

## "Friends Of Al - Aqsa"

ISSN 1463-3930

### EDITOR

Ismail Adam Patel

### Production Assistant

Abdul Wahid Kassam

Alli Bahadur

### Published By

Friends of Al-Aqsa

P.O. Box 5127 Leicester, England.

LE2 0WU.

Fax: + 44 (0)116 2537575

Email: [info@aqsa.org.uk](mailto:info@aqsa.org.uk)

### We welcome:

Papers, Articles on any aspect of Jerusalem, Al-Aqsa Mosque and those worshipping therein, with particular references to History, Politics, Architecture, Religion, International Law, Human Rights violation and the present dangers to Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Letters on any related topics are also welcome.

The Editor reserves the right to edit letters for the purpose of clarity and reasons of space.

Views on relevant topics are also welcome but must not exceed 1000 words.

Reviews of books related to the Palestinian issue, of between 800 to a 1000 words will be considered.

## C o n t e n t s

Volume 1 Number 2 April 1999

<b>Editorial</b>	3
<b>Jerusalem During Muslim Rule</b> Dr Azzam Tamimi	5
<b>Council of Europe's Recommended Policy on the Palestinian Refugees</b> Mr David Atkinson MP	9
<b>The Holy See and Jerusalem</b> Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran	11
<b>Letters &amp;Views</b> The Rt Hon Mr Derek Fatchett The Rt Rev William Down	15
<b>American Policy Towards The Palestinian Refugee Since 1948</b> A Special Report	17
<b>Judaisation of Jerusalem &amp; Threats to Al-Aqsa Mosque</b> Dr Daud Abdullah	21
<b>Friends of Al-Aqsa Conference Report</b> Abdul Waheed Kassam	25
<b>Jerusalem As A Biblical Shrine: An Evangelical Perspective Part II</b> Anthony McRoy	27

## EDITORIAL

3

*Praise be to Allah, The Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds, who has made no compulsion on religion: May Allah's blessing be upon all His Prophets from Adam [as] to His final Messenger, Muhammad [saw] .*

The end of 1989 witnessed the hollow celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). As exactly 50 years to almost the day the Palestinian refugees which the same institute was created to cater the likes of has seen their rights being evaporated. As the New-World Order and its priorities march on, the four and half million Palestinian refugees take back row, their needs, human and legitimate rights denied. Even the World Bank millennium fund for the worlds deprived could not find compassion for the refugees.

It is of interest to note David Atkinson's article that the European democratic powers have assumed the right of the Israeli State as *de facto*. The refugees are therefore to be assimilated, with the exception of a

few token, anywhere but Israel. The fact that the Jews have been carted from every corner of the world and brought to Palestine to reside in their houses and occupy the land of the refugees is immaterial. More concerning is the realisation that while the world powers are discussing the future of the Palestinians no representation on their behalf is being made. It must also be noted that a survey by the Israel Palestine Centre for research and Institute (IPCRI), conducted by Dr Adel Yehieh runs contrary to David Atkinson's suggestions, which showed 90 per cent of the Palestinian refugees insist on their right to return. Many of them answered, "OK! If the houses are occupied we'll find an empty plot next to them and return there." The Democracies of Europe's suggestion under the present apologetic stance to the State of Israel seem not too surprising and in particular Israel's intimacy with United States of America.

On the wider front the problem of the refugees which is intrinsic to the 'Palestinian issue' brings us to the new emerging thinking within the arena. On the one hand we have the defeatist who have capitulated to the force of the Israelis and have succumbed into accepting *Bantus town* leadership. On the other end of the scale are the resistance fighters who are prepared not only to endure but counteract the Zionist onslaught, referred to as the fundamentalists. A Third Way, propagated by Edward Said in America, Azmi Bshara a Knesset member, in Israel and others promulgate the idea of a Bi-National State. This ideology rests on the goodwill of the Israelis as it necessitates the co-operation of the Israelis in the struggle.

The Third Way is hoping to draw on the sympathy of the liberal Israelis to create a momentum towards the unification of the Jews and Palestinians into 'common citizens'. This, Third Way ideology is argued to be drawn from the South African experience.

What the Third Way thinkers seem to have omitted is the struggle before the fruits of a multiracial society is realised. It is no doubt arguable, the final collapse of apartheid in South Africa was assisted by the willingness from within the establishment. However, the establishment did not and would not have propounded any notion of equality if the ANC had not embarked on a resistance struggle from all aspects, including and in particular militarily which tilted the balance of power. The Western powers also played a catalyst role by providing sanctions and diplomatic pressure. To any observer of the Palestinian issue, the Third Way has been in operation since 1974, when the Ten Point programme was endorsed by the PLO. Which began with unconditionally accepting any piece of land for a Palestinian state and ending up with Wye, which has seen the basic rights of a nation evaporate. The liberals have not been forthcoming despite the surrender of the rights by Palestinians. The West, the backbone in South Africa's struggle with regards to sanctions and political pressure are dragging their feet on all fronts to allow Israel to march at its own desired pace and direction.

What the above approach shows is in concurrence with ideologies that accepts Israel's occupation of Palestinian land and a surrender to the present *status quo*. This no doubt is the wish of the Israelis, America and some European countries, which prefers to see Palestinians surrender their rights in order to be more realistic to the Israeli demands.

Even the Vatican, as Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran points out would like to see a Jerusalem that is controlled by an 'International Force' to ensure all the three monotheistic religions enjoy the freedom of the city. This is brushing aside UN resolutions 242 and 338 which both condemn Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem and request its immediate withdrawal. It also ignores resolution 181/11 (UN Partition plan) which further prohibited expulsion and expropriation. All the present proposals are compensating the aggressor at the expense of the victimised and allowing it to usurp land under aggression, surely a dire signal to the despots of the world.

No mention or consideration is sighted of the fact that for over one thousand years while the Muslims ruled Jerusalem, no gross harassment was meted out to any other religious group. The fact goes begging that history has shown and proved that within the 30 years of Israel's illegal occupation of Jerusalem there has been more atrocities, contentions, and abuse of human rights than the whole thousand years of Muslim rule of the city. For all the three monotheistic religions to enjoy the freedom of Jerusalem as a moral right and not merely be tolerated than it is only the Muslims who can offer this safeguard. Not only does history prove their credibility but it is 'only' Islamic teachings that emphasises the respect of all the other prophets – *We make no distinction between any of them (Sura 2:136)* – and gives due respect to the beliefs of others – *Do not revile those whom they invoke instead of God (Sura 6:108)*

One great twentieth century principle seem to be missing from everybody's lips. The buzzword, in whose name, sanctions are imposed, wars are legitimised and friendship cemented – Democracy! It is astounding

to observe those who jump and justify 'actions' at any given opportunity behind the veil of democracy are not gearing the Palestinian people and that includes the refugees into electing a leader of their choice. Further, there is no reason why democracy should not be enforced on Israel, so that one person carries one vote, only the will of the International community is called for.

Is it, maybe like many other rights denied to the Palestinians. The right to elect a leader representing the majority is a privilege afforded to the friends of the West or is it that the Palestinian peoples choice is unpalatable? But then, that would make me a cynic, or would it?

In order to find a sustained peace it is of the greatest importance for the International community to ensure Israeli is not allowed to rescind on the UN resolutions. Israel must be made to obey all International Laws and comply to UN resolutions. The International Community must go beyond verbal condemnation and apply economic and political pressure to emphasise their disagreement to the xenophobic apartheid regime in Israel. They should assist in creating a frame work that would bring about conditions for the unification of Palestinian people under an elected leader representing the majority commanding the widest possible authority. Until such time, Israel will not comply with any International Laws or Resolutions and any deals agreed will only be with pockets of people at the expense and the wrath of the majority. A sure way of creating friction within a people – divide and let them fight it out.

## **Jerusalem During Muslim Rule**

Dr. Azzam Tamimi

**5**

*(Dr Tamimi is the Director of the London-based Liberty for the Muslim World. He is the author of several books and has articles regularly published in the Media on the Palestinian issue.)*

Jerusalem was liberated by the Muslims in Rabi' al-Akhir of 16 AH (May 637 AD). The conquest put an end to centuries of instability, religious persecution and colonial rule once by the Egyptians, another by the Greeks, a third by the Persians and a fourth by the Romans. The liberating Muslim armies, who had just brought to an end the Roman rule in al-Sham and consolidated their success with a victory at al-Yarmouk, marched towards Jerusalem and imposed a siege around it. Having known of the defeat of his empire's army at al-Yarmouk, the Roman governor of the Holy City fled and left its own people to negotiate a peaceful surrender to the Muslims. Jerusalemites wanted a peace treaty similar to the ones concluded by the Muslims with the inhabitants of other towns in the region, save for one extra condition- they asked that the leader of the Muslims, Umar [ra], be present to take delivery of the city. As soon as the news arrived in Medina, Umar [ra] prepared for the journey to Jerusalem and asked Ali ibn Abi Talib [ra] to take charge of Medina during his absence.

It has been suggested that the insistence on the presence of Umar [ra] emanated from the desire on the part of the leaders of Jerusalemites to ensure that guarantees for the safety and security of Christian shrines be given by the most senior figure in the Islamic state. There is an abundance of historic evidence that the people of conquered regions, and Jerusalem was no exception, had heard of the piety and justice of Umar [ra] and of the strict adherence of Muslims to the values they preach. The conduct of the Muslims during their conquest campaign convinced many natives that this was not another colonial power.

On the eve of the al-Yarmouk battle between the Muslims and the Roman army, the Roman commander instructed a native Arab informer to infiltrate the Muslim camp and come back to him with a description of their conditions. The informer returned with the most astonishing report. He said: "I have come to you from a people who spend the night in worship and the day in fasting. They enjoin good and forbid evil. They are priests at night-time and lions at daytime. If their leader were to commit an act of theft they would not hesitate to cut his hand and if he were to commit adultery they would not stand short of stoning him. They sanctify truth and give it preference over personal desire." Reportedly, the commander of the Roman army responded by saying: "If such is their description, then the bottom of the earth is better than its top." In other words, he feared that a people with such description just could not be defeated. To the natives of Palestine, the Muslims were a new breed of humans, different from all those who invaded their country before. They watched the newcomers as they communicated with each other and as they dealt with their adversaries. The Muslim warriors had strict instructions to violate no sanctity and to hurt no innocent creature. A farewell admonition from the first Caliph Abu Bakr [ra] to one of the departing armies towards Jerusalem read:

"I recommend to you that you fear Allah and obey Him. When you engage the enemies and win over them do not loot, do not mutilate the dead, do not commit treachery, do not behave cowardly, do not kill children, the elderly or women, do not burn trees or damage crops, do not kill an animal unless lawfully acquired for food. You will come across men confined to hermitages in which they claim to have dedicated their lives to worshipping God, leave them alone. When you engage the pagan infidels invite them to choose between two things. Invite them to embrace Islam. If they don't wish to do so invite them to pay the Jizya (tax paid by non-Muslims in a conquered land). If they accept either, accept from them and stop fighting. But if they reject both, then fight them."

The lessons native inhabitants learned every day from the conquering army were crowned with the amazing experience of watching the arrival of the Muslim's leader from Medina, second caliph Umar Ibn al-Khattab [ra]. He had with him one companion, not a servant or a slave, but a friend with whom he shared one camel for the entire journey. The garment Umar [ra] had been wearing was torn and soiled. He took some time to patch it and clean it. He was advised upon his arrival that this is not too an impressive scene for the locals who are used to seeing kings and emperors well dressed and well-guarded. He answered: "We are a people whom Allah has empowered with Islam. We do not seek the pleasure of other than Allah."

The arrival of Umar [ra] in Jerusalem signalled the beginning of a new era during which the city of Jerusalem became an open city. Only during the times of non-Muslim rule did the city lose its sanctity and openness. The secret lies in Islam itself. On the one hand, Islam considers itself an extension of the divine messages that preceded it. All the prophets that preceded Muhammad [saas] and his followers are regarded as, Muslim. The followers of Muhammad [saas] are ordered to believe in all the previous prophets and to respect them as much as they respect the final prophet – Muhammad [saas]. The Qur'an calls on the believers to proclaim:

Say ye: "We believe in Allah, and the revelation Given to us and to Abraham and Ismail, and Isaac and Jacob And the Tribes, and that given To Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) Prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: And we submit to Allah. (Al-Baqarah. 2:136)

On the other hand Islam awards to the followers of both Judaism and Christianity rights, the violation of which is considered a sin. The Prophet Muhammad [saas] is reported to have said: "He who harms a dhimmi (a non-Muslim residing in Muslim land) is as if he harms me personally."

Although Islam unequivocally condemns those who have altered their own divine messages to suit their personal interests or deny the divine mission of Prophet Muhammad [saas], Islam guarantees the freedom of worship for the followers of both Judaism and Christianity. This is evident in the declaration signed by Umar [ra] upon his entry into the holy city. He pledged that the Muslims should guarantee the security of the inhabitants of the city, of their wealth, of their churches and of their crosses. He also guaranteed that their churches would not be taken from them nor would they be demolished or undermined in anyway, that none of their possessions would be seized from them and that they would not be compelled to change their religion.

The pledges given to the Christians applied similarly to the Jews except that the Jews had not at the time of conquest been living in the Holy City. Relations between the Jews and the Christians were extremely bitter, a product of the Roman persecution of Jews which long predates the conversion to Christianity by Emperor Constantine in 325 AD but which continued for many centuries afterwards. Between the years 132 and 135 AD, the Jews of Jerusalem rebelled against Roman rule only to be vanquished and banished in the earth by Emperor Hadrian who forbade them from ever returning to the Holy City. Jews returned to the city only when the Muslims liberated Jerusalem and made it accessible to all 'believers'.

Although at the dawn of Islam Muslims had a conflict with the Jewish tribes that had been living in and around Medina and later on in Khaibar, they did get along very well at all times afterwards, and especially in Palestine. For both Jewish and Christian inhabitants of the conquered lands, Islamic rule signalled the start of a golden age. Territories under Muslim rule became safe havens to which many Jews and Christians fled to escape persecution in their own homelands. It was in Muslim metropolis that many Christians and Jews found the opportunity to acquire learning and to excel in various fields of knowledge and expertise. Many of them had become historic figures who benefited from as well as contributed greatly to the Arab Muslim civilisation. In addition to recognising both Judaism and Christianity as divine faiths whose Prophets preached the same message Muhammad [saas] was sent to complement and seal, Muslims are warned

against the attitude of self-appointing as judges over people's hearts and choices of faith. Although Muslims disagree fundamentally with Jews and Christians over matters of faith, they are supposed to accept that faith is a matter between man and his creator and that notwithstanding the differences a common ground exists where Muslims and other believers may stand.

And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except in the best way, unless it be with those of them who do wrong. But say: We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; our God and your God is One; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam). (Al-'Ankabut. 29:46)

A Muslim's duty is to invite others, through wisdom and peaceful admonition, to what he believes to be the truth. But no Muslim, including the Prophet himself, has the authority to compel another human being to accept what Muslims believe to be the truth. It is, however, the responsibility of Muslims in this life to establish an order of justice in which human dignity is protected and freedom of choice is guaranteed. It is not surprising, hence, that the inhabitants of Jerusalem did not perceive the Muslims to be conquerors but rescuers who came to deliver them from persecution and enslavement.

Furthermore, Muslims are ordered to observe justice in their dealings, whether among themselves or between them and others.

O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety: and fear Allah. For Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do.

(Al-Ma'ida. 5:8)

In addition, Muslims are prohibited from abusing the symbols of other faiths, no matter how much these symbols contravene the basic tenets of the Islamic creed.

Revile not ye those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest they out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance... (Al-An'am. 6.108)

The status of Jerusalem under Muslim rule is best contrasted with its status under the rule of the Crusaders who occupied it for about 88 years between 1099 and 1187 AD. In seven days, the Crusaders killed no less than seventy thousand of the city's inhabitants. No distinction was made between Muslim and Jew. All those who did not share the faith of the invaders, including many local Christians, were considered heathens, the killing of whom was the religious mission the invaders came from afar to fulfil. Muslim symbols in the city were completely obliterated: the al-Aqsa mosque was turned into a barracks for the troops and its basement into a stable for their horses.

The Azzan (call to prayer) was banned and the minarets of Jerusalem were silenced for 88 years. The peace, tranquillity and accessibility of the Holy City were restored only when Salahuddin al-Ayyubi liberated it from its foreign intruders. Peace prevailed so long as Islamic rule continued. This lasted until the turn of this century when Jerusalem, like the rest of Palestine, was placed under the mandate of the British who used their power to alter the demographic nature of the country in preparation for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. Since then, Zionists have resorted to all sorts of measures to force the Palestinians out of the city and to obliterate all non-Jewish symbols. Yesterday's victims have become today's oppressors. Haunted by their bitter experience in Europe, Zionist Jews have gone as far as pursuing the policy of their own oppressors, the Nazis.

Never will Jerusalem's peace and liberality be restored unless Islamic rule is reinstated. Only the Muslims are guaranteed to respect the sacredness of the city and observe its central position not only to their faith, but also to the faiths of Christians and Jews. The crimes committed by the Zionists in Palestine are reminiscent of those perpetrated by the Crusaders almost nine centuries ago. Today's slogans and justifications of aggression are not much different from those of yesterday. Both the Crusaders and the Zionists claimed to fulfil a divine mission of some sort. Flying on a mythical carpet of divine promises they came from afar to rob, murder, destroy and disturb. In both cases, the invaders were motivated by greed and hatred and were driven to their doom by blind faith in some incredible myths. In both cases, the weakness of the Muslims helped the invaders achieve their goals.

Just as the crimes and barbarity of the Crusaders brought an end to their rule on its 88th anniversary, so will the crimes of the Zionists bring an end to their project, perhaps just before they celebrate its 88th anniversary. Like the return of Muslims to their faith marked the beginning of the end of the Crusader

campaign, it is today's return to their faith by the Muslims, despite all the hurdles, that promises an ending of the current painful chapter in the history of the Holy City.

The day the Zionist project comes to an end will be the day when peace and freedom of worship are restored in Jerusalem and once again the Holy City will be re-opened to all believers from all faiths.

## **COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S RECOMMENDED POLICY ON THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEES**

**9**

David Atkinson MP

*Mr Atkinson is the Conservative Member of Parliament for Bournemouth East. He was first elected to Parliament in 1977. He is currently the leader of the British Conservative Delegation on the Council of Europe and Chairman of its European Group. He is the Council of Europe's Rapporteur on the Palestinian refugee issue.*

Last year Israel celebrated its 50th anniversary. These 50 years have witnessed Jewish immigration from throughout the world to Israel where they have been swiftly transferred from transit camps into absorption centres and fully integrated citizens in a 'Jewish homeland.'

As for the Palestinians and their descendants who fled their towns and villages, in 1948 and subsequently in 1967, the right to return to their homeland has evaporated.

Many of the displaced Palestinians, now totalling 3.4 million registered with UNRWA, have lived in camps, their tents replaced by breezeblock walls and asbestos corrugated roofs. For over 50 years, homeless, stateless and by large ignored. This disregard has done more damage than anything else to perpetuate tension and conflict in the region.

It must be clear to all, including the Israeli Government, any Middle East Peace Settlement, which is unacceptable to the great majority of the Palestinians, who are the refugees, will not last. There can be no peace until a just resolution of their situation has been agreed and implemented.

In 1998, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe endorsed a report proposing how the Palestinian refugee situation can be resolved justly and practically. This report is now recommended policy for all 40 democratic member States of Europe, to adopt. It was compiled based on widespread discussion with appropriate ministers, politicians and officials of the host countries and Israel. Of equal importance were discussions with refugees in UNRWA's camps.

The Palestinian Refugees in the context of the Middle East Peace Process, is the third report I have produced for the Council of Europe's Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography. Like the previous two in 1988 and 1991 it is based on experience of personal visits to the region. I hope this will be my final report on the subject and that it will contribute to a just solution in the forthcoming negotiations on the 'final status' issues under the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles- the Oslo Agreement.

In organising my visit, which took place in September 1998, it seemed to me vitally important to obtain a representative sample of widely held refugee population views on how they see their future in any solution. The fate of some 3.4 million people and especially those 1.2 million who live in the camps, cannot be decided by governments without being aware of what is acceptable to them.

Although most Palestinians dream of the implementation of UN Resolution 194 proposing the right of return to their original and rightful homes in Palestine (now Israel). However, as I very soon found from my meetings with the refugees that after 50 years many understand that this would be practically difficult and politically impossible under the present status quo.

After my research I concluded:

**1.** It will not be possible to make progress without the establishment of a Palestinian State. This is not only for humanitarian reasons in ending the camps and offering permanent accommodation. It is an essential

step towards ending a major source of tension in the Middle East.

The Israeli observer delegation to the Council of Europe urged me to use the word 'entity' instead of 'state'. I explained that the word entity would be insufficient to encourage the refugees to end their refugee status. Only a viable, democratic sovereign state will establish their 'homeland' – to give up their right to return to Israel.

Only Israel can allow that. If Israel really wants a secure future in co-operation with its neighbours there is no other alternative for it but to assist in the establishment of a Palestinian State.

**2.** It must be realised that a Palestinian State composed of West Bank and Gaza cannot absorb all the 3.4 million refugees. During the course of my meetings a number of other choices became apparent and realistic to propose to the refugees.

In addition to resettlement in a new Palestinian State, the options are:

To remain in the host country where many have established themselves and would be ready to accept compensation not to return.

To resettle in other countries, both within and outside the region, in response to their offers of quotas.

To return to the Gulf States where applicable.

Finally, an option for some a return to Israel.

I have deliberately left out the numbers of refugees that could be involved with each of these options. That is for the negotiations to determine, which in due course, UNRWA and other agencies will have an important role to play. That is why I urged for the funding of US \$7 million, for a computerised database register of all refugees with UNRWA and the Palestinian Authority. This would undoubtedly expedite their resettlement and claims for compensation.

**3.** Until the issue of resettlement has been resolved I urged that it is absolutely essential that the services of UNRWA be fully maintained and funded, right up to and including the period of resettlement, to ensure a seamless transfer of those services to the Governments concerned. I also urged that the undoubted massive cost of resettlement, including compensation promised under UN resolution 194, should be anticipated and budgeted for by the international community as soon as possible.

**4.** I proposed the establishment of a new fund by the UN – The Palestine Refugee and Displaced Persons Final Status Fund – that it alerts member states to prepare their budgets to donate to the fund, approaching especially those countries which are not generously donating to UNRWA and to the Palestinian Authority. At present the much needed relief work is supplemented by charitable organisation such as INTERPAL (the Palestine Relief and Development Fund) whose greatly admirable work I had the opportunity to witness at first hand, last year.

**5.** I also want a delegation from the Palestinian Council be allowed to participate in all our debates which concern the Middle East just as members of Israel's Knesset do as an observer state.

In response to my report, the Council of Europe became the first international organisation to discuss how the Palestine refugee issue should be resolved. I hope our proposals will contribute to a just outcome to this 'final status' negotiations.

After over 50 years that is a dream which a just world must now make a reality.

*Foreign Secretary of the Vatican (lecture given at a conference in Jerusalem, October 98)*

It is Jerusalem that has brought us together! It is Jerusalem that urges us to look to the future! And Jerusalem, yet again, wishes to impart its secret, the secret which the Prophet Ezekiel disclosed for all times: 'And the name of the city henceforth shall be The Lord is there'

This cause of the Holy City has long been at the centre of the Holy See's concerns and one of its top priorities for international action, ever since the Jerusalem question existed.

The Jerusalem Question?

(I) Indeed, there is a conflict, or rather there are conflicts, because of and within Jerusalem- all related to its universally accepted uniqueness. It is unique in itself, and consequently it is also unique in its conflicts. It is different from any other city. The introduction to a book published in 1994 by a number of important Israeli academics begins thus, 'At least in three respects Jerusalem differs from most other places: the city is holy to the adherents of three religions, it is the subject of a conflicting national claims by two peoples, and its population is heterogeneous to a considerable degree.' Let us remember what Pope John Paul II wrote in his Apostolic Letter 'Redemptio Anno' of 20th April 1984, "...Jews ardently love (Jerusalem) and in every age venerate her memory, abundant as she is in many remains and monuments from the time of David who chose her as the capital and Solomon who built the Temple there. Therefore, they turn their minds to her daily, one may say and point to her as the sign of their nation. Christians honour her with a religious and intent concern because there the words of Christ so often resounded, there the great events of the Redemption were accomplished: the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord. In the city of Jerusalem the first Christian community sprang up and remained throughout the centuries a continual ecclesial presence despite difficulties. Muslims also call Jerusalem 'holy', with a profound attachment that goes back to the origins of Islam and springs from the fact that they have there many special places of pilgrimage and for more than a thousand years have dwelt there, almost without interruption."

(II) I think it is important to clarify from the very start that when we speak of Jerusalem the distinction often made between 'the question of the Holy Places and the question of Jerusalem' is unacceptable to the Holy See. It is obvious that the Holy Places derive their meaning and their cultic and cultural uses from the intimate connection with the surrounding environment, to be understood not merely in terms of geography but also and most especially in its urban, architectural and above all human community and institutional dimensions.

In papal documents there certainly exist emphases and nuances. They are seen more clearly the greater the span of time under consideration, for example, in a book edited by Archbishop Edmond Farhat, in which he gathers papal documents from 1887 to 1986 (one hundred years), dividing this span of time into three periods:

1. From 1887 to 1947 (the first war between Arabs and Israelis), when the Pope spoke of the Holy Land in general and of Jerusalem, insisting primarily on the need to protect the physical integrity of the Holy Places and on the needs of the local Catholics.
2. From 1947 to 1964 (Pope Paul IV's pilgrimage), here the stress is on safeguarding the Holy Places, on freedom of access for all the faithful of the three religions and the right of each of the three religions to have control of its own holy sites.
3. From 1964 to the present day, a period during which the emphasis moves to Jerusalem in a global context and to the preservation of its identity and vocation: The Holy Places, the areas surrounding them, guarantees for everybody of their own cultural and religious identity, freedom of religion and conscience for the inhabitants and the pilgrims, the cultural dimension.

(III) From the references to historical events, particularly those of the last fifty years, there emerges what



is commonly referred to as the 'political dimensions' of Jerusalem in a complex of situations which have arisen regarding territorial control and the actions carried out to gain such control. The concern expressed in the interventions of the Popes and in other documents of the Holy See could not and cannot overlook this aspect. It is ever present, first, in order to prevent the Holy City becoming a battlefield and later to ensure that it does not become, as is the situation today, a case of manifest international injustice. The situation today have been brought about and is maintained by force. The Holy See has spoken out on this and will continue to speak out clearly, without mincing words and consistently adhering to the position of the majority, within the international community, as expressed above all in the pertinent United Nations Resolutions. Since 1967, a part of the City has been occupied militarily and subsequently annexed. In that part of the City are to be found most of the Holy Places of the three monotheistic religions. East Jerusalem is illegally occupied. It is therefore wrong to claim that the Holy See is only interested in the religious aspect or aspects of the City and overlooks the political and territorial aspect. The Holy See is indeed interested in this aspect and has the right and duty to be, especially insofar as the matter remains unresolved and is the cause of conflict, injustice, human rights violations, restrictions of religious freedom and conscience, fear and personal insecurity.

Obviously, the Holy See's immediate and practical concern is with religious questions, while in other matters-political, economic etc- it interests itself inasmuch as they have a moral dimension. If the Holy See has no competence to enter into territorial disputes between Nations, to take sides, to seek to impose detailed solutions, on the contrary it has the right and duty of reminding the Parties of the obligation to resolve controversies peacefully, in accordance with the principles of justice and equity within the international legal framework. In the case of Jerusalem, the religious, the political and territorial, are closely linked, even though they are different in their constitutive elements, in the proper means of dealing with them in finding a solution to them.

What is the Holy See Requesting for Jerusalem

(I) First of all, it asks that Jerusalem be respected for what it is in itself or rather what it should be, compared with what it actually is. That is what I defined a short while ago as the vocation or identity of the Holy City. Jerusalem is a treasure of the whole of humanity. In view of a situation of evident conflict and considering the rapid transformation of the Holy City, any unilateral solution or one brought about by force is not and cannot be a solution at all.

It is the view of the Holy See that every exclusive claim- be it religious or political- is contrary to the logic proper to the very City itself. I must insist: every citizen of Jerusalem and every person who visits Jerusalem should embody the message of dialogue, coexistence and respect evoked by the city. Exclusive claims cannot be backed up by numerical or historical criteria.

Having said that, I must add that there is nothing to prevent Jerusalem, in its unity and uniqueness, becoming the symbol and the national centre of both the Peoples that claim it as their Capital. But if Jerusalem is sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims, it is also sacred to many people from every part of the world who look to it as their spiritual capital or travel there on pilgrimage, to pray and to meet their brethren in faith. It is the cultural heritage of everybody, including those who visit it simply as tourists.

(II) Consequently, the Holy See believes that there is an obligation to find a realistic solution to the problems of Jerusalem, to all of them, according to their particular characteristics.

1. There is a political problem concerning Jerusalem for Israelis and Palestinians. First of all which is very practical. The Madrid Conference of 1991 and what followed gave birth to hopes of a peaceful future. Hopes founded on a willingness to talk, to negotiate and to seek to compromise. Hopes which appeared well-founded also by reason of the commitment and efforts of a large section of the international community and in particular of the United States of America, as the events which took place at Wye Plantation in the last few days have demonstrated. Let us hope that the aspirations for dialogue and peace will contribute to the implementation of what has been agreed upon.

In this context, which is certainly both complex and delicate, the Jerusalem question has been placed at the bottom of the agenda. It is understandable that the difficulty and delicacy of the question of Jerusalem has meant that it has been left till last. But we all know and the Israelis and the Palestinians are the first in this, that peace and coexistence in the Holy Land and Middle East have no future, unless an answer is found to the political question of Jerusalem. Allow me to quote once again from 'Redemption Anno' of 1984, in which

His Holiness Pope John Paul II wrote, "I am convinced that the failure to find an adequate solution to the question of Jerusalem, and the resigned postponement of the problem, only compromise further longed-for peaceful and just settlement of the crisis of the whole Middle East."

What does the Holy See mean by an 'adequate solution'? It means recognising that the situation today is one of conflict. It means that Israelis and Palestinians, with the collaboration of all who can help them, have to reach an agreement which corresponds in some way to their particular legitimate and reasonable aspirations, and respect the principles of justice.

2. As far as the Holy See is concerned, however, the solution of a territorial dispute alone is not enough for Jerusalem, precisely because Jerusalem is an unparalleled reality: it is part of the patrimony of the whole world. And the whole world has shown that it is fully aware of this when, for example, through resolutions of the United Nations it has sought to defend that patrimony.

Looking to Jerusalem, the Holy See continues to ask that it be protected by 'a special internationally guaranteed Statute.' What is meant by this? In the Holy See's view:

The historical and material characteristics of the city, as well as its religious and cultural characteristics, must be preserved, and perhaps today it is necessary to speak of restoring and safeguarding those still existing.

There must be equality of rights and treatment of those belonging to the communities of the three religions found in the city, in the context of the freedom of spiritual, cultural, civic and economic activities.

The holy Places situated in the city must be preserved and the rights of freedom of religion and worship and of access for residents and pilgrims alike, whether from the Holy Land itself or from other parts of the world, must be safeguarded.

At stake is the basic question of preserving and protecting the identity of the Holy City in its entirety, in every aspect. For example, the simple 'extraterritoriality' of the Holy Places with the assurance that pilgrims would be able to visit them without hindrance, would not suffice. The identity of the City includes a sacred character which belongs not just to the individual sites or monuments, as if these could be separated from one another or isolated from the respective communities. The sacred character involves Jerusalem in its entirety, its Holy Places and its communities with their schools, hospitals, culture, social and economic activities. Israelis and Palestinians, in the desired search for a political settlement of their conflict over Jerusalem, cannot overlook the fact that the city has aspects which go far beyond their legitimate national interests. They therefore have to take these aspects into consideration in looking for and in reaching a lasting political and territorial solution. In the same way, they will not be able to avoid giving due consideration to the efforts and demands of all legitimately interested parties. In this, Israelis and Palestinians must not feel in any way restricted, but rather, honoured and reassured.

It is essential that the parties to the negotiations take a fair and appropriate account of the sacred and universal character of the City. This requires that any possible solution should have the support of the three monotheistic religions, both at the local level and at the international level. Besides, as they are being proposed, the negotiations are expected to include the participation of the sponsors of the Peace Process and other parties could also be invited to contribute. The Holy See believes in the importance of extending representation at the negotiating table in order to be sure that no aspect of the problem is overlooked and to affirm that the whole International Community is responsible for the uniqueness and sacredness of this incomparable City.

## Conclusion

In the coming days we shall listen to various other presentations and reflections. I would like to end my own intervention by expressing two feelings which I have experienced with great integrity:

1) Sometimes I have felt great sadness and almost a sense of helplessness. The way forward to peace for the Holy Land and Jerusalem appears very precarious, alternating between progress, hesitation and failure. One has the impression that anything could happen, be it good or bad. Thinking also about the year 2000, I wish to quote from Pope John Paul II address to the Diplomatic Corps on 11th January 1992, 'What a blessing it would be if this Holy Land, where God spoke and Jesus walked, could become a special place of

encounter and prayer for peoples, if this Holy City of Jerusalem could be a sign and instrument of peace and reconciliation! It is here that believers have a mission of primary importance to accomplish. Forgetting the past and looking to the future, they are called to repentance, to re-examine their behaviour and to realise once again that they are brothers and sisters by reason of the One God who loves them and invites them to co-operate in his plan for humanity.'

The second of my feelings: Episcopates of importance Nations of the world are represented here. The Bishops are in communion and solidarity with each other, and the initiative of His Beatitude Patriarch Michel Sabbah is founded on this certainty. In the name of the Holy Father and together with the Patriarch, I say to you all: Let us remember Jerusalem, let us recall its essential nature, its vocation and the love which people have for it, let us help the world and those who wield power in it to remember Jerusalem and to understand that for its sake it should not be impossible to make it definitively a place of meeting, of harmony and of peace. It is my earnest hope that the Episcopates of the world will become Jerusalem's Ambassadors within the local Churches, to your respective Nations and societies and to the institutions and Authorities thereof. 'Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem about my highest joy!

- . Ez 48:35
- . Ruth Lapidoth-Mosge Hirsh, The Jerusalem Question and its Resolution: Selected Documents, Dordech-Boston, London 1994.
- . Gerusalemme nei Documenti Pontifici, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1982.
- . Ps 137:6

## VIEWS & LETTERS

15

Foreign & Commonwealth Office  
From The Minister of State  
4th February 1999

Mr Patel & Mr Nagdi  
Friends of Al Aqsa  
P.O.Box 5127  
Leicester  
LE2 0WU

Dear Mr Patel & Mr Nagdi

It was a pleasure to meet you and to hear your concerns about Jerusalem and the sanctity of the holy sites, in particular of the Al Aqsa Mosque. I promised to write to you detailing our position of principle on Jerusalem and the holy sites.

Our position is that we recognise de facto Israeli authority in West Jerusalem, but consider East Jerusalem to be under illegal military occupation. We recognise no de jure sovereignty over the city. In accordance with the Declaration of Principles of 13 September 1993 and the Interim Agreement of 28th September 1995, signed by Israel and the PLO, we regard the status of Jerusalem as still to be determined in the "permanent status negotiations" between the two parties.

We made it clear in the 1980 Venice Declaration and in many subsequent statements, both by ourselves and with EU partners, that no unilateral attempts to change the status of Jerusalem are valid. Pending agreement in final status talks, we wish to preserve the Palestinian character of East Jerusalem. We have condemned and will continue to condemn Israeli policies aimed at altering the demographic balance of East Jerusalem, including settlement building, confiscation of Palestinian ID cards and house demolitions.

We expect the sanctity of holy sites in East Jerusalem for all religions to be respected, regardless of the outcome of any permanent settlement. Any arrangements, both present and future, should guarantee

freedom of worship at the holy sites of all religions and also freedom of access to these sites.

I hope you will find the above information helpful. As promised, I have also written to the Israeli Ambassador to report your concerns.

Derek Fatchett

Minister of State

**(Letter of Asst Bishop of Leicester to 'Friends of Al-Aqsa Conference')**

Dear Friends

I am very sorry that I will not be able to be present at your conference exploring the important theme of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. I send you warmest greetings from the Christian Churches in Leicestershire. As believers in One God, we share many common concerns in today's world.

This August, eight hundred bishops from the world-wide Anglican Communion gathered for the Lambeth Conference at Canterbury. Among the Resolutions they passed then was V.20 ON THE HOLY LAND, which stated:

This conference expresses its deep concern about the tragic situation in the Holy Land, especially as it affects the City of Jerusalem, and affirms the following points:

- (1) Jerusalem is holy to the three Abrahamic faiths, Judaism, Christianity and Islam and a home equally for Palestinians and Israelis;
- (2) The status of Jerusalem is fundamental to any just and lasting peace settlement and therefore it should serve as the capital of two sovereign states, Israel and Palestine, with free access to the adherents of all three faiths.

I am sure that you would agree with these sentiment, and I wish you God's wisdom and guidance as you explore together the present complex situation affecting the holy places in Jerusalem.

The Rt Revd William Down

Asst Bishop of Leicester

**American Policy Towards the Palestinian Refugees Since 1948**  
*A Special Report*

**17**

The World's oldest and most intractable refugee problem is that of the exiled Palestinians. Since 1948 more than half of the entire Palestinian population have lived outside of their ancestral land. The immediate cause of their dispersal was the 1947 UN decision to partition their land and grant 56% of it to Jewish immigrants mainly from Europe. Driven by an apparent sense of guilt for their own persecution of European Jews, the victorious allies led by the United States sought atonement by supporting large scale Jewish emigration to Palestine. When confronted with resistance from the indigenous people, the Zionist settlers in turn unleashed an unprecedented campaign of terror which triggered an exodus of Palestinians that is continues until this day.

Though essentially a political problem, the Palestinian refugee crisis soon developed into a major humanitarian disaster as an estimated 805,067 inhabitants streamed into camps in the Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. During the six months leading-up to Ben Gurion's declaration of statehood on 14th May 1948, United States policy makers began to toy with the idea of replacing the Partition Plan with a UN trusteeship. Until 1947 the State Department had traditionally acknowledged Palestinian rights including that of self-determination. After the failure of the Partition Plan, however, the Americans were forced to devise a new strategy towards Palestine. To begin with, they encouraged the Jordanian take over of all areas not occupied by the Jewish State and its absorption of the refugees. From the summer of 1948 all references to Palestinian rights, especially that of statehood disappeared from both internal and external records of the State Department. Throughout the subsequent decades the only Palestinian claims recognised by the US were those of the refugees.

### The First Initiatives

Having recognised the Jewish State in Occupied Palestine, the United Nations itself adopted resolution 194 on 11th December 1948. That those 'refugees wishing to return to their home and live in peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date...' The resolution also called for the creation of a UN council to prepare the way for the return of the refugees. The council began its work in March 1949 with visits first to Beirut and then Tel Aviv. While the Arab States insisted on immediate repatriation before any negotiations could begin, the Israelis demanded a comprehensive settlement before considering the return of the refugees.

The Truman administration was particularly perturbed by the Israeli intransigence. The Americans had themselves played a key role in drafting the final version of resolution 194 which they believed should form the legal basis of all policies toward the refugee problem. It was in this context, therefore, that President Truman on 6th September 1948 gave his unconditional support to the proposals of the UN mediator, Count Folke Bernadotte 'that the local government in Israel should take measures to relieve the suffering of the refugees' by expediting their return at the fastest possible opportunity.

Bernadotte was, observably, no stranger to humanitarian crises. He had gained international acclaim in 1945 for his work on behalf of the International Red Cross to save thousands of Jews from Nazi concentration camps. One day before he was assassinated (16th September 1948) by a Zionist terrorist in Jerusalem, Bernadotte wrote that there was absolutely no chance of reaching a just and comprehensive settlement to the Palestinian Question unless their right to return was recognised. The story of his killing has since remained a standing testimony of the betrayal and injustice that has always been a hall-mark of Zionism. For although the head of the Stern Gang, Nathan Friedman-Yellin was sentenced to five years imprisonment for the murder, he was quickly pardoned and elected to the Knesset in 1950.

Count Bernadotte's plea for the restoration of Palestinian rights did not go unheeded. While addressing the UN General Assembly a few days after the assassination, US Secretary of State, George Marshall, urged the world body to adopt the mediator's proposal which he believed constituted the 'best possible basis for realising peace'. Several months later President Truman went further and issued an ultimatum to the Israelis. In a letter dated 29th May 1949, he told Ben Gurion that the US was utterly dismayed with the Israeli violation of international law and warned that his administration may be forced to review its relationship with the Jewish State. When the Tel Aviv administration stood its ground, it was the Americans who had to humbly back down.

### The Eisenhower Years

With the arrival of Eisenhower to the White House in January 1953, American interest in the refugee problem entered a new phase. A dual approach was adopted and remained in force until 1967. It entailed in the first instance, the provision of relief supplies and assistance to the refugees and secondly, a search for a practical political solution.

Shortly after taking office, the Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles visited the region and recommended that some of the refugees should be allowed to return. At the time it appeared that the Congress was inclined to an economic rather than a political solution. It involved the exploitation of the waters of the Jordan river. Eisenhower was himself convinced that 'the acceptance of a comprehensive plan to develop the Jordan valley would help immensely in ensuring stability in the Near East.' It was envisioned that an estimated 300,000 refugees stood to benefit from Jordan Valley Development Programme. Arab rejection of

the plan and Israel's insistence on continuing with its own water-carrier project aborted the American plan. In September 1953 Eisenhower ordered the cancellation of all aid to Israel pending its cessation of attempts to divert the Jordan river. The American message was clear as well as effective and it took the Israelis a mere two months to climb down from their pedestal of belligerence.

While the 1953 suspension of aid was enough to force an Israeli retreat from the waters of the Jordan river, it was ostensibly, not enough to force the repatriation of the refugees. The Eisenhower administration therefore drifted toward the provision of material assistance while the search for a political solution continued. While unveiling the joint US-British 'Operation Alpha' on 26th August 1955, Secretary of State, Dulles called for Israeli compensation to the tune of \$280 million to the refugees. Both the US and Britain agreed that Israel should raise 30% of the funds while the former two would provide the rest through long term, low interest loans. The onset of the Suez crisis the following year aborted the plan and effectively brought to an end to all efforts by President Eisenhower to solve the refugee crisis.

Enter the AIPAC

Where as the appearance of the America Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) on Capital Hill in 1959 signalled the emergence of a new era of US policy toward the region, it did not spell good for the refugees. Being the most powerful special interest group in the US, AIPAC succeeded in those early days to convince Washington that Israel was worthy of being a strategic ally in the Middle East. In the aftermath of the Suez crisis, the US welcomed the notion of the regional ally to counter the growth of the Arab nationalist movement and the spread of Soviet influence in an area perceived as the soft under belly of NATO.

Following the visit of Senator Hubert Humphrey to the camps in 1956, the question of the refugees continued to haunt policy makers. Humphrey warned that further failures to resolve the crisis would lead to a spread of communist ideas among the refugees. Accordingly, the Kennedy administration adopted a plan developed by Joseph E Johnson, a former president of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Based essentially on UN resolution 194 the Johnson plan sought to apply the formula of repatriation or resettlement and compensation. The mere thought of considering repatriation was anathema to Prime Minister Ben Gurion. Thus in order to induce them the Kennedy administration offered the sale of major weapons to the Israelis with the hope that they would accept the Johnson plan. Although the Tel Aviv authorities accepted the American weapons, they categorically refused to reciprocate on the question of the refugees. Thus ended the last major US initiative towards the refugees.

The fact that 82% of the Jewish electorate had voted for Kennedy in 1960 was no doubt a telling factor which prompted him to lift the 1947 embargo on the sale of weapons to the Zionists. Both His immediate successor, Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon were considered even more supportive of Israel on major issues such as arms, territory and the refugees. The latter two's belief that Israel was the 'underdog' made it possible not only for the capture of east Jerusalem in 1967, but also for the expulsion of another 500,000 from their homes.

Meanwhile, the gains and position of the Israeli lobby machine AIPAC was considerably strengthened after the arrival of Henry Kissinger at the helm of the State Department during the Nixon and Ford presidencies respectively. Himself a Jewish immigrant from Austria, Kissinger played a major role in convincing the US establishment that Arab-Israeli conflict was a by product of the Cold War. Yitzhak Rabin paid tribute in his memoirs to Kissinger recalling; 'The story of Kissinger's contribution to Israel's security has yet to be told, and for the present suffice it to say that it was of prime importance.'

Abandonment Under Clinton

The acceleration of Zionist influence in the State Department after Kissinger coincided with a corresponding rapid decline in the fortunes of the refugees. Under the Clinton administration their plight degenerated significantly from bad to worse. Since his first inauguration in January 1993, President Clinton's refugee policy has sifted from one of compromise to total abandonment. The current strategy pursued by Washington has been to dissolve the international nature of the refugee problem and confine it to bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority. Toward this end the US has made several attempts to dismantle the United Nations Relief and Welfare Agency (UNRWA), the organisation that has, since 1949, looked after the affairs of the refugees.

Similarly on 8th December 1993 the Clinton administration took the unprecedented step of refusing to

support the reaffirmation of UN resolution 194 in the General Assembly. This, quite astoundingly, was the first time in almost fifty years that the US had failed to support the very resolution that had been drafted by itself. According to White House officials, the September 1993 Israeli – PLO accords have made all previous resolutions 'obsolete and anachronistic.' Secretary of State Madeleine Albright summed up her governments position on the refugees in a letter to members of the General Assembly dated 8th August 1994; 'We believe that resolution language referring the 'final status' issues should be dropped... These include refugees.' Thus in total violation of international law the US House of Representatives in June 1997 took the unprecedented step of recognising Jerusalem as the 'undivided and eternal capital' of Israel.

Having supported the Partition Plan, the US had, in the immediate years thereafter recognised its shared responsibility for the Palestinian refugee problem. After making several tentative political efforts to find a solution within the framework of UN resolution 194, the Americans gradually succumbed to Zionist pressure and abandoned the refugees. Aided by a favourable uni-polar international system, they have further seized the opportunity to impose an Israeli status quo over Jerusalem contravening the Fourth Hague Convention (1907), the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) and UN Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 478 (1980).

For the handful of politicians and technocrats who wheel and deal in secret, international resolutions concerning the refugees and other final status issues may seem 'obsolete'. Yet to the millions of Palestinians who continue to bear the burdens and share the memories of exile, their right to repatriation remains as 'inalienable' as the right of every American to life, liberty and justice. Being signatories to all the international conventions on humanitarian law, the democratic nations of Europe, must accordingly, take immediate steps, with or without American support, to honour their treaty, obligations and duties towards the Palestinian refugees.

## **The Judaisation of Jerusalem and the threat to Al-Aqsa Mosque**

**21**

Dr. Daud A. Abdullah

*Dr Daud is a researcher at the Palestinian Return Centre, London and editor of its Return review. He was awarded his doctorate by the University of Khartoum for a thesis entitled, "Imperialist Competition and Conflict in the Blue Nile Valley, 1885-1941." He previously lectured in history at the University of Maiduguri, Nigeria and taught Islamic Studies at Manarat Islamic School, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. He has published several articles on Islamic and Palestinian affairs. Among his publications is, The Key to Medinah' (Jeddah, 1995, Abul qasim Publications)*

When British forces entered Jerusalem on 9th December 1917, the Commander of the occupying army General Edmund Allenby declared; "today the Crusades have ended". His well-publicised proclamation was not entirely correct because a new phase of aggression was actually about to begin. The Balfour Declaration which promised a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine signalled the launching of a unique colonial project that would profoundly alter the boundaries and religious character of Jerusalem.

The immediate origins of the project can be traced to the late 19th. Century when Theodore Herzl founded the Zionist movement in order to create a state for the Jews who were being persecuted throughout Europe. At the time, there was a significant difference between the aims of the political Zionists and those of their religious counterparts. Whereas the former believed in a human agency for the restoration of Israel, the latter, Choveve Zion, or "Lovers of Zion" as they were called, regarded the biblical lands only as a spiritual centre from where Jewish faith and culture would spread by a divine agency.

Although the occupation of Jerusalem formed an integral part of their overall plan to colonise Palestine, Zionist leaders from Herzl onward never concealed or denied the depth of their interest in the city. Speaking at the first Zionist conference in Basle in 1897, Herzl declared; "If we should one day gain control of Jerusalem and I am still alive and able to do anything, I will demolish everything there that is not sacred in the Jewish religion..." ]1[

Having secured the political support of the British government, the Zionists became increasingly aggressive in their demands. In 1918, Herzl's successor, Chaim Weizmann, made three demands from Whitehall:

- (1) To lay the foundation of a university in Jerusalem,
- (2) 'The handing over' of the Wailing Wall to the Jews, and;
- (3) A land scheme. Although Balfour agreed to the university project, he urged the Zionist leaders to exercise the utmost caution and restraint on the latter two issues. [2]

With respect to the Wailing Wall, the Chief Administrator in Jerusalem at the time, Major-General Louis Bols, acknowledged that any accession to Zionist demands would 'set alight the whole Muslim world.' ]3[ The basic reason being that the site of the Wailing Wall is believed to be where the Prophet Muhammad r tied his celestial animal, al Buraq, on his miraculous Night Journey and Ascension (al Isra and al Mi'raj). To commemorate this event, Afdal Salahuddin al Ayubi later dedicated it as a religious endowment to be held by Muslims in perpetuity. Accordingly, Islamic law categorically prohibits the sale, lease or rental of any of these lands. Notwithstanding, successive governments allowed pious Jews to worship in front of the Wailing Wall, which they believed was a remnant of the last temple. This congenial and tolerant atmosphere was, however, disrupted and poisoned with the advent political Zionism. The Chief Rabbi in Palestine, Ishaq Kook, did nothing to avert the imminent crisis when he declared on 18 August 1929 that; "it is impossible to have Zion without Jerusalem and Jerusalem without the Jewish temple." ]4[

Arab opposition to Jewish provocation and threats escalated into violent clashes in late August 1929, in which hundreds on both sides died. The disturbances forced the convening of an international commission, which ratified the Islamic position on Jerusalem. The British government was also prompted to issue a white paper reaffirming Muslim ownership of the city with rights of limited access to the Jews. During the remaining years of the Mandate, the Zionists, however, managed with the help of Britain, to gradually change the status quo in Jerusalem. Through the implementation of a series of laws aimed at accelerating immigration the number of Jews in Jerusalem rocketed from 33,970 in 1922 to about 100,000 in 1947.

## Jerusalem

Shortly before the end of the Mandate, the Zionists in April 1948 launched two military offensives to capture Jerusalem. The first from Tel Aviv and the other from positions within the western part of the city. During the offensive the whole of west Jerusalem fell into their hands. Although the international community has given a tacit and, albeit, de facto recognition of this annexation, it must be underscored that this acquiescence is contrary to the terms of UN Resolution 181 which stipulated that all of Jerusalem should be recognised as a corpus separatum under a special international regime.

Soon after the capture of the eastern half of the city in 1967, former Prime Minister Yitshak Rabin declared: "In 1948 we had been forced to leave Jerusalem in the enemy hands, and ever since we have been dogged by the feeling that we must not miss the historic opportunity again". Since then, two rings of Jewish settlements have been erected to the north, east, and south of east Jerusalem. The construction of the Har Homa settlement (on Jebel Abu Ghoneim named after a companion of the Prophet r) by the Netanyahu regime is intended to complete the encirclement and effectual isolation of Jerusalem.

Whereas in 1967 an estimated 90% of the land in east Jerusalem was in Palestinian hands, 87% of it is now controlled by the Israeli government. Be that as it may, 1980 marked a major turning point in the Judaisation of Jerusalem. On 30th. July of that year, the Israeli government passed what it called the "Basic Law" claiming Jerusalem as its undivided and eternal capital. The move was immediately condemned universally as a violation of international law. Hence, the following month the Security Council adopted Resolution 478 "Deciding not to recognise the Basic Law" on Jerusalem and such other actions by Israel that sought to alter the character and status of the city and calling on states to withdraw diplomatic missions from Jerusalem". Similar concerns were again expressed in March 1994 when the Council adopted Resolution 904 after the massacre of Muslim worshippers in Hebron: "Reaffirming its relevant resolutions, which affirmed the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 to the territories occupied by Israel in June 1967, including Jerusalem, and the Israeli responsibility thereunder".

Even in the face of international condemnation, the Israelis have persisted in their relentless campaign to Judaise Jerusalem through land confiscation, settlement expansion and the ethnic cleansing of the city's Arab population. They have, indeed, introduced new political terms to underscore and flaunt their annexation of Jerusalem. The 1980s slogan of a "united and eternal" capital; has been metastasised into the 1990s slogan of "Greater Jerusalem." Under this guise they have been able to seize another 12% of the



West Bank.

In fact, since the signing of the Oslo accords Israel seized:

**26,382** feddans of Palestinian land under the pretext of building closed military areas  
**4,295** for settlement expansion  
**2,984** for the opening up of roads leading to the settlements  
**2,950** for what has been termed nature preserves

Meanwhile, the demolition of Arab homes in east Jerusalem has continued to gain momentum. Between 1990 and 1994, 91 Palestinian homes were levelled to the ground. Still in its efforts of Judaisation, the occupying authorities have withdrawn the identification cards and travel documents of Jerusalemites. Since February 1998 they seized over 600 such documents. Having done so, the Israelis have now ordered the people to leave because their permission to reside had expired.

Al Aqsa mosque

With regard to Al Aqsa mosque, numerous terrorist acts and aggression have, since 1967, been committed against this Islamic sanctuary. Suffice it to recall the arson attack of the 21st. August of 1969 when the entire south wing of the mosque was destroyed including the mimbar (pulpit) installed by Salahuddin al Ayubi over 700 years ago when the Crusaders were driven out in the 12th. Century. The Australian arsonist who carried out the attack was described as mentally deranged. Significantly, many of the attacks against the mosques since 1967 have taken place in the month of August because it is believed that Titus the Roman leader destroyed the Temple on 21 August 70 AD. Hence, attacks were staged in 1967, 1969, 1978, 1981, 1983, 1984, and 1986; not forgetting, of course, the attacks of other months since the occupation began.

While the arson attacks, bombings and shootings in the mosque constituted grave acts of sacrilege, there is no doubt the most dangerous of these activities are the continuous excavations, the purpose of which is to undermine the rock foundations of the mosque. All these aggressions are part and parcel of an official government policy. There are currently over 20 Jewish organisations competing with each other to destroy the Al-Aqsa. They are aided by several Christian Zionist groups. The latter believe that Christianity is an extension of Judaism and that the construction of the temple will hasten the return of Jesus (Isa u), the Messiah. For this reason, they are co-operating with the Jews in their aim to destroy the mosque.

The Judaisation of Jerusalem is not simply a governmental policy, it is in effect the doctrine of a state, assisted by military occupation. But even so, the fact that the Prophet Muhammad r was taken on the Night Journey at a time when the Islamic call (da'awah) was facing its worst opposition is itself instructive. It indicates that whatever the hardships and painful circumstances which Muslims may face today in their various societies and local situations, Jerusalem must not, as a principle of doctrine and faith (aqeedah), be neglected nor forgotten. Furthermore, his prayer there as Imam (Leader) of the Prophets, indicates that the leadership and ownership of Jerusalem had effectually passed to the ummah (community) of Muhammad r. For these reasons the time has, undoubtedly, come for an assertive and co-ordinated Islamic policy on Jerusalem. One in which Muslim scholars and political leaders will take the initiative to ascertain the facts and enlighten the ummah of its religious and historic duties toward the first of the two Qiblas (direction to which a Muslim faces when praying) and third of the holy sanctuaries.

[1]. K. Qasimiyah, Qadiyat al Quds (Beirut:1979), p.12

[2]. A.L. Tibawi, Anglo-Arab Relations and the Question of Palestine 1914-1921, (London:1977), p.284

[3]. F.O. 371/5270, p.200: From Bols to Curzon, 29 June 1920

[4]. M. Abu Hamdah, Al Masjid Al Aqsa Al Mubarak wa ma Yatahadadhu min Hafriyat al Yahud (Amman:1982), p.49

*Abdul Waheed Kassam*

*(Reproduced. Courtesy of Palestine Times, December 1998)*

The Friends of Al-Aqsa conference at Leicester University on 24 October 98 on The Centrality of Al-Aqsa in Islam & The Threats to Al-Aqsa was a concerted effort highlighting the Zionist nightmare in Palestine. Over 500 British men heard the heart-rending stories of Zionist aggression against Al-Aqsa and Palestine and were reminded by Ibrahim Hewitt in his opening statement that the issue was a problem for every Muslim, not just Palestinians and Arabs. Al-Aqsa is the only mosque to be named in the Qur'an, but the inaction of British Muslims made it appear as if that reference had been excised. A British Muslim delegation had visited Palestine in 1988 to examine the Intifada and concern for Al-Aqsa could not be separated from general social and political issues in Palestine. Mentioning a conference in Jerusalem the previous month, calling to re-build the Jewish Temple to replace Al-Aqsa, Hewitt impressed on the conference that Al-Aqsa was in real danger. Rejecting the smear of anti-Semitism, Hewitt stated that many Jews opposed Zionism.

Hewitt reminded Muslims that there were Christian Palestinians and that many Christians were pro-Palestinian. A practical example of the latter was the presence of Christians at the conference and the statement by Rev. Richard Curtis, speaking for the Assistant Bishop of Leicester, William Down, giving warmest greetings to the event and informing the conference of the Lambeth Conference's Resolution 20, stating that Jerusalem was a holy city to three religions, special to both Israelis and Palestinians and calling for the city to be the joint capital of two states.

Dr Daud Abdullah of the Palestinian Return Centre spoke of the long-term Zionist aim to change the boundaries and religious identity of Jerusalem, admitted by Yitzhak Rabin when East Jerusalem was occupied in 1967. From that time, the indigenous people had been moved out and new landmarks constructed, leading to 87% of the city now being in Israeli hands, whilst Arabs building projects accounted for only 12% of the whole 1968. To make way for a Jewish settlement, a Muslim grave-yard had been desecrated. Netanyahu had recently annexed 12% of the West Bank to Jerusalem. In a policy of ethnic cleansing, Palestinian homes were being demolished, repairs of others were prohibited and Jerusalem Arab ID cards were being withdrawn.

He recounted much of the history of the Palestinian issue and noted many UN resolutions condemning Zionist actions. He said that attacks on Al-Aqsa usually happen in August because it is the anniversary of the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. Presently, twenty Jewish groups, with support from Christian Zionists, are attempting to destroy Al-Aqsa. He called for Muslims to respond in a 'more assertive' and 'popularly oriented' fashion and also for a body of Muslim scholars to visit Al-Aqsa.

The Imam of Birmingham Central Mosque, Shaykh Riaz'ul Haq, examined the history and religious importance of Al-Aqsa. Lamenting the absence of interest in Al-Aqsa and the inclination to detach the sanctuary from Makkah and Medina, he argued that any attack on these sanctuaries would result in 'outrage' and 'action'. The sanctity of Al-Aqsa's went back not just to the Miraj and 'Isra, but to creation. The Prophet Ibrahim u, important in Islam, had made hijra to Al-Quds. The Prophet Muhammad r stated that following the hijra to Medina, a second hijra would take place to Al-Quds, where the people would settle. Al-Quds was made a promised land after Mussa u (Moses) and Joshua, for Muslims in general, not only for Bani Isra'il. The prophet 'Isa u (Jesus) was born in the blessed land.

The importance of the Miraj being preceded by the 'Isra to Al-Quds, as opposed to directly from Makkah to Paradise, should be noted. It was the first Qibla, and all the conquests of the Prophet Muhammad r with the exception of Makkah, had been in its direction. It was as central to Islam as Makkah and Medina and the Prophet Muhammad r promised a 500-fold blessing for Salaat there. Al-Quds is the destined site for the resurrection and judgement. Prophet Muhammad r stated that faithful believers would always be present in Bait al-Maqdis.

Dr Azzam Tamimi of Liberty for the Muslim World, recalled that when Jerusalem was conquered by the Muslims in May 637, no looting or desecration occurred and Jerusalem became an open city for all religions,

the rights of Jews and Christians safeguarded by Caliph Umar t. He even refused to pray in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to ensure that later generations would not turn it into a mosque.

When the Crusaders captured Jerusalem on a 'divine mission', 70,000 Jews, Muslims and Arab Christians were murdered in seven days. Al-Aqsa was turned into a barracks and minarets were silenced for 88 years. Under Zionism, yesterday's victims turned into today's oppressors. Zionists acted like the Nazis and the Crusaders. This was not true Christianity or Judaism. Just as the crimes of the Crusaders occasioned their fall, Zionist crimes would have the same consequence. When that occurred, Jerusalem would again be a city of peace and religious liberty.

He condemned Yasser Arafat and the 'peace accord' as being humiliating to Palestinians and Muslims and compared him unfavourably with the great hero Salah ad-Din. He acclaimed Sheikh Ahmed Yassin of Hamas and upheld the right of the Palestinians to liberate themselves, stating they would not be intimidated. Having earlier noted the role of the British Mandate in enabling the Zionist project, he stressed that Muslims must impress the British people with the truth about Palestine.

Yusuf Islam compared the Bani Isra'il in Surah al-Baqarah (verse of the Qur'an) with contemporary Muslims, particularly their rulers, who have the attitude of subservience and slavery to Western powers who maintain their rule. That generation of slaves who left Egypt had to die and a new generation, not knowing slavery, had to replace them. Al-Quds was sanctified because of the 'Isra and Miraj, making the issue vital for Aqida (belief). There was no reference in the Aqida to 'peace for land'; instead, there was the command to Jihad, when Muslim land was invaded. In this regard, Palestine was an Islamic concern, not just for Palestinians, though they faced the test. This conference was the symbol to Palestinian Muslims that they were not alone in that test.

The Zionist state is an illegitimate entity. British Muslims must use the freedom they have in this country to help the Palestinians by being pro-active, not just by marches. He gave the example of how in the Muslim schools issue, British courts, being independent of the state, were used. At the moment, they were being used in regard to the Chilean dictator Pinochet, a man who, like the Israelis, was a torturer. Muslims could use the courts in the same way against Israeli soldiers, guilty of abuses, visiting Golders Green, etc. He called for the Muslim Council of Britain, of which he was treasurer, to take up the issue. He urged Muslims to be pro-active against Zionist organisations, raising funds for causes in Palestine.

The concluding speech was by the special guest, General Secretary of the Jamiat Ulema of Transvaal, South Africa, Shaykh Ibrahim Bham, who also affirmed that the sanctity of Al-Aqsa was coequal with that of Makkah and Medina. This sanctity extended beyond the mosque to the whole precinct and indeed, every inch of the city. Many of the narratives in the Qur'an, such as those of the Bani Isra'il, Musa u and Mariam u happened in the area.

Shaykh Bham told the conference, that the rabbis of Vienna, responding to Herzl's claim that Palestine was 'a land without a people', sent two representatives there in 1897, who brought back the message that 'the bride is beautiful, but she is married to another husband'. Shaykh Bham denounced Zionism as racist, xenophobic nationalism, which relied on religious fervour to gain support. He answered the slur that anti-Zionism was equivalent to anti-Semitism or anti-Judaism by stating that Muslims recognised Judaism as a divine revelation, and as Arabs were Semites, anti-Semitism was impossible for them and Arabs were not blameworthy for the crimes of the Nazis. At any rate, many Orthodox Jews opposed Zionism. He bitterly denounced the 'peace process', since it ignored Al-Quds, presenting only the illusion of peace. Arafat's PNA was only 'a small town government', giving legitimacy to the Apartheid-style situation. True peace, as in South Africa, had to be founded on justice.

In the question time, with an emphasis on practical response, a contribution from the audience to Yusuf Islam proposed that Muslim communities boycott local tourist businesses offering holidays in the Zionist entity, picketing them every Saturday until they end such dealings and reproducing such action against florists selling imported Israeli flowers. This policy of economic sanctions, on the South African model, aimed at pressuring Israeli businessmen to force the Zionist regime to abandon its practices. Yusuf Islam said that this was a very practical suggestion. On this point, Daud Abdullah stated that in breach of international law, the EU imported from Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories and so Muslims should lobby EU Governments against this.

Azzam Tamimi urged Muslims to lobby Governments and the public on the general issue of Palestine.

Another contribution from the floor urged the formation of local branches of Friends of Al-Aqsa, and The Chairman of Friends of Al-Aqsa replied that this was envisaged. Many contributors urged British Muslims to visit Palestine on pilgrimage both to encourage their suffering brothers and sisters and to emphasise that Al-Aqsa is a Muslim sanctuary

## **JERUSALEM AS A BIBLICAL SHRINE: AN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE PART II: NEW TESTAMENT**

27

Anthony McRoy

*Anthony McRoy B.A., B.D, M.A, is an Irish citizen, married with three children, and has worked as a lecturer in an Evangelical Christian theological college, as a religious journalist and researcher, and is currently working on a PhD about the Muslim Community in Britain. He has a lively interest in human rights issues, and Christian-Muslim relations.*

### **The Significance of the Temple at the time of Jesus.**

At the time of Jesus, Jerusalem 'was not so much a city with a temple in it; more like a temple with a small city round it.' [1] The temple, and thus Jerusalem, was '...regarded as the place where YHWH lived and ruled... where... he lived in grace, forgiving them, restoring them, and enabling them to be cleansed of defilement and so to continue as his people..' [2] The ministry of Jesus fulfils this, and since the city no longer possesses sacrificial or divine-indwelling functions, Al-Aqsa is not threatened by the Biblical concept of a holy place.

### **The Time is Fulfilled**

Jesus states in Mark 1:15 - 'The Time is fulfilled, and the Reign of God has drawn near. Repent and believe the good news.' [3] Professor A. M. Hunter holds that the 'Time' (kairos) refers to Isaiah 52:7, predicting the return of the exiles from Babylon '...to Jerusalem with God in their midst...Jesus appeared in Galilee saying in effect: "The time which Isaiah prophesied has come.' [4] Jesus is thus the true Restoration of Israel. This Age of fulfilment relieves the Jerusalem shrine of its central significance, as heaven is 'God's throne and earth His footstool', Matthew 5:34-35 echoing Isaiah 66:1ff.

### **Jesus as the Temple**

Dr R. T. France writes:

In Jesus and his ministry a new work of God, transcending the temple ritual of the Old Testament, has begun. As the temple has been the focus of God's presence among his people, so now it is in Jesus and his new community that God is to be found.[5]

The ethical requirement for enjoying the eschatological Beatific Vision, Matthew 5:8, relates to Psalm 24:3-4, where the concept concerns the Temple. Fenton states that this promise to the 'pure in heart' '...was originally a Palestinian way of saying "appear before God, attend the temple worship, specially that of the great festivals"...' [6] Thus the temple is identified with YHWH Himself. This identification indicates that when Jesus offered forgiveness of sins, Matthew 2:5ff, He was both claiming a divine prerogative and assuming a function of the Temple. Jesus boldly identified Himself with God, and that in terms of sight, John 12:45:[7] the one who sees Him sees the One who sent Him (i.e. God).

In John 12:20ff, some Greeks (i.e. Gentiles) who had ascended (anabainó) on pilgrimage to Jerusalem request to 'see Jesus'. Jesus replies in v22 that the hour had come for Him to be 'glorified', i.e. crucified.[8] When He was thus 'lifted-up' (hupsoó), v32, He would draw all men to Himself. In the Septuagint [9] of Isaiah 2:2ff, hupsoó is used for the exaltation of the Temple Mount, and anabainó is employed for the ascent of the Gentiles to the Mountain of YHWH. Hence, Jesus was presenting Himself as fulfilment of that prophecy: as one previously ascended the Temple Mount to see God, now Gentiles 'ascend' in 'pilgrimage' by 'seeing Jesus', the true Temple Mount, Zion, Jerusalem, etc. This being so, the physical 'Temple Mount'

in Al-Quds is no longer of Biblical significance.

In John 4:4ff, Jesus, answering a Samaritan woman about the identity of the divine shrine, which she equates with Mount Gerizim, in contrast to Jewish claims about Jerusalem, v20, states that the time of eschatological fulfilment had arrived when neither shrine possessed this function, v21. This is because Jesus is the temple - the Word became flesh and 'tabernacled' (skénoó) among us, John 1:14.

One significance of the temple veil being torn at the Crucifixion of Jesus was that the Temple no longer functioned as the dwelling-place of God. [10] France also states it was a divine judgement on the old sacrificial cultus, foreshadowing the destruction of A.D. 70, God thereby 'desecrating' the temple. [11] Matthew 21:42-44 [12] attacks the Temple priesthood, quoting Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14 [13], and presents Jesus as the rejected stone which became the corner-stone. N. T Wright states that the idea of the 'stone' is '...closely linked with the idea of the eschatological temple.' [15]

### **The Church as the Temple**

Because of the Mystical Union of Christ and His Church, the Church is the Temple/Jerusalem. Ephesians 2:20-22 present the Church as 'a holy temple', and 'a place in which God dwells by His Spirit', Christ being the corner-stone, and also the means of access to the Father, v18, another temple feature. This has particular relevance to modern Jerusalem since the context is of Jewish-Gentile relationships, with v14 stating that Christ has demolished the 'wall of hostility.' In the Jerusalem temple, Gentiles were marginalised, being segregated from their Jewish fellow-worshippers by a wall. In the eschatological temple, that barrier has been removed; Gentiles are no longer aliens, but fellow-citizens, v19, a pertinent concept for present-day Jerusalem.

2 Corinthians 6:16 states that God indwells the Temple-Church, linking this concept with the Covenantal promise that God would dwell among His People, quoting Ezekiel 37:27. It is noteworthy that 2 Corinthians 6:2 presents the Messianic era - not events since 1948 - as the fulfilment of Isaiah 49:8 - the Restoration of Israel and Zion.

### **The 'Cleansing' of the Temple**

Matthew 21:12ff and parallels present Jesus 'cleansing' the temple, a Messianic act prophesied in Malachi 3:1-3. The Temple's Court of the Gentiles was where pilgrims exchanged currency for the temple tax and obtained sacrificial animals. Jesus expressed His indignation at swindling or even commercialisation per se in the temple precincts, John 2:16. He called the Temple 'My Father's house', emphasising His own authority over the Temple as Son of God. This is important for Christians; Jesus was claiming ownership of the Temple area, and thus of Jerusalem and Palestine. [15]

Another nuance to the 'cleansing' is its location. The Court of the Gentiles was the only place Gentiles could enter the temple precincts. Commercial activity was '...effectually preventing the one area of the Temple that was open to the Gentiles from being a place of prayer.' [16] In Mark 11:17 Jesus conflates Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11 in stating that the Temple was 'for all nations' - not just the Jews. The Temple, and thus Jerusalem, was not a 'national' shrine in the emphasis could be on the distinction between religious nationalism (den of léstés as insurrectionists) and religious universalism ('for all nations'). Hence, the temple cleansing is rich in ethical symbolism for modern Jerusalem. Moreover, the 'cleansing' should be seen as a prophetic 'acted parable' of judgment [21] and destruction. [22]

### **Jesus as Jerusalem**

We previously noted the close connection between Theophanies and holy shrines. Divine-human encounter involves both divine presence and revelation. Jesus is YHWH - John 8:58, and his name, Emmanuel, denotes divine presence, Matthew 1:23. In Isaiah 2:3, the law - the Torah, meaning 'a body of teaching' [23] - goes out from Zion and Jerusalem as revelation. In Matthew 5:21ff, the Torah goes out from Jesus. John 1:18 and 17:6 present Jesus as the revealer of God. Luke 2:32, quoting Isaiah 60:1-3 about Jerusalem, calls Jesus 'a Light to the Gentiles', cf. John 8:12; 9:5. Essentially, Jesus is the true Jerusalem.

## **Prophecies of Judgement on Israel, Jerusalem and the Temple**

Israel was warned when given the Mosaic Covenant about the grave consequences of forsaking YHWH - Deuteronomy 28:15, 49-57. Terrible punishments would result; such occurred at the Fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC, and in AD 70. The parables of Judgement symbolised imminent, climactic divine judgement on the land, Jerusalem and the Temple because of the rejection of Jesus:

[a] Matthew 21:19 - the curse on the fig tree, symbolising Jerusalem and Israel, indicated that the Messiah had come and had the right to expect from the 'tree' the very purpose for its existence; fruit! So when He found none, its days were numbered. Compare Luke 13:6-9 and John the Baptist in Matthew 3:7-10:

...You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance...every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

[b] The Parable of the Wicked Tenants, Matthew 21:33 - the vine was the symbol of Israel, Psalm 80; Jeremiah 2:21; Isaiah 5:1ff, especially v7; 3:14. In the latter text, the Land is probably to the fore, cf. 4:2ff. The Matthaean text reflects this understanding. The Land was the symbol of, and means to the experience of the Kingdom of God. It should be remembered that the Torah was adamant that the Land did not belong to Israel, but rather to God - Leviticus 25:23 - Israel were simply His tenants.

The interpretation is that the prophetic revelation to Israel had now climaxed in God's Son, but popular reaction had been rejection of the prophets, and murder of His Son, to obtain the 'inheritance' for themselves; 'inheritance' denoted the Land - Deuteronomy 12:8, and all the Covenant disposed - Galatians 3:18. The vineyard - the Kingdom - is consequently given to others, a fruitful nation, the Church - v41, 43.

[c] Matthew 22:1-14 - the Parable of the Wedding Banquet. 'The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son', v2, but whose invitations were declined, his servants experiencing hostility and murder - v6. His response was to send in his army, destroy those murderers and burn their city. These words are a stark prophecy of the Roman siege and destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

[d] Luke 19:41-44 - Jesus weeping over the fate of Jerusalem:

The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognise the time of your visitation.

This did occur in AD 70 - the Romans surrounded the city, and besieged it for five months. After breaking through, they killed every Jew save a few for the gladiatorial contests, and levelled the city. Jesus predicted this terrible destruction of the city to the women of Jerusalem in Luke 23:28-31 - cf. Deuteronomy 28; Revelation 6:15-17.

[e] John 11:48 - the priests warn that unless Jesus was stopped, the Romans would destroy 'our place and our nation' - i.e. the city/temple and nation. High Priest Caiaphas then refers to 'one man dying for the nation' instead, which the gospel presents as an ironic prophecy - i.e. because of the death of Jesus, the Romans in the providence of God would destroy Jerusalem and its temple.

As Wright states, 'The promises to Jerusalem, to Zion, are now transferred to Jesus and his people. Meanwhile Jerusalem herself has become...the city whose destruction signals the liberation of the true people of God.' [24]

## **A Shrine without walls**

In Acts 6:12ff, the deacon Stephen, before the Sanhedrin, is accused of 'speaking against this holy place'. In his 'defence' speech, he states of the temple that 'the Most High does not dwell in houses made by men', quoting Isaiah 66:1ff. De Young suggests that this should be translated 'God "does not continue to dwell" or "no longer dwells" in temples.' [25] Hence, God will not recognise a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. Paul repeats in 17:24 that God does not dwell in humanly-built temples. It is also noteworthy that when some Christians are persecuted in Ephesus, the town official defends them by declaring that they are not 'robbers

of temples', 19:37, a sin to which the epistle to the Romans refers in 2:22, asking Jewish Christians if they avoid this transgression.

It should be borne in mind that the temples were pagan, so the imperative is not to disturb the shrines of other religious confessions. Again, this is rich in imagery with respect to attempts to wrest the 'Temple Mount' from the Muslims [26]

The Church as Jerusalem [27]

Israel, Jerusalem and the Temple were meant to be a 'light to the nations', Isaiah 49:6; in Matthew 5:14 Jesus describes His followers as 'the Light of the World and a 'city on a hill' - i.e. Zion. Jeremiah 2:2 figuratively pictures Jerusalem as the Bride of YHWH, Isaiah 54:5-8; Ezekiel 16:8, 43, 60. In the New Testament, Christ is the Husband and the Church is His Bride, 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:31. Hence, what was once ascribed to the city in Palestine is now ascribed to the followers of Jesus. The Church has the 'fingerprints' of the Holy City.

What is especially significant in regard to Al-Aqsa is Revelation 21:22; the new Jerusalem has no temple, since God and 'the Lamb' are its temple. In Ezekiel 47:1ff, the river of life flows from the temple; in Revelation, it flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb, 22:1-2. Crucially, 21:1-3 present the New Heavens and the New Earth in which the New Jerusalem exists as the fulfilment of the Abrahamic Covenant - the dwelling of God is then with men. Hence, the Promised Land/Holy City in the culmination of the Messianic era is the entire globe, a thought echoed in Romans 4:13, where it is stated that the promised inheritance of Abraham and his seed was the world (kosmos) [28]

### **The Heavenly City**

Deuteronomy 12:7 connects liturgical rejoicing before the presence of YHWH with the Elect Place, corresponding to the frequent New Testament injunctions to 'Rejoice in the Lord' or to experience 'Joy in the Holy Spirit' - Philippians 4:4; Romans 14:17. This receives territorial expression in Matthew 25:21 - 'the joy of your Lord', in the New Earth, the 'inheritance' (cf. Deuteronomy 12:11) and 'kingdom' prepared since the creation of the world - v34.

Hebrews 12:22 states that in coming to Christ, we have come to Mount Zion, the City of God, the heavenly Jerusalem. The Old Testament saints, like Abraham, were looking for a heavenly city, 11:8-10, 13-16. If the true Jerusalem is heavenly, and we live in the age of eschatological fulfilment, 11:39-40, the earthly city is of no theological consequence. Similarly, in Galatians 4:24-25, the earthly Jerusalem is equated with Hagar, the slave woman, and spiritual bondage is declared its characteristic in the present age, i.e. the Messianic era. In contrast, Christians are children of the Jerusalem 'above', which corresponds to Sarah, the free woman, 4:26ff. Hence, the 'holy city' of the Messianic era is not Al-Quds, but the heavenly Jerusalem.

This is especially relevant considering the question of priesthood. A temple, in Biblical terms, requires a sacrificing priesthood. Any campaign to construct a Jewish temple on the site of the Haram al-Sharif would require such a priesthood - the Cohanim - who must be of pure Aaronic/Levitical descent. [29] Even if someone could be found fulfilling that requirement, in Christian terms it would be irrelevant, since with the coming of Christ, the Levitical priesthood has been superseded by the priesthood of Melchizedek, the Palestinian Gentile priest-king of Salem, Hebrews 7:12. Thus, the Levitical priesthood held only a temporary feature in the divine plan. Hebrews 7:7 states of Abraham's tithe to Melchizedek, 'But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater'. As McConville states, the author presents

...the significance of the incident in terms of his argument that Melchizedek represents a superior priesthood to that of Levi. Both Melchizedek's blessing of Abram and the latter's gift of a tithe imply the priest-king's superiority to him, the father of Levi (7:4-10).[30]

This has relevance for the contemporary situation in Palestine, especially Al-Aqsa, since vv9-10 state that Levi, the progenitor of the Jewish priesthood, effectively recognized the superiority of the priesthood of the same Palestinian Gentile, as he was in the loins of his ancestor Abraham when the patriarch paid the tithe to Melchizedek. Since Jesus is the priest after the order of Melchizedek who sacrificed Himself, the Levitical

priesthood and temple are superseded:

Clearly, therefore, the author of Hebrews has applied Abram's encounter with Melchizedek to an issue which was paramount for him, namely the fact that Jesus transcended all previous institutions given to Israel.[31]

Professor F. F. Bruce, one of the most renowned Biblical scholars, agrees with this picture, stating of the author of the 'Hebrews'

Like several other New Testament writers, he applied to the exalted Jesus the oracle of Psalm 110:1, where God says to the anointed king, 'Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool'. But he drew his readers' attention to another oracle in verse 4 of the same psalm, addressed presumably to the same person:

The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.'

...part of the argument of the letter to the Hebrews is designed to show that the priest of Melchizedek's order is greater in every way than a priest of Aaron's line.[32]

Hence, from an Evangelical Christian perspective, if a Levitical-Jewish temple were to be built, it would contravene the divine purpose, since the only priesthood which operates in this age is that after the order of Melchizedek - and only one person, qualifies for that office - Jesus, Hebrews 6:20; 7:17.

## **CONCLUSION**

Our tour through the Jewish-Christian Scriptures shows that the idea of a shrine was intimately tied to the phenomenon of theophany, and/or covenant, the common factor being the promise of the divine manifestation. Jerusalem is at best marginal in this regard in early Biblical history, and as we have seen, the shrine is first located elsewhere. God was quite willing to destroy the site of His shrine because of human sin, as He demonstrated at Shiloh, and then with Jerusalem in 586 B.C and 70 A.D. The implication of Isaiah 66:1ff is that the construction of the original temple was a divine concession to human infirmity, but was never meant to be a permanent historical feature. Rather, YHWH is the true sanctuary.

Thus, when John 1:14 speaks of the Incarnation as God 'tabernacling' among us, the gospel is reflecting the Biblical concept of divine manifestation irrespective of walls and buildings. Since Jesus is Jerusalem/Temple, there can be no expectation of divine blessing for any purported edifice built upon a displaced Haram al-Sharif, even more so because His is the only valid priesthood today. Finally, Jerusalem was originally the shrine of a Palestinian Gentile, and throughout the Bible we find a Gentile association with the divine shrine wherever it may be, and also the idea that the shrine was for all nations. As Christians, we believe that Jesus remains the 'place' of worship, sacrifice reconciliation and access to God for all nations, Ephesians 2:18, and by analogy the earthly Jerusalem should likewise be for all ethnic groups and religious confessions a cosmopolitan city of justice, peace and equality.

## **FOOTNOTES**

[1] Wright, N. T., *The New Testament and the People of God*, (SPCK, London, 1992, Second impression 1993), p. 225.

[2] Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, pp. 224-225.

[3] My translation.

[4] Hunter, A. M., *Introducing New Testament Theology*, (SCM, London, 1957, third Impression 1966), pp. 16-17.

[5] France, R. T., *The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, (IVP, Leicester, 1985), p. 203

[6] Fenton, J. C, *The Gospel of St. Matthew*, (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1963), p. 81.

[7] I appreciate that Muslims will be unable to agree with the presentation of the deity of Christ, However, I am examining the Biblical data, which supports it, and is pertinent to our theme.

[8] Again, I am aware of Muslim objections to the Christian doctrine of the Cross, but I am simply presenting the Gospel material.

[9] Greek translation of the Old Testament.



- [10] Morris, Leon, *The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, (IVP, Leicester, 1974), p. 330. The suggestion comes from Godet.
- [11] France, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, p. 400. Nineham, D. E., *The Gospel of St. Mark*, (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1969 revised edition), considers something similar, p. 430.
- [12] With parallels in Mark 12:10 and Luke 20:17ff, quoted in Acts 4:11, and alluded to in Ephesians 2:20ff and 1 Peter 2:6ff.
- [13] It should be noted that in this text, YHWH is described as a 'sanctuary'. Also, the theme of the text is a prophecy against Israel and Jerusalem.
- [14] Wright, N. T., *Jesus and the Victory of God*, (SPCK, London, 1996), p. 499.
- [15] As Muslims regard Jesus as one of their prophets, whilst rejecting His deity, presumably they also may find some significance in this, especially with regard to Al-Aqsa..
- [16] Cranfield, C. E. B., *The Gospel According to Saint Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, (C.U.P, London, 1959, 1972 revised edition), p. 358.
- [17] Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, p. 358. See also Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 419.
- [18] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, pp. 419-420.
- [19] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 420.
- [20] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 420.
- [21] De Young, J. C., *Jerusalem in the New Testament*, (J. H. Kok, Kampen, 1960), p. 63.
- [22] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 421.
- [23] McComiskey, Thomas Edward, *The Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants*,(IVP, UK edition, Leicester, 1985), p. 22.
- [24] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 363.
- [25] De Young, *Jerusalem in the New Testament*, p. 56.
- [26] Of course, I am not equating Al-Aqsa with a pagan temple, but the principle is valid.
- [27] By 'the Church' I mean Christians as a body, rather than any institution
- [28] See Wright, N. T., *Jerusalem in the New Testament*, in Walker, P. W. L., (ed.), *Jerusalem Past and Present in the Purposes of God*, (Paternoster Press, Carlisle and Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1994 edition), p.67.
- [29] Cohanim -the Levitical priests. Within Israel the tribe of Levi were called to perform the priestly function for the nation with respect to the Tabernacle - Exodus 32:25-29, Numbers 3:5-13, with the special calling of the family of Aaron. Calling was by physical descent, and was only disqualified by physical disability Leviticus 21:16-24. Most Jews will admit that even if someone has 'Cohen' for s surname, the chances of his being a pure-blooded descendant of the priesthood are negligible.
- [30] McConville, Abram and Melchizedek, p. 117.
- [31] McConville, Abram and Melchizedek, p. 117.
- [32] Bruce, F. F., *The Work of Jesus*, (Kingsway, Eastbourne, 1979), 1989 edition, pp. 73-74.