifest so that all who come will feel the divine presence and say once again with Isaiah (2:3):

And the many people ‘Shall go and say: Come, let us go up to the Mount

of the Lord, to the House of the God of Jacob; That he may instruct us in his ways, and that we may walk in his paths.’ For instruction (Torah) shall come forth from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

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JERUSALEM: THE CITY OF DREAMS, HOPES, AND PEACE

Prof. Mohammed S. Dajani Daoudi

Two women came before King Solomon, each claiming that a newly-born baby was hers. The judgment of Solomon was to have the baby sliced in two and each be given a half. “Let it be neither thine nor mine, but divide it!” As the sword was drawn to carry out the order, one of the women agreed with the verdict whereas the other rushed forward to save the baby, exclaiming, “Oh my Lord, give her the baby, but please do not slay it”. Observing these reactions, King Solomon judged the later women to be the true mother and ordered that she should have the child.

Introduction

This paper addresses one of several major obstacles to the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace process, namely, the dispute over Jerusalem - a complex controversial issue, which seems insoluble and the search for any hidden opportunities it may contain has proved elusive. The model proposed reflects the potential for shifting the political discourse in the Holy Land from the persistent conflict to address the common threats both Palestinians and Israelis face and experience to various degrees. It explores the hidden opportunities for Jerusalem as a city holy to three religions and in which all parties can coexist and co-operate based on

equality of opportunities and mutual respect and not on control and power. The search for viable solutions to the future status of Jerusalem is the focus of this paper. By exploring ways of achieving a balance between national interests, religious beliefs, political demands, and international legality, it enters the thorny field encompassing the political and religious aspirations of both Palestinians and Israelis with respect to the future of Jerusalem as well as their psychic adoration of the city. The key goal of this study is not to offer answers as much as to provide a milieu or setting that may be conducive to thinking in terms of problem solution. This objective is usually lost when emotions overcome rationality. Palestinians and Israelis often get so immersed in their “pursuit to win all” that the windows of opportunities and promises escape attention.

Significance of the Jerusalem Issue

The significance of the Jerusalem issue stems from its universal religious importance for the three great monotheistic faiths: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim, who for centuries have been competing for its soil. It also stems from the assorted colorful mosaic of peoples living in it and the rich culture, traditions and customs surrounding it. The ancient Greeks called Jerusalem ‘The Navel of the world’. The sources of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish attachment to Jerusalem are deep and complex; both have infused different ingredients of religion, spiritualism, politics, psychology, nationalism, history, and patriotism to demand unquestioned loyalty to the cause of maintaining and holding on to absolute sole political and religious sovereignty over the

holy city.

Muslims, Christians and Jews share many identical values and beliefs such as the oneness of God, the need for total submission to the will of God, as well as the similar differentiation between good and evil. In Islam, the antecedent of the other two religions, many of the individuals, events, stories, and places sacred to Jews and Christians are similarly sacred to Muslims. The Holy Quran states: {Say: We believe in Allah and that which is revealed to us; in what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes; to Moses and Jesus and the other prophets by their Lord. We make no distinction amongst any of them, and to God we submit ourselves.}¹. Many Jews believe that God promised the holy land to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

According to the Jewish Tanakh, God made a covenant with Abraham, saying to him: “I assign the land you sojourn in, to you and your offspring to come, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting holding. I will be their God.”². Jewish attachment to Jerusalem dates to the 10th century BC when David captured the city and declared the city the capital and religious centre of Israel. King Solomon, who followed him, enlarged the city and erected the Temple, which transformed the city into a permanent centre of the Jewish religion. When the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II (562 – 630 BC) captured the city in 586 BC, he exiled the Jews and destroyed their temple. Nevertheless, Jerusalem remained to the Jewish Diasporas the spiritual centre. The Jews returned and rebuilt the city after the Persian exile, but it was destroyed by Trajan about 70 AD. The centrality of Jerusalem in Jewish life is

¹ Baqara Sura; verse 136

² Bereishit / Genesis 17:7 – 8

reflected in the vow uttered by Jews on religious occasions, ‘Next year in Jerusalem’. The Jews consider the City ‘uniquely holy’, and assert that Jerusalem has always been the heart and soul of Judaism and the Jewish nation: “And the Torah shall be disseminated from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem”³.

The times Jesus of Nazareth spent in Jerusalem and his crucifixion, burial, and resurrection makes the city most sacred to Christianity. Christian attachment to Jerusalem is reflected in the various names for the city contained in the Bible, such as the ‘city of righteousness’, the ‘faithful city’, the ‘city of God’, the ‘holy city’, and the ‘city of truth’. The book of Psalms says: “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem”⁴; “Praise God O Jerusalem, laud your God O Zion”⁵.

For Muslims, Jerusalem is the third most holy city in Islam, next to Mecca and Al-Madinah. The Muslim heritage in Jerusalem is reflected in the Holy Quran as well as in the Sayings of Prophet Muhammad. Jerusalem has had an important spiritual meaning for Muslims, not only for being the first Qibla but also for the mystical experience of the prophet’s ascendance to heaven as recited in the Quran: {In the name of Allah, most gracious, most merciful: Glorified be he who carried his servant [Prophet Muhammad] by night from the inviolable place of worship [The Sacred Mosque in Mecca] to the farthest distant place of worship [Haram el-Sherif in Jerusalem] the precincts whereof we have blessed, that we might show him some of our tokens.}⁶ Prophet Muhammad is quoted to have said: “Pilgrimage is restricted to only three mosques: Al-Haram Al-Sharif [in Mecca], my Mosque [in Al-

3 Isaiah 2: 3

4 Psalms 122: 6

5 Psalms 147: 12

6 Surat al Israa’, Chapter 17, Verse 1

Madinah], and Al- Aqsa Mosque [in Jerusalem].” He asserted that the Muslim who starts procedure for pilgrimage or umra from Al-Aqsa Mosque shall have all his/her sins forgiven. “Jerusalem is the land of the ingathering, go to it and worship in it, for one prayer therein is equivalent to 1,000 acts of worship elsewhere.”

To yield political sovereignty over Jerusalem would be to the Jews a betrayal of their history, heritage, tradition, and sacrifices. On the other hand, to yield political sovereignty over their holy city, which they call ‘pearl of the cities’, would be to all Muslims, a betrayal of their religion, history, identity, heritage, and tradition.

Sustainable Conflict Resolution

The most perplexing question to answer on the future status of Jerusalem is: Is a sustainable resolution for the Arab-Israeli or Muslim-Jewish conflict over Jerusalem elusive or can it be achieved? If a ‘sustainable resolution’ to the Jerusalem issue is achievable, the persisting dilemma remains: How can it be achieved in the best way, and will there be good will to implement it by all parties concerned? Here, the term ‘sustainable resolution’ refers to a solution to the conflict that satisfies the basic needs and aspirations of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their basic needs, demands, and aspirations. This definition contains three key concepts and ideas: political conflict resolution, psychological needs satisfaction, and religious aspirations. The concept ‘conflict resolution’ proposes a durable peace without any residues for future conflict. It includes the satisfaction of religious, political and national demands. The term ‘needs’ introduces the idea of distribution of resources: meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to

satisfy their longing for a better secure prosperous life. The concept of ‘future collective aspirations’ means that we have a moral duty to look after the city of Jerusalem in terms of physical and environmental status, and to pass it on in durable political and religious framework to future generations. It suggests that whatever solution to the conflict reached today must continue to be acceptable, relevant and workable in the future – embodying ideals and conditions that future generations will be happy to live with. Its sustainability would stem from its success to meet and satisfy religious, social, economic, and political demands. Should one party impose unacceptable terms on the other today, then this would, no doubt, constitute a potential seed recipe for a future conflict. Sustainable resolution implies resolving the conflict both for ethical, moral and practical reasons.

At least there are eight basic assumptions required to achieve a sustainable peaceful solution. Both peoples:

1. Respect and recognize the right of each other to live, work, and move freely within the borders of the city of Jerusalem.
2. Recognize the right of others, Christians, Muslims, and Jews, to have free access to their holy shrines to practice their faith.
3. Value the need to protect the unique spiritual, religious and cultural diversity of the city of Jerusalem.
4. Appreciate that joint planning, coordination and cooperation between the de facto present Palestinian and Israeli sectors of the city of Jerusalem is vital to overcome the economic, technological and educational gap between them.
5. Acknowledge the need to alleviate the religious, cultural, and

social enmity between all communities on a gradual and continuous process.

6. Seek to ensure order, security and peaceful coexistence for all the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem.
7. Call for fostering good will among all residents of the city of Jerusalem.
8. Encourage the development of peaceful relations among residents.

Models for the Future of Jerusalem

One question preoccupies all those concerned about the future of Jerusalem. What is the most practical and useful model for power sharing and division of responsibilities for the future City of Jerusalem?

Four models are at present proposed for the future of the City:

Model I: A Unified Open International City

Model II: A Unified Closed Jewish City

Model III: A United/Divided Muslim-Jewish City

Model IV: A Muslim-Jewish-Christian City

Model I: A Unified Open International City

The first model is of an international united city of Jerusalem. The model is not new; Britain, France and Russia initially conceived it in the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916. The United Nations again suggested the concept of Jerusalem as a separate area (*corpus separatum*) in its Partition Plan of 1947. In December 1949, the UN General Assembly restated its intention to establish an ‘international regime’ in Jerusalem, which would provide adequate protection for the holy places. However,

the plan for internationalizing Jerusalem presented by Count Folke Bernadotte, the UN mediator in Palestine, was never approved by the United Nations and the international community withdrew this proposal given the strong opposition from both Israelis and Arabs

Model II: A Unified Closed Jewish City

The second model is that of Jerusalem as ‘one Jewish city united and undivided under Israel’s full sovereignty.’ This is the official Israeli policy on Jerusalem. In the aftermath of its occupation of East Jerusalem in June 1967, Israel formally annexed the Arab sector of Jerusalem and enlarged the municipal area of the city more than ten times its original size. Israel succeeded in the Camp David Framework for Peace in the Middle East (1978) on the principles governing a comprehensive peace settlement to place occupied Jerusalem totally outside the scope of the powers and responsibilities of the projected ‘self-governing’ authority. In its 1996 election platform, the Likud outlined its position on Jerusalem as follows: “United and undivided Jerusalem is the capital of the State of Israel. Activities which undermine the status of Jerusalem will be banned, and therefore the PLO and Palestinian Authority institutions in the city, including the Orient House, will be closed.” After the election of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the guidelines of the Israeli government on Jerusalem were: “Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, is one city, whole and united, and will remain forever under Israel’s sovereignty... The Government will prevent any action which is counter to Israel’s exclusive sovereignty over the city.”

Likewise, in its 1996 election platform, the Israeli Labor Party claimed:

“Jerusalem, the capital of the State of Israel and the focal point of the Jewish people, will remain undivided, under Israeli sovereignty.” Various Israeli experts, such as former Mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, political geographer Saul Cohen, Mapam Party leader Ya’akov Hazan, and many others, proposed a number of plans for the city, which reiterated the Israeli official line of advocating Jerusalem as “one city united and undivided under absolute Israeli sovereignty.” Israeli policies viewed Muslim and Christian presence in Arab East Jerusalem as purely functional; the city would be divided into boroughs in which the Muslims and Christians will be guaranteed some limited social, cultural and educational autonomy. The main characteristics of the Israeli model are the following:

1. It keeps the city of Jerusalem united under Israel’s full control and assigns the sovereignty over the entire city exclusively to the Israelis, and thus allows the continuation of the domination of one people over another in defiance of international law. In addressing the Jordanian Parliament on 23 November 1993, late King Hussein of Jordan reflected international sentiments when he asserted: “A just and comprehensive peace will not be realized until Jerusalem becomes a city of peace and its occupied Arab land is returned to its owners. ... A full settlement is impossible as long as Israel demands sole sovereignty over Jerusalem.”
2. It allows Israeli political national considerations to remain the cardinal cornerstone with regard to future planning and development of the united city.
3. It promotes a city government structure that taxes one segment of the population (Muslims and Christians) much more while spending

much less in response to its needs.

4. It advocates a process of local government system, which allocates public resource among the various services and functions in a manner that would benefit one segment of the community (Jews) more than others (Muslims and Christians). It is a system in which political and religious factors make an important difference in determining the level of services delivered and the manner of their distribution (who gets what?).
5. It lacks international support since it retains Israel's sole political sovereignty over the united city.
6. It contradicts the spirit and letter of the Oslo Accords signed by Israel with the PLO and the Jordan-Israel Peace Agreement, which stipulated that permanent status negotiations should include Jerusalem among other issues. Thus Israel's claim of exclusive sovereignty over Jerusalem preempts any genuine future negotiations on the status of the city.

Model III: A United/divided Muslim-Jewish City

Since its establishment in 1964, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) adopted a firm policy aiming at the establishment of a political, religious, spiritual and administrative capital in al-Quds al-Sharif, (the holy city of Jerusalem) for a Palestinian state. The proclamation of independence announced by the Palestine National Council (PNC), meeting in Algiers on 15 November 1988, called for the establishment of the Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. Consequently, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) continued carrying this banner. The official Palestinian position on Jerusalem may be summarized as

follows:

1. Arab Jerusalem is an integral part of the Palestinian Territories occupied in 1967. Therefore, UN Security Council Res. 242 of 22 November 1967, and Res. 338 of 22 October 1973 that called for Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories (including East Jerusalem) occupied in the 1967 war, should be implemented.
2. The main aim of the Palestinian people is the establishment of the state of Palestine with al- Quds al-Sharif (the holy city of Jerusalem) as its capital.
3. The Israeli unilateral decision to annex Arab Jerusalem and enjoy full exclusive political and religious sovereignty over united Jerusalem is totally denied and categorically rejected.
4. Palestinians in the Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, have the right and desire for self-rule and self-determination in accordance with international law and the basic principles of democracy.
5. There should be no separation between political sovereignty over Jerusalem and the custodianship over the holy places in the City.
6. There should be a guaranteed freedom of worship at the holy places of Jerusalem for all faiths.
7. Removal of all Israeli settlements built in Arab Jerusalem since 1967.
8. Jerusalem of the future should be an umbrella city for two capitals, one Palestinian in East Jerusalem, the other Israeli in West Jerusalem.
9. There should be free access between the two capitals within the city, which will remain functionally united.
10. Cultural, social, and economic ties should continue to function

between both Jewish and Muslim communities residing in the city.

11. No party in the conflict should impose its political and religious will on the other, or dictate its views regarding the future status of the city.

12. Jerusalem's diversity and its multicultural character must be maintained in any future comprehensive settlement. The model is that of a bi-national twin 'separate and undivided' city.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1987) defines 'twin' as "made-up of two similar, related, or connected members or parts; paired in a close or necessary relationship; having or consisting of two identical units; being one of a pair." This relates to this future model of Jerusalem as the concept of a twin city – separate and undivided – as proposed by many scholars and international experts as an imaginative durable solution for the Jerusalem issue that would realize Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religious aspirations. Professor Walid Khalidi of Harvard University proposed these ten points as a solution for the future status of Jerusalem:

1. East Jerusalem would be the capital of Palestine, with its own municipality in the extended municipal borders of 1967; West Jerusalem would be the capital of Israel.
2. The borders between West and East Jerusalem would follow the 1967 lines, but be open both ways – 'sovereignty without walls' – subject to agreed security arrangements.
3. The Jewish quarter in the old city, the Wailing Wall plaza, and the Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives would have extraterritoriality.

4. An agreed number of Jewish residences of East Jerusalem would remain, as Israeli citizens, with their own boroughs within the Palestinian municipality of East Jerusalem.

5. Each religion would be in exclusive charge of its own holy places and institutions, but an ecumenical council with a rotating chairmanship would promote interfaith harmony.

6. Central structures with rotating chairmanships would exist at both an inter-ministerial and an inter-municipal level to address the political and infrastructural issues respectively between East and West Jerusalem.

7. Land acquired by Israel but not built upon in East Jerusalem would be returned to the Palestinians.

8. The choice of compensation or return would be accorded to Palestinian Jerusalemites.

9. Jewish colonies outside the extended 1967 municipal borders would be addressed in the final status negotiations on the settlements in the West Bank.

10. There would be an agreed transitional period.

Another Palestinian scholar, Professor Sari Nusseibeh⁷, proposed the following 'mixture of separation and integration' in which Palestinians and Israelis have 'separate sovereignty' over Jerusalem:

1. The Palestinians will have sovereignty over eastern Jerusalem and the Israeli over western Jerusalem in an undivided city.
2. Jerusalem would have an extended and joint municipal government, or joint function of two separate municipal governments, which would operate both sectors, such as sewage, fire-fighting, street lighting,

7 Nusseibeh, S. & Heller, M. A., 1991: No Trumpets No Drums. (Tauris & Co. Ltd.)

tourist aid and facilities, public health, whose enjoyment by the citizens and benefit is non-exclusive.

3. Matters such as the culture, political and religious affairs would be operated by two separate municipal governments.
4. Jerusalem would be the seat of two capitals and systems of government.
5. The city would have its own single court of law, supervised by a judiciary body whose members are seconded respectively by the two states and whose legal framework is adjusted to address the unique states and dealings of the city's Israeli and Palestinian residents.
6. The outlying metropolitan borderline endowing the city with a special status to be enhanced.
7. The porosity of the city borders should allow the free movement of capital, goods, and persons, to make it possible for residents, whatever their nationality, and wherever they reside, to move freely.
8. The city is to be declared a violence-free and demilitarized zone, a sanctified area that provides free access to all pilgrims and visitors at all times.
9. An honorary role is introduced for a distinguished international public figure to be appointed as UN representative with a special Jerusalem title.
10. A massive renovation program is to be adopted in the Old City.

Model IV: A Muslim-Jewish-Christian City

This model aspires to fulfill the needs, demands, hopes, and aspirations of the three major players, namely, the Israelis, the Arabs, and the international community – Jews, Moslems, and Christians. The

model aims to overcome the political hurdles and to provide political attractiveness that makes it promising for all three monotheist religions for which Jerusalem is a holy city.

1. 'Holy Jerusalem' is composed of the one square kilometer area that falls inside the walls of the Old City. The walled Old City would be declared a *corpus separatum* subject to a 'special international status', while the rest of the city of Jerusalem would be divided to two sectors – West/Israeli and East/Palestinian.
2. The arrangements to be determined for the administration of the city would take the interests of all the inhabitants into account including those of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities.
3. East Jerusalem excluding the Old City would be under Palestinian sovereignty; while West Jerusalem would fall under Israeli sovereignty.
4. Those residents of the city who lost properties in consequence to the 1948 conflict would receive compensation for it.

This model for the City of Jerusalem enjoys the following advantages:

1. It meets the claims of both Palestinian and Israeli to Jerusalem as the capital of their nations;
2. It resolves the thorny issues of sovereignty as it bestows sovereignty rights related to governmental matters to each state in the sector where it has the major population weight;
3. It has the potential to enjoy support from the international community;
4. It satisfies the needs for identity and recognition for all antagonists;

5. It meets the requirements of international law and UN resolutions;
6. It allows the city to become fully accessible to the international, regional, and local communities;
9. It provides peace, prosperity, and security to the city, its inhabitants and visitors. This model fulfils the symbolic, religious, spiritual and psychological needs of Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

Conclusion

Ever since the year 2000, over 100 solutions to the conflict over Jerusalem have been suggested. These many proposals failed to lead to a breakthrough because they promoted exclusive agendas. The wealth of proposals reflected different maximum positions that never led to an agreement based on mutual respect and common interests. The arguments on the future of Jerusalem should drift from focusing on the doomed maximal win-lose resolution scenarios towards taking a more positive attitude of mutual win-win often painful compromise scenarios. Here, it must be recognized that such sacrifices by the people on both sides of the conflict would not go unrewarded. Although it took military force to tear down the walls which divided Jerusalem, it will surely take profound moral power and deep human commitment to bridge the chasm between Moslems and Jews on Jerusalem. Nevertheless, this should not stop the people residing in Jerusalem from aspiring to achieve a dream of a city sailing in peace beyond the troubled horizons of the 20th century into the rainbow of the 21st century. Thus, the enduring question persists: Will the balance tilt away from a vision of sorrow and death to a vision of life and festivity? While religion and

nationalism based on power have often contributed to hate, violence, and wars, the very goals of the three monotheist religions of the sons of Abraham addressing peace would suggest a shift towards mutual compromise from the maximal dreams to the small realistic hopes. By referring to a different notion of religions as forbearers of peace and cooperation, and of mutual trust and respect, a solution of the religious aspect could possibly open a different avenue that is hardly present where the Hobbesian vision of the old testament seems to prevail by a thinking on tooth by tooth, action and counteraction, the impossibility for peace without painful sacrifices. This model aims to overcome this fundamental obstacle and aspires to open a different road to peace.

According to this optimistic scenario the Jerusalem of tomorrow would look much different from the Jerusalem of today. There is still a very wide religious, political, emotional and psychological divide between Muslims and Jewish views on Jerusalem, which makes it extremely painful to have both to make historic concessions on the city of Jerusalem. Perhaps in the complex elements of religion, culture, psychology, and rationality hides the window of opportunity, which might lead to an imaginative solution sui generis. An emotional appeal is voiced to awaken the creative spirit of the decision-makers to strive to build bridges of cooperation and understanding for the sake of future generations so that the city would become ‘a model for coexistence and cooperation among nations’ – an oasis of peace in a troubled sea of conflict.

Robert Kennedy once remarked: “Some men see things as they are and ask ‘why,’ I dream of things that never were and ask ‘why not!’” All those who fell in love with the city of Jerusalem dream of things that

never were and ask 'why not'. No doubt, the fruit of peace would bring peace, prosperity, and tranquility, which Jerusalem dearly deserves.

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Prof. Henry Abramovitch, is a Jungian psychoanalyst, psychologist and anthropologist. He is Professor at Sackler-Medical School at Tel Aviv University, founding President of the Israel Institute of Jungian Psychology and active in interfaith activities.

Christiane Amari currently works as a research officer to the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the German parliament, MP Ruprecht Polenz. She holds a M.A. in political science. Her main areas of expertise include political developments in the Middle East and North Africa as well as the international engagement in Afghanistan.

Prof. Moshe Amirav, political scientist, former Jerusalem City Council member, veteran peace activist at the national and municipal levels, advisor to Prime Minister Barak on Jerusalem for the Camp David negotiations 2000. He is the Head of the School of Government, Beit Berl College and teaches political science at Hebrew University.

Zeina M. Barakat, was born in Jerusalem. She got her B.A. at Bethlehem University, continued with her M.A. at Al-Quds University and is today a Ph.D. candidate at Ben Gurion University. She works as project coordinator at Wasatia, a moderate Islamic initiative to promote peace, justice, coexistence, moderation, and tolerance, as well as teaching and research assistant at the American Studies Center at Al-Quds University, and Coordinator for the Game Theory Experimental Project at Al-Quds University. She is active in peace-building non-governmental organizations such as Seeds of Peace.

Prof. Munther S. Dajani is a professor of political science and diplomacy, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, the director of the European

Studies M.A. Program and the director of the Issam Sartawi Center for the Advancement of Peace and Democracy at Al-Quds University.

Prof. Mohammed Dajani Daoudi, is a professor of political science and international relations; founding director of the American Studies Institute at Al-Quds University and founding director of the Wasatia Moderate Islamic Movement in Palestine. He is a Jerusalem-born scholar and peace activist with two doctorate degrees in government (University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, 1981; University of Texas, Austin, Texas, 1984). He is chairman of the Board of Directors of the House of Water and Environment; member of the Board of Directors of the YMCA-West Jerusalem and the founding director of the Jerusalem Studies and Research Institute.

Prof. Margareta Gruber OSF, holds the Laurentius Klein Chair of Biblical and Ecumenical Theology and is the Dean of the Theological Study Year at the Dormition Abbey, Mount Zion, Jerusalem.

Dr. Yehuda Stolov is the executive director of the Interfaith Encounter Association, an organization that strives to establish a framework for peace in Israel and the Middle East by fostering mutual respect among individuals and communities through interfaith dialogue. Dr. Stolov has lectured on the role of religious dialogue in peace-building throughout the world, including Jordan, Indonesia, Turkey, South Korea and Europe. In 2006, he was awarded the Immortal Chaplains Foundation Prize for Humanity, which honors those who “risked all to protect others of a different faith or ethnic origin.” Among other activities, Dr. Stolov was a member of the steering committee for the United Nations Decade of Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace. He holds a B.S. and a M.Sc. in Physics and a Ph.D. from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Robin Twite was for thirty years a career official in the British Council serving in Israel, India, Portugal and Ethiopia. On his retirement he spent five years at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, working on conflict resolution. From 1994 to the present he has worked at the Israel Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI) based in Jerusalem as director of the Environment and Water Program. He is the author of a variety of articles on both environmental issues in the Near East and on interfaith concerns in the Holy Land.

Reverend Ulrike Wohlrab is pastor at the Church of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives, compound of the Kaiserin-Auguste-Victoria-Foundation. Her main task is to develop and conduct educational programs for pilgrims and visitors of the Holy Land by holding seminars and lectures, as well as to serve the German speaking congregation at the Church of the Redeemer with services and pastoral care. Dialogue between people from different backgrounds is one of the central aims at the Center for Pilgrims and Tourists on the Mount of Olives.

Dr. Ophir Yarden teaches Jewish and Israel studies at Brigham Young University, Jerusalem Center and is the Director of Educational Initiatives at the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel.

