

A History of Jerusalem¹

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Introduction

Jerusalem, al-Quds al-Sharif (The Noble Holy City), has a long and rich history, accentuated by its religious, symbolic and strategic significance. It stands as a witness to the life and cultures of the great number of peoples, who have lived, belong or ruled over it. The long history, central importance and spiritual imagery of the city have generated a vast literature of various narratives on the question of Jerusalem. And owing to the emotion the city arouses, few authors have been able to resist coloring their work with selective analysis aimed at showing which group of people has the most valid “claim” of ownership or belonging to the city. The result is that one can now find several sources to support some argument, and that there is little consensus about long periods of the city’s history. Indeed, there are probably few subjects that have generated so much mutually contradictory research and analysis. Therefore, a broad review of Jerusalem’s history should not focus on details but rather try to notice the general trends that combine to form the legacy of Jerusalem. The diversity and holiness of the city as well as its potential as a center for the meeting of diverse civilizations and intellectuals are the greatness of Jerusalem. It is this legacy that we who deal with Jerusalem in the present must strive to protect.

¹ This article was first published in *Jerusalem Reader: from occupation to city of peace*, edited by Ali Kazak, Canberra: Palestine Publications, (1st edition 1997, 2nd edition 2003), 3rd edition, 2019, pp. 12-24.

The land, its people and history

As recorded in: Religious, books, legends, recourses and historic documents. Over 5000 years ago, after a wave of drought struck the Arabian peninsula, the **Canaanites**, tribes of Arab Semites, came to and settled in the territories east of the Mediterranean Sea that make up present-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine.^[1] The Jebusites, a Canaanite subgroup, founded Jebus, Jerusalem in the place where it is located today and they built the first wall around it, one possessing 30 towers and seven gates.^[2] Approximately 2000 years later, the **Philistines**, coming from Crete, arrived in the land of Canaan. They mixed with the Canaanite tribes and lived in the southwestern area of modern Palestine on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, in the area that now stretches from the Gaza Strip through Ashdod and Ashkelon. The Canaanites gave the territories they inhabited the biblical name “The Land of Canaan” while the Philistines gave it the name Philistine or “**Palestine**”.

The Canaanites found that they were in a strategic location and surrounded by powerful empires originating from Egypt to the southwest, across the Mediterranean to the west, and Mesopotamia and Asia to the northeast. Over the millennia before the birth of Christ, Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Mongolians, Greeks and Romans all grew up around the land of the Canaanites and Philistines and came to rule for varying lengths of time. The area’s geographical position meant that it served as both a bridge between these regional powers, as well as an arena for the struggles and conflicts between them. As a consequence the Canaanites could never establish a strong and unified state, and their political organizations took the shape of independent cities possessing governments bound together by federative relationships. Among the most prominent coastal cities of the Philistines, Canaanites and Phoenicians who inhabited the area of modern-day Palestine were Beirut (Bairtuyus), Sidon, Tyre, Acre,

Ashkelon and Gaza. The Canaanite cities in the interior included Jericho, Nablus (Shikim) and Jerusalem (Jebus). The religion of these earliest civilizations of Palestine was centered on nature: the sky was the Father God and earth was the Mother God.^[3] These Semitic peoples of Canaan formed the base of the stock from whom the Palestinians of today descend.

In terms of geography, demography, society, economy, and cultural life, Jerusalem has been the center of Palestine and the major meeting point of important east-west and north-south transportation axes. Indeed, from the times of the earliest civilizations in Palestine, Jerusalem has been the most important part of an inseparable from Palestine. Thus, it is said that “whoever controls Jerusalem is in a position to dominate all of Palestine”. Herein lie the roots of the troubled and conflicted narrative to understand the “history” of the city of Jerusalem.

In around the 18th century BC, Abraham came from Ur in south Mesopotamia (Iraq) to the Land of Canaan. He settled somewhere in the Jordan Valley. As the old and new testaments had not been revealed when he was alive, Abraham religion was neither a Jewish nor a Christian, but a believer in the oneness of God. He was reported in Genesis as worshipping “the most high God.” The Holy Qur’an mentions that he was a “Muslim,” not in the modern definition of one who follows the laws revealed in the Qur’an, but rather in the sense of having given his “submission to the will of God.” Thus Christians, Muslims and Jews still pray for him in all their prayers, as they believe God has enjoined them to do. Abraham’s concubine Egyptian Hagar bore his son Ishmael, to whom present-day Arabs now trace their descent; meanwhile his first wife Sarah bore his son Isaac, to whom present-day Jews claim their lineage. Abraham moved to a place near Hebron (al-Khalil), where he lived preaching monotheism. When he

died, his two sons, Ishmael and Isaac buried him in the same cave in which his wife Sarah was buried.

Around the year 1400 BC, the 12 sons of Jacob (Isaac's son) left the area of Harram for Egypt. They integrated with the Egyptians, and Joseph, the youngest of Jacob's sons, married the daughter of the high priest. Originally a small band of people, they multiplied and gained strength for several hundred years in Egypt, becoming known as the "Israelites". It was in Egypt that Moses, "the founder of Judaism and the foremost lawgiver," yet a prophet to all three revealed religions, was born and trained in Egyptian philosophy, becoming learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.^[4] Moses, along with his people, left Egypt around the 13th century BC. He wandered for 40 years in the Sinai, and during this time he received the Divine Law, at Mount Sinai (Tur).

After the death of Moses, Joshua assumed leadership and led his people to the west across the Jordan River into Canaan. The first Canaanite city Joshua conquered and occupied was Jericho, which he destroyed along with its inhabitants. Then he took control of Yashuu' (Bayt Ele), Likhish, and Hebron, although the Philistines blocked their advance toward the coast in the area between Gaza and Jaffa and the Canaanites kept them from occupying Jerusalem. When they arrived in Canaan, they were influenced by the Canaanites and followed them in religious rituals, especially in the presentation of sacrificial offerings to the God Baal.^[5]

For the next 150 years, the new comers "shared" with its Philistines and Canaanites of portions of the territories area of modern Palestine. And the Canaanites (Jebusites) continued living and controlling Jerusalem. But no one group was able to consolidate control over the whole territories. There were numerous conflict, struggles and battles between these groups, which each maintained its own "culture" and separated entity.

Around 1000 BC, “King” David was able to subjugate the petty states of Edom, Moab and Ammon. For seven years, he took Hebron as his capital, but then moved the center of his rule to Jerusalem for the last 33 years of his reign. After him, rule passed on to his son Solomon. According to Jewish narrative, he built a place of worship known as “Solomon’s Temple”. This temple became the center of religious life and the primary symbol for Jews.

After Solomon’s death, his kingdom was split into two sections: the Kingdom of Israel in the north, made up of ten tribes, with Samaria (Sabastia) as its capital, and the Kingdom of Judea in the south, made up of two tribes, with Jerusalem as its capital. Chronic struggles between the two entities, as well as battles pitting them against the Canaanites and Philistines, characterized this volatile era of the Near East’s history.^[6]

Around 720 BC, the Assyrians under King Sargon destroyed the Israelite Kingdom in the north. In 600 BC the Babylonians, under the command of Nebuchadnezzar, conquered the southern Kingdom, destroying Solomon’s Temple in approximately 586 BC. In both instances, most of the population was led away in captivity to Assyria and Babylon in Mesopotamia. As for Jerusalem, it became a Babylonian Colony. Around 538 BC, Cyrus, King of Persia, was able to conquer the Babylonian Empire (Mesopotamia). He moved on in his conquests until he occupied Syria and then Palestine, including Jerusalem. He permitted Nebuchadnezzar’s captives to return to Palestine, and a “Second Temple” was completed in 515 BC.

As the Greek Empire flourished (they even ruled Jerusalem for about seven years) Palestine fell under the rule of the Ptolemies from Egypt (322–200 BC), and then for a spell under the rule of the Seleucids of Syria from 200 to 142 BC. In this year, the Maccabees (Jews) revolted against the rule of King Antiochus IV, who had damaged “Solomon’s

Temple” and forced the inhabitants to renounce Judaism and embrace Greek paganism.

Around 63 BC, after the Romans had overcome the Seljuks in Syria, the Roman general Pompey gained control over Jerusalem. With the help of the Romans, Herod became King of Judea in the year 40 BC. His rule lasted until his death in 4 BC. During his time, “A second Temple” was reconstructed in Jerusalem and the persecution, trial and crucifixion of Jesus Christ ^[7] took place, after which time came the call to propagate the Christian faith.

In the age of Titus, around 70 AD, the Romans reoccupied the city of Jerusalem. Under Hadrian several decades later, the final remnants of the inhabitants were subjugated and driven out of Palestine. The Romans erected a new city on the ruins of Jerusalem, which they named Aelia Capitolina with reference to the emperor Aelius Hadrianus. Around 395 AD, Jerusalem became a Byzantine and Christian city. But although Palestine and its inhabitants became a part of the Byzantine Empire politically and religiously, the life and culture of the local Canaanites remained focused on Jerusalem. ^[8]

After a brief period of control by Persia in the early seventh century AD, Palestine and the rest of Syria emerged from the rule of the Romans and entered the sphere of the Arab-Islamic Empire. Jerusalem has been the first direction toward which the Muslims prayed (*qibla*) “the first of the two *qiblas*” and Palestine “the precincts God has blessed.” ^[9]

In 638 AD, the second Arab Muslim Caliph, Omar Ibn al-Khattab, arrived in Jerusalem. It is important to note that for the approximately 1400 years from the coming of the Arab-Muslim civilization to Syria including Palestine through to the current century, Jerusalem remained Arab, from the standpoint of culture heritage, language and demographics.

Caliph Omar believed that God had commanded respect for the holiness of the city of Jerusalem and the acknowledgment of *Ahl al-*

Kitab (the people of the book). According to Arab-Muslim, the freedom of religious worship for *Ahl al-Kitab* in Jerusalem is God-given and thus cannot be contested by any governor. Therefore, Omar did not take the city by force but rather initiated “the Covenant of Omar”, an agreement that established Arab-Muslim political control over the city but recognized the inalienable right to freedom of religion for Jews and Christians in Jerusalem. Omar entrusted to two Arab Muslim families in Jerusalem (Nuseibeh and Judeh) the keys of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. He did so in order to establish the equal rights of all inhabitants, that the church is a holy place not to be damaged, disrespected, or violated in any way, and as a solution to the bickering between various Christian sects over who should control the church. Of the Arab families living in the city, some converted to Islam in time, while others retain their Christian faith to this day. Among these old Jerusalem Christian and Muslim Arab families are the Judahs, the Nassars, the Haddads, the Khalidis, the Alamis, the Nuseibehs, and the Husseinis.^[10]

Arab-Muslim rule prevailed over Jerusalem and Palestine from the seventh century AD until the beginning of the 20th century, with the exception of the period of the Crusades. The Crusaders captured the city in 1099 AD, saw it liberated by the Ayyubids under Saladin in 1187 AD, and then recaptured it in 1229 AD. Some 15 years later, the Arab-Muslims again established their rule, and the city did not fall from their hands until the British Military occupation in World War I, in 1917.

The Arab-Islamic dynasties the Umayyads, the Abbasids, the Fatimids, the Seljuks, the Ayyubids, the Mamelukes, the Ottomans, and the Hashemites respected the religious and historical “status quo” of the holy places established in the Covenant of Omar Ibn al-Khattab. They all shared in the reconstruction of Jerusalem, preserving the sanctity of its heritage and developing its Islamic and Arab legacy. These dynasties strove to reconstruct al-Aqsa Mosques, referred to in the first verse of

Surah 17 of the Qur'an.^[11] Finally, Arab-Muslim rulers were eager to give Jerusalem a special status; the first Umayyad Caliph Muaawiyah linked his own personal identity with Jerusalem, calling himself the Caliph of Bait al-Maqdis.^[12] The Caliph Abd al-Malik erected, in 691, the magnificent dome of the rock mosque (*Masjed Qubbat al-Sakhra*). It is of people belief that Prophet Muhammad (Al-Isra' wel Mi'raj) ascended to heaven from that area. He also re-built the Mosque of al-Aqsa in the southern part of the area of al-Haram al-Sharif, to take the place of the wooden building of the old mosque. These two mosques were restored and embellished by subsequent Arab Muslim rulers.

Jerusalem's modern history:

The wave of nationalism that swept Europe in the 19th century caught the attention of all minorities and led to the rise of various movements in Europe. The term "Zionist movement" can be defined as referring to the plans to establish "Jewish entity" in Palestine and a process to bring "Jews" into areas predominantly inhabited by Palestinians. It has been realized in a two-step process: first, Jewish immigrants arrive in Palestine, and then they are integrated into special colonies. However, such a policy cannot succeed without a "force" of de-Palestinization. The Zionist movement has undertaken to achieve this primarily through control over Palestinian land, work, natural resources, government and sovereignty; and the uprooting and expulsion of Palestinians from Palestine. Zionist concepts of (and policies and practices toward) Jerusalem and Palestine have centered on these ideas, and have moved through several stages:

- As a cooperating partner in European schemes to manipulate the Arab world; as a link, under the Capitulations System, between Europe and its interests in the Arab world;

- As a political movement in the tradition of colonial-settler movements;
- As a political movement aligned with the traditional colonial regimes;
- As the manifestation of a power that rivals and serves as a substitute for the imperialist powers.

A brief look at developments over the past several hundred years will serve to illustrate the above claims.

European manipulation

For hundreds of years in Spain, Jews flourished and formed a cultural bridge between Islam and Christianity. And while Arab-Islamic civilization dominated the Middle East at that time, Jerusalem and Palestine were often the crossroads and meeting place for religious pilgrims and intellectuals of the major three monotheistic religions.

But the rise of colonialism as the primary force in international politics by the 17th century affected the Jews' interests and positions. Influential Jewish figures cooperated with the imperialist schemes in the Arab world of the European powers where they lived. This is precisely what happened, for example, during Napoleon's campaign against the Arab East in 1798, and Napoleon asked the Jewish leader to support his conquests. The Jews joined him and backed his campaign, although when he failed in his attempt to conquer Palestine and retreated from Acre, they retreated with him and Palestine remained Arab.^[13]

The Capitulations System

At the end of the eighteenth century, the increase of European interests in the Near East and the corresponding decline of the Ottoman Empire led to the Capitulations System in which European powers were able to gain privileges and footholds in the Middle East in return for bribes and favors to the Ottoman rulers. Through the protection and guidance of foreign consulates (British, French, Austrian, and Russian), a number of Jewish activist and institutions (Moses Montefiore, the Rothschild family, and Alliance Française) were able to establish a “Jewish quarter” outside the walls of Jerusalem.^[14] This quarter later on became the core of the Jewish society in the city. They included the Montefiore Quarter, established in 1859 to the west of Jaffa Gate; Mishkanot Shaananim, established in 1860 in front of Jaffa Gate; and Nahlat Shivva, also founded in 1860, on the road to Jaffa. Between the years 1875 and 1878, Mea She’arim and Ivan Israel were established.^[15] By 1882 the Jewish community (Yishuv) in Palestine lived in four urban areas, namely Jerusalem, Hebron, Tiberias, and Safad,^[16] and it constituted six percent (6%) of the population of Palestine.^[17] It was contained within six colonies whose total area was 62,500 *dunums* (one *dunum* is equal to 1000 square meters or just under a quarter-acre). The populations were composed primarily of Russian and Romanian immigrants who came after the events of 1881–82 in Russia.^[18] One of the Zionist settlers expressed the nature of the political thinking during this period in saying: “The final goal is eventually to gain control of Palestine and restore to the “Jewish people” the political independence of which it has been “deprived” for 2000 years.”^[19]

Continuing to work under foreign guidance and protection, and inspired by European commercial and investment projects, Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), in his booklet *The Jewish State* (1896), called for a political movement similar to European colonial-settler movements.

Herzl wanted the Zionist movement to be a new model for colonial-settler movements, and he described it as being “a portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of “civilization” opposed to “barbarism.”^[20] He described his plan and the means that he wanted to employ for colonizing Palestine with these words:

Let “sovereignty” be given to us on a piece of land... and we will take care of what follows... The plan is simple in its form, although complicated in its execution... Two organizations will be in control of executing the plan: The Jewish Society and the Jewish Company.^[21]

In his diary, Herzl recorded the need to expropriate land in Palestine and “spirit” the population across the borders.^[22] He also added: “If we one day capture Jerusalem, and I am still alive and capable of doing anything, then I will destroy everything not sacred to the Jews in it.”^[23]

Zionist political thinking during this period was embodied in the political announcements of the Zionist movement, crystallized at the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897.^[24] Other institutional developments within the Zionist movement followed soon after.^[25] But such plans to set up an exclusively “Jewish state” in Arab Palestine and to control Jerusalem essentially failed, even after the end of World War I, when British colonial offices sponsored the Zionist colonial-settler movement.^[26] Indeed, during the first phase of Zionist activity, between the years 1878 and 1918, the area of land over which Zionist-Jews gained control in Palestine amounted to 2.48 percent of the total country.^[27] By 1918 the number of Jews in Palestine did not exceed 55,000, while Palestinian inhabitants numbered 700,000; that is, eight percent of the population was Jewish and 92 percent was Palestinian.^[28]

The British occupation (1917-1947)

With the end of World War I, the British had contracted three mutually contradictory promises for the future of Palestine. The Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 with the French and Russian government's proposed that Palestine be placed under an international administration. The Hussein-MacMahon Correspondence of 1915–16 assured that Palestine would be included within the zone of Arab independence. Meanwhile, the Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917 encouraged the colonization of Palestine by Zionists and to establish a "Jewish homeland" under British protection.^[29] In the end, Britain chose to adhere to the alliance with the Zionist movement. A short while after General Allenby's troops occupied Jerusalem in 1917; Allenby summoned McLean, a civil engineer for the city of Alexandria, to draft the first infrastructural plan for the city of Jerusalem. McLean accomplished his task in 1918, and his plan became the basis for all of the others that followed in years to come.^[30]

McLean's plan divided Jerusalem into four areas: the Old City and its walls; the areas surrounding the Old City; East Jerusalem; and West Jerusalem. He prohibited building in the areas surrounding the Old City and placed restrictions on building in East Jerusalem, while West Jerusalem was declared an area open to development.^[31] Since the Jewish community of Jerusalem resided in a part of West Jerusalem, McLean's plan helped to strengthen and develop the West area of the city at the expense of the other three.

In 1919 the King-Crane Commission, the first international fact-finding committee ever sent to the Middle East, advised against a Zionist Jewish entity in Palestine and recommended that a "wholly independent Syria [including Lebanon and Palestine] should be established, on the principle of the right of self-determination."^[32] Britain ignored these recommendations.

In 1922 Britain was designated by the League of Nations as the mandatory power for Palestine, and the Palestine Mandate became effective on 29 September 1923.^[33] The second paragraph of the preamble to the Mandate for Palestine incorporated the Balfour Declaration, and the World Zionist Organization was given the responsibility to advise and cooperate with the British administration in the economic, social, and general development of the country. Many Zionist colonial organizations moved to Jerusalem, such as the Jewish National Fund (Keren Kayemeth Yisrael) and the World Zionist Organization. Meanwhile, an armed force (Haganah) was formed in March 1920.^[34]

In March 1921 Herbert Samuel was appointed the first High Commissioner to Palestine. He hastened to issue laws for the facilitation and realization of the British-Zionist alliance for the establishing of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, e.g. the Land Transfer Ordinance of 1920 and the Palestinian Citizenship Law, designed to open the doors for Jewish immigration. He recognized the Jewish Agency as an official organization, and he formed a new, appointed, municipal council for Jerusalem consisting of two Muslims (one as mayor), two Christians, and two Jews (one as deputy mayor).^[35] Around this time “new Jewish quarters” were established in the eastern part of the city, such as Rumania (1921), Galipot (1922), Bait Hankered (1923), Meeker Hakim, Meeker Baruch, Rah via, and Karat Moshe (1924), and Bait Vegan, Mahanoy, and San-Hadrian (1925).^[36]

In spite of the intensive joint British-Zionist efforts in Palestine, the percentage of Jews in Palestine did not exceed 11 percent of the total population according to the first British census in 31 December 1922; it did not exceed 17 percent according to the second British census on 31 December 1931. In 1922, the land the Jews controlled did not exceed 2.48 percent of Palestine; by 1936 they controlled no more than six percent of Palestine.^[37]

In the interwar period and through World War II, the Palestinians held fast to their right to self-determination and resisted British Zionist plans with their revolts in 1921, 1933, and 1936–39. As for the Zionists, they declared in a meeting at the Biltmore Hotel in New York in May 1942 that the Balfour Declaration implied the creation of an independent Jewish state, and they called for its establishment.^[38]

British politicians meanwhile began to reevaluate their government strategy in Palestine and the Arab world. They began to fear that the pro-Zionist policies would ultimately prove detrimental to British regional interests. Thus they called to moderate the support of the Zionist movement and started preparing plans for the idea of “partition” of Palestine between Jews and Arabs, in an attempt to stem the increasing animosity between the two societies. For instance:

- Following the Palestinian uprising of 1928-1929, the Shaw Committee (1930) plan for partitioning Palestine into Arab and Jewish cantons was proposed.
- Following the Palestinian Great revolt of 1936, the British Peel Royal Commission proposed the partitioning of Palestine into two states, Arab and Jewish and making Jerusalem a separated, independent entity, *corpus separatum*, not assigned to either side.
- Following the St James Conference in 1939, Britain issued the White Paper, which put restrictions on Jewish immigration and land sale and promised an independent Palestine within 10 years.
- In 1946 the Morrison-Grady plan provided for a British trusteeship over a federation of two autonomous provinces, one Arab and one Jewish, along with British direct rule over the Jerusalem and the Negev districts.
- In 1947 Ernest Bevin, then British Foreign Secretary, proposed a unified state under temporary British trusteeship with autonomous Jewish and Arab cantons.^[39]

In February 1947, Britain announced that it was not prepared to continue to administer Palestine and turned the responsibility to the newly created United Nations for “a solution”. The Palestinians and five Arab states asked for the termination of the British Mandate and for Palestinian independence, but the General Assembly refused to include this demand in its agenda and instead named in May 1947 a special committee (UNSCOP) United Nations Special Committee on Palestine to study the question of Palestine. UNSCOP reported two sets of recommendations. The majority report revived the notion of partition and recommended dividing Palestine into a Jewish state; an Arab state; and a *corpus separatum* under international administration for the cities of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and environs. The minority report called for a federal union between autonomous Arab and Jewish regions, with Jerusalem as the capital but with two separate, independent municipalities, one Arab and one Jewish.^[40] The majority report, with some modifications, was adopted by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestine Question, which had been created to study the UNSCOP’s recommendations. The report was adopted by a two-thirds majority in the UN General Assembly as Resolution 181(II) of 29 November, 1947.^[41] The Palestinians turned down the partition resolution because they considered it unjust and striping them from their land. The partition assigned to the proposed Jewish state 56 percent of the land of Palestine, while Jews constituted only 33 percent of the population and owned only six percent of the nonurban land. On 14 May 1948, the Mandate expired and Britain withdrew from Palestine. Zionist leaders seized the opportunity to unilaterally declare the birth of the state of Israel that very same day, making the unfolding Palestinian Nakba (Catastrophe).

Israel as a colonial power

The 1947 UN partition resolution, which included the internationalization of the city of Jerusalem, was never implemented. Many factors contributed to this fact. The most obvious factor is that the Palestinians refused it because of its prejudicing in favor of the Zionist interest at the expense of the Palestinians. Also important was that the Arab world neither was ready to accept the plan, nor unified and strong enough to effectively confront the emerging Zionist state. Finally, the partition resolution has also never been realized because of Zionist, and later Israeli policy. They used Arab rejection of the UN resolution as an excuse to further their plans for occupying and Colonizing Jerusalem and Palestine. Ben-Gurion revealed this aspect of Zionism by saying:

The question of Jerusalem is not a question of arrangements, or politics, it is first and foremost a question of military capabilities: will we have the military power for (a) occupying the Old City; (b) occupying a wide corridor from here (Tel Aviv) to Jerusalem, not just for passing through but for forming a settled strip that binds Jerusalem to the rest of the territories of the Jewish state; and (c) destroying the Arab Legion in the triangular area. Without this, it cannot be said that Jerusalem has been “liberated.”^[42]

Thus, the Israelis put a “transfer theory” into practice, which meant uprooting Palestinians by killing them, terrorizing them, or forcing them to flee their homes. On 9 April 1948, for example, Menachem Begin’s Irgun Zvai Leumi Terrorist gang massacred the Palestinians of the village of Deir Yasin, situated on the eastern outskirts of Jerusalem, killing 250 persons, most of whom were old men, women and children. And on 28 October 1948 Moshe Dayan’s 89th Battalion massacred the Palestinians of Dawaymeh, a village on the road between Jerusalem and Ramallah, killing 580 persons.^[43] Begin considered the massacre of Deir Yasin so crucial to Zionists that he asserted, “There would have been no Israel

without [what he called] the victory at Deir Yassin.”^[44] In July 1948, the Israeli Army attempted to occupy all of Jerusalem, but they failed due to the resistance of Arab forces.^[45] In September 1948, as Minister of Defense, Ben-Gurion suggested the undertaking of a military operation to occupy Latrun in order to insure a “Jewish Jerusalem.” In 1952 he planned to occupy all of Jerusalem as well as Hebron.^[46] But again Palestinian and Arab efforts forced the failure of these Israeli attempts, thereby preserving the Arab character of Jerusalem and the West Bank.

The armistice agreement of 1949 between Israel and the Arab States declared that “the armistice lines are not to be construed in any sense as a political or territorial boundary.”^[47] Yet Israel expanded its borders not only past the proposed borders of the 1947 UN partition plan but also past the armistice line in 1949 to gain control over 77 percent of Palestinian lands. In Jerusalem, Israel seized 84.23 percent of the municipal surface area, leaving 11.48 percent in the hands of the Palestinians. The remaining 4.39 percent became a “no man’s land” under the supervision of the UN.^[48] Israel surrounded Arab quarters in West Jerusalem, e.g. Abu Tur, Baqah, the German Colony, and Katamon, and changed their names to Hebrew: Abu Tur became Giv’at; at Hananah; Baqah became Ge’ulem; the German Colony became Rifa’im; and Katamon became Gonen. New Jewish quarters were established among and behind the aforementioned Arab quarters: Talpote, New Baqah, New Katamon, Rasqa Quarter, and Giv’at Mordechai. Twenty-nine Palestinian villages around Jerusalem were destroyed, their lands confiscated, and their inhabitants forced to flee.^[49]

As for demographic developments following the armistice agreement of 1949, Israel opened the doors for new immigration by passing the “Law of Return” in 1950, which allowed every Jew, wherever he might be, the right to emigrate to Israel, to settle there, and to acquire Israeli citizenship. Thus the numbers of Jews in Jerusalem grew from 84,000 in

1948 to 103,000 in 1949, to 167,400 by 1961, and to 196,000 by 1967.^[50] Israel forbade and prevented Palestinian refugees from returning to their homelands in spite of UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (III), which called for the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes, the return of their properties, and compensation for those who did not wish to return to their homes. There were approximately 700,000 Palestinian refugees living outside of Palestine following the 1949 armistice agreements.^[51] Israel named Palestinians living in Jerusalem and occupied Palestine the “Israeli Arabs” instead of Palestinians.

To prepare the way for seizing Palestinian properties and liquidating them in occupied Jerusalem of 1948, Israel passed a series of administrative and legislative laws. Examples are the Emergency Regulations regarding “abandoned” properties, Supplement B No. 10 of 23 June 1948; the Emergency Regulations concerning the cultivation of wastelands and the use of water resources (1948); the Emergency Regulations (Security Zones) of 1949; and the Absentees Property Law of 1950. These “laws” allowed Israelis to confiscate both movable and immovable Palestinian property. It has been estimated that Palestinian private property in occupied Jerusalem of 1948 amounted to 80 percent of the city’s property.^[52]

Completing the policy of transforming Jerusalem into a “Jewish city”, on 11 December 1949 Israel declared Jerusalem its capital and moved the seat of government there. The historic Islamic Mamillah cemetery was destroyed and converted into a park. A new cemetery for Israeli politicians, named after Theodor Herzl, was established, and a new Israeli museum and campus for the Hebrew University were built. Israel forbade the mention of the word Palestine or its Arab-Islamic history in school curricula, and restricted the admission of Palestinians into universities. Restrictions on work, residence, and movement were imposed upon all Palestinians.

Jerusalem since 1967

After the June War of 1967, Israel rushed to execute its second stage of occupying and Judaizing the rest of Jerusalem and all of Palestine. This process moved along with astonishing speed, and in all fields: military, administrative, legislative, demographic, geographic, religious, and historical-archaeological. Its ultimate goal was the complete uprooting and destruction of Palestine.

Despite Israeli policies and measures to Colonize and de-Palestinize Jerusalem since 1948, 360,000 Palestinians still live in Jerusalem, with Palestinian institutions and organizations serving all aspects of their lives. The Palestinians, six and a half million of them, resist the Israeli occupation, reject its “laws” and “policies,” and hold fast to their rights. They consider Jerusalem an inseparable part of the Occupied Palestinian territories and a fundamental component of in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It should not be dropped from or ignored in any political agenda on Palestine.

Conclusion

In searching for a “political solution” to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the question of Jerusalem can be an open forum and the best outlet for a breakthrough. The first lesson we learn from Jerusalem’s history from ancient times through to the present is that more than one group has important claims and strong ties to Jerusalem. The other lesson is that while conflict has often plagued the city, coexistence and tolerance have significant precedents: from the Israelites’ sharing of the city with the Jebusites under King David, to Omar’s acknowledgments of Christian rights in the city. Indeed, although the city is currently divided, many Jerusalemites of different religions do interact constructively. This coexistence can evolve toward peace and stability in Jerusalem and

eventually in all of Palestine, provided there is a recognition and respect for Palestinians rights in the city.

To recognize the collective rights of only one society, the Israelis, constitutes an untenable injustice. Trying to oust the Arab presence that dominated Jerusalem for 1400 years is a travesty against Palestinians, humanity and the legacy of Jerusalem, against which Israelis, Arabs and the international community must take a firm and active stand. All sides must acknowledge that there is no legitimate justification for exclusive governance over the whole city. This has to be acknowledged by ending the current pattern of Israeli military occupation with a model based on a shared, open free access the city: two capitals, two sovereignties, two municipalities and two states living independently next to each other.

Notes:

1. Wilson B. Bishai, *Islamic History of the Middle East*, (Allyn and Bacon Inc., 1968), 34.
2. Khayriah Kasmyyah, *Qadyyat Al Quds* (The Problem of Jerusalem), (Beirut: Dar al-Quds, 1979), 11.
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