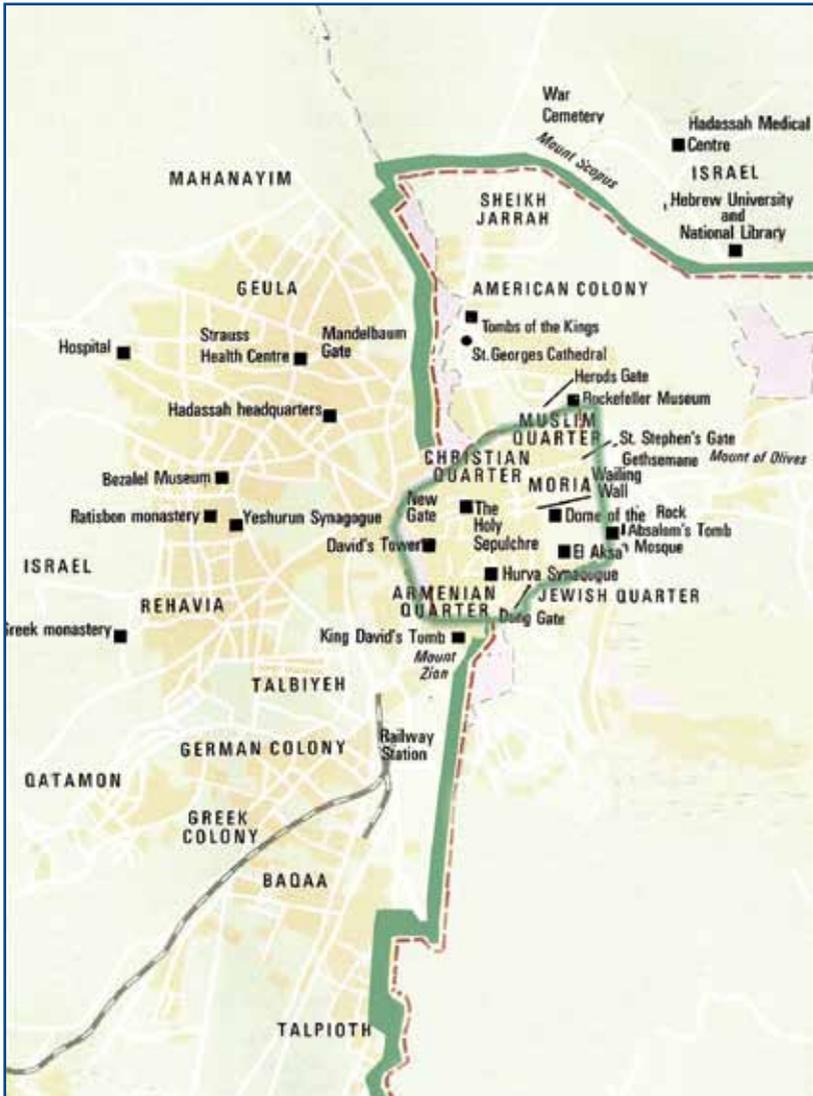


Dividing Israel's Capital City

A National and International Catastrophe



by
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1. The antiquity of Jewish Jerusalem

The validity of that claim is brought into the sharpest relief by the 644 times that the word 'Jerusalem' appears in the Old Testament – written during the last millennium BCE - and the 154 times that its synonym, 'Zion,' is mentioned. In the Koran, on the other hand, it does not merit a single mention!

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The Jewish claim is substantiated by many archaeological discoveries from the ancient 'City of David,' such as once-grand residences dating back to the 8th and 7th centuries BCE, the period of Israel's monarchy. These include the Ashlar House, the "burnt room," the house of Ahi'el and the *Bullae* house which contains 50 clay seals with Hebrew lettering. One of these (Bulla #2) refers to one 'Gemaryahu son of Shaphan, the scribe', who is known to us from the biblical book of Jeremiah 36:10ff. The 'big lie' of revisionism that has recently surfaced in Palestinian circles, as an attempt to discredit the biblical history of Israel, is thus quite preposterous and disingenuous.

It is a similar distortion of history to deny the millennial spiritual and emotional bond between the Jew and his land, and especially its capital city, Jerusalem. That bond is confirmed by the numerous references to, and petitions for, the restoration of Zion (Jerusalem) that constitute one of the central themes of Jewish liturgy.

2. Israel and Jerusalem in the Bible and later Jewish sources

The very first divine communication to Abraham, founder of the Jewish faith (circa 1900BCE), directed him to leave his birthplace in Mesopotamia and make his way to 'the land that I shall show you' (Genesis 12:1). Possession of the land of Israel was a prerequisite for the uniquely monotheistic, moral and spiritual way-of-life that his offspring was summoned to embrace there, and which constituted such a contrast to the

idoltrous and immoral practices of the surrounding nations and tribes at that period.

The people, the faith and the land of Israel have thus all been inextricably interwoven from the very dawn of Jewish history. This explains why the name 'Israel' has always been applied - and not only by Jews - to all three: The land of Israel, the people of Israel (including the modern nomenclature, 'Israelis') and the religion of Israel.

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All the laws and prescriptions of the biblical *Five Books of Moses* presuppose residency in Israel and adherence to a set of agricultural laws rooted in social responsibility. Thus, an adequate proportion of the harvest was to be left for the widow, orphan, poor and stranger (See Leviticus 19:9 and 25:12; Deuteronomy 5: 12-15, *et al.*). Almost 2000 years before the Muslim *haj*, inspired by it, the incomparably holy site of Jerusalem required a thrice-yearly harvest pilgrimage from every Israelite for the celebration of the major festivals of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles (See Exodus 23: 14-17 and 34:23; Deuteronomy 16:16).

As a prelude to their 'Grace After Meals', Jews recite psalm 137 which gives expression to the unbearable sense of loss that the Babylonian exile from Jerusalem (586 BCE) had occasioned:

*By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down;
There we wept when we remembered Zion...
How can we sing a song of the Lord on alien soil?
If I forget you, O Jerusalem let my right hand wither,
Let my tongue stick to my palate if I cease to think of you;
If I do not keep Jerusalem in memory even at my happiest hour.*

Judaism's central prayer, the *Amidah*, recited daily since before the Common Era, contains a fervent plea for the restoration of the city of Jerusalem, from which the Roman occupiers banished Jews in the year 70CE:

*Return to Jerusalem, Your city, and dwell therein as You have promised;
and rebuild it, speedily and in our days, as an eternal edifice...*

The 'Prayer before retiring to sleep at night' contains psalm 128: *May the Lord bless you from Zion; may you see the goodness of Jerusalem all the days of your life.* Throughout the ages, the Jew prayed for Jerusalem's restoration three-times daily, and made it his final thought each night.

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Judaism's subsequent voluminous sacred literature, comprising Talmud, liturgy, Hebrew poetry, mysticism, philosophy, legal codes and devotional works, are all similarly saturated with the spirit and sanctity of Jerusalem and with spiritual exercises designed to secure divine favour for its restoration. The discovery in 1997 of a distinctive Y-chromosome, shared exclusively by present day *Cohanim*, descendants of the ancient Jewish priestly fraternity that ministered in the Jerusalem Temple during the last millennium BCE, indisputably underlines the historical association of the Jewish people with the city. That people,

throughout its history, has clearly carried the imprint of Jerusalem within its soul. It was through the efforts of political Zionism in the 19th and 20th centuries that international help was secured to make that millennial Jewish dream of national restoration a reality.

3. Jerusalem's Jewish majority

We have seen that, notwithstanding the many conquerors whose armies have looted and ravaged Jerusalem over the past two millennia, the Jews have never given up on their claim and allegiance to it. Indeed, they have always maintained a majority presence there, though this involved living in great poverty and hardship, and with a considerable scarcity of water.

The allegation that Israel is 'Judaizing' the city - fuelling an international obsession with Israeli building requirement to provide for its natural population growth - thus flies in the face of historical demography.

The earliest census, conducted in 1845 by the Prussian Council in the city, estimated the Jewish population as 7,120, with 5000 Muslims and 3380 Christians (Martin Gilbert, *Jerusalem Illustrated History Atlas* (1977), pp. 41, 45). In 1967, when the city was reunited after its arbitrary armistice division following the 1948 War of Independence, the Jewish majority rose to 74% of the total population. The allegation that Israel is 'Judaizing' the city - fuelling

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The truth is that it is the Arab population that is currently boosting its ratio year on year as a result of re-location from Hebron and other areas into the capital.

4. Arab-initiated wars

Since its creation in 1948, Israel has had to defend itself against a succession of Arab-initiated wars. These included (i) 'The War of Independence' (1948) launched by all the surrounding countries, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria no sooner was the State declared; (ii) 'The Suez Campaign' (29th October 1956), prompted by Egypt's decision to nationalize the Suez Canal; (iii) 'The Six-Day War' (June 1967), launched by Egypt, Jordan and Syria, with forces contributed by Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Algeria; (iv) 'The War of Attrition' (1967-1970), initiated by the Egyptians in order to recapture the Sinai from the Israelis; (v) 'The Yom Kippur War' (Oct. 6th - 26th 1973), led by a coalition of Arab states, with the objective of regaining Sinai for Egypt and The Golan Heights for Syria; (vi) 'The First Lebanon War' (6th June 1982) launched by Israel to end the constant terror attacks on northern Israel made by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation that had made its base there, and (vii) 'The Second Lebanon War' (12th July - 8th September 2006), triggered by the abduction of two Israeli reserve soldiers by the Hezbollah, though also the inevitable corollary of an alarming escalation in the number of terror attacks from Lebanon across that entire border region of northern Israel.

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5. Israel: A peace-loving democracy amid a sea of hatred

Israel is the only true Parliamentary democracy in the entire Middle East. Given the spread of militant Islam and *al Qaeda* terror, its role as a unique and determined custodian of freedom, enlightenment and political integrity is becoming more and more important in that region of the world that is growing progressively more narrow, extreme, unstable and dangerous. As a 'Jewish National Home' - the term employed in the famous 'Balfour Declaration' (1917) to define the British government's commitment to Jewish aspirations - the security of Israel is vital if Jews are to have any haven from the global anti-Semitism that is growing apace at the present time, much of it fuelled by Islamic propaganda and activity.

The State of Israel's total commitment to freedom of expression, equal opportunity, equality of the sexes, artistic license and the encouragement to its citizens to challenge accepted norms and push forward the cultural as well as the scientific boundaries, has been responsible for the nine Nobel laureates that it has

It is vital that the European Union and other individual countries that seek to promote peace in the region are aware of just how they may aid and how they may hamper that process.

produced in its short, sixty-two year, history. This compares with a mere five laureates produced by the entire Arab world.

The European Union and others who wish to further the peace process must realise that any attempt to impose an external solution will be counter-productive. Expressions of goodwill, and the expansion of commercial, cultural and political ties, on the other hand, will result in increased influence as well as enhanced mutual benefit. Most Israelis accept that it is not only Jews, but also Christians and Muslims, who have legitimate cultural, ethnic and religious claims to Jerusalem, and that a lasting peace must involve a pluralistic approach to the city. In the absence of peace, however, pluralism is a pipe-dream.

6. A divided Jerusalem: A gift to Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas and al Qaeda

Modern history has rendered it axiomatic that the arbitrary division of long-standing sovereign states in order to appease and accommodate disparate ethnic or national aspirations is a most hazardous exercise. This is especially so when one of the aspirant parties has no record of stability, peace-seeking, democratic expression or the upholding of the rule of (secular) law. Thus, the suggestion that Jerusalem be divided, with the eastern part of the city constituting the capital of a future Palestinian state, will create more problems than it solves. It is not merely the fear that the latter might well flout human rights. After all, most of the surrounding countries have just such a record! What is at stake here is nothing less than a serious threat to the very existence of the State of Israel if Jerusalem is divided.

Palestinian Jerusalem would inevitably become the immediate target of the Hamas, Hezbollah and al-Qaeda terrorist organisations which are uncompromisingly committed to the destruction of Israel. With Hamas-led Gaza just 40 miles south-west of Jerusalem, with Hezbollah in occupation of Lebanon's southern border with Israel, with the West Bank as the putative Palestinian state, Israel would find itself totally surrounded and in an impossible strategic position. There is a strong likelihood that the Hamas rejectionists would succeed in their goal to displace the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. Given the foothold offered to them by a divided Jerusalem, they would be well-placed to threaten not merely the security but the very existence of the State of Israel. *This cannot be allowed to happen.*

Not only would a divided Jerusalem be the launching-pad for her most implacable foes to achieve Israel's destruction, but it would also facilitate a dangerous de-stabilization of the entire, already volatile, Middle East. With Lebanon already under the thrall of Syrian-backed Hezbollah terrorism, the existence of such tenuously stable regimes

as Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt is also at stake. As long as pan-Arab nationalism, and the extremist Muslim dream of ‘reviving the Caliphate,’ is being promoted and bank-rolled, the very notion of providing its adherents with a base in Jerusalem is a nightmare situation that must never be contemplated.

Whatever ideological differences exist between Hamas and al Qaeda, hatred of Israel unites them. This explains the presence of ten al Qaeda suicide bombers who attempted to launch an attack from Gaza on the Israeli border-crossing of Nahal Oz on 6th August 2009. Note also the al Qaeda onslaught on the main Catholic church in West Baghdad (31st October 2010) when fifty eight worshippers were slain, and the New year’s eve suicide bomb attack on the Coptic church in Alexandria. Not only is Iran joining forces with those groups, supplying arms and funds to Hezbollah and Hamas, but it is also attempting global de-stabilization, as evidenced by the recent apprehension of Iranian operatives smuggling arms to the Taliban in Afghanistan to be used against British and American forces.

A divided Jerusalem brings al Qaeda into the heart of the Middle East conflict and greatly increases its scope and influence and its ability to constitute a mortal threat not only to Jews but also to the existence of Christian communities throughout the region. ‘Once released, the al-Qaeda genie cannot be put back in the bottle’ (Richard Beeston, The Times, December 24th 2010 p.8). A strong Israel is a bulwark against al Qaeda.

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7. Facilitating the restoration of missed opportunities

After the failure of the Geneva talks in December 1973, Abba Eban, then Foreign Minister, memorably mused that “Arabs never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity.” Over the decades successive Israel premiers have sought to provide them with further opportunities to realise a goodly proportion of their national dreams, notably when, at the Oslo Accord (1993), Yasser Arafat was offered 98% of the West Bank, yet recklessly rejected the offer. The same refusal to make any concessions occurred at the Camp David Summit (July 2000), the Taba Summit (Jan. 2001), in the aftermath of the Quartet’s (United States, The European Union, Former Soviet Union and United Nations) ‘Road Map for Peace’ proposal (Sep. 2002), and following Israel’s unilateral withdrawal from Gaza (Aug 2005). The mutually beneficial results of Israel’s peace treaties with Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994) left the Palestinian

leadership totally unmoved. Most recently it has attempted to force the pace by side-stepping direct negotiations and, instead, lining up some UN member states, such as Brazil and Argentina, pre-emptively to recognise a Palestinian state within the 1967 armistice lines. This is a situation that Israel cannot possibly be expected to accept. Ironically, a Pechter Middle East poll (12th Jan 2011) of 1000 Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem revealed that two thirds expressed a preference to continue to live under Israeli rule! They clearly know something that many EU and UN countries will just not face up to!

Countries that are truly concerned for the fate and national aspirations of the Palestinians need to bring their influence to bear on the latter. They need to convince them to abandon violence, negotiate in good faith and demonstrate that they are capable of being trustworthy and peaceable neighbours. In the absence of any Palestinian recognition of the sovereignty of the Jewish State, those aspirations will assuredly be frustrated.

Isaiah's dream of a day when 'men shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks,' and when 'nation shall not lift up sword unto nation, neither shall they learn war any more,' may seem far off, but, as Theodore Herzl averred, 'If you will it, it need be no dream!' Israel has this dream not only for itself, but also for its neighbours.

To avoid that, they could do no better than to adopt the Israeli attitude of looking to the future rather than brooding over the past. It was from that perspective that Israel absorbed, among others, the vast numbers of Jewish exiles and refugees from Arab countries in 1948 (This represented an equivalence of the number of Arabs who fled Israel at that time!). For its refugees Israel built a country wherein their offspring could grow up proud, free, educated and successful. The Arabs, on the other hand, built refugee camps where their offspring inherited merely despair and the thirst for revenge.

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