

A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People

# MISHKAN

Issue 81, 2019



## Jerusalem

### Contents:

- The Roots of Jerusalem
- Jerusalem as Egeria saw it
- A Catholic reflection from the midst of the conflict
- The Besorah, Jerusalem, and the Jewish People
- On the Political Rhetoric of Toponyms

# MISHKAN

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# MISHKAN

A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

**ISSUE 81/2019**

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*Mishkan 81: Summer 2019*

Dear Mishkan readers,

The topic of the issue you are now (virtually) holding in your hands is *Jerusalem*. This city has been a focus of hope, hate, zeal, and greed. It has drawn the faithful of at least three major religions, researchers of all kinds, and more than its due share of problems. The holy city has prospered and suffered, changing hands several times in its long history. In this issue we attempt to take a look at its past, present, and future from various perspectives of those who love the city of the great king and share the faith in Jesus the Messiah. We hope this issue will be enlightening, challenging, and encouraging.

Wishing you a blessed summer!

*Caspari Center Staff*

Jerusalem, July 2019

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# **The Roots of Jerusalem — Something You Didn't Already Know?**

**Andreas Johansson**

## **Why and how do we get the impression we have about Jerusalem?**

Almost every newspaper and TV channel seem to be eager to give updates about Jerusalem, and the opinions and interpretations of what happens are often emotionally charged, in one direction or the other.

What is it that directs the perspective of the journalists? What kind of background information do each and every one of us use in order to interpret what we hear and see from Israel and the Middle East? This article will try to find some snapshots from the history of Jerusalem and its present time, and let these flashes contribute to a better overview, and a somewhat better understanding of the situation as well. I'm of course aware that my selection of "historical flashes" is due to my own biases and priorities of what is important. I hope these short, and not always fluent "historical flashes" will be an inspiration to search for more information about Jerusalem elsewhere.

## **Jerusalem — a beloved topic**

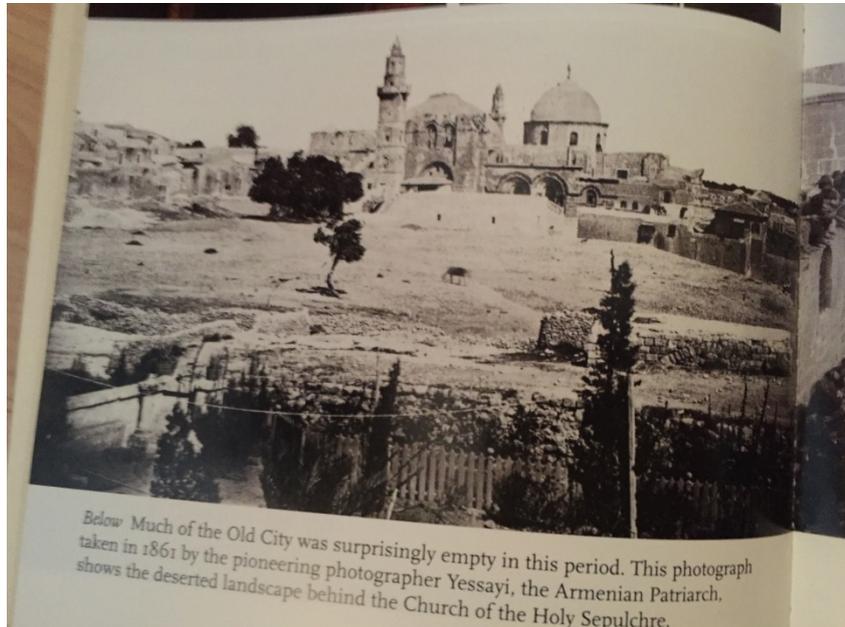
Jerusalem is mentioned 821 times in the Hebrew Bible and 137 times in the New Testament, and pretty often on TV and in the newspapers. Jerusalem is, however, not mentioned explicitly in the Quran even once, even if the expression "the Farthest Mosque<sup>1</sup>" is recorded in Surah 17:1, assuming Muhammad<sup>2</sup> travelled to this "Farthest Mosque." "The Farthest Mosque" is generally interpreted as referring to one of the two mosques on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

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<sup>1</sup> In Arabic "al-Aqsa".

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad died in 632 CE, while the precursor of the al-Aqsa Mosque was built several years later, in approximately 638, and the al-Aqsa Mosque itself was finished even later, in 705.

Nobody can describe Jerusalem completely. Simon Sebag Montefiore has done a good job trying to cover 3000 years of the history of Jerusalem in *Jerusalem, The Biography*, a “short” book of approximately 650 pages. One of the most fascinating pictures in his book is from 1861 that shows a big open field with good space for sheep grazing right behind the famous Church of the Holy Sepulchre inside the Old City. There was a time when the Old City in Jerusalem was not synonymous with lack of space!



### **The Times of the First and Second Temple**

Jerusalem has many ancient remnants. While the First Temple still stood, i.e. approximately 2,600 years ago, it was recorded in the prophet Jeremiah 37:3 that “King Zedekiah, however, sent Jehucal son of Shelemiah with the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah to Jeremiah the prophet with the message: ‘Please pray to the LORD our God for us.’” Jehucal, son of Shelemiah, is no central figure in the Bible. Nobody has heard of Jehucal in Sunday school, and hardly anybody in a church service either, but when they started digging down in the City of David — an excavation that of course is politically controversial — they did find a bulla that bears the name “Jehucal son of Shelemiah”, the same person that is mentioned in the Bible. The people of Israel, the Jewish people, do have deep roots in Jerusalem.



The Second Temple is no longer. In the excavation of the Western Wall the lower part of the temple wall still stands, and has been standing since King Herod. The stones are many meters long. Could it be that the workers were injured on the job from the effort of putting them in place?

When the Romans tore down the Temple in 70 CE they did a thorough job. The soldiers must have been standing on top of the Temple Mount pushing down stone after stone from the wall. Now, almost 2,000 years later, the southwestern corner of the Temple Mount is excavated, and the stones are still there just as the Roman soldiers threw them down.

Until the next war, the Bar Kochva war, or The Second Roman-Jewish War 132–135, all the Jesus-believing bishops in Jerusalem were “of the circumcision,” i.e. they were Jews and they identified as Jews. The Romans were not friendly to any Jewish group. They were fed up with the Jewish ambitions of independence. That's why circumcision was forbidden. Jews were threatened under penalty of death not to stay in the city now called Aelia Capitolina, while the province got its name changed from Judea to Syria-Palestine. In this way the Romans wanted to contribute into erasing all Jewish connections from the area. In the city, for a period called Aelia Capitolina, a main street was built, called *Cardo Maximus*. The stones from this street were excavated by the Israelis after the Six Days War.

### **Christian, Jewish, and Moslem rulers in Jerusalem**

The Roman Empire was Christianized in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and thus changed its name to The Byzantine Empire. Jerusalem, and the whole country as well, is full of church ruins from the Byzantine era. In Europe, church buildings from the Medieval Era with an age of 900 years would still be an attraction. The Byzantine buildings and ruins in The Holy

Land are somewhere between 1,400 and 1,700 years old, and more ruins are excavated all the time.

Toward the end of the Byzantine period, there was a short Persian invasion, during which the Persian Shah allowed three years of Jewish independence (614–617). As a response to hundreds of years of Christian persecution of Jews, the Jews in Jerusalem answered by persecuting the Christians. As soon as the Christians were back in a position of power, the Jews had to walk out of Jerusalem in the direction of Jericho.

The Arabic-Moslem invasion of the Levant toward the end of the 630s caused at least three things: 1) a limited number of Jews were allowed to come back to Jerusalem and live there permanently; 2) the Mosques on the Temple Mount were built, and they still stand 1,400 years later; and 3) “The People of the Book”, i.e. Jews and Christians, received the status of Dhimmi which means they were protected (with the right to live their own internal life) and circumscribed (many limitations and a demand to pay the tax of *Jizya*). Different Moslem rulers of Jerusalem have emphasized the protection of and the intolerance toward Jews slightly differently.

Except for a short break of almost 200 years of Crusader rule (whose ruling was known in Europe for having been brutal), Jerusalem and its surroundings was ruled by Moslem rulers of different ethnicities for more than 1,250 years, all the way to 1917, when the British, with the help of League of Nations, established The Mandate of Palestine. First, Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula ruled, then the Crusaders from Europe. The next dynasty was the Mamluks, originally slaves from Central Asia, and then the Turks ruled through the Ottoman Empire for 400 years. Obviously the Moslem presence in Jerusalem has deep roots, even though the presence of Christians and especially Jews has even deeper roots in Jerusalem.

Early in the 8<sup>th</sup> century the city of Ramla was founded by the Umayyad ruler Suleiman ibn Abd-Malik, as the only city founded by Arabs in the Holy Land. Suleiman built The White Mosque and a residence for himself in Ramla, which served as the administration center for several hundred years up until the Crusaders came. Under Arabic Moslem rule, another city different from Jerusalem was chosen as the administration center for a long period of time.

### **Religious (in)tolerance in Jerusalem**

The Christians were harsh toward the Jews, both during Byzantine and Crusader time. The Jews were expelled from Jerusalem; at least they were not allowed to stay overnight

in Jerusalem. The Moslems were more tolerant; Jews (and Christians) were allowed to live in Jerusalem under Moslem rule.

The condition for being allowed to live in Jerusalem as a non-Moslem was to submit to the status of being a Dhimmi. The Umayyad Caliph Omar Abd-al-Aziz ruled the Caliphate 717–720 and is known as the originator of the “Covenant of Omar” in which non-Moslems are described as *ahl al-dhimma*, the people of the covenant. The Covenant of Omar<sup>3</sup> gave these non-Moslems, i.e. the Jews and the Christians, three rights: 1) security for their lives and property; 2) freedom of religion; and 3) internal self-government. These rights were conditioned, first and foremost by the demand to pay the *Jizya* tax and by accepting the dhimmi conditions.

The *Jizya* tax is motivated from the Quran: “Fight those who do not believe in God, nor in the Last Day, nor forbid what God and His Messenger have forbidden, nor abide by the religion of truth — from among those who received the Scripture — until they pay the due tax (*jizya*), willingly or unwillingly.” (9:29)

Other dhimmi conditions said that they were not allowed to build new churches or synagogues. A Dhimmi could not ride a horse, only a donkey. They were not allowed to use saddles, they could not employ a Moslem, and they had to wear special clothes that made them visible from the Moslems. In particular, green clothes were forbidden to a Dhimmi. A non-Moslem is not allowed, according to the dhimmi rules, to testify in court against a Moslem, which means that a Moslem that would steal something, having only Christians or Jews as observers, by definition would have immunity. Property that belongs to a Dhimmi would in principal accrue to the Moslem rulers upon the death of the Dhimmi — until possible heirs would be able to prove that they are rightful heirs according to Sharia law. A Moslem man can, according to the Dhimmi rules, marry a Christian or Jewish woman, and the children would then be Moslems. A Christian or a Jewish man could not marry a Moslem woman. Conversions from Islam are forbidden, while conversions to Islam are encouraged.

### **Interreligious Relations in the Ottoman Jerusalem**

Under the Ottoman rule many Jews got high positions as doctors and administrators. Jews could trade and even some new synagogues were built. The conditions for Jews in

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<sup>3</sup> Gilbert, Martin. *In Ishmael's House* p.31–34.

the Ottoman Empire were relatively better than in Christian Europe, and better than in other Moslem countries as well.

There are, however, many examples as well that show that coexistence in the Ottoman Empire was not only harmonious. In 1625 a Moslem warlord from Nablus bought the right to govern Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup> He then put the Jewish leaders from Jerusalem in prison and demanded 12,500 gold florins in ransom. The Jewish community in Jerusalem sent emissaries to Europe in order to collect money. Fortunately for the Jews the warlord was deposed the following year.

In 1720 Moslem Arabs seized a local Ashkenazi synagogue in Jerusalem, burned the Torah Scrolls, and refused to return the synagogue to the Jewish community.<sup>5</sup> The synagogue was not returned until 1816, almost 100 years later.

A study<sup>6</sup> of the accounting books of the Jewish community in Jerusalem from some of the years 1760 to 1796 can give us insight into how one of the dhimmi groups related to the authorities approximately 250 years into the Ottoman period. In total, Jerusalem by then had between 12,000 and 15,000 inhabitants. Out of these, approximately 3,000 were Jews. The accounting books show that the Jewish community did have daily contact with several dozen persons in different authority levels. All these contacts demanded much planning and strategic thinking — and more than that it cost a lot of money. Everybody charged money — either official fees or outright bribes. Some examples:

During Jewish Holidays the Jewish community needed meat from the butchery and they needed to pay “sugar money” to those responsible in the butchery. The Jews lived at the time in what is still the Jewish quarter in the Old City, and their graveyards were, as today, on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. In order to get there, they had to pass through the village of Silwan. The local farmers (*fellaheen*) made the funeral procession pay in order to let them through the area of the village. Pilgrimages to the tomb of Rachael, which is just north of Bethlehem, demanded payments as well for Jews to be able to move these few kilometers outside Jerusalem.

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<sup>4</sup> Gilbert, Martin. *In Ishmael's House*, p.83.

<sup>5</sup> Gilbert, Martin. *In Ishmael's House*, p.93.

<sup>6</sup> <http://jcpa.org/article/the-jerusalem-jewish-community-ottoman-authorities-and-arab-population-in-the-second-half-of-the-eighteenth-century-a-chapter-of-local-history-2/>

Even if Christian Europe does have a history worthy of critique in light of how Jews were treated, and even if the Jews were often treated better under Moslem rule, Europeans travelling to Jerusalem several times were still shocked by the treatment Jews got among other places in Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup>

In 1806 a French diplomat wrote that the local Jews in Jerusalem were the “special target of all contempt,” and further “they lower their heads without complaint; they suffer all insults without demanding justice; they let themselves be crushed by blows.”

In 1834 a British traveler wrote: “Many of the Jews are rich, but they are careful to conceal their wealth from the jealous eyes of their Mohammedan rulers, lest they should be subject to extortion.”

In 1839 the British Vice-Consul in Jerusalem wrote that the Egyptian Pasha showed more consideration for the Jews in Egypt than the Christians did, but “the Jew in Jerusalem is not estimated in value much above a dog — and scarcely a day passes that I do not hear of some act of tyranny and oppression against a Jew.”

In 1843 another British traveler wrote that even if he estimated that more than half<sup>8</sup> of Jerusalem's inhabitants were Jews, their situation appeared lamentable. He writes: “Should a Jew have a little of this world's good in his possession, he is oppressed and robbed by the Turks in a most unmerciful manner; in short, for him there is neither law nor justice.”

An Italian wrote two decades later that the local Moslems in Jerusalem “unfortunately hold the opinion that to injure a Jew is a work well pleasing in the sight of God.”

In 1856 the Dhimmi system was officially abolished in the Ottoman Empire, and thus the conditions for Jews and Christians in the Empire were considerably improved. The British took upon themselves the task of protecting the Jewish population (probably not without at the same time promoting their own geopolitical interests), by, e.g., having the British ambassador in Jerusalem show up at different court meetings

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<sup>7</sup> Gilbert, Martin. *In Ishmael's House* p.103–109.

<sup>8</sup> The figures from estimations and censuses in Jerusalem vary. It seems clear that the Jews were the largest population group in Jerusalem in the 1840s — several decades before modern Zionism came into being. Jewish absolute majority in Jerusalem came about some time in the 1890s, more than 20 years before the Ottoman Empire was forced out of Jerusalem.

and other meetings with the Ottoman authorities in order to speak on behalf of the Jews. James Finn was ambassador in Jerusalem 1853–56<sup>9</sup> and he wrote:

The Jews have to pay annual amounts in order to be allowed to pray at the Western Wall, they need to pay the Moslem rulers in order to avoid having their tombs dug up, protection money not to be attacked on the roads, extra tax so that Moslems would inspect Jewish butchery and they had to pay the sugar for Moslem Holidays as well.

He tells further that Christian priests in Jerusalem, who themselves were a minority, accused Jews of cannibalism. Christians claimed Jews had to use Christian blood for their unleavened bread. A Jewish elderly man was grabbed in his clothes and shaken while Christians told him: “Oh Jews, do you have the knives ready for our blood!”

At another occasion fanatic Christian pilgrims attacked a Jewish boy who had crossed the line for where Jews were allowed to go in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In theory Moslems were also not allowed to cross this line, but since the Moslems ruled the country, in practice the rule of not crossing this particular line was not upheld for Moslems. When the British ambassador tried to follow up on the case he got to hear from Greeks, Latins, and Armenians that Christians had immunity if they happened to kill a Jew who went too far into the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The impression that James Finn gives is that he got support and acceptance from the Ottoman Authorities when he defended the Jews in Jerusalem, and thus he confirms the impression that the Ottoman Empire, especially toward its end, worked for increased tolerance and improved rule of law in the Empire.

During the Easter celebration in 1846,<sup>10</sup> Orthodox priests and Catholic priests, in full mass robes, used weapons against each other inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The internal Christian rivalry must have been pretty strong, as there were many days of conflict when weapons were not used.

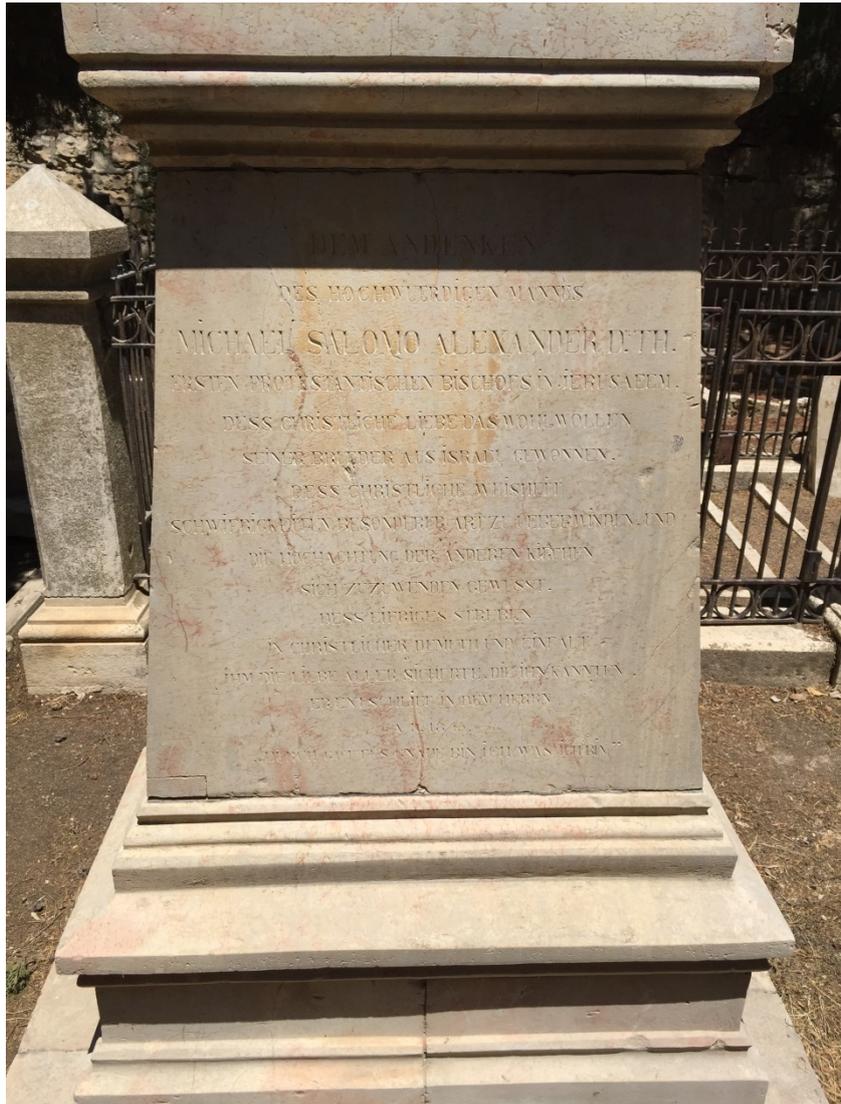
Jewish internal relations could be complicated as well. I spoke to an Israeli who told me about his grandparents who lived in Jerusalem; since one was a Sephardi Jew and the other was an Ashkenazi Jew, this caused so much fuss in the Jewish community they had to emigrate in order to be able to live as a couple.

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<sup>9</sup> Finn, James. *Stirring Times; Or, Records from Jerusalem Consular Chronicles of 1853 to 1856*

<sup>10</sup> Montefiore, S.S. *Jerusalem, The Biography*, p.407.

The relationship between Moslem Arabs and Christian Arabs could be tense toward the end of the Ottoman Era as well. A Christian Arab from today's Northern Israel told me about the sisters of his grandfather. Four orphaned Christian children grew up together. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Moslems kidnapped one of the sisters, then 14, from a Galilean village. Somebody put the next sister, then 13, in a



monastery in order to protect her from a similar fate.<sup>11</sup> What does this tell us about the Ottoman Empire (that had officially abolished the dhimmi system in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century)? What does this say about the local Arabic Moslem culture that monastic life was considered an insurance against orphaned Christian girls being kidnapped as late as the 20<sup>th</sup> century?

### **A Jewish Jesus-believing Bishop in Jerusalem for the First Time in 1700 Years**

In 1842 Michael Alexander Solomon came to Jerusalem. He was a Jew, and had served as a rabbi in England. Between 1842 and his death in 1845, Michael Alexander Solomon was the first Jewish Jesus-believing bishop since the Bar Kochva war in 132–135, and

<sup>11</sup> Compare the dhimmi rules that say that when a Dhimmi dies his property (daughters count as property) accrues to the Moslem authorities until an heir can prove lawfully he is a real heir. In that light it's legitimate to kidnap orphaned Dhimmi girls in order to make them Moslems.

the first Protestant bishop ever in Jerusalem. He served in Christ Church that is situated right at the Jaffa Gate in the Old City.

### **The British Mandate Era**

World War I was about to end. Great Britain conquered Jerusalem in December 1917. In November 1917 the Balfour Declaration had been published, and as a result of this the British Mandate of Palestine was established. It's written a lot about this elsewhere.

Was the territory covered by the British Mandate of Palestine (today's Israel, including the West Bank and Gaza) seen as its own defined territory with its own identity as early as 1920? The fact that the Holy Land (together with Lebanon and great parts of today's Syria) was ruled by Egypt from



1831 to 1849, due to civil war in the Ottoman Empire, contributed to separate a Palestinian Arab identity. Still it's clear as well that The Holy Land all the time up to 1917 was divided into totally three different districts: two districts (The Sanjak of Nablus and of Acre) that were under the Province Government in Damascus (The Vilayet of Damascus), and a district that was directly under Istanbul (The Sanjak of Jerusalem). The area was a part of South Syria.

In 1920, a few years into the British Mandate government, there were Arab demonstrations in Jerusalem.<sup>12</sup> Among other things the demonstrations were against Jewish immigration, but also declarations of loyalty to King Faisal in Damascus (who was later expelled by the French as they took control over their French Mandate), and declarations that "Palestine is part of Syria," i.e. they demonstrated against what was then Syria being split up between the Mandate of Syria (French) and the Mandate of Palestine (British). An independent Palestine was not an issue fought for in 1920; rather the opposite. One of the most important newspapers in Arabic published in Jerusalem during the 1930s was called *Suriya janubiyya* – Southern Syria.<sup>13</sup> The word "nationalism" meant – during the last decades of the Ottoman Era and the first years of

<sup>12</sup> <http://jcpa.org/article/who-are-the-palestinians/>

<sup>13</sup> Gelvin, James L. *The Israeli Palestine Conflict One Hundred Years of War*, p.95.

the Mandate Era – first and foremost Arab nationalism (as opposed to Ottomanism and Turkish nationalism). One of the reasons for abandoning the Arab nationalism of “Greater Syria” was that the territory corresponding to the Ottoman area of Greater Syria had become divided into one British and one French mandate, and thus the Arab nationalism of “Greater Syria” was no longer practicable. Another reason for transferring the nationalism of “Greater Syria” into a more regional Palestinian nationalism was the confrontations with Zionism.

On the eve of Yom Kippur in 1928<sup>14</sup> some chairs were set out for elderly Jews who were to pray at the Western Wall, and in addition a small screen was put up to divide men and women worshippers according to Jewish law. This had been done the previous year as well, but this year the Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini protested that the status quo was broken and the next day, on the very day of Yom Kippur, British police raided the Western Wall area during the prayer time and pulled the chairs from under elderly worshippers. The Mufti was jubilant, but warned that the Jews were on their way to take possession of the Mosque of al-Aqsa gradually.

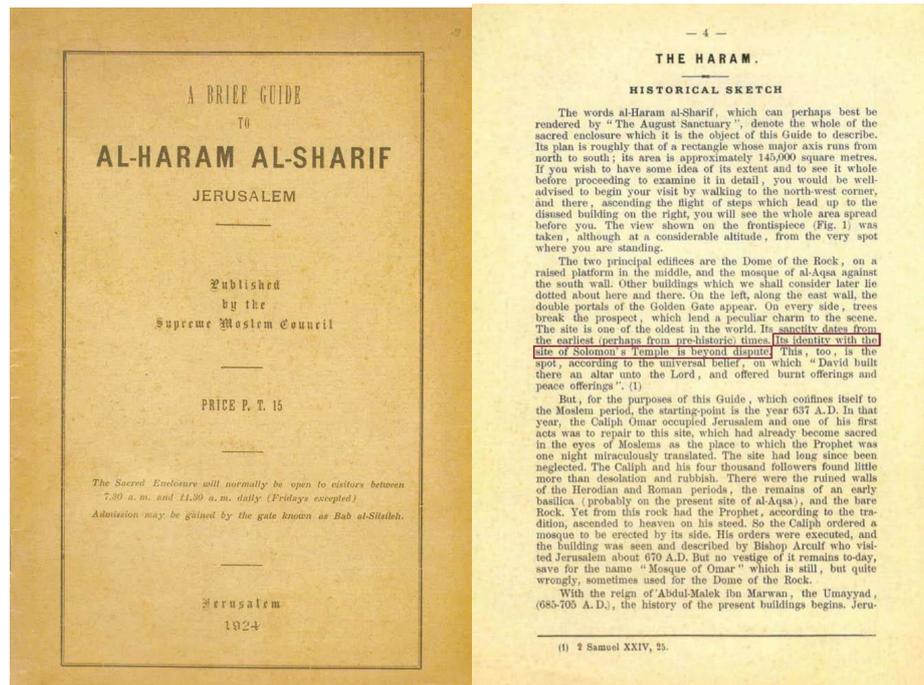
Today it's often claimed by Palestinian Moslems that there has never been a Jewish temple in Jerusalem<sup>15</sup>, while in a guide that The Supreme Moslem Council issued in 1924 while Haj Amin al-Husseini was the leader of the Council, it's stated that it's beyond dispute that the place of the Mosque of the Rock and the al-Aqsa mosque is the same place where the Temple of Solomon stood.

Hilda Andersson, from Scania in Sweden, lived for many years on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem (1927–1948). She was a good friend of her neighboring poor Arabs, and she was often invited to weddings and other celebrations. She was a nurse and the neighbors could come to her private clinic and get treatment for free. She had friends among Jews and Arabs, and saw herself as a missionary. She actively attended the congregation of Christ Church.

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<sup>14</sup> S.S. Montefiore; *Jerusalem, The Biography*, p. 524.

<sup>15</sup> <sup>15</sup> See e.g. an interview with the Palestinian ambassador to Great Britain Manuel Hassassian from Oct 25<sup>th</sup> 2017, clip #6285 <https://www.memri.org/tv/palestinian-ambassador-hassassian-hit-israeli-student-claimed-felafel-jewish-national-food>.



The last spring Hilda was alive, the spring of 1948, she tells about much unrest in the city and a lot of rumors. She tells about her bus trips down from Mount of Olives to Jerusalem, where the passengers talked a lot in Arabic about how they were to kill Jews. Hilda was pretty critical of how the British handled the Mandate of Palestine toward the end of its existence. Hilda supported the establishment of a Jewish state and claimed that there was space enough for the Jews all over the world to come back without having to move one single Arab.

For many reasons, both Arabs and Jews had to move and flee in 1948 and the years after, but Hilda Andersson was never able to experience this. On Sunday March 25th, less than two months before the State of Israel was proclaimed, Hilda was on her way home from a church service and was shot in the valley of Kedron. It's not known who was behind these shots.

## **Jerusalem Is Divided and United**

The war in 1948, which the Israelis call the Independence War or Liberation War and the Palestinians call al-Naqba (the Catastrophe) is described by historians as a “dirty war.” Geopolitically it's not very hard to understand why the different active sides, out of their world view and their possibilities, did what they did during that war, and in the same way it's easy to understand why the evaluations afterwards of what happened are so different, all according to world view, ethical system, and perspective among Israelis, Palestinians, and international assessors of the conflict.

The results of a war are still about human beings. Personally I have listened to the story of an Arab family who used to live in western Jerusalem, and then the Israeli soldiers came and told the family they temporarily had to leave their house and go eastwards in the city. After the war was finished and Jerusalem was divided between Israel and Jordan, no Israeli soldier came to tell this Arab family to move back into their house in western Jerusalem. The representative of the family, who told me this, was very critical of the whole project of the “State of Israel”.

I have also met people who used to live in the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem, and their Hebrew accent reveals their origin in the Middle East. The war of 1948 came, and when (Trans)Jordan occupied East Jerusalem, the Jews had to leave the Old City. This Jewish family settled down in some abandoned houses in Tel Aviv.

Jerusalem was divided for 19 years. Walls, barbed wire, and snipers. West Jerusalem was the capital of Israel. Knesset, the Israeli parliament, was localized to Jerusalem in December 1949. No Jews could come to the Western Wall to pray, since the Western Wall back then belonged to Transjordan. Transjordan kept its capital in Amman.

June 1967 was the Six Days War. The part of the war that was fought in Jerusalem started when Jordanian troops started shooting. Israel conquered Jerusalem and the whole of the West Bank and made Jerusalem one city again. There have been many discussions about that unity.

## **Some Encounters with Today's Jerusalemites**

It's easy to think, especially for those not living in the area, that “every Israeli thinks like this” and “every Palestinian reacts like that.” It's too easy when a western journalist would interview a representative for a group that “then everybody would be the same.”

Of course there is bitterness and hate in the Middle East. I have met some of it. But that's not all one can say about Jerusalem.

The last time there were peace negotiations (2013–2014) I met a Moslem Arab Jerusalemite who lives on the Mount of Olives, and I asked him what he thought about the peace negotiations, and if he looked forward to a Palestinian state. He wasn't interested in a Palestinian state, and he made clear he was not the only one having that opinion. What would he do with a Palestinian state? He was happy with the social security system of Israel (Arab Jerusalemites are part of that). I got an answer I hadn't expected, since I know from many other neighborhoods in East Jerusalem that they are given less priority from the Municipality of Jerusalem and the dissatisfaction can be great.

I asked further: What about your citizenship? He was stateless. Of course he was aware he, as an Arab Jerusalemite, could apply for an Israeli citizenship, but he hadn't given that a priority, and when he was to go abroad, he just went to the United Nations and got a travel document. He didn't see that as a problem. How is it to live on Mount of Olives? I asked. Before we had plenty of space, but now after Israel had built the security fence/wall it had started to get crowded there, since many new Arabs had moved in, he said, and hinted that it's rather popular for Palestinians to live under Israeli government.

A conversation with another Arab Jerusalemite gave me some more insight: The guy wasn't exactly enthusiastic over the political leadership on one side or on the other. He talked a bit of his children having switched between Palestinian and Israeli curriculum, in the way that Jerusalem Arabs can choose. He told me he had been travelling to Turkey and they had asked him if he was an Armenian since he had an Armenian family name. So I suggested to him that he as a Moslem with an Armenian family name probably had been Christian some generations back. He agreed to my theory, even though it didn't seem he had done much research as to how and when the conversion had happened. I hope he did more research into his family roots after our conversation.

Another time I watched Israeli TV from a hospital in Jerusalem. In one room there was an Israeli Jewish boy and in the other room a Palestinian girl from Gaza. Both were injured in their hands — from what I understood, in the same war. The same doctor treated both children. Hospitals in Israel are a good integration project.

One year when I was on a New Year's reception for Christian leaders at the House of the President of Israel, I started talking to some of the church leaders from the historical churches in Jerusalem, representatives of those who often are called Palestinian Christians. They stood there in their black robes and I asked how it was to be a Christian church leader and an Arab in Israel. They had much to tell about visa problems for students from the neighboring countries that were supposed to study at a theological seminary in Jerusalem and they told me about some other problems of discrimination. They felt that the State of Israel didn't trust Christians. Once one of them had been at the Ben Gurion Airport in full priestly robes, and the security staff wanted to check if he carried weapons. In a country where terrorists dress however they want, it's not an unusual question. But the church leader had answered by showing his cross and said "this is my weapon". A man in priestly robes who shows a cross to a Jew stirs up some historical memories, and could not really be understood either as friendly or as culture sensitive, I thought. The church leader continued telling me things, and he claimed that "the Israelis crucify us." I looked at the church leader and told him I believe he and his denomination were suffering from discrimination in Israel, but that he still looked like an unusually healthy man considering he was crucified. So the church leader thought for a while and came to the conclusion that he ought to moderate his statement, so he said: "They hang us." I thought it was not worthwhile to talk more about the issue, but I learned it can be difficult to find precise words to describe what we experience.

When you listen to church leaders from Jerusalem, or when you read about Jerusalem in the newspapers, it's possible to become worse than terrified of the situation. I have experienced moods tending toward anger on my travels, but that's not all. I was in a hotel lobby, deep into West Jerusalem. The workers were both Jews and Arabs. All of them spoke Hebrew. Even the Arabs spoke good Hebrew without accent, but when the Arabs spoke between themselves they used Arabic, all this openly in front of the hotel guests, in a nice hotel with a nice atmosphere in Jerusalem. Should Jerusalem be divided again, maybe it could bring some advantages, but the Jews and Arabs working together in this hotel would probably not be able to work together any longer.

While living in Israel I was involved in a faith-based center for needy people, run by Messianic Jews and Christians from many countries. This center emphasizes helping and showing love to any human being, of any race, gender, ethnicity, or religion.

Everybody gets help. One group that gets help at this center is those who fight against the Israeli social security bureaucracy. Even if you are a Jew in Israel, the Israeli bureaucracy can be a challenge. Other groups receiving help are Holocaust survivors, poor religious Jews, former religious Jews, Ethiopian-Jewish single mothers with children, Arab and Jewish women suffering from domestic violence, and so on. Why shouldn't everybody get an opportunity to be seen and appreciated in Jerusalem?

Jerusalem is very many things. Much more than what has been told in this article.

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# Jerusalem as Egeria Saw It

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By the end of the fourth century, Christian pilgrimages to Jerusalem and the Holy Land had already become popular.<sup>16</sup> Pilgrims from all parts of the Roman Empire — and even outside its borders — traveled to the Holy Land to visit holy sites and worship there. In Jerusalem, several churches and monasteries had already been built, and liturgical life flourished. One of the most interesting sources describing Jerusalem during this time is a unique document: the travel diary of a Spanish woman, Egeria. She wrote letters addressed to “dear ladies and sisters” where she vividly tells of her journey, what she saw, and what she experienced.<sup>17</sup>

Egeria traveled from the Atlantic coast to the Holy Land probably between the years 381–384.<sup>18</sup> Because she dedicated her text to “sisters,” she has sometimes been described as a nun. However, at this time, to call someone “a sister” does not yet necessarily tell of her belonging to an organized monastic community. It is possible that she did belong to some kind of community of ascetic women, but she might also have written her letters to a circle of friends. Egeria had the freedom and the means to travel abroad for several years, as did several other ascetic women at that time.<sup>19</sup> She travelled with a small company and often on a back of a donkey. Wherever she went, she carefully described the places and the liturgical life there.

Because Egeria’s text is not preserved in its entirety, we do not know her entire travel route with certainty. She came to Jerusalem via Constantinople, and probably

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<sup>16</sup> A.M. Laato, “What Makes the Holy Land Holy? A Debate between Paula, Eustochium, and Marcella (Jerome, Ep. 46)”, *Holy Places and Cult*. Eds. E. Koskenniemi & C. de Vos. *Studies in the Reception History of the Bible* 5 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns 2014), 169-199.

<sup>17</sup> *Itinerarium Egeriae*. Sources chrétiennes 296; English translation in J. Wilkinson, *Egeria’s Travels to the Holy Land*. Newly translated with supporting documents and notes by John Wilkinson. Revised edition. (Jerusalem: Ariel Publishing House, 1981).

<sup>18</sup> Her name is a bit uncertain, as is the date of her visit and place of her origin, but Egeria, years 381–384, and Hispania are the most probable and generally accepted choices. Wilkinson, *Egeria’s Travels*, 3; 235–239.

<sup>19</sup> Such as Paula and Eustochium, Melania the Elder and Melania the Younger, and Fabiola.

returned the same way. She stayed in Jerusalem, according to her own words, for a three-year period, and from there she made several excursions to as far as Egypt.

### **Egeria, Reporter by Nature**

Egeria does not tell much directly about herself, but we still can learn something about her when reading her text. She was a devout Christian and it was natural for her to participate in Eucharistic liturgy, worship, and prayers wherever she went. She was very interested in the details of liturgy, and, for example, diligently noted which biblical passages were read in a certain day or commented that a certain antiphon was, in her view, well chosen to suit the texts. Her places of interest are those mentioned in the Old and the New Testament.

Egeria's use of language reveals that she had not received highest education. Her Latin is not classical, but shows vernacular features and traces of Biblical translations and liturgical texts of her time. However, it is clear that she had a scholarly mind. For example, she became very happy when she received another copy of the Letter of Abgar from the bishop of Edessa so that she could compare it to the one she already had at home. She also shows critical thinking: even if she does not directly put the stories she has heard into question, she sometimes, when she refers to stories she has heard, introduces them by saying that something "has been told" to her, or "is said to have been," thus letting her readers know that the source for the information is not firsthand. Most importantly, she is always interested to learn new things and to report what she has learned.

Egeria enjoyed the beauty of the nature and the grandeur of human edifices. She described enthusiastically the decorations in the Constantinian basilicas in Jerusalem and Bethlehem during Easter (23.8), and calls Eleona "a very beautiful church on the Mount of Olives."

What really interested her and filled her heart were the Biblical stories, their sites, and how liturgy was celebrated in different places. This is what she mainly writes about. She comments on prayers, antiphons, and hymns, the celebration of Eucharist, homilies, and Biblical texts used in the local church with its many visitors. In contrast, she is not equally interested in people she meets. In the parts of her text that are preserved, she mentions only one person by name (deaconess Marthana), and, even if she often mentions that a bishop or presbyters or deacons or ordinary Christians are present, her characterizations of them are stereotypical. The people she meets are all

holy, devout, respected, and eager to help. Not even the bishop is named, but he is often identified as Cyril of Jerusalem. However, she emphasizes, that the children took part in processions and celebrations; for example, on the Day of Palms the “babies and the ones too young to walk” were carried on their parents’ shoulders from the Mount of Olives to the city (31.3).

When thinking that she travelled from Hispania to Jerusalem with a small group of people, and made excursions to places like Mount Sinai or Mount Nebo, or to the desert of Egypt, and only very rarely comments on difficulties of the journey, one finds Egeria to be an energetic and courageous person. She appears always eager to visit new places, and curious to see new details even in places she has seen before.

### **Radical Changes in the City**

The Jerusalem Egeria came to was in many ways different from the Jerusalem of the time of Jesus. The Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE, and in the Jewish War (131–135) still more parts of Jerusalem were demolished. Subsequently, Emperor Hadrian had built Jerusalem into a Roman city, and even changed its name to Aelia Capitolina. In the place of the Temple, he had erected a temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, and a temple of Venus was built in the middle of the city. With new constructions, the center of the city was moved to the north and west. New roads were built. Even the population had changed: Romans prohibited the Jews coming to the city; this pertained even to Jewish Christians. During this period, they could gather outside the city wall, on Mount Zion.

During the reign of the emperor Constantine, the character of the city changed once more. Pagan temples were demolished, and Constantine began to build Aelia/Jerusalem into a Christian city. As a part of his project of building basilicas on central Christian sites in the Roman Empire, he started to build three basilicas in Jerusalem and its vicinity: a church on the place of the death and resurrection of Jesus, a Church of Nativity in Bethlehem, and Eleona on the Mount of Olives. His mother, Empress Helena, traveled to Jerusalem in 326, one year after the Council of Nicaea, to supervise the building projects and to pray on the holy sites.

The example of an empress travelling to visit holy places invited other Christians to travel, too. During the fourth century, pilgrimages to the Holy Land became increasingly popular. Therefore, churches, chapels, and monasteries were built, and

even an infrastructure for the needs of Christian visitors was developed — the pilgrims needed places to sleep and eat.

When Egeria came to the Holy Land, there were already traditions for travelers to follow. They could read and hear from the reports of earlier pilgrims where to go and what to do. From the text of Egeria we can see that in many places, the local priests and monks were accustomed to welcoming visitors.

After Egeria's visit, the development of Jerusalem continued. New roads, new churches, and new monasteries were built. The Madaba map from the 6<sup>th</sup> century illustrates beautifully how Jerusalem looked in the Byzantine period.

### **The Holy Sepulchre as Egeria Saw It**

From a Christian point of view, the center of Jerusalem and the main reason to travel there was Golgotha, with the Holy Sepulchre. In Egeria's times, it was clear for all that this was the true site of the tomb of Jesus. Pilgrims from all over the Empire came there and worshipped together with the local church, and a rich liturgical life flourished there.

The church complex was very different from what can be seen today. The buildings Egeria visited have been demolished and rebuilt several times, in particular by caliph Hakim in 1009 CE, but the site is the same.

Egeria most probably came to the church through the main entrance by the main road, *Cardo*. She came first into a court. The complex she saw next consisted of two main parts: the great Constantinian basilica, called *Martyrium*, and a rotund edifice called *Anastasis*, that is, Resurrection. Egeria writes that *Martyrium* was used for Eucharistic celebrations, but it also was the place where the bishop was teaching the catechumens during Lent. Between them was an open courtyard, which Egeria calls "Before the Cross," and in its corner, there was a chapel called "Behind the Cross." There the veneration of the Cross occurred (37.1). All these places had their own functions in daily worship and special festivities. Why the basilica was called *Martyrium* (*martyrium* is usually a name for a tomb of a martyr) is not clear, but Egeria thinks that it refers to the passion of Jesus on Golgotha (31.1).

Egeria calls the tomb a cave, but in fact, there was a little edifice with a roof. Inside was always a lamp with a light, and from there the light was collected every day at *lucernare*. Before it was a portico with four columns and a screen. Egeria mentions several times how the bishop went alone behind the screen to pray, and when he comes out, he blesses everyone (e.g. 24.2-5). Everywhere were candles and lamps.

### **Other Churches in Jerusalem at the Time of Egeria**

The Eleona church on the Mount of Olives was also built by Constantine. Today in the same place is the Church of the Pater Noster. Close to it was a place called Imbomon, which Egeria presents as a place from which the Lord ascended into heaven (31.1). Egeria writes many times of how the Christians walked to Eleona and back in procession and celebrated liturgy there, and calls the church very beautiful. The altar was on a place where Jesus was said to have taught his disciples after his resurrection.

Egeria also mentions several times a church called Sion. It was the old parish church in Aelia/Jerusalem, and in Egeria's time outside the walls of the city. Like Eleona, it was a destination of processions, and a place for celebration. The Jerusalemite Christians had gathered here already in the first century. According to Wilkinson, the church Egeria saw was built between 336–348, the latter date from Cyril of Jerusalem, who called it "Upper Church" because of its geographical position.<sup>20</sup> Today, the church Egeria tells about cannot be localized with certainty. Egeria talks about two churches: the upper room where Jesus appeared after the crucifixion (39.4-5) and another room where the Holy Spirit came to the disciples at the Pentecost (43.2-3). Peter the Deacon has in a passage which probably comes from a lost part of Egeria's text mentioned the bishop's throne of James, located in this church (On the Holy Places E).

The church in Betania was in Egeria's timescale Lasarium. There was a relatively new church with the tomb of Lazaros.

### **What Did the Christians Do There?**

Egeria stayed in Jerusalem for a longer time, and had the opportunity to participate in the liturgical life and yearly feasts of the church of Jerusalem. On the one hand, she was not an outsider; she was a part of the Eucharistic community in the city, but on the other hand, she did describe what she saw from a visitor's point of view: this is how things are done in Jerusalem. When travelers like her spread their stories about how liturgy is celebrated in Jerusalem, they also spread ideas that could be used elsewhere in their home countries.

The fact that they were in the city where Jesus had lived, died, and resurrected was innovatively used to teach and to touch the hearts of the congregation. The feasts of the liturgical year — Egeria mentions Epiphany, Easter, and Encaenia — were planned

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<sup>20</sup> Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, 39; Cyr. Cat. 16.4.

so that the Christians not only heard the gospel but could experience it. On feast days, the churches were decorated with gold, jewels, and silk (25.8).

Typical for the celebrations in Jerusalem is that they were multisensory. The Christians not only heard homilies, but also sang hymns and listened to antiphons. They saw the biblical places. On every Sunday morning, they gathered in front of the church before dawn when it still was dark, and when they were allowed in, they saw a host of lamps and candles (24.8). They smelled the censers (24.10). They moved together during the liturgy from Anastasis to Martyrium. They walked from the Holy Sepulchre to Eleona or Sion in processions, and they sat and stood, and they touched holy places.

Egeria describes in detail the liturgical life in Jerusalem (chapters 25–48). Her account can be completed by the catechetical and mystagogical homilies of Cyril of Jerusalem. The fact that there were so many presbyters, deacons, and monks made it possible to have services night and day. Egeria is, for example, delighted when on the 40th day after Epiphany the bishop and all presbyters who wanted could preach one after another, and all explained the passage about Joseph and Mary taking Jesus to the Temple, and Simeon and Anna seeing the Lord (26).

Characteristic of the life of the church in Jerusalem was that it was multilingual. Egeria writes that the texts were always read in Greek. So was the homily, but it was translated into Syriac because many Christians understood only that language. For those visitors who did not know these languages, only Latin, kind sisters and brothers translated what was said (47:3-4).

### **Why Did Egeria Visit Jerusalem?**

Not all Christians in the fourth century travelled to Jerusalem, and some were in fact against the idea of pilgrimage. But many did, and in the letter of Paula to Marcella (letter 46 among the letters of Jerome) many reasons are presented. In the preserved pages of the travel journal of Egeria we do not find such lists, but we still can see what motivated her.

For Egeria, learning more about the Scripture and participating in the liturgical life of the church of Jerusalem are central motivations. She visits the places of both Old and New Testament events, listens to the texts read there, and participates in the Eucharist or prayer. The liturgy, prayers, hymns — all that she can be a part of delights her. Paula expressed similar ideas in her letter. She too visited biblical places in order to learn and experience. The difference between the two pilgrims was that Egeria was far

more interested in the communal life of the church, while Paula concentrates on personal experience.

Both ladies wanted to share with others what they had learned and experienced. Egeria wrote like a reporter to “ladies and sisters,” describing both places and liturgy because she thought they were interested. Paula wrote to Marcella and tried to persuade her to come to the Holy Land. Both thought that a visit helped them to understand the Scripture, and to know the Lord better. Paula formulates beautifully her motivation: “I found the one my heart loves. I held him and would not let him go” (Song of Songs 3:4), and Egeria often summarizes what different places and texts tell about Christ. She tells that on Good Friday all people gather in the beautiful courtyard between the Cross and Anastasis and listen to the readings. They read the psalms and the prophets about what the Lord would suffer, and then the Gospels about what he did suffer. And on the Easter they all celebrate the resurrection of the Lord.

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# Jerusalem:

## A Catholic Reflection from the Midst of the Conflict

Rev. Dr. David Mark Neuhaus SJ

*Of the Korahites. A Psalm. A Song. On the holy mount stands the city he founded; the Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God. Selah Among those who know me I mention Rahab and Babylon; Philistia too, and Tyre, with Ethiopia— "This one was born there," they say. And of Zion it shall be said, "This one and that one were born in it"; for the Most High himself will establish it. The Lord records, as he registers the peoples, "This one was born there." Selah. Singers and dancers alike say, "All my springs are in you."  
(Psalm 87)*

As I write these lines, a new conflict is taking place in the Haram al-Sharif, also known as the Temple Mount. Some Muslims and some Jews are wrestling for control for a location called *Bab al-Rahma* (Gate of Mercy), through which, according to some traditions, the Messiah will come. This is but the latest chapter in centuries of struggle that have characterized the history of Jerusalem. As conquerors come and conquerors go, each community's faithful try as best they can to nurture their shrines and preserve them. They also zealously stand guard so that the faithful of other religions do not overstep the invisible, yet palpable, boundaries set by tradition and history.

Psalm 87 echoes a glorious vision of Jerusalem:

the Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.  
Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God. Selah ... The Lord records,  
as he registers the peoples, "This one was born there." Selah.

Jerusalem is more than just a geographical location or a sociopolitical reality for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Jerusalem is a holy space where God's revelation of God's self to humanity unfolded over the generations. Those who count themselves as the faithful of ancient Israel's direct progeny—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—all look towards Jerusalem, lovingly venerating their Holy Places in the city's precincts.

However, in the past, they have also tried to gain a monopoly over the city, defining its contours anew and limiting access of others to it. Today's Jewish Zionists have replaced Christian Byzantines, Crusaders and British colonialists, Muslim Ummayyads, Abbasids, Fatamids, Ayyoubids, Mamelukes, and Ottomans. Each community points to its own periods of rule as golden ages of prosperity and beautification of the city. Christians, Muslims, and Jews have all had their turns ruling the city; however, Jerusalem's vocation to be a "city of peace" is yet to be realized.

Any consideration of Jerusalem must confront the simple fact that Jews, Christians, and Muslims make Jerusalem what it is. Members of the three religions have built and rebuilt Jerusalem (sometimes destroying what was there before built on the ruins). The narrative of the origins of the city as a religious center, conquered by David, is common to all three religious traditions. The erection of the Temple by Solomon is likewise a cherished memory for all three communities. The centuries of history of the people of God in the city declared holy are told and retold in the Scriptures that Jews and Christians share and are echoed in the New Testament and Quran. Jews, wherever they are in the world, turn towards Jerusalem three times a day in prayer. Christians reflect on Jerusalem whenever they remember the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the central events upon which their faith is founded. Muslims remember that Muhammad came on a miraculous night journey to Jerusalem and from there ascended into heaven. This is a central event in his life, celebrated annually by Muslims the world over, and they never forget that Jerusalem was the first direction of prayer. In addition to the overwhelming spiritual significance of Jerusalem for Jews, Christians, and Muslims, the age-old roots of these communities in the city are witnessed to by what each community has built, embellished, and preserved, not only their monuments but also their homes and their cemeteries in the city.

On May 25, 2014, Pope Francis joined the ranks of his predecessors, Popes Paul VI (1964), Pope John Paul II (2000), and Pope Benedict XVI (2010), visiting the Church of the Resurrection (Holy Sepulcher) in Jerusalem as a pilgrim and a man of peace. Standing before the empty tomb, alongside the Greek Orthodox Patriarchs of Constantinople and Jerusalem and representatives from many Churches, he said:

Every time we ask forgiveness of one another for our sins against other Christians and every time we find the courage to grant and receive such forgiveness, we experience the resurrection! Every time we put behind us

our longstanding prejudices and find the courage to build new fraternal relationships, we confess that Christ is truly risen! Every time we reflect on the future of the Church in the light of her vocation to unity, the dawn of Easter breaks forth!

A few weeks later, on June 8, 2014, at a prayer in the Vatican that brought together the president of Israel, Shimon Peres, and the president of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, Pope Francis widened the circle of reconciliation:

We have heard a summons, and we must respond. It is the summons to break the spiral of hatred and violence, and to break it by one word alone: the word “brother”. But to be able to utter this word we have to lift our eyes to heaven and acknowledge one another as children of one Father.

These words promote a vision of Jerusalem as a city in which the spiral of violence can be broken.

The convocation of the Second Vatican Council in 1962 by Pope John XXIII was to be a turning point in the history of the Church. The promotion of ecumenical relations with Orthodox and Protestants, the budding dialogue with both Jews and Muslims, and the call to dialogue with the modern world would impact how the Church formulated her position on Jerusalem. At the end of the second session of the Council, Pope John XXIII’s successor, Pope Paul VI, announced that he would visit the Holy Land, a first overseas visit for a Pope in centuries. This voyage was understood as a return to the roots of the Church. Without explicitly mentioning Israel or Jordan by name, Pope Paul explained that this pilgrimage, motivated by piety, would also be to “implore divine mercy in favor of peace among men” (discourse, 4.12.1963). The most important encounter in Jerusalem was not with political authorities, with Jews or Muslims, Israelis or Arabs, but with the Greek Orthodox Patriarchs of Constantinople and Jerusalem, Athenagoras and Benedictos — an enduring symbol of the desire for Christian unity.

Subtle changes can be noted in Catholic discourse about Jerusalem after the Second Vatican Council. The Holy See was no longer uniquely concerned with Christian Holy Places and Christian communities, but also with questions of justice and peace and the dialogue with Jews and Muslims. On the outbreak of the 1967 War, Pope Paul VI declared:

it is a supreme interest for all the descendants of the spiritual seed of Abraham, Jews, Muslims and Christians, that Jerusalem be declared an open city, free from military operations, immune from causes of war, which have already caused such damage. (general audience, 7.6.1967)

He added that Jerusalem should be spared “the regime of war” and remain “the Holy City, a refuge for the helpless and wounded, a symbol for all of hope and peace.” The new situation created after the war, the military occupation of East Jerusalem and its later annexation by the state of Israel, was seen as yet another blow to attempts to leave Jerusalem outside the conflict.

After the 1967 War, a subtle change in the formulation of the position of the Holy See became perceptible. No longer insisting that Jerusalem be a “*corpus separatum*,” i.e. a separate entity under international custodianship, as proposed by the United Nations in 1947, the Holy See began to promote a special statute for the Holy Places and religious communities, which would shield them from the ongoing conflict. At the end of 1967, in an address to the Sacred College, Pope Paul detailed the Holy See’s vision regarding the necessity of ensuring “the liberty of cult, respect, conservation and access to the Holy Places,” taking into account the “historical and religious physiognomy of Jerusalem” (discourse, 22.12.1967). The special regime for the Holy Places was coupled with a concern for the welfare of the various communities that lived in the city. The Pope insisted on “the free enjoyment of the legitimate civil and religious rights of persons, residences and activities of all communities.” In 1973, Pope Paul stressed

the duty, more than the right, which we are obliged to work on, because any resolution touching the state of Jerusalem and the Holy Land (...) responds to the needs of the particular character of that unique city in the world, and to the rights and legitimate aspirations of those who belong to the three great monotheistic religions who have, in the Holy Land, sanctuaries among the most precious and dear to their hearts. (discourse, 21.12.1973)

The pontificate of Pope Paul VI saw an increasing acceptance of the reality of the State of Israel (he received many of Israel’s political leadership even if there were no diplomatic relations with Israel) and a recognition that the Palestinians were a people

with the right to a homeland in Palestine (the Palestinians were no longer referred to as “refugees” but as a “people”).

Pope Paul’s successor, Pope John Paul II, promoted the new vision of relations with Jews and with Muslims, a fraternal dialogue that had implications for the position on Jerusalem. However, the Holy See continued to insist on a special status for Jerusalem and it was this message that Pope John Paul II brought to the United Nations in 1979:

I also hope for a special statute that, under international guarantees—as my predecessor Paul VI indicated—would respect the particular nature of Jerusalem, a heritage sacred to the veneration of millions of believers of the three great monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. (discourse, 2.10.1979)

The Holy See insisted upon a solution that would ensure justice attained by peaceful means. According to the Holy See, the “special statute internationally guaranteed for Jerusalem” had to include:

- the parity of the religious communities, freedom of worship, access to the Holy Places, protection of rights, and safeguarding the historical and urban aspects of the City; and
- equal enjoyment of rights for all religious communities, guaranteeing the promotion of spiritual, cultural, civil, and social life.

In the light of this, it was not surprising that the Holy See, in harmony with most of the international community, firmly rejected the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem in 1980.

In 1984, in an apostolic letter on Jerusalem, Pope John Paul II wrote lovingly and at length about Jerusalem.

Indeed, there should be found, with goodwill and farsightedness a concrete and just solution by which different interests and aspirations can be provided for in a harmonious and stable form, and be safeguarded in an adequate and efficacious manner by a special statute internationally guaranteed so that no party could jeopardize it. (Redemptionis anno, 20.4.1984)

Underlining the demand that Israelis might live in security and that Palestinians might be accorded a homeland, he 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 compromises further the longed for peaceful and just settlement of the crisis of the whole Middle East.

This letter, eminently sensitive to Jews and Muslims, Israelis and Palestinians, insisted that Jerusalem be allowed to realize her spiritual vocation.

Further subtle change in the nature of the discussion was due to the initiation of negotiations between the Holy See and both Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization after 1992, undertaken in light of the beginning of negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian leadership. While maintaining that the Holy See's position on Jerusalem had not changed, a new element had become apparent in the Holy See's discourse: encouraging direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians and accepting that these negotiations would ultimately decide the fate of Jerusalem, all the while insisting on international guarantees for the safety and wellbeing of both the Holy Places and the communities that worship there.

The signing of the *Fundamental Agreement between Holy See and State of Israel* in 1993 raised much controversy regarding possible imminent changes in the Holy See's position on Jerusalem. Although the agreement made no mention of Jerusalem, the Holy See insisted that there had been no change in position. In a summary of the Holy See's position on Jerusalem, published by the Holy See's Secretariat of State in May 1996, the Holy See, maintaining neutrality, underlined its "right to exercise its moral and spiritual teaching office." The Holy See's position was summarized as follows:

The part of the city militarily occupied in 1967 and subsequently annexed and declared the capital of the State of Israel is occupied territory, and all Israeli measures which exceed the power of a belligerent occupant under international law are therefore null and void.

The declaration also acknowledged that the Holy See's interest in Jerusalem went beyond territorial issues and touched upon a religious dimension. Quoting at length Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter on Jerusalem, the declaration explained that the Holy See firmly held that "no unilateral claim made in the name of one or other of the

religions or by reason of historical precedence or numerical preponderance is acceptable.” Safeguarding the identity of Jerusalem means that the “historical and material characteristics of the city as well as its religious and cultural characteristics must be preserved.” The declaration also made clear that this should not only be understood as applying to the Holy Sites but also to the communities that live around the sites.

Cardinal Tauran, Secretary for Relations with States at the Secretariat of State, in a conference in Jerusalem in 1998, explained how the Holy See saw the interrelationship between the political claims on the city and its universal religious vocation:

There is nothing to prevent Jerusalem, in its unity and uniqueness, becoming the symbol and the national capital 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. (discourse, 26.10.1998)

The Cardinal insisted that “the whole international community is responsible for the uniqueness and sacredness of this incomparable city.”

The signing of the *Basic Agreement between the Holy See and the PLO* in February 2000 refocused attention on Jerusalem. The text of the Agreement spoke of Jerusalem at length:

Declaring that an equitable solution for the issue of Jerusalem, based on international resolutions, is fundamental for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, and that unilateral decisions and actions altering the specific character and status of Jerusalem are morally and legally unacceptable; calling, therefore, for a special statute for Jerusalem, internationally guaranteed, which should safeguard the following:

- a. Freedom of religion and conscience for all.
- b. The equality before the law of the three monotheistic religions and their institutions and followers in the City.
- c. The proper identity and sacred character of the City and its universally significant, religious and cultural heritage.

- d. The Holy Places, the freedom of access to them and of worship in them.
- e. The regime of "Status Quo" in those Holy Places where it applies.

During the visits to Jerusalem, the pontiffs were able to repeatedly draw attention to Jerusalem's identity and vocation. John Paul II, at an inter-religious gathering in Jerusalem in March 2000, said:

For all of us Jerusalem, as its name indicates, is the "City of Peace." Perhaps no other place in the world communicates the sense of transcendence and divine election that we perceive in her stones and monuments, and in the witness of the three religions living side by side within her walls. (discourse, 23.3.2000)

Pope Benedict, who visited Jerusalem in May 2009, focused particularly on the identity and vocation of the local Christians and at the mass celebrated at the foot of the Mount of Olives, he said:

Jerusalem, in fact, has always been a city whose streets echo with different languages, whose stones are trod by people of every race and tongue, whose walls are a symbol of God's provident care for the whole human family. As a microcosm of our globalized world, this City, if it is to live up to its universal vocation, must be a place which teaches universality, respect for others, dialogue and mutual understanding; a place where prejudice, ignorance and the fear which fuels them, are overcome by honesty, integrity and the pursuit of peace. There should be no place within these walls for narrowness, discrimination, violence and injustice. (discourse, 12.5.2009)

In May 2014, Pope Francis became the fourth Pope to visit Jerusalem in modern times. During his visit to the Israeli president, he said:

I am happy to be able to meet you once again, this time in Jerusalem, the city which preserves the Holy Places dear to the three great religions which worship the God who called Abraham. The Holy Places are not monuments or museums for tourists, but places where communities of believers daily express their faith and culture and carry out their works of charity. Precisely for this reason, their sacred character must be

perpetually maintained, and protection given not only to the legacy of the past but also to all those who visit these sites today and to those who will visit them in the future. (discourse, 26.5.2014)

Flying back to Rome, the Pope commented on the various proposals regarding a solution to the question of Jerusalem and formulated clearly that negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians should resolve the status of Jerusalem:

The Catholic Church (...) has its own position from a religious perspective: it will be the city of peace of the three religions (...) The concrete measures for peace must emerge from negotiations (...) I believe that one has to enter into negotiations with honesty, a spirit of fraternity and mutual trust. And there everything is negotiated: all the territory, also the relations. Courage is needed to do this, and I fervently pray to the Lord that these two leaders, these two governments, will have the courage to go forward. This is the only path to peace. I only say what the Church must say and has always said: Jerusalem should be preserved as the capital of the three religions, as a point of reference, as a city of peace. (interview, 26.5.2014)

Unfortunately, negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians have not yet brought about a lasting peace and Jerusalem remains an arena of ongoing conflict. The Holy See insists on its neutrality on territorial claims, to the chagrin of Palestinians, and on its strict abiding by the definitions of international law and UN resolutions, to the chagrin of Israelis. It sees its role as preserving a dimension of Jerusalem, as holy city, where three religions converge and where Christianity has its origins, a dimension too often marginalized in the national conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. It was in this light that Pope Francis and King Muhammad VI of Morocco signed a common declaration on Jerusalem on March 30, 2019, which states:

It is our hope (...) that in the Holy City, full freedom of access to the followers of the three monotheistic religions and their right to worship will be guaranteed, so that in Jerusalem/Al-Quds Acharif they may raise their prayers to God, the Creator of all, for a future of peace and fraternity on the earth.

Over the past century, the Catholic Church has repeatedly expressed her concern for Jerusalem. The modalities have shifted as political realities have changed and the concerns of the Church have broadened in their scope. The Church encourages Israelis and Palestinians to maintain dialogue and find just ways to peace and reconciliation, recognizing that Jerusalem is also at the center of the conflict between these two peoples. Two basic concerns for Jerusalem have remained constant:

- the protection of the Christian Holy Places and free access to them; and
- the well-being of Christian communities in Jerusalem.

In recent times, two more elements of the Church's vision have been formulated and provide a context in which the Church's position on Jerusalem is formulated:

- the promotion of justice and peace; and
- the nurturing of inter-religious dialogue with Jews and Muslims.

Undoubtedly, the Holy See will continue to work tirelessly to promote its vision of Jerusalem as a city of peace and a place where Jews, Muslims, and Christians can live together and bear witness to a God who loves all called to make Jerusalem a place where God's name is venerated, conforming to the vision of Psalm 87.

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# **The *Besorah*, Jerusalem, and the Jewish People: An Excerpt from *Jerusalem Crucified, Jerusalem Risen***

**By Mark S. Kinzer**

Almost all Messianic Jews are Zionists. We take seriously the land promise given to the patriarchs and matriarchs. According to our post-supersessionist understanding of the teaching and work of Yeshua, the Jewish people — the genealogical descendants of the patriarchs and matriarchs — remain recipients of an irrevocable covenant. That covenant includes the promise of the land. In light of these convictions, we find it difficult to deny the working of divine providence in the regathering of Jews to the land, and in the emergence of the State of Israel.

We share this perspective with Christian Zionists of various stripes. Like them, we affirm the compatibility of our faith in Yeshua, our acknowledgement of the continuing covenantal status of genealogical-Israel, and our belief in the enduring validity of the promise of the land. We all make the case that these three beliefs are compatible with one another.

However, in my view these claims do not go far enough. They leave us with a Judaism to which Yeshua has been added, or with an apocalyptic or prosperity gospel to which the Jewish people have been added. The additions may be compatible with the primary convictions, but they are still no more than “additions.” The Yeshua part and the Israel part constitute separable and self-sufficient units, rather than interdependent components which function properly only when joined together.

In my recent volume, *Jerusalem Crucified, Jerusalem Risen*,<sup>21</sup> I seek to present a more integrated understanding of Yeshua, the Jewish people, and the land. I propose that Yeshua died and was raised as the messianic representative of the Jewish people, and that these events in his life foreshadow and order the course of Jewish history. Yeshua’s suffering and death constitute a proleptic participation in the intensified exile

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<sup>21</sup> Mark S. Kinzer, *Jerusalem Crucified, Jerusalem Risen: The Resurrected Messiah, the Jewish People, and the Land of Promise* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018). This article is adapted from the book.

of the Jewish people which will begin a generation later when the Romans destroy Jerusalem. This messianic participation in Israel's suffering imparts to the coming exile a redemptive character, so that the dissolution of Jewish national existence centered in Jerusalem functions not only as punishment but also as a source of purification and corporate renewal. In corresponding fashion, Yeshua's resurrection serves as the pledge and efficient cause of Jerusalem's ultimate redemption.

In other words, I propose that the *besorah* (good news) of Yeshua's death and resurrection is a prophetic message which points forward to genealogical Israel's destined historical journey. This means that the *besorah* itself is inseparable from the Jewish people and the land. In light of the historical events of the twentieth century, we may conclude that this *besorah* is also inseparable from at least a modest form of Zionism.

In this article I will examine the role of the city of Jerusalem in the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. I will argue that these texts view the holy city as the fulcrum of God's action in human history, and as indissolubly bound to the crucified and risen Messiah. Since the capital city represents the land as a whole, demonstration of the ongoing theological significance of the city in the New Testament is sufficient grounds for affirming the theological significance of the land. If Jesus identifies himself with Jerusalem, he thereby identifies himself with the land in its entirety, and with the Jewish people to whom that land was promised.

### **The Judgment and Redemption of Jerusalem**

Drawing upon a common description of the Gospel of Mark, N.T. Wright characterizes the *Jewish War* by Josephus as "a passion narrative (the war itself) with an extended introduction."<sup>22</sup> Wright thus implies a parallel between the way Mark presents the suffering and death of Yeshua and the way Josephus depicts the suffering and destruction of Jerusalem. Then Wright proposes that this parallel between the passion of Yeshua and the passion of Jerusalem already exists within the New Testament itself — not in Mark, but in the Gospel of Luke:

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<sup>22</sup> N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 373. The saying concerning the Gospel of Mark apparently derives from the nineteenth-century German theologian Martin Kähler.

Luke's narrative has, in this sense, a double climax to Josephus' single one, and that (I think) is part of the point: the fall of the Temple, seen as future from within Luke's narrative world, is set in close parallel with the death of Jesus. The distinction between Luke and Josephus at this point is a powerful clue to the theological point that Luke is making.<sup>23</sup>

Wright's assessment is astute, though he slightly misstates Luke's concern; this gospel shows a unique preoccupation not only with the *fall of the temple*, but also with the *fall of the entire city*. Luke juxtaposes the death of Yeshua and the fall of Jerusalem in such a way as to make each an interpretation of the other. What precisely is "the theological point that Luke is making" through this juxtaposition?

***"Jerusalem, Jerusalem" (Luke 13:31–35)***

To answer that question, I will begin by examining four passages in the Gospel of Luke (13:31–35; 19:41–44; 21:20–24; 23:27–31) which anticipate the events of 70 CE. The last three of these texts are unique to Luke's gospel, and display lucidly the author's particular theological emphasis. The first, Luke 13:31–35, appears also in Matthew, but its distinctive Lukan context and form manifest the same perspective as that of the latter three passages. This passage falls within Luke's lengthy narrative of Yeshua's departure from Galilee and journey to Jerusalem.

<sup>31</sup>At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." <sup>32</sup>He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. <sup>33</sup>Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed away from Jerusalem.' <sup>34</sup>Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! <sup>35</sup>See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 374.

<sup>24</sup> Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version (nrsv).

Verses 31–33 are found only in Luke. The Pharisees warn Yeshua of Herod’s murderous intentions, and as a group they are thereby distinguished from the Jerusalem authorities of the following verses who will implement Herod’s wish.<sup>25</sup> This reflects Luke’s moderate portrayal of the Pharisees in both his gospel and Acts, and likewise reflects his depiction of the Chief Priests as the primary actors initiating the arrest and conviction of Yeshua and the subsequent persecution of his disciples in Jerusalem. Verse 33 highlights the special role of the city of Jerusalem in Luke as the object of both judgment and redemption. The final two verses (34–35) appear also in Matthew 23 (vss. 37–39), where they function as the climax of Yeshua’s lengthy denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees. In contrast to Luke, however, Matthew’s placement of these verses stresses the Pharisees’ shared responsibility for the crucifixion. The broader context in Matthew of harsh rebuke also qualifies the tone of intense grief which these words convey in their Lukan setting.

In Matthew 23, Yeshua’s address to Jerusalem occurs *after* his triumphal entry into the city when the accompanying crowds shouted, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Matt 21:9). Matthew’s version of the promise “you will not see me” contains the added word “again” (Matt 23:39), which suggests that the triumphal entry was a prophetic symbolic act anticipating Yeshua’s future coming to the city in glory and victory. Yeshua’s address to Jerusalem in Matthew 23 also occurs *after* his arguments with various Jerusalem authorities (Matt 21:10–22:46), and the reference to Jerusalem’s unwilling response to his overtures points back to those disputes. Luke’s version, however, occurs *before* Yeshua has arrived in Jerusalem, and *before* he has tested Jerusalem’s “willingness” to be gathered under his wings. How then does Luke understand Yeshua’s sadness at Jerusalem’s past rebuff, and his claim that the city “will not see” him? Luke here likely presents Yeshua as a prophet speaking in the name of God. As Robert Tannehill argues, the words “how often have I desired to gather you” (Luke 13:34) refer to “the long history of God’s dealing with Jerusalem,” and the words “you will not see me” likewise refer not to Yeshua, but to God: “verse 35 is speaking of the departure of Jerusalem’s divine protector, who will not return to Jerusalem until it is

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<sup>25</sup> Luke’s passion narrative is the only witness to Yeshua’s appearance before Herod after his arrest (Luke 23:6–12). Herod’s contemptuous treatment of Jesus justifies the concern expressed by the Pharisees in 13:31.

willing to welcome its Messiah, ‘the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’”<sup>26</sup> This interpretation makes sense of what is otherwise a difficult text. Luke here alludes to the theme of the return of the Lord to Zion, which N.T. Wright underscores as a central element in both first-century Jewish eschatological hopes and the aims of Yeshua.<sup>27</sup>

In summary, Luke 13:31–35 focuses attention on the city of Jerusalem and its temple authorities as those who persecute the prophets and who will put to death the Messiah. The Pharisees are distinct from this persecuting body and in some measure opposed to it, as are the Galileans who accompany Yeshua on his journey to the capital. The longing for a welcoming response from Jerusalem belongs not only to Yeshua but even more to God, whose love for the city and whose grief at its wickedness is not a recent development but has extended through multiple generations. The predominant tone of this text, as of all four of the passages we are now considering, is one of lament.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, a more positive note emerges in the final words: “you will not see me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord’” (Luke 13:35). There is reason to hope that the divine presence, whose departure renders the city vulnerable to its enemies (“See, your house is left to you”), will return once again, presumably to comfort and glorify Jerusalem. The condition for such a future return is clear: the city — apparently still in its character as the capital of the

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<sup>26</sup> Robert C. Tannehill, *Luke* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 225. See also G.B. Caird, *Saint Luke* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1963), 174, and N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 642. Tannehill also notes that the triumphal entry in Luke does not fulfill the condition of this promise, since it is not “Jerusalem” that utters the words “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord” but “the whole multitude of the disciples” who accompanied Yeshua from Galilee (Luke 19:37).

<sup>27</sup> See Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 612–53. See also my treatment of this theme in chapter two of *Jerusalem Crucified*.

<sup>28</sup> “The four passages that address Jerusalem and prophesy its fate have an important role in the plot (see 13:33–35; 19:41–44; 21:20–24; 23:27–31). It is important to catch the dominant feeling tone of these passages. Jesus speaks words of anguished longing and lament (13:33–35; 19:42)...These four scenes, which build up to the crucifixion and help to set the tone for it, constitute one major reason for interpreting the story of Israel in Luke-Acts as tragic” (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Shape of Luke’s Story* [Eugene: Cascade, 2005], 134).

Jewish people — must offer the same welcome to the Messiah which he will receive from his Galilean disciples on Palm Sunday.<sup>29</sup>

***Yeshua Weeps for Jerusalem (Luke 19:41–44)***

Luke 13 anticipates the inadequate response which Jerusalem will offer to Yeshua, the divine representative. That inadequate response is then narrated in Luke 19. In comparison to the other gospels, the Lukan version of Yeshua's entry to Jerusalem emphasizes the failure of the city to receive Yeshua in a proper manner. As Steve Smith recognizes, "[I]t is only the followers of Jesus who welcome him, not the city...Far from being a triumphal entry, as the event is commonly understood, it is a non-triumphal entry..."<sup>30</sup>

Jerusalem's failure sets the stage for a distinctive Lukan addition to the account:

<sup>41</sup>As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, <sup>42</sup>saying, "If you, even you, had only recognized [*egnōs*] on this day the things that make for peace [*eirēnē*]! But now they are hidden from your eyes. <sup>43</sup>Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies [*echthroi*] will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. <sup>44</sup>They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize [*egnōs*] the time of your visitation [*episkopēs*] from God." (Luke 19:41–44)

<sup>29</sup> In a seminal article, Dale Allison demonstrates that Yeshua depicts the words, "Blessed be he who comes," not as a response (joyful or mournful) which Israel will have to the Messiah after he comes, but instead as the catalyst that induces his coming. "'Until you say' can be understood to signal a conditional sentence. The text then means not, when the Messiah comes, his people will bless him, but rather, when his people bless him, the Messiah will come. In other words, the date of the redemption is contingent upon Israel's acceptance of the person and work of Jesus" (Dale C. Allison, Jr. "Matt. 23:39 = Luke 13:35b as a Conditional Prophecy," JSNT 18 [1983]: 77). Allison's argument reveals the weakness of the traditional Christian interpretation of these words which portrays them as the Jewish people's coerced and mournful response when they behold the return of Yeshua. Peter Walker is among those who continue to advocate the traditional view which Allison refutes (Peter W.L. Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City: New Testament Perspectives on Jerusalem* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 99).

<sup>30</sup> Steve Smith, *The Fate of the Jerusalem Temple in Luke-Acts: An Intertextual Approach to Jesus' Laments over Jerusalem and Stephen's Speech* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 58.

Here the tone of intense grief is unmistakable. Looking upon the city as he descends the Mount of Olives, Yeshua weeps over it. He weeps because in one glance he beholds two prophetic pictures, one superimposed on the other: the first is his own suffering and death, which will reveal that Jerusalem has not “recognized . . . the things that make for peace” or the time of her “visitation”; the second is Jerusalem’s destruction at the hands of the Romans in 70 CE.

One of the most striking features of these verses is their allusion to the Song of Zechariah in Luke 1:68–79. That song, uttered on the occasion of the circumcision of John the Baptist, is a celebration of God’s saving power at work in the fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel. The object of praise is “the Lord God of Israel” (vs. 68), and his redeeming act is in accordance with his oath to Abraham (vs. 73), his merciful covenant with all the patriarchs (vs. 72), and the words spoken “through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old” (vs. 70). Thus, the *tone* of the song is diametrically opposed to that of Luke 19:41–44. Even more, the *content* of Yeshua’s prophetic words as he approaches the city appears to be a direct negation of Zechariah’s song. In the births of John the Baptist and Yeshua, God has “visited [*epe-skepsato*] his people to redeem them” (1:68) and “to give knowledge [*gnōsin*] of salvation to his people” (1:77), but Jerusalem “did not know [*egnōs*] the time of its visitation [*epi-skopēs*]” (19:44). God has come to “give light to those who sit in darkness” and “to guide our feet into the way of peace [*eirēnē*]” (1:79), but now “the things that make for peace [*eirēnē*]” are “hidden from your eyes” (19:42). God’s work through John and Yeshua will result in Israel’s being “saved” and “rescued” from its enemies [*echthroī*] (1:71; 73), but now Yeshua foresees the coming siege of Jerusalem by Israel’s “enemies” [*echthroī*] and the city’s utter destruction at their hands [19:43–44]. We have here far more than a *non-fulfillment* of what was promised; the identical diction draws attention to the blatant *contradiction* between what was anticipated and what is actually taking place. Furthermore, the problem cannot be evaded by attempting to distinguish the “Israel” of Zechariah’s Song from the “Jerusalem” which Yeshua approaches, for the infancy narrative of Luke treats the “redemption [*lutrōsin*]” of Israel (1:68) as equivalent to “the redemption [*lutrōsin*] of Jerusalem” (2:38). If Jerusalem is judged rather than redeemed, then Israel is judged rather than redeemed.

Robert Tannehill has viewed this contradiction between the joyful expectation of Jerusalem's redemption in the infancy narrative and the actual events which occur in Jerusalem in both 30 and 70 CE as evidence that the Lukan narrative concerning Israel should be read as a tragedy.<sup>31</sup> Without denying the tragic element in the story, it is highly unlikely that Luke thinks the promises to Israel in his infancy narrative have been — or can be — definitively thwarted. To see God's dealings with Israel as ultimately tragic would mean that God's dealings with Yeshua result in failure.<sup>32</sup> Yeshua mourns over the coming suffering of Jerusalem just as many in Jerusalem mourn over *his* suffering (23:27–31). The suffering of Yeshua and the grief it causes are swallowed up in the joy of his resurrection (Luke 24:41, 52); if Luke considers the promises to Israel cited in the Song of Zechariah as divine in origin, would he not expect Jerusalem's suffering and grief likewise to be swallowed up in joy?

Most commentators agree that Luke would never entertain the notion that God's dealings with Israel could fail. Many of them, however, propose that he radically reinterprets what those dealings entail: only those who believe in Yeshua constitute the true Israel, and their communal life in the Spirit represents the redemption and restoration which the Lukan infancy narrative anticipates.<sup>33</sup> However, this view ignores

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<sup>31</sup> See footnote 306. Tannehill has argued this point in virtually all his writings on Luke-Acts.

<sup>32</sup> To be fair, Tannehill also asserts that Luke hopes for Jerusalem's future redemption. However, Tannehill stops short of what we are asserting here: that the certain redemption of Jerusalem in the future is as essential to Luke's redemptive vision as is the resurrection of Yeshua.

<sup>33</sup> This view is well-represented by Michael E. Fuller, *The Restoration of Israel: Israel's Re-gathering and the Fate of the Nations in Early Jewish Literature and Luke-Acts* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006). For Fuller the Jewish *ekklēsia* in Jerusalem, ruled by the twelve apostles, constitutes the fully restored Israel. "From heaven, Israel's messiah rules the world. The role of the restored Israel is to proclaim and interpret the significance of the messianic exaltation as the inauguration of Israel's (spiritual) rule over the occupied world" (p. 268). Fuller regards as erroneous all attempts to interpret Luke 1–2 as referring to a redemption that will touch the Jewish people as a whole, whether those interpretations assume a future restoration of Israel or a tragic and unresolved failure in the accomplishment of the divine purpose: "A common error of scholars is to interpret these broadly construed hopes of restoration in Luke 1–2 as indications of Luke's retention of a pan-Israel salvation, either in terms of (future) Jewish conversions or even nationalistic liberation. Other scholars, while also seeing a pan-Israelite inclusion in these hopes of restoration contend they are ultimately unrealized over the course of the narrative due to wide-scale Jewish rejection" (p. 206).

the tone of lamentation which permeates the Lukan texts we are now considering. Furthermore, it misses the many indications in both Luke and Acts that the author/editor looks for a redemption of Israel that is yet to come.

While the Lukan infancy narrative resounds with the tone of joyful hope, an ominous hint of lamentation enters at one point, namely, when Simeon blesses Mary and Yeshua:

Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, ‘This child is destined for *the falling and the rising of many in Israel*, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed — and a sword will pierce your own soul too.’ (Luke 2:34–35)

Many see this text as pointing to the division in Israel that will occur in response to the Messiah’s words and actions. However, David Tiede argues persuasively that “the falling and rising of many in Israel” should be taken as a prophetic temporal sequence, with at first “many in Israel” falling and experiencing judgment, and afterward “many in Israel” rising to receive redemption.<sup>34</sup> This corresponds to the pattern of imminent judgment followed by future redemption which marks the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. This also fits the final verse of Luke 13:31–35, which anticipates a future welcome of the Messiah to be extended by the city of Jerusalem and a consequent return of the divine glory to Zion. If this is Luke’s vision of Israel’s future, then the allusion in Luke 19:41–44 to the Song of Zechariah is neither ironic nor contradictory, but instead a way of signaling that the sad events taking place in Jerusalem are not the end of Jerusalem’s story. In fact, the judgment of Jerusalem — and Yeshua’s bearing of that judgment proleptically and representatively on the cross — will itself be instrumental in achieving her ultimate redemption.

Simeon’s blessing points to the cross (the “sword” that will pierce Mary’s heart) and to the coming judgment (“falling”) of Israel. Entering Jerusalem, Yeshua likewise ponders both events together. The disciples do not initially understand the role the

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<sup>34</sup> David L. Tiede, “Glory to Thy People Israel: Luke-Acts and the Jews,” *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People*, ed. Joseph B. Tyson (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 27–28; see Mark S. Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 111.

cross will play in Yeshua's work "to redeem Israel" (Luke 24:21). In order to "rise," Yeshua himself had to "fall." It appears that Jerusalem must walk the same course.

***The End of the Times of the Gentiles (Luke 21:20–24)***

The third passage in Luke which anticipates the events of 70 CE (Luke 21:20–24) is found in Luke's version of Yeshua's eschatological discourse (Luke 21:5–36). In Mark and Matthew this discourse combines and compresses references to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE and the great distress at the end of the age in such a way that one event is superimposed on the other. The overlay effect is especially evident in Mark 13:14–20:

<sup>14</sup>"But when you see the desolating sacrilege [*to bdelugma tēs erēmōseōs*] set up where it ought not to be (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains; <sup>15</sup>someone on the housetop must not go down or enter the house to take anything away; <sup>16</sup>someone in the field must not turn back to get a coat. <sup>17</sup>Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! <sup>18</sup>Pray that it may not be in winter. <sup>19</sup>For in those days there will be suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, no, and never will be. <sup>20</sup>And if the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he has cut short those days."

The "desolating sacrilege" — or, more literally, "the detestable thing of desolation" — alludes to the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel which had their preliminary realization in the desecration of the Jerusalem temple by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 BCE (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; see also 1 Macc 1:54). The relationship between the eschatological message of Daniel and its partial historical enactment in the Syrian persecution of Antiochus is similar to the relationship between the eschatological message of Mark 13 and its partial enactment in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. In each case one event is telescoped typologically upon another in such a way that the two cannot be disentangled by means of a purely literary analysis.

In contrast, Luke's version of these verses distinguishes clearly between what will happen in Jerusalem in 70 CE and what will happen at the end of the age.

<sup>20</sup>“When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation [*erēmōsis*] has come near. <sup>21</sup>Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those inside the city must leave it, and those out in the country must not enter it; <sup>22</sup>for these are days of vengeance, as a fulfillment of all that is written. <sup>23</sup>Woe [*ouai*] to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress on the earth and wrath against this people [*laō*]; <sup>24</sup>they will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken away as captives among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled [*patoumenē*] on by the Gentiles, until the times [*kairoi*] of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” (Luke 21:20–24)

Luke transforms Mark’s reference to the desecration of the temple (*to bdelugma tēs erēmōseōs*) so that it becomes a description of the “desolation” (*erēmōsis*) of the entire city. The sign itself becomes the armies surrounding Jerusalem rather than the erecting of an idolatrous altar. The Markan text implies a cosmic distress, whereas the Lukan version speaks of “wrath against *this people*” (i.e., the Jewish people who inhabit Jerusalem). Most significantly, the world in its unredeemed form — and the Jewish people — remain in existence after this event, for not all of the inhabitants of Jerusalem are slain but some are “taken away as captives among all nations,” and “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” This concluding statement about Jerusalem implies that an extended period of time will elapse between the destruction of the city by the gentiles and the end of the age (which will occur only *after* “the times of the gentiles are fulfilled”).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Peter Walker proposes that the phrase “the times of the gentiles” refers only to the short period when the Romans are actually engaged in subjugating Jerusalem (*Jesus and the Holy City*, 100). If that is the case, what is the point of the statement? Given the climactic rhetorical context of the verse, one would expect that something significant is to occur after the “until.” If only a short period is in view, and nothing is said about what is to follow that period, why even speak of the “fulfillment” of those “times”? Also, why the plural form of the word “times”? That seems to be an unusual way to refer to a short temporal span. Walker may sense the weakness of this proposal, for he immediately proceeds to an alternate interpretation: “even if the ‘times of the Gentiles’ does refer to a more extended period within the Church’s history, there is nothing in the text to suggest that these times will be followed by the ‘times of the Jews’ ” (pp. 100–101). In fact, the very use of the word “gentiles” itself implies something of the sort, for that word in Luke-Acts always means “non-Jews.” Of course, it is possible, as Walker then suggests, that “the moment when the ‘times of the Gentiles’ are fulfilled will

While commentators generally assume that the “times of the Gentiles” begins with their trampling of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the text permits another reading: the phrase may refer to the extended era of the four gentile empires described in Daniel 2 and 7, the fourth of which was understood by first-century Jews to be Rome (4 Ezra 11:39–40). Such an interpretation is supported by Daniel’s mention of the divine control of “times [*kairoi*] and seasons [*chronoi*]” (Dan 2:21 LXX), which may be alluded to by the resurrected Yeshua when he responds to the disciples’ question about the imminent restoration of the kingdom to Israel: “It is not for you to know the times [*chronoi*] or periods [*kairoi*] that the Father has set by his own authority” (Acts 1:7).<sup>36</sup> If that is correct, then the “times of the Gentiles” begin with the Babylonian conquest of 586 BCE rather than the Roman destruction of the city in 70 CE. Thus, according to this interpretation, Luke 21:24 implies that the exile continues — and is even intensified by a “trampling” of Jerusalem — after the death and resurrection of Yeshua.

Luke 21:20–24 thus demonstrates once again this author’s particular focus on the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. However, verse 24 also confirms what we have already suggested in relation to Luke 13 and Luke 19 — namely, Luke’s anticipation of a future redemption for Jewish Jerusalem. Taking account of the literary traditions underlying this verse, Robert Tannehill offers the most cogent reading: “That Jerusalem or the sanctuary has been or will be ‘trampled on’ is a repeated theme in ancient Jewish writings. . . . This trampling of Jerusalem will last only ‘until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.’ We are not told explicitly what will happen then, but if we return to the other

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be the time of the ‘coming’ of the ‘Son of Man’” (p. 101) — but it is also possible that his “coming” is expected to inaugurate an era of a restored Jerusalem that could be called the “times of the Jews.” That Luke 21:24 refers in some way to a restored Jewish Jerusalem is confirmed by the tight interconnection between that verse, Acts 1:6–7, and 3:19–21. Walker fails to note this interconnection, and so misinterprets each of the three passages.

<sup>36</sup> “[T]he reference to ‘times or periods (seasons)’ in Acts 1:7 may lead the reader to recall the same phrase from Daniel 2, emphasizing divine control over kings and kingdoms within world history. It would, therefore, create expectations about the kingdom’s restoration to Israel and the divine role in that.” (Michael A. Salmeier, *Restoring the Kingdom: The Role of God as the “Ordainer of Times and Seasons” in the Acts of the Apostles* [Eugene: Pickwick, 2011], 25.)

texts that speak of this trampling, we find the expectation that Jerusalem will be restored.”<sup>37</sup>

Perhaps Luke expects the period in which the gentiles “trample” Jerusalem to end when the Jewish people corporately welcome Yeshua as the Messiah with the words, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.” If so, such “trampling” must be compatible with Jewish residence in the city, since Luke 13:35 appears to speak of a welcome extended to Yeshua by the Jews *of Jerusalem*. On the other hand, perhaps the transition from the “times of the Gentiles” to the fullness of the messianic age is an extended process rather than a singular event — a process which culminates in the corporate Jewish welcoming of the Messiah, but begins well before that greeting.

### ***The Daughters of Jerusalem Weep (Luke 23:27–31)***

The fourth and final Lukan passage concerning the destruction of Jerusalem brings that event once again into close proximity to the death of Yeshua. The verses appear in the midst of Luke’s passion narrative, as Yeshua is being led to his place of crucifixion.

<sup>27</sup>A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. <sup>28</sup>But Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. <sup>29</sup>For the days are surely coming when they will say, ‘Blessed [*makariai*] are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.’ <sup>30</sup>Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us’; and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ <sup>31</sup>For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?” (Luke 23:27–31)

These verses, which appear only in Luke, contain a number of noteworthy features for our purposes. First, the women who beat their breasts and wail for Yeshua’s fate show that the city is divided in her response to Yeshua, just as she will later be divided in her response to the twelve (Acts 5:33–39), Stephen (Acts 8:2), and Paul (Acts 23:6–10).<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, in the final analysis those who are sympathetic to Yeshua and

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<sup>37</sup> Tannehill, *Luke*, 305–6.

<sup>38</sup> In the case of the twelve and Paul those sympathetic to the disciples of Yeshua are Pharisees, just as we found Pharisees warning Yeshua regarding Herod Antipas in Luke 13.

his disciples are unable to carry the day. Second, these women respond to what is happening to Yeshua in the same way that he responded to what he envisioned of Jerusalem's fate as he anticipated his arrival in the city (Luke 13) and as he actually approached its gates (Luke 19). This gospel has already sounded the note of grief, and these women are but echoing a note that readers have heard before. Third, this echo means that readers have been prepared for the response that Yeshua gives to the wailing women when he points them to what should be the true object of their grief. The passages being echoed — Luke 13 and 19 — also enable us to understand the tone of Yeshua's words to the women. He does not speak harshly or vindictively, but instead beckons the women to join him in his own grief for Jerusalem which is coming to a head as he reaches his place of execution. Fourth, Yeshua's words concerning the happiness of barren women in that day allude to a verse from our previous passage: "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days!" (Luke 21:23). "Woe" (*ouai*) and "blessed" (*makariai*) are parallel and converse forms of speech, and Luke's literary preference for balancing one with the other is evidenced by Luke 6:20–26. Those who are "blessed" here in our fourth passage on the destruction of Jerusalem are those who are not subject to the "woe" of our third passage. Thus, the beginning of Luke's crucifixion narrative (Luke 23:27–31) echoes the three earlier grieving-for-Jerusalem texts (Luke 13:31–35; Luke 19:41–44; and Luke 21:20–24) as it sets the stage for their dramatic enactment. This echo confirms the bond connecting these four texts, and their special role in telegraphing an essential feature of the author's message.

A fifth and final point concerns the closing words of this passage: "For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?" (Luke 23:31). N.T. Wright describes this as one of Yeshua's many "riddles" which reveal the meaning of what is happening in his crucifixion. Yeshua is innocent of violent insurrection, yet he suffers the punishment reserved by the Romans for just such offenders. He is the green wood, which will be burned up in the "baptism of fire" which he must undergo. If one innocent of offense suffers in this way, what will be the fate of the city as a whole and its leaders — the dry wood — when the torch is tossed in their pile? In this way Yeshua takes his place as the innocent representative of his people, who bears in advance the judgment which they merit and will eventually receive. In interpreting this "riddle" Wright points readers in the proper direction:

[W]hat is happening to Jesus is a foretaste of what will happen to many more young Jews in the not too distant future. . . . It suggests, in its dark riddling way, that Jesus understood his death as being organically linked with the fate of the nation. He was dying as the rejected king, who had offered the way of peace which the city had rejected; as the representative king, taking Israel's suffering upon himself, though not here even with any hint that Israel would thereby escape. . . . Having announced the divine judgment upon Temple and nation alike, a judgment which would take the form of awful devastation at the hands of the pagan forces, Jesus was now going ahead of the nation, to undergo the punishment which, above all, symbolized the judgment of Rome on her rebel subjects. If they did this to the one revolutionary who was not advocating rebellion against Rome, what would they do to those who were, and those who followed them?<sup>39</sup>

Yeshua here signals that his death is “organically linked with the fate of the nation.” By inserting this fourth passage on the destruction of Jerusalem in the midst of the passion narrative, Luke underlines this organic linkage. In other words, rather than attempting to dissuade the daughters of Jerusalem from grieving at his death, Yeshua urges them to recognize how his death — his “baptism of fire” (Luke 3:16; 12:49–50) — anticipates the national conflagration to come. He thus invites them to grieve *with* him rather than merely *for* him.

### **Jerusalem's Resurrection**

These four passages confirm the assertion of N.T. Wright cited earlier concerning the shape of Luke's narrative. The author gives special attention to the future destruction of Jerusalem, and presents that catastrophe as intimately connected to the suffering and death of Yeshua. In part, these passages imply that the events of 70 CE are a consequence of the events of 30 CE — or, more precisely, a consequence of the consistent behavior over several generations which comes to a head with Jerusalem's rejection of its divinely-appointed king. However, as implied by the riddle of the green wood and the dry, and by the grief of the soon-to-be-crucified Yeshua which has as its object not his own suffering but that which the city will undergo a generation later, the relationship between the two events is more complicated than such an exclusively

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<sup>39</sup> Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 570.

unidirectional analysis would suggest. Indeed, Luke views the destruction of Jerusalem as judgment for the unjust execution of Yeshua; but he also sees Yeshua's death as a voluntary act in which Jerusalem's future king proleptically bears the judgment which will come upon his guilty but still beloved city.

Luke considers Jerusalem to be Yeshua's rightful possession, though this Galilean has never resided there. This is evident already in the story of Yeshua's visit to Jerusalem as a twelve-year old boy, accompanying his parents to celebrate the Passover.

<sup>43</sup>When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy [*pais*] Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. . . .

<sup>45</sup>When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. <sup>46</sup>After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. . . . <sup>49</sup>He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:43–49)

The NRSV interprets Yeshua's response as referring to the temple ("my Father's house"), but the Greek is less specific: *en tois tou patrou mou* means "in the things/places of my Father." Yeshua may be speaking of the temple in particular, but he may also refer to the city as a whole. The use of *pais* ("boy") in verse 43 may also be significant. Elsewhere in the Lukan writings the word is used as a title for David and for Yeshua as David's heir.<sup>40</sup> Jerusalem was the city of David and his dynasty, and therefore for Luke it is also the city of Yeshua. There may even be a play on words in the term *pater* in verse 49: the city of Jerusalem and its temple belong ultimately to God (Yeshua's divine "Father"), but God has bestowed it as a heritage upon David (Yeshua's human "father" or ancestor).

If Luke links the destruction of Jerusalem to the death of Yeshua, and if in the very texts which establish that link he also anticipates a future restoration of Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish people, it seems natural to ask a question which is rarely considered: does Luke assume the same sort of connection between Yeshua's resurrection and the future "redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38) as exists between

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<sup>40</sup> For *pais* in reference to King David, see Luke 1:69; Acts 4:25; for the same word in reference to Yeshua as David's heir, see Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30.

Yeshua's death and the events of 70 CE?<sup>41</sup> Good reasons exist for answering that question in the affirmative. Prominent among them is Luke's pattern of associating the resurrection of Yeshua with God's promises to David and his dynasty.<sup>42</sup> The author highlights this theme by featuring it prominently in the two most important speeches of Acts — Peter's first public proclamation of the apostolic message on the day of Pentecost, and Paul's speech in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch on his first apostolic journey. Peter argues for the resurrection and ascension of Yeshua by citing Psalms 16 and 110 and noting that their traditional author, David, spoke of events that he did not experience in his own life:

<sup>25</sup>"For David says concerning him . . . <sup>27</sup>"For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption. . . ." <sup>29</sup>Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. <sup>30</sup>Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. <sup>31</sup>Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah. . . . <sup>32</sup>This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. <sup>33</sup>Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear. <sup>34</sup>For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, <sup>35</sup>until I make your enemies your footstool." <sup>36</sup>Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has

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<sup>41</sup> Peter Walker (*Jesus and the Holy City*, 78) succeeds in articulating this question forcefully: "... the close connection between Jesus' death and Jerusalem's fate invites the question: would Luke have seen any parallel for Jerusalem comparable to Jesus' resurrection? One tragedy (Jesus' death) was followed by a divine reversal; would the same hold for the other tragedy (Jerusalem's destruction)?" However, because he is convinced that Luke-Acts — and the New Testament as a whole — anticipate no restoration of Jewish Jerusalem (and because that conviction governs his entire volume), the best he can offer in response is the suggestion that perhaps this is "precisely the point of contrast between the two." Given the emphasis in Luke-Acts on the "redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38), this is a weak response to a powerful question.

<sup>42</sup> Jacob Jervell contends that Luke sees David, "father of the Messiah," as "the prophet par excellence, the central figure in Scripture" (*The Unknown Paul: Essays on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984], 126–31).

made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.” (Acts 2:25–36)

The resurrection of Yeshua constitutes his vindication and glorification as the promised son of David, and his subsequent ascension represents his heavenly enthronement as “Lord and Messiah.”

In Luke’s description of Paul’s opening speech we find the same exegetical logic displayed. He first underlines the importance of Yeshua’s lineage as David’s descendant and heir (Acts 13:22–23). He then cites Psalm 2 as a Davidic prophecy of the resurrection (Acts 13:33) to accompany a reference to Psalm 16 (Acts 13:35) which he shares with Peter. He also adds an illuminating text from Isaiah 55:3: “As to his raising him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, ‘I will give you the holy promises made to David’” (Acts 13:34). The resurrection of Yeshua thus stands at the heart of the “holy promises made to David.” In other words, that momentous event is not merely the raising of a holy Galilean prophet in whom God was uniquely present, but also the glorification of Israel’s Davidic king whose eternal reign could not be divorced from the city which was elected to be the place of his throne.<sup>43</sup> If the Son of David has been raised from the dead, and if the city of David is destined to likewise be raised from the dead, we have sufficient reason to see the former as a firm pledge, proleptic realization, and efficient cause of the latter.

This conclusion is reinforced by Paul’s final speeches in Acts in which the resurrection of Yeshua is presented as the source of hope for Israel’s national resurrection.<sup>44</sup> When Paul appears before the Sanhedrin, he identifies himself as a Pharisee (i.e., as member of a party for whom Israel’s future resurrection is a fundamental tenet of faith), and then makes the claim, “I am on trial concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead” (Acts 23:6). The word “dead” here is plural (“resurrection of *those who are dead*”). Paul thus refers to the hope for Israel’s future

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<sup>43</sup> On the election of Jerusalem and its association with the election of David, see Psalm 132:11–18.

<sup>44</sup> Peter Walker underlines this emphasis in the Pauline speeches of Acts. However, for Walker this only demonstrates that “for Luke the restoration had already been inaugurated through Jesus” (*Jesus and the Holy City*, 98). He acknowledges that “in a final sense Israel is ‘restored’ only at the Last Day” (p. 99). However, he dismisses any notion that the final restoration might involve an earthly Jerusalem and a genealogical Israel. He thus misses a central Lukan theme.

resurrection, a hope which he shares with his fellow Pharisees. While this claim was a shrewd political maneuver, setting the Pharisees in his audience against the Sadducees, it was also an entirely accurate statement. Paul was on trial for his proclamation of the risen Messiah of Israel, whose resurrection funded a firm and joyful hope in Israel's corporate destiny.

Paul restates this claim when he appears before Felix, the Roman governor (Acts 24:15, 21), but the fullest articulation of Paul's message of national hope and resurrection occurs when he appears before King Agrippa:

"I have belonged to the strictest sect of our religion and lived as a Pharisee.<sup>6</sup> And now I stand here on trial on account of my hope in the promise made by God to our ancestors,<sup>7</sup> a promise that our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship day and night. It is for this hope, your Excellency, that I am accused by Jews!<sup>8</sup> Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead [plural]? . . . <sup>22</sup>To this day I have had help from God, and so I stand here, testifying to both small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would take place: <sup>23</sup>that the Messiah must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles." (Acts 26:5-8, 22-23)

Yeshua is only "the first to rise from the dead," and Paul implies that his resurrection will be instrumental in effecting Israel's future resurrection, the "promise that our twelve tribes hope to attain." Paul does not here link Yeshua's resurrection to the restoration of Jerusalem, since at this point in the narrative the city and its temple remained intact. Instead, he focuses more generally on Israel's national hope of future glory. In his final speech in Acts, this time to the Jewish leaders of Rome, Paul again reiterates his conviction that the message he proclaims concerns Israel's corporate destiny: "For this reason therefore I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is for the sake of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain" (Acts 28:20). The "hope of Israel" to which Paul refers here is not Yeshua himself, but the eschatological renewal of Israel which Yeshua will accomplish. For readers at the end of the first century, aware that in the years immediately following Paul's proclamation Zion was

not glorified but instead burned to the ground, these words would point to a future redemption of the city which would be a true resurrection from the dead.<sup>45</sup>

This proposal regarding Luke's view of Yeshua's resurrection coheres perfectly with Luke's portrayal of Yeshua's death. Luke sets these two intertwined events within the context of a proleptic Israel-Christology, in which Yeshua's death and resurrection are intrinsically and inseparably bound to Israel's eschatological destiny. For greater precision, one might characterize Luke's teaching as *Jerusalem-Christology*. But such a Jerusalem-Christology is but a particular expression of Israel-Christology. For Luke, as for Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, Jerusalem represents both the people of Israel and the land of Israel, fusing in one vivid image the corporate life of the Jewish people and the site apportioned as its promised inheritance.

### **Jerusalem and the Geographical Structure of Luke and Acts**

The author/editor of Luke and Acts reinforces the thematic centrality of Jerusalem for his two volumes by structuring his narrative geographically, with Jerusalem as its pivot. No other books in the New Testament adhere to such a defined geographical pattern as a primary principle of organization. An examination of the geographical structure of Luke and Acts will provide clues regarding the message which the two volumes convey.

#### ***The Geographical Structure of the Gospel of Luke***

Among the four gospels, only Luke begins in Jerusalem — and not only in Jerusalem, but in the temple, with the future father of John the Baptist offering incense in the holy place and receiving there an angelic visitation. While both Matthew and Luke describe Yeshua's birth near Jerusalem in Bethlehem, only Luke depicts the presentation of the infant Yeshua in the Jerusalem temple, accompanied by the prophetic blessings of Simeon and Anna. Only Luke among the canonical gospels provides readers with a story of Yeshua as a youth, and that story recounts his visit to Jerusalem for Passover and his lingering there in the courts of the temple. Thus, Luke's two-chapter introduction centers on the city of Jerusalem and its temple.

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<sup>45</sup> For a perceptive treatment of this theme in the Pauline speeches of Acts, see Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation; Volume 2: The Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 319–20. His conclusion concerning Acts 26:6–7 is especially apt: “Thus the hope and promise of which Paul speaks in 26:6–7 is not merely a hope for individual life after death but a hope for the Jewish people, to be realized through resurrection.”

From the beginning of chapter three to the final paragraphs of chapter nine, Luke shifts focus to Galilee, following for the most part the order of events recorded in the Gospel of Mark. Then Luke begins a new section of his narrative which combines material from the double tradition (i.e., units shared by Luke and Matthew but not Mark) with material unique to Luke. The new section begins in this way: “When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51). The next nine chapters of Luke’s “Special Section” take the form of an extended travel narrative encompassing Yeshua’s final journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51–18:14). The material itself is only loosely geographical in character, consisting of parables and stories that for the most part lack an intrinsic connection to the journey and its destination. Nevertheless, Luke has chosen to organize the material around such a journey, with occasional editorial reminders of the geographical context (e.g., Luke 13:22; 17:11). In this way the central section of Luke’s narrative, which occurs outside Jerusalem, employs the holy city as its point of orientation and source of structural unity.

As in all four gospels, the events of Luke’s passion narrative occur in Jerusalem and its immediate environs. However, only Luke restricts resurrection appearances to that location, and only Luke includes the dominical command that the disciples remain in the city (Luke 24:49). The gospel ends as it began — in the Jerusalem temple, with a community of Jews worshipping the God of Israel (Luke 24:53).

Among the canonical gospels only Luke begins *in* Jerusalem, ends *in* Jerusalem, and orients its central narrative around a journey *to* Jerusalem. Taken together with the particular Lukan material related to the destruction and redemption of Jerusalem considered above, this emphatic geographical structure underlines Luke’s unique concern for the holy city and her enduring theological significance.

### ***The Geographical Structure of Acts of the Apostles***

Acts of the Apostles likewise features a narrative ordered according to a geographical pattern centered in Jerusalem, and that pattern finds explicit articulation in the verses which follow the book’s preface:

<sup>6</sup>So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” <sup>7</sup>He replied, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own

authority.<sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:6–8)

These are crucial verses for a proper interpretation of the entire book. Is Yeshua attempting to correct the ethnocentric worldview of his disciples and urging them to adopt in its place a universal perspective in which Jerusalem and the Jewish people forfeit their role as the fulcrum and goal of the divine purpose? Only a reader holding such a belief as an established presupposition would interpret the verses in this way. In the text itself the only issue at hand is “the time” — will Israel’s full eschatological restoration occur *now* (or *later*)? On even this point Yeshua refrains from offering a negative answer but instead denies the appropriateness of the question. We will return to this topic momentarily. At this juncture we must attend to the substance of the response he does give: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” As has been noted by generations of interpreters, this verse supplies us with a rough geographical outline of Acts.

Like the Gospel of Luke, Acts of the Apostles begins in Jerusalem, with a community centered on the temple (Acts 2:46; 3:1–10; 4:1–2; 5:12; 5:20–21; 5:42). The story develops as the message and power of Yeshua radiate outwards — first to the towns of Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1, 4–25), then with reference to Damascus (Acts 9:1–2, 10, 19). In Acts 10 Peter brings the message of Yeshua to the gentile Cornelius and his household in the coastal city of Caesarea. Then in Acts 13 Paul begins his travels, wending his way through Asia Minor, and eventually crossing over to Europe and establishing Yeshua-believing communities in Greece. The story concludes with Paul in Rome, capital of the Empire.

This narrative outline, like the condensed geographical summary of Acts 1:8, leaves out a particular detail which has profound implications for our interpretation of the geographical structure of Acts: while radiating steadily outwards, *the story continually reverts back to Jerusalem*.<sup>46</sup> Paul encounters Yeshua on the road to

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<sup>46</sup> Peter Walker notes this feature of the geographical structure of Acts, but minimizes its significance: “There are frequent returns to Jerusalem, but these become fewer, and give way to Paul’s extended journey away from Jerusalem towards Rome. There is a gradual severance from Jerusalem, with the

Damascus, *and then returns to Jerusalem* (Acts 9:26–29). Peter proclaims Yeshua to Cornelius in Caesarea, *and then returns to Jerusalem* (Acts 11:2). A congregation arises in Antioch, and *then sends aid to Jerusalem* in a time of famine (Acts 11:27–30). Paul and Barnabas journey from Antioch to Asia Minor, *and then return afterward to Jerusalem* for the central event in the book of Acts — the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:2). From Jerusalem Paul travels with Silas to Greece, *and then returns again to Jerusalem* (Acts 18:22).<sup>47</sup> Paul takes his final journey as a free man, *and then returns to Jerusalem*, where he is arrested (Acts 21:17–23:11). While this feature of the geographical structure of Acts is often ignored by commentators, Robert Brawley sees it clearly and notes its significance:

Although Acts begins in Jerusalem and ends in Rome, it is inaccurate to conclude that Jerusalem falls out in favor of Rome. The narrative in Acts actually reciprocates between Jerusalem and the extended mission. . . . Even when Paul is in Rome, his memory reverts to Jerusalem to reiterate his fate there (28:17). Hence, Acts does not delineate a movement away from Jerusalem, but *a constant return to Jerusalem*. In the geography of Acts emphasis repeatedly falls on Jerusalem from beginning to end.<sup>48</sup>

If indeed Acts 1:8 is a geographical outline of the book, then its language supports this conclusion, for it characterizes Rome as being located at “the *ends* of the

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city becoming increasingly ‘dispensable’” (*Jesus and the Holy City*, 81–82). The “returns” do not, in fact, become “fewer,” for every journey taken — except the last one — is concluded with such a “return.” Since the entire point of Acts is to document the spread of the apostolic message and community from Jerusalem “to the ends of the earth,” it is essential that Paul’s journeys are of increasingly longer duration and take him farther away from Jerusalem. The fact that he always returns to the city after laboring at “the ends of the earth” shows that Jerusalem remains his center, that there is no “gradual severance” from the city, and that the notion of Jerusalem’s “dispensability” is alien to Luke and Acts.

<sup>47</sup> “When he goes on to say that Paul went up and greeted the church, this is usually understood as a reference to going up to Jerusalem and seeing the church there. . . . If this is a correct assumption, it means that each of Paul’s missionary campaigns concluded with a visit to Jerusalem, so that Paul’s work began from and ended in Jerusalem in each case” (I. Howard Marshall, *Acts* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 301–2).

<sup>48</sup> Robert L. Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology, and Conciliation* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1987), 35–6. Emphasis added.

earth.” Rome may be the capital of a gentile Empire, holding political control over much of the earth, but for Luke and Acts it was neither the *center* nor the true capital of the world. That honor belonged to Jerusalem alone.

This assessment finds further confirmation in the geographical structure of the list of Jews gathered for the holiday of Pentecost (Acts 2:5, 9–11). Richard Bauckham has analyzed this list, and his results deserve lengthy citation:

Luke’s list of the nations and countries from which the pilgrims attending the festival of Pentecost had come (Acts 2:9–11) provides a much more authentically *Jerusalem* perspective on the Diaspora. The order in which the names occur has perplexed interpreters. In fact, if we take the trouble to plot the names on a map of the world as an ancient reader would have perceived it, we can see that Luke’s list is carefully designed to depict the Jewish Diaspora with Jerusalem at its centre. . . . The names in Acts 2:9–11 are listed in four groups corresponding to the four points of the compass, beginning in the east and moving counterclockwise. . . . The first group of names in the list . . . *begins in the far east and moves in towards Judaea*, which is then named. Recognizing that Judaea is in the list because it is the centre of the pattern described by the names is the key to understanding the list. The second group of names . . . is of places to the north of Judaea, and follows *an order which moves out from and back to Judaea*, ending at the point from which one might sail to Judaea. The third group of names . . . moves west from Judaea through Egypt . . . and Libya to Rome, *and then back to Judaea* by a sea route calling at Crete. Finally, a single name (Arabs) represents the movement south from Judaea, presumably indicating Nabataea, immediately due south of Judaea.<sup>49</sup>

This list depicts Jerusalem as the center of the world. Moreover, it follows the same rhythm of outward and inward movement which characterizes the entire narrative of Acts. Reading Acts 1:8 in light of Acts 2:9–11 and in light of the overall narrative structure of Acts, we might say that the Pentecost list portrays the actual historical spread of the apostolic message in accordance with Acts 1:8, whereas the

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<sup>49</sup> Richard Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Church,” *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 419. Emphasis added.

narrative of Acts focuses on one particular strand of that greater story — the strand associated with the figure of Paul. In both the greater story of the advance of the apostolic message and the more circumscribed story of Paul, the heart beats in an alternating diastolic and systolic rhythm, with Jerusalem as the perpetual center *to which all must eventually return*.

### ***The Puzzling Conclusion to Acts of the Apostles***

Yet, Acts ends in Rome rather than in Jerusalem. Moreover, it ends with Paul's rebuke of the Jewish leaders of Rome as those whose hearts had been dulled by a divine judgment, in accordance with the words of Isaiah 6. In many respects this is a puzzling conclusion to these two volumes. The second half of Acts deals exclusively with the work of Paul, who will die in Rome as a martyr not many years after the events described in Acts 28. Luke could have brought closure to his narrative of the early *ekklēsia* by recounting Paul's heroic death, yet he refrains from doing so. As we have seen above, the Gospel of Luke gives more attention to the destruction of Jerusalem than any other book in the New Testament, and both Luke and Acts were composed after this cataclysmic event. Luke could have brought closure to his narrative by concluding with a reference to the ruin of Jerusalem, yet he again refrains from doing so.

I propose that this lack of closure constitutes the essential message of Acts 28. The story that Luke is telling is not concluded, but has in fact only just begun. Ending with the death of Paul could signal that the proclamation of the kingdom of God and the earthly realization of its transforming power had come to a suitable narrative climax. Luke seeks to forestall such a false inference by concluding the book with the statement that Paul "lived there [i.e., in Rome] for two whole years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance" (Acts 28:30–31). The work must continue, the kingdom to come must still be proclaimed, lived, and awaited. Similarly, ending with Jerusalem in ruins could signal that God had given up on the Jewish people and had made Rome the capital of not only a gentile empire but also of a reconstituted "Israel." Luke seeks to forestall such a false inference by avoiding explicit reference here to Jerusalem's destruction, only alluding to it cryptically through Paul's citation of Isaiah 6.

This reading of the end of Acts finds its most powerful support in the beginning of Acts. As we saw above, the first chapter of Acts begins with a question from the apostles to Yeshua: “Lord, is this the time [chronos] when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6.). They ask this question in Jerusalem, where the Messiah has just been raised from the dead. They clearly anticipate the imminent restoration of the Davidic kingdom in its ancestral capital.

The disciples appear to have forgotten Yeshua’s earlier teaching regarding the destruction of Jerusalem: “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, until the times [kairoi] of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:24). Yeshua’s response to their question about the Davidic kingdom reminds the disciples of his earlier words concerning the trampling of Jerusalem: “It is not for you to know the times [chronoi] or periods [kairoi] that the Father has set by his own authority” (Acts 1:7). The death and resurrection of the Messiah has begun the process that will lead to the overthrow of the final gentile empire, but Luke makes clear that much suffering still remains for the people of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. Since Jerusalem will soon be “trampled on by the gentiles,” it is evident that the kingdom is now being restored to Israel in only a partial and imperfect fashion. Luke still awaits that day when “the times of the gentiles are fulfilled,” which will also introduce the “time” when God will “restore the kingdom to Israel.” Therefore, he rightly decides to leave his narrative without closure, for the narrative of God’s dealings with Jerusalem, Israel, and the nations has not yet been closed.

Luke wants his readers to grasp the rhythmic geographical flow of his narrative, which streams out from Jerusalem always to return again, like waves that beat on the rocks and then return to their ocean home. He leaves his narrative in mid-flow, in anticipation of its future consummation which will occur at some point *after* the judgment of Jerusalem. Rome may be at the “ends of the earth,” but it is not the end of the story. The story must end where it began: in Jerusalem.

The verses immediately following the opening dialogue between Yeshua and his disciples in Acts 1 confirm this conclusion:

<sup>9</sup>When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup>While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by

them. <sup>11</sup>They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” <sup>12</sup>Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away. (Acts 1:9–12)

What is meant by the revelation that Yeshua “will come in the same way as you saw him go”? Verse 12 hints at the answer by telling us that the ascension occurred on the Mount of Olives. Luke’s reference to the location alludes to the eschatological prophecy of Zechariah 14:

For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle. . . . Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. On that day *his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives*, which lies before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley. . . . *Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.* (Zechariah 14:2–5)

Given the almost certain allusion to Zechariah 14, and Luke’s unequivocal Jerusalem-centered cartography, the phrase “in the same way” should be read as including the geographical site of the two events. Just as Yeshua ascends now *from* the Mount of Olives, so he will descend at the end *to* the Mount of Olives. Just as the Mount of Olives serves now as his point of departure from Jerusalem, so that same site will mark his point of entry to the city when he returns. The angelic message calls the disciples to remember Yeshua’s “non-triumphal entry” on Palm Sunday, and to acknowledge that earlier event as a prophetic anticipation of the “triumphal entry” that is yet to come.

Acts 1:9–12 may also allude to the departure and return of the divine glory (*kavod*) as described in the prophet Ezekiel. When the *kavod* departs from the temple it first stops and rests on “the mountain east of the city” (Ezek 11:23) — that is, the Mount of Olives. When the *kavod* returns to the temple it comes “from the east” (Ezek 43:2) — that is, from the exiles in Mesopotamia. The prophet views the returning *kavod* from the

vantage point of the temple mount, and so stands looking at the Mount of Olives. Thus, Ezekiel sees the *kavod* return “in the same way” as he saw it depart.<sup>50</sup>

Jerusalem will suffer many things, as the prophecies of Zechariah (12–14), Ezekiel, and Yeshua (Luke 13, 19, 21, and 23) all foretell. But the city will be consoled when the Lord comes to defend her at the end, his feet standing on the Mount of Olives. “On that day” the Lord will be welcomed by Jerusalem in a fitting manner, reversing the failure of Palm Sunday. “On that day” the leaders and the people of the city will go out together to meet him, proclaiming with joy, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord” (Luke 13:35; 19:38).<sup>51</sup>

The narrative of the ascension in Acts 1:9–12 provides us with the strongest and clearest evidence for the Jerusalem-centered eschatology of Luke and Acts. This crucial scene set on the Mount of Olives casts a long shadow, encompassing the non-triumphal entry in Luke 19, the anticipation of that entry in Luke 13, and the disciples’ question about the restoration of Israel’s kingdom in the verses immediately preceding (Acts 1:6–8). Given the importance of this scene, it is surprising to see how little attention it receives from those who study Lukan eschatology. The present volume seeks to correct this error of negligence.

An eschatological reading of Acts 1:9–12 that highlights the allusion to Zechariah 14 enables us to perceive another signal of the incomplete character of Luke and Acts and their eschatological hope for “the redemption of Jerusalem” — namely, the

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<sup>50</sup> Klaus Baltzer sees the relevance of these texts in Ezekiel for Luke and Acts, but he fails to draw the logical conclusion regarding the eschatological-geographical significance of Acts 1:9–12. See Klaus Baltzer, “The Meaning of the Temple in the Lukan Writings,” *HTR* 58:3 (1965): 263–277.

<sup>51</sup> Peter Walker rightly underlines the importance of the Mount of Olives for the narrative of Luke and Acts. However, he misses the allusion to Zechariah 14 and to Palm Sunday, and so misinterprets the text, claiming that the author contrasts the Mount and the city in favor of the Mount: “the Mount of Olives, not Jerusalem, is the geographical ‘hinge’ of Luke-Acts. . . . The Christian gospel has a close connection to Jerusalem, but its centre is fractionally, but significantly, different” (Jesus and the Holy City, 81). In fact, the significance of the Mount of Olives in the narrative derives from its destined role as the first stage of the divine entrance to the city. Rather than detracting from the holiness and centrality of Jerusalem, the Lukan emphasis on the Mount of Olives serves to confirm those very characteristics.

approach taken by these two volumes to the pilgrimage festivals of Israel.<sup>52</sup> Early in Luke we read of Yeshua and his family journeying to Jerusalem to celebrate the early-spring pilgrimage festival of Passover (Luke 2:41). As already noted, the central narrative of Luke is then structured around Yeshua's journey to Jerusalem, again in order to celebrate the Passover (Luke 22:1, 7–8, 11, 13, 15). Acts of the Apostles has a similar orientation to the late-spring pilgrimage festival, Pentecost. The book begins with the giving of the Spirit on this day (Acts 2:1). Later the book describes Paul's final journey to Jerusalem in a way that makes it resemble Yeshua's pilgrimage before his death.<sup>53</sup> But whereas Yeshua went to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, Paul goes for Pentecost (Acts 20:16). The narrative of Acts is thus focused on Pentecost in the same way as the narrative of Luke is focused on Passover. This covers the first two pilgrimage festivals of Israel — but what about the third, the autumn feast of Booths? The festival year is incomplete without this crucial feast, which anticipates the final harvest and Israel's redeemed life (with the nations) in the world to come. It is likely that already in first-century Judaism, as in later Jewish tradition, a key reading from the prophets for this holiday was Zechariah 14:1:

And the LORD will become king over all the earth; on that day the LORD will be one and his name one. . . . Then all who survive of the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the festival of booths (Zechariah 14:9, 16).

If the Gospel of Luke is related to Passover, and the Acts of the Apostles to Pentecost, then the as yet unwritten conclusion to this trilogy will be related to Booths. In the eschatological celebration which will fulfill the meaning of this holiday, the nations will join Israel in Jerusalem to glorify the One who is the “king over all the earth.” Thus will be realized the “kingdom of God” which, according to the final verse of

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<sup>52</sup> I first proposed this interpretation of Luke's approach to the Jewish holidays in *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism*, 121.

<sup>53</sup> “The parallels with Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem have often been noted and are considerable” (Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 627–28).

Acts, Paul proclaimed in Rome “with all boldness and without hindrance” (Acts 28:31). Only then will the story find its ultimate closure.

The conclusion of Acts, read in relation to the beginning of the book, supports our thesis. The geographical structure of Luke and Acts conveys the same message we discerned in their substantive message: the resurrection of Yeshua is the pledge and power which ensures Jerusalem’s future redemption. Only then will the “kingdom of God” reach its appointed goal.

### **Proleptic Joy in the Midst of Exile**

Biblical scholarship is indebted to N.T. Wright for his identification of the theme of exile as central to the thinking of first century Judaism and to the New Testament.<sup>54</sup> However, Wright’s construal of that theme in the New Testament has problematic features. According to his reading, Yeshua and the apostles assumed that the Babylonian exile continued even after the temple was rebuilt. In his death Yeshua endured the full power of that exile, and in his resurrection he overcame that power. When Jews rally to the resurrected Messiah, they become those who have already returned from exile. Paradoxically, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE involves no intensification of exile but instead demonstrates its termination by confirming the prophetic words and actions of Yeshua. Jerusalem had become the new Babylon, persecuting the servants of God, and her definitive judgment represented God’s victory and the vindication of God’s servants.<sup>55</sup>

Luke’s reiterated lament at the fall of Jerusalem and expression of hope for Jerusalem’s future redemption manifest a vision of Israel’s restoration and exile that is far more complex than that offered by N.T. Wright. On the one hand, Luke would agree with Wright that the resurrection of Yeshua constitutes the first-fruits and source of Israel’s ultimate restoration. On the other hand, Luke also sees the destruction of Jerusalem as a new stage in Israel’s enduring exile, which will not end until “the times of

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<sup>54</sup> Wright provides a succinct and nuanced explanation of his use of the term “exile” in *Jesus & the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N.T. Wright’s “Jesus and the Victory of God”*, ed. Carey C. Newman [Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1999], 257–61. In the same volume Craig Evans supports Wright’s approach to exile (“Jesus & the Continuing Exile of Israel,” 77–100).

<sup>55</sup> On the destruction of Jerusalem as divine vindication and victory, see Wright’s exegesis of Mark 13 in *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 339–65.

the gentiles are fulfilled.” The exile endured by Yeshua in his suffering and death was not primarily the exile that began in the distant past when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and that continued to his own day, but the intensified exile which was coming upon his people in the near future at the hands of the Romans. Moreover, Luke portrays Jerusalem as both the enduring capital and international center of the Jewish people, and also as the capital and international center of the community of Yeshua’s disciples — and indeed of the world itself. The agony and humiliation of the city at the hands of the Romans inspired in his work a profound sense of grief rather than exultation.

We find this complex vision of exile and restoration not only in Luke but in the synoptic tradition as a whole. No better witness to this complexity exists than the story of Yeshua’s teaching concerning feasting and fasting. All three synoptic gospels contain this pericope with little significant variation. Here is Luke’s version:

<sup>33</sup>Then they said to him, “John’s disciples, like the disciples of the Pharisees, frequently fast and pray, but your disciples eat and drink.”

<sup>34</sup>Jesus said to them, “You cannot make wedding-guests fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? <sup>35</sup>The days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.” (Luke 5:33–35)

N.T. Wright’s comments on this unit are instructive:

Fasting in this period was not, for Jews, simply an ascetic discipline, part of the general practice of piety. It had to do with Israel’s present condition: she was still in exile. More specifically, it had to do with commemorating the destruction of the Temple. Zechariah’s promise that the fasts would turn into feasts could come true only when YHWH restored the fortunes of his people. That, of course, was precisely what Jesus’ cryptic comments implied.<sup>56</sup>

Wright helpfully characterizes the practice of fasting as a corporate Jewish response to exile. He also rightly sees Yeshua’s feasting rather than fasting as a sign that Yeshua is the one who will bring the exile to an end. However, in order to fit this text

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<sup>56</sup> Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 433.

into his unambiguous understanding of restoration, Wright must go beyond this useful insight:

This is . . . a claim about eschatology. The time is fulfilled; the exile is over; the bridegroom is at hand. Jesus' acted symbol, feasting rather than fasting, brings into public visibility his controversial claim, that in his work Israel's hope was being realized; more specifically, that in his work *the Temple was being rebuilt*.<sup>57</sup>

Unfortunately, this reading only makes sense if we ignore the final verse of the unit: "The days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and *then they will fast in those days*" (Luke 5:35). This verse implies that Yeshua's physical presence served as a proleptic sign of the coming restoration, but was not the final restoration itself. Fasting was not appropriate in his physical presence, but it would be appropriate *after his ascension*. The resurrection and ascension of Yeshua may secure the ultimate end of exile, but the appropriateness of fasting in the era inaugurated by these messianic events suggests that the condition of exile in some sense endures.

The restoration had begun, and through faith in Yeshua, the gift of the Spirit, and participation in the apostolic community one could receive an authentic foretaste of the final redemption. Nevertheless, for Luke the destruction of Jerusalem constituted a new stage in the exile rather than its conclusion. Still, this new stage also contained positive elements, even for Jews outside the apostolic community. First, the doors of the apostolic community remained open, and there the powers of the messianic age were available in proleptic form. Second, the Messiah had risen from the dead and ascended on high, and these events — and his continued presence in the world by his Spirit — stood as a sure pledge of Jerusalem's ultimate restoration and glorification. Third, Yeshua took upon himself Jerusalem's suffering when he died upon the cross. This established a dynamic connection between his redemptive work and the suffering endured by the Jewish people as a consequence of the exile. As one aspect of this connection, I propose that Luke envisions the Jewish people in post-70 exile as benefiting corporately from the redemptive suffering of Yeshua — even apart from explicit communal reception of Yeshua as Israel's Messiah. At the very least, we may

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 434. Emphasis original.

confidently assert that the radical identification of Yeshua with the Jewish people in his suffering and death — and in his resurrection and ascension — solidified a bond that is thereafter unbreakable.

That Acts concludes in Rome may be viewed as further evidence for the author's vision of exile as both enduring and potentially redemptive. Writing from a post-70 vantage point, Luke knows that Roman armies will demolish Jerusalem after Paul dies in Rome. He concludes his two volumes with Paul proclaiming Yeshua and "the kingdom" in the very city that will be the agent of divine judgment upon the promised seat of that kingdom. Rome thus occupies the same position vis-à-vis Jerusalem as that previously held by Babylon in the sixth century BCE. The armies of Babylon had destroyed Jerusalem and taken many of its inhabitants into exile; but it was from the midst of that exile, and from the city which had brought it to pass, that the post-exilic renewal of Judaism and the Jewish people would originate. Ezra, "a scribe skilled in the law of Moses," comes to Jerusalem "from Babylonia" (Ezra 7:6). For Luke, as for 1 Peter 5:13, Rome is the new Babylon, the agent of judgment on Jerusalem which is destined also to become an incubator for her eschatological renewal.

Luke thus sees the saving work of Yeshua in his death and resurrection as simultaneously deepening Israel's exile (through the judgment of Jerusalem in 70 CE), transforming it to realize its redemptive potential (through association with Yeshua's suffering and death), and initiating the exile's ultimate demise (through his resurrection). The community of Yeshua's disciples takes its place in the midst of Israel, and in the midst of Israel's exile, as a prophetic sign of the meaning of that exile and a pledge of the restoration to come. In fellowship with their Messiah, the disciples of Yeshua mourn for the destruction of Jerusalem, which was the center of their communal life and the focal point of their eschatological hope. With Paul, the *ekklēsia* takes up her temporary residence in Rome, at the *ends* of the earth — but without losing her expectation of returning home to Zion, the true capital of the world. Indeed, this is a far more complex vision of exile and restoration than the one enunciated by N.T. Wright. Though we should be grateful to Wright for highlighting the importance of exile and restoration for the New Testament, we should also recognize the limitations of his manner of elucidating that theme.

### **The Lukan Vision and Israel Today**

Luke and Acts portray Jerusalem as the city of David and the city of David's greater son, the city of the holy temple, the city which Yeshua loved and the city in which he died and rose again from the dead. These two volumes present Jerusalem as the center of the land of Israel, the center of the Jewish people, the center of the messianic *ekklēsia*, and the center of the entire world. They depict the suffering and death of Yeshua as a prophetic embodiment of and participation in the suffering and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, and imply that his resurrection is the pledge and future catalyst of Jerusalem's eschatological restoration.

The comprehensive vision of Luke-Acts, however, concerns not only the city itself, but also that which the city represents — the land of Israel and the Jewish people. According to Luke and Acts, the death and resurrection of the Messiah are bound inextricably to both the land and the people. In the final analysis, his salvific work either includes them in its scope, or fails in its purpose.

If we look beyond the narrative of Luke-Acts to the present, we might ask how this narrative sheds light on the Jewish return to the land of Israel in our own time. *Something* is happening in the Zionist movement of tremendous positive theological import. That *something* corresponds *in some way* with the prophetic *besorah*. But what does this mean for the specific questions which disciples of Yeshua must address as they reflect theologically on critical events taking place in the Middle East?

How disciples of Yeshua answer these questions has a profound impact on how they respond to those events. Most of the direct participants in the Middle East are not intentional disciples of Yeshua, and we cannot expect the *besorah* to shape their thinking and action. But disciples of Yeshua around the world play a prominent role in supporting or opposing various courses of action adopted by those participants. Thus, we need to know what the prophetic *besorah* requires or permits concerning these actions.

In what follows I am not advocating any particular political program or policy. My aim is to clarify the practical twenty-first century imperatives of the message of Luke-Acts outlined in this article. I seek only to define what that message requires concerning the Jewish people and the land of Israel, and where there is scope for prudential decisions based on the ethical teaching that is also central to the *besorah*.

### ***Five Theological Questions***

**Question #1:** Does a positive theological assessment of Zionism in light of the prophetic besorah mean that the Jewish State as currently constituted is the beginning of the redeemed order of the world?

Our theological reflection on these historical events suggests that *the rebirth of Jewish national life in the land of Israel is a divine work with profound eschatological implications*. This conclusion should be evident from the extraordinary form this history took and by its relationship to the Lukan *besorah*. However, this does not mean that *the state* should be regarded in exactly the same way. Considered as a particular political arrangement for the ordering of Jewish national life, the state serves the nation but is not identical to it. It is an instrument, not an end in itself, and could take a variety of forms and still fulfill its purpose.

In 1948 the two chief rabbis of the new State of Israel composed a prayer for the state that is still used by many Jewish communities today. That prayer refers to the state as *reshit tzemichat ge'ulateynu* — literally translated, “the first-fruit of the sprouting of our redemption.” The Hebrew word translated here as “sprouting” alludes to biblical and liturgical texts which speak of the eschatological reign of the Messiah.<sup>58</sup> There are ways of interpreting this phrase that would be compatible with the prophetic *besorah*. The term “state” (*medinah*) may be understood as referring not primarily to a governmental structure but instead to the people served by that structure, and also to the entire historical sequence of events whereby they were regathered to the land as a self-governing community. These events may reasonably be viewed together as an eschatological sign manifesting God’s faithfulness to the covenant promises, and pointing beyond themselves to a future messianic expression of that faithfulness beyond all imagining.

However, the phrase employed in the prayer for the State of Israel may also be interpreted in ways that are incompatible with the *besorah*. This occurs whenever the

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<sup>58</sup> See, for example, the fifteenth blessing of the daily Amidah prayer: “May the offshoot [*tzemach*] of Your servant David soon flower [*tatzmiach*], and may his pride be raised high by Your salvation, for we wait for you salvation all day. Blessed are You, Lord, who makes the glory of salvation flourish [*matzmiach*]” (*The Koren Siddur: Nusach Ashkenaz*, trans. Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks [Jerusalem: Koren, 2009], 124–25).

State of Israel as a particular political order comes to be viewed as the first stage of the messianic redemption, with the ultimate reign of the Messiah merely adding the capstone to a nearly completed structure. Such an orientation to the Jewish State exaggerates the continuity between this broken world and the redeemed world, between Israel-now and Israel-then. The coming of the Messiah will heal the *nations* (Revelation 21:24, 26; 22:2), but will end *states* as we now know them by establishing a *kingdom* in Israel (Acts 1:6).<sup>59</sup>

In this context, the approach taken to the reality of the Jewish State by Martin Buber has much to commend it. Before 1948 Buber had been aligned with those who had argued for a bi-national state in which the Jewish people would find a national home as an autonomous partner in a twofold Jewish-Arab political order. Displeased with the actual shape taken by the State of Israel in 1948, he nonetheless accepted it as his own. “I have accepted as mine the State of Israel, the form of the new Jewish community that has arisen from the war. I have nothing in common with those Jews who imagine that they may contest the factual shape which Jewish independence has taken. The command to serve the spirit is to be fulfilled by us in this state, starting from it.”<sup>60</sup> While embracing the Jewish State, Buber still argued vigorously against an idolatry of that state. For him, the Zionist vision was fundamentally a moral and spiritual task given by God to the Jewish people, and the establishment of the state offered a decisive new opportunity to accomplish that task. Buber’s biographer summarizes his view of the State of Israel in this way:

“Every attempt to replace the living idea of ‘Zion’ through the establishment of a state must end in failure,” wrote Buber [in 1959]. “The state is not, as Hegel thought, the ‘self-determination’ of the spirit in

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<sup>59</sup> According to David Novak, the notion of the State as the first stage of the messianic redemption is also problematic from a traditional Jewish theological perspective. See David Novak, *Zionism and Judaism: A New Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 233–40. Novak argues that “the land of Israel exists for the sake of the people Israel; the people Israel do not exist for the sake of the land of Israel. . . . In the same way, the State of Israel is for the sake of the people Israel in the land of Israel; the people Israel in the land of Israel is not for the sake of the State of Israel. And, most importantly, the people, then the land, then the state all exist for the sake of God” (pp. 150, 151). I agree completely with Novak’s formulation.

<sup>60</sup> Martin Buber, *A Land of Two Peoples* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) 292–93.

which alone man can have a rational existence. It is at best a supporting structure that the spirit employs in its work; but can also be a hindrance." Zion can grow out of a state that is faithful to the spirit but not out of one that forgets it unless it recollects itself and "turns." The people need the land and freedom to organize their own lives in order to realize the goal of community, Buber wrote in *Israel and Palestine*. But the state as such is at best only a *means* to the goal of Zion, and it may even be an obstacle to it if the true nature of Zion as commission and task is not held uppermost. "Zion means a destiny of mutual perfecting. It is not a calculation but a command; not an idea but a hidden figure waiting to be revealed. Israel would lose its own self if it replaced [the land of] Palestine by another land and it would lose its own self if it replaced Zion by [the land of] Palestine."<sup>61</sup>

Buber was the prophetic conscience of the Zionist movement. His attitude to the State of Israel produced by that movement has as much prophetic power today as it did a half-century ago.

**Question #2:** Does a positive theological assessment of Zionism in light of the prophetic besorah mean that the State of Israel must retain sovereignty over all the land it now controls?

If the State of Israel was the first stage of the eschatological redemption, destined to change gradually into the messianic kingdom, then one might justly argue against any territorial concessions on the part of the Jewish State. In that case, to yield land could mean delaying the day of final redemption. However, I have already denied such a status to the Jewish State. The State of Israel is at best a preliminary sign of the messianic kingdom, whose ultimate coming will rupture the order of this world as we know it.

In effect, I would argue that the Zionist ethos of collective action must be complemented and tempered by the traditional Jewish ethos of trusting expectation. Inspired collective action has providentially yielded a Jewish national home in the land of promise. But collective action alone cannot initiate the messianic age. In light of the *besorah* of Yeshua's death and resurrection, one must hold that the existential condition

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<sup>61</sup> Maurice Friedman, *Martin Buber's Life and Work: The Later Years, 1945–1965* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1983), 351.

of exile continues so long as sin and death dominate the created order. The corporate life of the Jewish people in the land of Israel constitutes a sign pointing beyond the exile to a world governed by the resurrected and glorified Messiah of Israel — yet the exile continues, even for Jews in the land. We will only see the true end of exile when God intervenes in an extraordinary and unilateral fashion to rend the heavens and transfigure the form of this world.

That is the eschatological perspective of the prophetic *besorah*.<sup>62</sup> Viewed from this angle, the State of Israel is free to make territorial concessions if it determines that such decisions would advance the welfare of its people and promote the good of its region. Prudential judgments concerning security and other matters may make such concessions unwise in certain circumstances, but one should not confuse prudential judgments with theological imperatives.

**Question #3:** Does a positive theological assessment of Zionism in light of the prophetic *besorah* mean that the State of Israel must retain total sovereignty over a politically united city of Jerusalem?

As we have seen, the *besorah* acknowledges the unique bond joining the Jewish people to the holy city, and anticipates an eschatological day of redemption when that bond will be consummated. This means that disciples of Yeshua must resist all attempts to equate theologically the Jewish relationship to the city with the religious attachment to the place held by Christians (i.e., gentile disciples of Yeshua) and Muslims. Christians are joined to the city through their relationship with Yeshua the Messiah, who suffered, died, and rose from the dead there, and to whom the city ultimately belongs. However, the titulus under which he died identified him as “the king of the Jews,” and the city belongs to him because he fulfills that role as the risen Son of David. Consequently, gentile disciples of Yeshua are linked to the city through the Jewish people of which Yeshua is the sovereign. Muslims, on the other hand, derive their devotion to Jerusalem from a tradition that Mohammed ascended to heaven on the temple mount in order to receive divine revelation. This tradition won a special place in Islamic piety through the houses of worship constructed there to honor the event. Of course, disciples of Yeshua will be disposed to view this story as legendary, but they cannot deny the attachment

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<sup>62</sup> This is also the eschatological perspective advocated by Jewish theologian David Novak, a perspective which he terms “transcendent messianism” (*Zionism*, 245).

that has arisen as its result. What is crucial for our purposes is to note that, from a historical perspective, the story likely arose because the early Islamic tradition acknowledged the site as the place of the Jerusalem temple, and thus treated it as suitable for such an ascent.<sup>63</sup> Thus, Muslim as well as Christian devotion to Jerusalem derive ultimately from the more basic Jewish connection to the site.

However, our answers to questions #1 and #2 underline the preliminary and provisional character of the Jewish State in relation to the messianic kingdom that is still to come. What is true of Jewish state sovereignty over the land as a whole applies also to Jewish state sovereignty over the holy city which is its heart. Of course, any political arrangement concerning Jerusalem must account for the city's unique role as the center not only of the Jewish State but also of the Jewish people throughout the world. Administration of the city must always be such as to enable Jewish life to thrive there, and to assure freedom of access to Jewish holy sites. Having met those essential conditions, the Jewish State could negotiate any number of possible political arrangements that would be compatible with the message of the resurrected Messiah. Disciples of Yeshua should not impose theological constraints on the State's right and duty to develop creative solutions to complex political and diplomatic problems. The prophetic *besorah* and the Zionist ideal (especially in the cultural Zionist tradition) share in common the imperative of joining ethical concerns, such as the priority of justice and peace, to national and religious concerns. As Buber argued, the "Zion" which animated the Zionist hope was not merely a place but also an ethical task, and the Jewish people should not be compelled to give up that task in the name of a particular expression of "state sovereignty."

At this point in history it is unlikely that the State of Israel would agree to any political arrangement that compromises its sovereignty in respect to Jerusalem. I am not arguing against that position, nor proposing any particular alternative. I merely seek

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<sup>63</sup> That does not mean that Muslims today generally recognize the site as the ancient home of a Jewish temple. Thus, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has frequently stated that "there never was a Temple on the Temple Mount" (Yossi Alpher, "The Issues the Peace Process Should Avoid," *The Forward* [July 29, 2013], <https://forward.com/opinion/181261/the-issues-the-peace-process-should-avoid/>).

to define the boundaries of permissible political options for those committed to the besorah of the crucified and resurrected Messiah.

**Question #4:** Does a positive theological assessment of Zionism in light of the prophetic *besorah* mean that the State of Israel should claim ownership of the temple mount and seek to rebuild the temple?

All Jews treat the temple mount as the holiest place on earth. For most of the past nineteen centuries Jews have been unable to worship on the mount itself, and have expressed their devotion to the place by praying at the western wall of the mount's supporting structure. Even after the Jewish State took control of the Old City of Jerusalem in 1967, rabbinic rulings prohibited Jews from visiting the temple mount in order to prevent the inadvertent profaning of the holy place.

The Lukan writings continue to show reverence for the temple mount. Regardless of whether a Jewish temple adorns the site, the place itself retains its unique character as a central component in the Lukan vision of the cosmos. Just as Jerusalem remains the holy city, so the temple mount remains the holiest of the holy.

Therefore, disciples of Yeshua should affirm the enduring connection between the Jewish people and the temple mount, and defend Jewish rights to worship freely at the western wall.<sup>64</sup> Christians of the Roman and Byzantine eras commonly treated the mount with contempt, seeing it as a symbol of a people forsaken by God, but disciples of Yeshua today should show reverence for the site as a sacred symbol of a people chosen and beloved by God, whose identity and destiny are part and parcel of the *besorah*.

Jews have traditionally believed that the temple would be rebuilt by the Messiah, and therefore Jewish longing for the temple was enfolded in a greater longing for the messianic era. Religious Zionists believed in collective action in order to return to the land and refashion Jewish national life, but they still assumed that the temple would be rebuilt only by the Messiah. So, when it came to the hope for a new temple, one could only pray and wait.

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<sup>64</sup> This may appear to be a non-controversial statement. That this is not the case is demonstrated by an April 15, 2016, UNESCO resolution which spoke of the "Al-Haram Al Sharif" (the "noble sanctuary") solely as a "Muslim holy site of worship," and which referred to the Western Wall as "Al-Buraq Plaza" (with "Western Wall" mentioned parenthetically, in quotation marks).

This approach coheres well with the New Testament orientation to the temple and the messianic era. Like many Jews of the first century, the early disciples of Yeshua looked for a future temple “not made with hands,” which would descend from heaven. For many of them, that temple was equivalent to the entire creation transformed and filled with the divine glory. Some of them may have hoped for a particular edifice in a renewed Jerusalem — but even they knew that it would not be constructed out of earthly stones by ordinary Jewish hands.

In the Six Day War of 1967 Israel took control of the Old City of Jerusalem for the first time in nearly nineteen centuries. After that dramatic event, a few Israelis began to think that the temple should be rebuilt *now*, before the coming of the Messiah.<sup>65</sup> The same type of collective action which resulted in the establishment of the Jewish State and the unification of the city of Jerusalem could now result in the renewal of Jewish temple worship. Such a program has gained momentum in recent years, and, while still marginal, has a growing number of Israeli adherents.<sup>66</sup>

Of course, this program also would likely entail destroying some or all of the Muslim religious sites which currently reside on the temple mount. That act would dishonor structures held sacred by a billion Muslims around the world, isolate the Jewish State even from its allies, and ignite a violent conflict with the Palestinians and other Muslim neighbors. Given the fact that building the temple before the coming of the Messiah is required by neither Jewish tradition nor the prophetic *besorah*, and given the catastrophic geopolitical consequences it would produce, this is not a course of action which disciples of Yeshua need support or applaud.

I am not here suggesting that temple worship itself is incompatible with New Testament teaching. The early Jewish disciples of Yeshua participated in temple worship before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, and there are no compelling theological reasons which would prevent Jewish disciples of Yeshua from doing the same if the Jerusalem temple existed in our day. Thus, I am not here arguing against the

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<sup>65</sup> See Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2013), 215–17.

<sup>66</sup> See Elhanan Miller, “Temple Mount Revival Movement Revels in Crowd-Funded Passover Sacrifice — but at What Cost?” *The Forward* (May 2, 2016) (<http://forward.com/news/israel/339759/temple-mount-revival-movement-revels-in-crowd-funded-passover-sacrifice-but/>).

*permissibility* of temple worship but instead against the *necessity* or *wisdom* of advocating its restoration before the return of the Messiah.

Some may argue that disciples of Yeshua must advocate the rebuilding of the temple because the New Testament expects the temple to be in existence in the period immediately preceding the return of the Messiah. Paul (or one of his literary disciples) evidently held such an expectation (see 2 Thessalonians 2:1–4). However, Paul apparently also believed that Yeshua’s return was imminent, and he does not seem to know what the author/editor of Luke/Acts knew — that the temple would be destroyed, and the history of Israel and the nations would continue in its absence. Since prophets do not always know how their words will be fulfilled, it is possible that Paul’s reference to the temple in 2 Thessalonians should be taken in a figurative sense. The text may point only to the authority which “the lawless one” claims over the people of God, and the worship he demands from them. On the other hand, perhaps this text will indeed have a literal fulfillment, and the temple will be reconstructed at some point. Even if that is the case, it does not follow that such reconstruction is intrinsically a good and desirable act. There are many events which scripture anticipates at the end of this age which may be inevitable, but which in themselves are not good, and which should be resisted by the faithful rather than promoted. The initial triumph of “the lawless one” is itself the most extreme instance of just such an event, and (depending upon the circumstances) the reconstruction of the temple could be another.

While the prophetic *besorah* does not require disciples of Yeshua to advocate the reconstruction of the temple, it also does not require that they oppose such action. As noted above, current circumstances make the reconstruction of the temple a perilous and potentially disastrous venture which would dishonor a major world religion and violate the rights of its adherents. While it is difficult to envision a future scenario in which that is not the case, history takes many strange twists and turns that defy all attempts at prognostication. Should circumstances change in a way that makes the reconstruction of the temple a morally and prudentially acceptable action, disciples of Yeshua would be free to support it. As I have already stated, there is nothing about temple worship that is incompatible with New Testament teaching.

Nevertheless, our hope rests not on any such human project, but on the temple built without the help of human hands, whose holy of holies will be the New Jerusalem, and whose glory will fill the entire cosmos.

**Question #5:** Does a positive theological assessment of Zionism in light of the prophetic *besorah* mean that disciples of Yeshua should always support the policies and actions of the government of the State of Israel?

In contrast to the previous four questions, the answer to this one should be obvious: if disciples of Yeshua need not approve of every policy and action undertaken by the governing authorities of their own ecclesial communities — which even Catholics are not obliged to do — of course they need not do so in regards to the Jewish State. Once again, if traditional Jews who consider themselves Zionists do not adopt such a posture — and none to my knowledge do — then why should Jewish or gentile disciples of Yeshua be required to do so?

The reason for even asking this question is not in order to receive the expected negative response, but instead to clarify the attitude which disciples of Yeshua should take in their moral evaluation of Israeli policy and action. Fundamentally, that attitude should be one of solidarity with the people who have elected the particular government in power and whose continued assent provides it with legitimacy. A disciple of the Jewish Messiah cannot adopt a neutral posture in thinking about Middle-East politics, standing at an equal distance from all parties and giving the benefit of the doubt to none.

At this final stage of our argument, the bases for such solidarity should be evident. First, all disciples of Yeshua — gentile as well as Jewish — are bound inextricably to the Jewish people as brothers and sisters. As a consequence, one is considering the conduct of family members, not strangers. Second, disciples of Yeshua should view the overall Zionist enterprise as a miracle of the Holy Spirit in history, tied intimately to the *besorah* and reflecting the divine *boulē* (plan or counsel). Just as we cannot consider the ovens of Auschwitz apart from the cross of the Messiah, so we cannot consider the life of this nation apart from his resurrection. Third, disciples of Yeshua should be vividly aware that the diabolical forces whose machinations culminated in the Shoah have not been banished by its manifest horrors. The spirit of anti-Semitism is identical to the spirit of anti-Christ, and it is alive and well today in

both guises. Not all anti-Zionism serves as a socially acceptable cloak for anti-Semitism, but some of it does. This fact makes us all the more eager to speak constructively, if not always positively, about the inevitably ambiguous fruit of Israeli politics.

We should begin from a place of faith in the work of God in history. Like every government enmeshed in a tangled web of international, intercultural, interethnic, and inter-religious hostility and violence, the government of Israel has committed, is committing, and will continue to commit misdeeds of varying degrees of gravity. But does this not echo the biblical narrative itself, in which God weaves his own redemptive tapestry out of our frayed and tangled cords? We can acknowledge the misdeeds of the Jewish State and pray and labor for their correction, while also acknowledging our limited capacity to discern the precise outlines of God's providential design in its historical outworking. At the same time, we are called to place our hope in the divine *boulē* which turned the sin of Joseph's brothers into salvation for both Jacob's family and the nations of the world.

Within the broad framework of this ecclesial Zionism, there is ample room for vigorous debate and disagreement concerning the practical details of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I am attempting to provide a set of theological parameters within which advocates of the right, left, and center can all take their stand. In other words, the approach presented here does not dictate a particular political stance in dealing with the issues at hand. In fact, the purpose is to limit the impact of theology to those essentials which draw the outer boundaries of discourse. I seek to free those in the debate from the heavy burden of theological imperatives in order to focus on the prudential and ethical considerations whose content should be decisive in shaping the argument. The theological framework is indispensable, but every attempt to draw detailed practical conclusions from this framework imprisons us in a dogmatic box from whose unyielding judgments we cannot escape, regardless of urgent ethical and prudential considerations.

### **Conclusion**

Here we have a Zionism that is thoroughly integrated with the *besorah*, and a *besorah* which is inseparable from the hope of Zion. This Zionism and this *besorah* find their most powerful witness in the Lukan writings. In Luke-Acts the earthly city of Jerusalem appears as a proleptic eschatological reality inseparable from both the Jewish people

and the *besorah* of the resurrected Messiah. As the hope of both the Jewish people and the *ekklēsia*, she is also an ecclesiological reality that has the potential to unify the whole people of God — Jew and gentile, Protestant and Catholic, Eastern and Western. Her holy mountain is destined to be a “house of prayer for all peoples” (Isa 56:7; Mark 11:17), with all nations streaming to it (Isa 2:2). Just as Jews find their spiritual home in Jerusalem, so also shall those whose descent from Abraham and Sarah is only by faith and not by genealogy: “Among those who know me I mention Rahab and Babylon, Philistia too, and Tyre, with Ethiopia — ‘This one was born there,’ they say. And of Zion it shall be said: ‘This one and that one were born in it’” (Ps 87:4–5).

When the *ekklēsia* of the nations rediscovers this truth she will join with the Jewish people in taking the words of the Psalmist as her own sacred promise: “If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy” (Ps 137:5–6).

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# **On the Political Rhetoric of Toponyms: Jerusalem in the History of Redemption**

**Judith Mendelsohn Rood**

## **Abstract**

Place names, or *toponyms*, convey meaning, shaping our understandings of ourselves, our communities, and “the others” who agree and disagree with us about them. By studying historical geography, we learn that over time places are named and renamed, and that what was once here is now there. Jerusalem’s symbolic power is beyond calculation. The more we study Jerusalem, the more our assumptions about her are challenged. We know that the political rhetoric of toponyms has been deployed for polemical reasons throughout the immensely long history of Jerusalem. What we think we know because of these names and concepts often is the site of conflict as competing interpretations of the evidence — literary, archeological, and historical monuments — are enough to lead to war and trauma. Nowhere is quite like Jerusalem, with its identity shaped by the Hebrew Scriptures, the New Testament, The Quran, and the traditions of the Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Here I lay out the framework for my understanding of the evidence and scholarship on the theme of how we understand the toponyms “Israel” and “Palestine” and the place of Jerusalem in our own thinking. For the followers of Yeshu’a, who sanctified the Temple by His appearance there, this history is an important source of our understanding of His life and the history of those who have been called by His name. Our witness is to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us, making us the Temple of the Holy Spirit in this dispensation, the Age of the Messianic Movement, in all its historical complexity. Jewish believers have a burden to become the most knowledgeable experts about the history of the Land of Israel. Our scholarship is a critical dimension to our existence as a community that transcends politics, pointing towards Second Coming of the Lord and His coming Kingdom.

## **Antiquity**

When Abraham was called to Canaan, he met with the mysterious Melchizedek, thought by some scholars to have been Shem, the Righteous Priest-King of the Creator who had survived the Flood. Abraham deferred to his authority by offering bread and salt to

him.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps as they met Shem told him the history of the world, and Abraham shared that knowledge with Job, an ancient king who lived during the same period in what became known as Arabia much later in history. Even in Mesopotamia, Abraham's father Tahor knew of the God of Creation. Abraham's family became known in ancient sources as "Hebrews" because they'd crossed over Mesopotamia through Syria to the southwesternmost region of Asia. They became the custodians of the historical and spiritual revelations from the antediluvian world, entrusted to them as a blessing for the whole world. Abraham bought the Cave of the Patriarchs, known as Machpeleh (meaning "Two Caves"), from a Hittite whose people had settled the area. Hebron, and its Arabic name, "Al-Khalil," mean "Beloved," an ancient name for Abraham.

When the Hebrews were called out of Egypt after 400 years, the Sea Peoples had established themselves on the coastal littoral of the Mediterranean between the Sinai Desert and the Taurus Mountains, establishing ancient cults that featured human sacrifice. The Hebrew term "*Palesheth*" appears eight times in the *Tanakh*,<sup>2</sup> but the verb appears in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Micah. According to *Strong's Concordance* the root, *palash*, means to "roll in ashes."<sup>3</sup> The Egyptians, Greeks, and Assyrians all used the term "*Filastine*" specifically to refer to the southern Mediterranean coastline occupied by the Philistines, a Mediterranean Sea People descended from Japheth that had migrated from Mesopotamia to Caphtor (Cyprus) in very ancient times, and their cities, Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath, Ekron. Jewish sources considered these people "sojourners" in the Land, but the Septuagint instead uses the term "*allophuloi*" (ἄλλόφυλοι, "other nations") for these peoples. Thus, before Israel conquered the land, this area was known to the Greeks as "Philistia," while the central highlands, known later as Judea and Samaria, was known as "Canaan." They were of the same people as the Phoenicians, who established

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<sup>1</sup>The detailed history of the Temple and the scholarly controversies surrounding it are beyond the parameters of this article. The bibliography serves as a tool for those who wish to dig deeper.

<sup>2</sup> "*Paleshet*," <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/kjv/pelesheth.html> <accessed June 4, 2019.> Wikipedia has a comprehensive entry on "Palestine" providing a detailed etymological study of the ancient and medieval sources. Wikipedia has become a good source so long as all of the references and sources are detailed, as they are in this article. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palestine\\_\(region\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palestine_(region)) <accessed June 4, 2019.>

<sup>3</sup>"*Palash*" <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H6428&t=WLC>. <accessed June 4, 2019.>

themselves on the northern coast of the Levant and Africa, where they established their most famous city, Carthage. Human sacrifice was a central feature of this culture. This was the practice that the Jebusites, who had taken control of Jerusalem centuries after Melchizedek, and the God of Israel condemned through His relationship with Abraham. The most ancient artifacts found in Jerusalem, near the Gihon Spring, date to 3200 B.C. — the Early Bronze Age.<sup>4</sup>

God covenanted with Abraham, the patriarch of Jews and Arabs, to grant his progeny the “Promised Land.” The Hebrews, after their 400-year Egyptian exile, were constituted into the people of Israel at Sinai. David and Solomon became the kings of Israel with the mission to make known the Word of God and to establish righteous worship in Jerusalem. However, the Israelites accepted the idolatry of the pagans surrounding them, and engaged in child sacrifice. The Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom, exiling those who corporately became known as “Ephraim,” the descendants of Joseph and the Ten Lost Tribes. God judged the Northern Kingdom, which became known in the Second Temple Period as “Galilee” and “Samaria.” The Assyrians exiled other peoples from their empire to what became known as Samaria, where the syncretic Samaritan religion developed during the Second Temple Period. “Judea,” from the name “Judah,” which means “He who praises Yah(weh)” came to refer to the Southern Kingdom, consisting of Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The “Jews,” those who praise Yah(weh) thus take their name from Judea, which became the refuge of some of the Israelite survivors of the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom. Judea was conquered and destroyed in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians. Most were exiled to Babylon, where they began to redact their history, poetry, and prophetic writings. Notably, it was during this period that Daniel wrote and prophesied, and the Book of Esther was recorded. These books were brought back to Judea 70 years later. The Israelites were condemned for adopting the practice of human sacrifice and judged because of this sin.

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<sup>4</sup> R. Steven Notley and Anson F. Rainey, *The Sacred Bridge: Carta's Atlas of the Biblical World* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2006). The archeological study bibles are excellent for studying the ancient world of the Bible: John D. Currid (one of my favorite scholars!) and David W. Chapman, eds., *Archeology Study Bible - ESV* (Wheaton IL: Crossway, 2017); Walter C. Kaiser (another favorite), ed. NIV (my preferred translation) *Archeological Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005); and Randall Price, ed. *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archeology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017).

Both the Philistines and the Canaanites, along with the Lost Tribes of Israel, disappeared as distinct peoples, at least by the time of the Babylonian Captivity (586 B.C.). The history of these exiles is difficult to discern over the centuries, but, taking the long view of medieval history, the “Jewish angle” sometimes emerges, with consequences for the history of Jerusalem, as we shall see later.

In 526 B.C. the Babylonian exiles began their return when Cyrus permitted Ezra and Nehemiah to lay the foundations of the long Second Temple Period. The province of *Yehud* retained its independence under the aegis of the Achaemenid Persian Empire. Alexander the Great, newly declared a god in Egypt, incorporated what had been known as *Medinata Yehud*, i.e., Judea, into the Hellenistic Empire sometime before his death in 324 B.C. He left the Judeans to govern themselves and respected the independence of their cult, as was his practice when encountering the worship of other deities the lands he conquered. However, his successors the Seleucids had no such scruples, and persecuted them for refusing to worship their king as god. After a period of religious oppression, the triumphant Maccabees liberated Judea and later extended their rule by forcibly converting their neighbors to the south, the pagan Nabatean Edomites (Idumeans), to Judaism, and established the Hasmonean Kingdom. Eventually, the Idumean king Herod the Great allied himself with Rome, and the stage was set for his claims to the Messianic Kingdom. In a letter to his brother, an Egyptian named Aristaeus — who may or may not, have been a Jew — wrote sometime around 250 B.C.,

When we approached near the site we saw the city built in the midst of the whole land of the Jews, upon a hill which extended to a great height. On top of the hill the Temple had been constructed, towering above all.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Yaron Z. Eliav, *God's Mountain: The Temple Mount in Time, Place, and Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 2. This work supports the general thesis of my research; that is, the political rhetoric of toponyms helps us to understand the shifting religious perspectives of believers conditioned by their lived experiences and their collective memories. We can trace the development of religious concepts through archeology, literary sources, and the built environment. Frustratingly, throughout this fascinating book, Eliav strains to make his point that the idea of the Temple overshadowed the idea of the holy mountain until the destruction of the temple. In fact, Eliav constantly downplays the height of the Temple Mount to make his point. It seems that he is fixed on the northern and southern approaches to the city, which does diminish the impression of height when one approaches the Temple Mount. Yet as anyone who has approached the site of the Temple

The enormous building projects of the Hasmoneans, especially the fortifications built by Herod, completely transformed the ancient contours of the ancient walled city, known also as Zion. Our understanding of Hasmonean and Herodian Jerusalem has been shaped by the Islamic tradition that the Temple Mount is Al-Aqsa, the farthest mosque. In what follows, we will trace how this happened.

During the Second Temple Period, Jews who resisted Herod's unjust rule rejected the priestly elite (the Sadducees who claimed descent from Zadok), the Pharisees, and the *Sicarii* (the Zealots, known for using knives to assassinate their enemies). Other groups focused on the Branch of Jesse, the Davidic King, including the *Notzrim* and the *'Isa'iin* (the Essenes), from "*Ishai*," Jesse, genitive plural, named for the eponymous father of David, who lived in other cities in Israel, according to Josephus. The Davidic family itself, some of whom had fled from Bethlehem to a remote village which became known as "Nazareth" —for "watchtower," where the people living hidden below a high precipice from which they could scope out incoming invaders — to escape Herodian persecution. These became known as the prophetic groups named in Isaiah and Jeremiah — the "*Notzrim*" or "watchers" who were awaiting the righteous Davidic king.<sup>6</sup>

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from the City of David (the Ophel) or the Mount of Olives, it is very high and daunting (as is the Ophel itself!). Eliav's forced attempt to prove his thesis, that the Temple Mount is not really a mountain, but at best a hill, and that therefore the term "Temple Mount" was not a term used during the Second Temple Period, detracts from his overall project. See: Ernest L. Martin, *The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot* (Portland, Oregon: Associates for Scriptural Knowledge, 2000) and Marilyn Sams, *375 Descriptions Defy the Jerusalem Temple Mount Myth* (Kindle Version: CreateSpace, 2014). Yoram Tsafrir rejects the idea that the Tenth Legion occupied the Temple Mount, calling it "highly unlikely" in his chapter, entitled, "70-638: The Temple-Less Mountain," in Oleg Grabar and Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Where Heaven and Earth Meet: Jerusalem's Sacred Esplanade* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 93.

<sup>6</sup>Paul W. Rood and Judith Mendelsohn Rood, "The Testimony of the Nazarenes: Persecution of the Followers of the Jewish Messiah Brings Jesus to the Foreground of the Middle East Conflict," August 1, 2014, [https://www.academia.edu/7870750/The\\_Testimony\\_of\\_the\\_Nazarenes\\_Persecution\\_of\\_the\\_Followers\\_of\\_the\\_Jewish\\_Messiah\\_Brings\\_Jesus\\_to\\_the\\_Foreground\\_of\\_the\\_Middle\\_East\\_Conflict](https://www.academia.edu/7870750/The_Testimony_of_the_Nazarenes_Persecution_of_the_Followers_of_the_Jewish_Messiah_Brings_Jesus_to_the_Foreground_of_the_Middle_East_Conflict) <accessed 23 May 2019>. The word "Jesus" is from this same morphology in Arabic: "*Isawiyah*" is the adjective for Jesus, as in the Jesus Movement. The Quran preserves this identity in its use of the name *'Isa* for Jesus, which we propose was the name that the *Nasara/Notzrim*, or Jewish Christians of

Among them was John, who may have visited established communities during his sojourn in Arabia where they may have discipled him.<sup>7</sup> These became known centuries later as the *Nasara* in the Quran. Their contact with Jewish-Christians during the Persian and Roman periods helped to shape their understanding of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period.

In the New Testament, the term “Palestine” is never used. The term “Israel” is primarily used to refer to the people of Israel, rather than the Land. However, in at least two passages, the reference to “Israel” is territorial:

Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel for they are dead who sought the young child’s life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel (Matt. 2:20-21).

But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: verily I say to you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel til the Son of man shall have come (Matt. 10:23).

Note that in both cases the significance of the passages relates to Christ’s role as king. The first passage describes his first coming to his Kingdom, and the next refers to his second coming. Jesus, Matthew, and the angel speaking to Joseph use the term “Israel” with reference to the Kingdom, though the term was not in use in that sense during the Roman period, when the terms “Judea” and “Israel” referred to these areas. When Titus destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Rome struck a coin with the phrase “*Judea Capta*,” meaning “Captive Judea,” depicted as a weeping woman seated beneath a palm tree. The term “Palestine” was not used until 135 A.D., when the Romans crushed the Bar Kokhba Rebellion. Roman Emperor Hadrian (76-138 CE) then applied the term

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Arabia, used in the period leading up to the events leading to the rise of Islam in the seventh century. Nazerene is spelled with the letter ζ (zeta), which is generally transliterated from the Hebrew letter (zayin) but never צ (tsade) as in netzer (נֶצֶר). (Transliteration from Hebrew to Greek often led to the blending and confusion of terms, fusing their meaning to create entirely new concepts. See also Juzif Qazzi (translated into English as Joseph Azzi), *The Priest and the Prophet: The Christian Priest Waraka Ibn Warfal’s Profound Influence Upon Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam* (Pen Publishers, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Gal 1:17.

“Palestine” to erase the memory of the Jewish Kingdom. He changed the name of Jerusalem to *Aelia Capitolina*, to honor himself and his personal god, Jupiter. According to some sources, Hadrian built shrines on the Temple Mount devoted to Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva (Aphrodite) sometime after 129 A.D. in Jerusalem.

### **Roman Toponyms**

Historian Yaron Z. Eliav challenged this idea in his book *God's Mountain*. In this book, Eliav closely studied the literary and archeological evidence concerning Jerusalem from the time of King David to the emergence of what he calls “Palestinian Christianity” on the eve of the Islamic period. His book traces the use of the phrase “Temple Mount” and although he never uses the term “toponym” that is exactly what his book is all about: the religious dimension to the political rhetoric that shaped the rabbinical concept of the “Temple Mount.”<sup>8</sup> Eliav traces how these ruins transformed the huge esplanade into a sacred mountain, a spectacle that was preserved by the Byzantine Restoration to Jerusalem in 629 A.D., seven years after Muhammad’s flight to Medina and only three years before his triumphant return to Mecca. The ancient ruins of the Herodian Temple were obliterated by the Roman destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., the Bar Kokhba rebellion of 135 A.D., and finally, the Sasanian destruction of Byzantine Jerusalem in 614 A.D. These catastrophes resulted in many, many deaths, leaving behind many questions about the ruins standing as a solemn testimony of desolation outside of the Roman and Byzantine cities sometime after 129 A.D. in Jerusalem, but the locations of these buildings is disputed in the sources. Without explaining why, Eliav importantly, if perhaps quite uncritically, accepts Hadrian’s intentional choice of the Latinized term “Palestine.” Hadrian renamed the land after its long-vanished Canaanite and Philistine inhabitants in order to reassert the supremacy of the pre-Israelite gods of over the God of Israel.

Eliav persuasively adduces archeological and literary evidence to prove his thesis that the location of the Temple was beyond the walls of the Roman city of Aelia Capitolina. The ruins on what later became known as the “Temple Mount” assumed new meaning to the Jews, Jewish Christians, and eventually, Palestinian Christians during the Byzantine Period. An even more radical reappraisal of the toponyms associated with the

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<sup>8</sup> Martin and Sams.

Temple Mount is the thesis of Jerusalem archeologist Benjamin Mazar, the first archaeologist, to excavate the Ophel that was the location of Solomon's Temple. Mazar and his son shared this idea with their friend and associate, Old Testament historian Ernest L. Martin, while they were working together on the dig. The Ophel, the southeastern ridge marked in Bahat's atlases of Jerusalem as the City of David, rises between the Tyropoeon and the Kidron Valleys, parallel with the Mount of Olives. Determined to fully investigate Mazar's suggestion, Martin researched ancient Jewish, Christian, and Muslim literary sources concerning the Temple Mount for decades, resulting in his book, *The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot*, in 2000. His thesis is that the Temple Mount was the location of the Roman garrison built by Herod to house the Roman army, known in the literary sources as the *Praetorium* and the Antonia Fortress. Martin focused on the size of the Temple Mount in comparison to other temples and garrisons in the Middle East. Independent historian Marilyn Sams has brought this theory up to date in light of recent archaeological findings in the City of David.<sup>9</sup> Sams

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<sup>9</sup> Benjamin Mazar's thesis is one that I find compelling, but I cannot go into the weeds to adduce all of the evidence that Martin and Sams deploy for this article. Critics like Leen Rittmyer and Randall Price criticize Martin and Sams because they are not archeologists, but, following the model laid out by Eliav, I believe that Martin and Sams rightly question the "Temple Mount Myth" and that the professionals have to deal with the evidence they've adduced. Sams studied English and American literature at the University of Utah and Brigham Young University. She writes that while on a pilgrimage in 1997, her interest in the Dome of the Rock and the Temple Mount was piqued. She read Ernest L. Martin's controversial book, *The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot* (Portland, Oregon: Associates for Scriptural Knowledge, 2000) and decided to use her language skills to read all of the ancient texts relating to Jerusalem to judge for herself. The fact that Sams self-published her work, and therefore did not go through the process of peer review required for academic publishing, should not, in my view, lessen our interest in the evidence she has assembled to support Martin's views. The same paradigm that Eliav used can be considered as we weigh the increasing archeological evidence coming from the City of David excavations with the ancient writings all of these authors have studied. Clearly, by the time that Umar arrived in Jerusalem, the location of the Temples had shifted from the City of David to the Temple Mount. This would mean reframing Eliav's findings from the Mount to the City of David; this would include the Judeo-Christian site preserving the tomb of James the Lesser to the ruins there, but that these were then shifted to the Temple Mount during the Constantinian era. If this is the case, the church on today's Mount Zion would have faced the Temple directly, strengthening this connection between these two sites outside of Roman and Byzantine Jerusalem even more deeply. On the suppressed history of the Messianic Jewish community on Mount Zion during the late Second Temple Period, begin with Raymond Robert

notes that the two valleys make the City of David like a theater, as attested in the ancient sources she has collected. By rejecting the widely accepted idea that the Solomonic and Davidic Temples were built upon the Temple Mount, Martin and Sams challenge the now widely held belief that what we see today on the Temple Mount is the remnant of Solomon and Herod's Temples. What is surprising is that Eliav completely ignored Mazar's thesis as developed by Martin and Sams.

### **The Judeo-Christian Community of James**

Most authors writing about the Temple Mount are unaware of the early Christian monuments built there during the Byzantine Period, and the sources are quite unclear. However, Eliav masterfully brings archeological and literary evidence to bear on this subject. He asserts that the earliest followers of Jesus left traces of their Temple worship that survived. According to the *Protoevangelium of James*, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was brought to the Temple at the age of three, and grew up among the priests.<sup>10</sup> This story reveals that the family of Jesus had an ongoing presence in Jerusalem, the historical memory of which was preserved by the earliest sources, including the New Testament. Eliav takes on the Tübingen School, which held that Christianity "was ideologically opposed to the Temple even in its nascent stages."<sup>11</sup> Eliav rejects the idea that the Romans and Byzantines were engaged in a polemical battle, one which was fought through sacred architecture. He finds that no pagan temple was ever built on the Temple Mount.

Eliav proposes that the tombs of James the Greater (the disciple) and James the Lesser (the head of the Judeo-Christian community in Jerusalem and author of the Book of James), were originally on the ruined Temple Mount area, and are now said to be preserved in the nearby Armenian Basilica built on ancient ruins — but we are unsure of whether these places were on today's Temple Mount or in the City of David. Eliav traces the terms "*pterygion*," "*agof*," and "*pinna*," words used to describe the "precipice,"

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Fischer and Reuven Efraim Schmalz, *The Messianic Seal of the Jerusalem Church* (Jerusalem: Olim Publications, 1999). See also Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik, editors, *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Eliav, 48. Chapter Two of his work ought to be required reading for students of the history of the messianic movement.

<sup>11</sup> Eliav, 49.

“pinnacle,” “height,” or even “steeple” from which James the Lesser was thrown down and then beaten to death. This structure was said to have remained visible during the Byzantine period on the Temple Mount, and Eliav traces its movement from the center of the Temple Mount to the South East Corner of the Herodian Walls, and then to the Mount of Olives. It is very likely that the original tomb would have been treated in a way similar to Golgotha, which also was outside of the Herodian Walls during the Second Temple Period. We know the history of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and we can suggest a similar treatment of the Tomb of James.<sup>12</sup> Eliav believes that the Temple Mount served as a sacred cemetery, and I agree. He quotes Hegisippus, who wrote that James the Lesser’s gravestone still stood by the Temple in his time.<sup>13</sup> Eliav also suggests that Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, was also buried at the same site. His martyrdom, according to the sources assembled by Eliav, also occurred at the Temple. Both James the Lesser and Zechariah’s blood turned to stone, a tradition that strengthens the idea that the ruins of the Temple became a shrine to Jews and Jewish Christians — and, as we shall see — to the Muslims. The traces of a *martyrium* on the site of the Temple lie before our very eyes, because the Muslims also venerated Zechariah. Eliav does not believe that any pagan shrine was erected by the Romans on the Temple Mount; indeed, he emphasizes the fact that “the ruined Temple precinct” was left untouched, and was only incorporated into the city in the mid-fifth century with the erection of “Eudocia’s Walls.”<sup>14</sup> At this point in history, Eliav believes that the Byzantines “may have erected certain structures on the site,” structures that Sams asserts are reported by pilgrims to be the Church of Our Blessed Lady (or the Blessed Mary) and the Church of Saint Sophia (or the Church of Holy Wisdom) — names that

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<sup>12</sup> Eliav, Map 4: “Shifting Locations of the Pterygion and the Tomb of James,” 64. We know that the earliest Jewish Christians worshiped also at a church on what we now know as Mount Zion, which was oriented towards the Temple. Mount Zion had not figured into Jewish worship until Jewish Christians began to gather there during the Roman and Byzantine era. See also Eliav, 141–5, 177–186. See also James F. Strange, “Archeological Evidence of Jewish Believers,” Skarsaune and Hvalvik, 737–9.

<sup>13</sup> Eliav, 77.

<sup>14</sup> Eliav, 86–7.

may have shifted from their original location (the ptyregion in the City of David to the medieval Temple Mount).<sup>15</sup>

Eliav is emphatic that the fact that “the accepted scholarly view about the Temple Mount’s place in Jerusalem” is wrong. He argues that although the Roman and Byzantine rulers of Jerusalem did not leave the site — whether it is the Temple Mount or the City of David — in ruins for theological reasons, instead the walled city of Jerusalem did not include these areas. Instead, he establishes the fact that the Judeo-Christian community remained attached to the ruined temple, and would make pilgrimages to visit the Tomb of James/Zechariah and other structures on the site of the Temple during the Roman and Byzantine periods. These followers of James (and John via Zechariah!) stayed in Jerusalem, while another group, the Elkesaites, after the reign of Trajan, continued to face Jerusalem in their prayers.<sup>16</sup> In a section he entitled “The Maturation of Palestinian Christianity,” Eliav focused on Constantinian Jerusalem, so important to the establishment of Christianity as the official religion of the Empire. The “Palestinian” Patristic literature was written by Origen and Eusebius in Caeserea, and Jerome in Bethlehem, all in the third century. All three knew Hebrew, Jews, and Judeo-Christians. Upon the Byzantine restoration to power, following the Sasanian War, the Temple Mount was left in ruins.

Hadrian forbade Jews to live inside the walls of the Aelia Capitolina by imperial decree, a restriction that lasted throughout the Byzantine period. However, if Eliav is right, the “Temple Mount” lay outside of the city. According to Christian chroniclers, there was one attempt to rebuild the Temple during the reign of Julian the Apostate in 363.<sup>17</sup> Julian, opposed to Christianity, invited the Jews back to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple. They returned to the city and began to undertake the reconstruction. Workmen gathered building materials but as soon as construction began, frighteningly strong winds began to buffet the crews, tremblors shook the ground, and balls of lightning

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<sup>15</sup> Sams, “The Byzantine Presence on the Temple Mount,” October, 2014.

[https://www.academia.edu/11818163/The\\_Byzantine\\_Presence\\_on\\_the\\_Temple\\_Mount](https://www.academia.edu/11818163/The_Byzantine_Presence_on_the_Temple_Mount) <accessed June 4, 2019>.

<sup>16</sup> Eliav, 154.

<sup>17</sup> Eliav, 146–8.

flashed all around the mount. Terrified, the workmen scattered, and the project was completely abandoned. We do not know with any certainty where all of this occurred.

Indeed, the very idea that the Temple was destroyed because the Jews rejected Jesus is no longer tenable on either a theological or a historical basis. Jesus wept over Jerusalem, prophesying her destruction, not because He condemned the city, but because he recognized the tragic worldly forces that would govern humanity until His return.

### **Christian Toponyms**

In Jerusalem, the Byzantines built a *martyrium* in 335 A.D. at the former site of Christ's empty tomb, replacing Hadrian's temple, also to Aphrodite, that the sources indicate was located there — leading us to ask whether there were two temples to Aphrodite in the city — which seems unlikely. Known today as the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Western scholars have long held that this building replaced the Temple as the most sacred site in Jerusalem during the Byzantine era. It is important to note that this spot was outside of the walls of the Second Temple city, known as Golgotha. By the Roman period, both it and the "Temple Mount" were beyond the city walls, in places that held the memory of death and suffering. In its original setting the church was octagonal. The Basilica of San Vitale still stands in Ravenna, modeled on the original Church of the Sepulcher. Two Byzantine structures of this type are still visible in Israel and the West Bank, in the Galilean village of Capernaum and on Mt. Gerezim. In Capernaum, the octagonal foundation of a Byzantium *martyrium* marks the location of the house of Peter's mother, with whom Jesus stayed, and whom He healed. The house itself was preserved inside a *domus ecclesias*, or house church, where Jewish Christians worshipped until the time of the Council of Nicaea, when the Byzantines took over the site, and built the octagonal church of the Prince of the Apostle, preserving the house, as reported by Egeria in the late fourth century. In 382 A.D., Theodosius probably built the monument, the remains of which are still clearly visible in Capernaum, at about the same time, part of the process of the imperial appropriation of Jewish-Christian culture that began in the fourth century. The discovery of the mosaic floor of a Byzantine basilica under the Al-Aqsa Mosque undermines the assumption that the Byzantines had allowed it to become a garbage dump in order to illustrate Christian supremacy over the Jews. The still commonly held idea that the Church of the Empty Tomb/Resurrection (*al-Qiyama*) represented Christianity's triumph over the Jews by making the Temple

Mount into a garbage dump (*al-Qumama*) can now decisively be set aside as a medieval, anti-Christian polemic, with its roots in the Muslim period. In fact, it was the Persian Sasanians, their anti-Byzantine Arab supporters, and their Jewish allies, who had destroyed the Christian buildings throughout Palestine, which intensified anti-Jewish and anti-“Nestorian” feelings among the Byzantine Christians.<sup>18</sup>

The Christian historian Eusebius of Caesarea (260/5–339/40) used the term “Palestine” in his writings extolling the Emperor Constantine around the time that the Roman persecution of Christianity finally came to an end. He did not use Hadrian’s name for Jerusalem, Aelia Capitolina, but he was named bishop of the geographical territory called “Palestine” in recognition of his territorially defined ecclesiastical position under Byzantine rule. The Greco-Roman term “Palestine” thus remained in ecclesiastical use, which continued even after the Protestant Reformation led to the rediscovery of the Hebraic bible and the Jewish people. According to Eusebius, Helena, the mother of the first Christian Emperor of Rome, Constantine, discovered Christ’s burial place and many other sites associated with his life throughout the Holy Land, which she visited in 326–28 A.D.

Despite his interest in Jerusalem, Constantine shifted his capital city from Rome to what was then known as “Byzantium,” and which he renamed “Constantinople” — Constantine’s city, (later renamed Istanbul after Mehmet the Conquerer took it for the Ottomans in 1453). The Eastern realms of the Roman Empire thus somewhat confusingly became known as the Byzantine Empire. Through the legends of Constantine’s mother’s journey to the Holy Land, historians have claimed that the Byzantines asserted Christian supremacy over Judaism through their architecture.

A strand of this discussion traces Byzantine sacred architecture back to pagan Rome; Herod’s Temple is understood in this context. The Byzantines built octagonal buildings wherever Helena had identified an important event in Jesus’ life. Called a *martyrium*, this type of structure was designed as a “witness” to the life of Christ, with each of its eight sides representing one of the eight historical eras, or dispensations, identified in the Bible by both Jews and Christians including the great Christian

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<sup>18</sup>Judith Mendelsohn Rood, “What We Choose to Remember: Jerusalem in World History,” *History News Network* (online e-zine), <http://hnn.us/articles/125435.html>, April 19, 2010 <accessed 22 May 2019>.

theologian Augustine. A church that contains a grave or a monument to the dead can also be called a “martyrion.” However, here my focus is upon a building that has no grave, but marks an important place where an event in the life of Jesus occurred. In Arabic, this type of building is literally translated as a *mashhad*, a direct translation of the term “*martyrium*” — a place of witness.

During the Byzantine restoration the Christian Arabs, as the allies of the Byzantines, referred to the coastal area known today as Gaza as “Palestine” but distinguished it from the province of Jerusalem, *Bayt al-Maqdis*, or the House of the Temple and the “Holy Land,” “*Al-‘Ard al-Muqaddis*,” terms adopted into the Muslim vocabulary presumably via the *Nasara*, the Jewish and Arab Christians of the East during the pre-Islamic era. The Arabic term “*ard filastin*” is a variation of the ancient geographical name that was used in the Old Testament (Genesis 21:32 “land of the Philistines”) and by Arab geographers throughout the Islamic period, including during the Ottoman period, where I read it in the registers of the Islamic court of Jerusalem.<sup>19</sup> Jerusalem is also sometimes referred to in Islamic literature as *Madinat Bayt al-Maqdis*, or “The City of the House of the Temple.”<sup>20</sup>

Two great powers dominated the Middle East from the fourth through the first part of the seventh century: the Sasanians in Persia and their enemies, the Byzantine Empire. Between them stretched the Fertile Crescent. The Year of the Elephant, 570 A.D., so-called after an important battle between these forces, is the traditional year of Muhammad’s birth. We do not have evidence that the Byzantines built a *martyrium* on the Temple Mount before 614 A.D. — unless we accept the idea that the Dome of the Rock itself is that evidence! An octagonal building of some sort marking the graves of James the Lesser, James the Greater, and Zechariah, the father of John, may have marked a site of Jewish-Christian pilgrimage during the early Byzantine era, and, if such a monument did exist, it presumably stood until the time of the Persian invasion in 614

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<sup>19</sup>Rood, *Sacred Law in the Holy City* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 45-6.

<sup>20</sup> Irfan Shahid, *Rome and the Arabs: A Prolegomenon to the Study of Byzantium and the Arabs* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1984) and *Byzantium and the Arabs, Fourth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1984/2006), *Fifth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1989/2006), and *Sixth Century, Part One, Century* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002) and *Part Two, Century* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2009).

A.D., when the Sasanians famously stole the “true Cross” from Jerusalem and then proceeded to destroy the city along with hundreds of other Byzantine churches, monasteries, and *martyria* throughout Syro-Palestine — a time of devastation almost totally ignored by archeologists who have failed to recognize the rebuilt post-Sasanian structures.<sup>21</sup> The single survivor of this destruction was the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, which was spared because of its depiction of the wise men depicted as wearing Persian dress in mosaics still visible inside the Church. The Persians, it is said, recognized that the wise men were in some sense holy, and left the site unharmed.

At that time, the Persians allowed their Jewish allies to massacre the nuns and monks living in the city by gathering them in the Pool of Mamilla, ironically the site of the new Museum of Tolerance. Although the incident is well attested in the historical record, it remains one of the darkest chapters in the history of Jerusalem. The burial place of its victims was unearthed in 1992, as the ground was being prepared for the construction of a municipal parking lot in West Jerusalem, not far from the King David Hotel and the YMCA in the Mamilla commercial district of Jerusalem. As work began, the construction crew uncovered a cave bearing the Greek inscription “Only God Knows Their Names” and filled with thousands upon thousands of bone fragments.

Israeli archeologist Ronny Reich excavated the cave, verifying that it was a mass burial site for the victims of a well-known massacre committed during the epic Byzantine-Sasanian War. In 2000, physical anthropologist Yossi Nagar reported the results of studies conducted on the forensic evidence and published on the Israel Antiquities Authority website. That evidence shows that the Greek-speaking Christian population of the city was neither Jewish nor Arab. Of the estimated 24,000–90,000 victims reported by chroniclers at the time of the massacre, only 526 individuals could be identified, although the large number of fragments suggested that thousands of victims were interred in the cave. The ratio of 38 males to 100 females indicates that those slain in the massacre were primarily Christian women, aged 30–35 years old. The archeologists speculate that this was because most of the city’s male inhabitants were fighting at the front, and the women stayed behind. Many of these were nuns.

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<sup>21</sup> Elliott Horowitz, “‘The Vengeance of the Jews Was Stronger than Their Avarice’: Modern Historians and the Persian Conquest of Jerusalem in 614.” *Jewish Social Studies*, New Series, 4, no. 2 (1998): 1–39. See also Tsafir, 98–9.

Apparently, there were few children or elderly inhabitants. The Sasanian destruction permanently shaped the Christian built environment in Jerusalem and its rural hinterlands, the Galilee, and along the Lebanese coast. Christian chroniclers preserved the memory of the massacre.<sup>22</sup> Ultimately, the Persians withdrew in 617 A.D. and the Byzantines began to rebuild. All of this occurred before the beginning of Islamic history.

The Jewish War against the Byzantines left a lasting legacy of hatred between the Jews and Christians of the Middle East. It was these wars that is the real source of the polemics that developed in the late Byzantine period. Arab tribes rallied with one or the other of the two superpowers. Local Christians, resenting Byzantine control and taxes, supported the Arab invasion. Jews in Arabia viewed Islam as means to overthrow the Byzantines, and apocalyptic expectations relating to Islam led many Jews to convert to Islam or to support the Muslim conquest of the Holy Land. When the Muslim armies moved west towards Byzantium, Jews again rode with them, too, in order to defeat their hated enemy, known in rabbinical literature as Edom. The rabbis viewed their Arab and Persian allies as signs of the Messianic Age. Arab Christian mercenaries also rode with them, forming a coalition of anti-Trinitarian believers in the God of Israel.<sup>23</sup> The Persian Empire collapsed under the Muslim assault, but the Byzantine Empire stood, losing its Syrian and Palestinian provinces only in 636/7, and ultimately collapsing under the Ottomans in 1453. Islam was thus born in a vacuum created by the power struggle between Byzantium and the Sasanian Empire, with both sides fighting an ongoing holy war throughout the Middle Ages.

Clearly, by the time that Umar arrived in Jerusalem, the location of the Temples had shifted from the City of David to the Temple Mount. This would mean reframing Eliav's findings from the Mount to the City of David. This would include the Judeo-Christian site preserving the tomb of James the Lesser to the ruins there, but that these then shifted to the Temple Mount during the Constantinian era, as depicted on the Map of Byzantine Jerusalem in Tsafrir's chapter on Byzantine Jerusalem.<sup>24</sup> If this is the case,

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<sup>22</sup> Robert Schick, *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule: A Historical and Archeological Studies* [Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 2] (New Jersey: Darwin Press, 1995).

<sup>23</sup> Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers at the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> Tsafrir, in Grabar and Kedar, 95. This map shows the former camp of the Tenth Legion on the Western side of the city, where the current Tower of David Museum now stands; this area, known as the

the church of the Community of James on today's Mount Zion would have faced the Temple directly, strengthening this connection between these two sites outside of Roman and Byzantine Jerusalem even more deeply.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Dome of Rock and the Conquest of Jerusalem**

When the third Muslim Caliph, Umar al-Khattab, accepted the surrender of Jerusalem in 636 A.D., he temporarily agreed to the surrendering Greek patriarch's request that Jews not be allowed back into the city. Ultimately the Muslims allowed the Jews to return; the first time during the Umayyad Period, and the second when Saladin forced the Crusaders to surrender the city in 1187 A.D. Umar is famed in Jerusalem for his humility in re-sanctifying the site of the Temple and for leaving the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Christian hands. It is interesting to note that when the Muslims conquered Jerusalem in 637, they were accompanied by Jews and others who opposed the Byzantines and who rejected Trinitarian Christianity as they understood it.<sup>26</sup> To the Arabs, a believer in the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was known in the Quran as "a believer (*hanif*)."<sup>26</sup> Umar (Omar) al-Khattab, the Third Caliph, conquered Jerusalem and accepted the surrender of Sophronius, the Byzantine Bishop. Historian Steve Runciman, author of *A History of the Crusades. Volume One: The First Crusade*, recounts the conquest of Jerusalem:

On a February day in the year A.D. 638 the Caliph Omar entered Jerusalem, riding upon a white camel. He was dressed in worn, filthy robes, and the army that followed him was rough and unkempt; but its discipline was perfect. At his side was the Patriarch Sophronius, as chief magistrate of the surrendered city. Omar rode straight to the site of the Temple of Solomon, whence his friend Mahomet had ascended into heaven. Watching him stand there the Patriarch remembered the words

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*kishle*, was used by the Ottomans as a permanent garrison, but it is very small, making it an unlikely place for the garrisoning of the Roman legions during the Second Temple Period.

<sup>25</sup> On the suppressed history of the Messianic Jewish community on Mount Zion during the late Second Temple Period, begin with Raymond Robert Fischer and Reuven Efraim Schmalz, *The Messianic Seal of the Jerusalem Church* (Jerusalem: Olim Publications, 1999).

<sup>26</sup> At that time, it seems that proto-Muslims thought that Jesus, Mary, and the God of Abraham constituted the Trinity.

of Christ and murmured through his tears: ‘Behold the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet.’<sup>27</sup>

Umar refused Sophronius’ terms for surrender, which involved continuing the prohibition for Jews to reside in Jerusalem. As a result of his encouragement, the Jews of Tiberias and other areas returned to live in the Holy City.

When the Muslims arrived in Jerusalem, the recently rebuilt Church of the Holy Sepulcher was the finest monument in the city. The Temple Mount — and the City of David! — lay buried in garbage and ruins left from the Sasanian invasion. The Muslim relationship to the Rock is based upon the Quran chapter entitled “*Isra*, the Night Journey, Children of Israel,” Chapter 17:17:

Glory to God (Allah) Who did take His servant for a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque whose precincts We did bless, in order that We might show him some of Our signs: for He is the One Who Heareth and Seeth.

Note here that Jerusalem is not mentioned specifically, but is referred to as the “Farthest Mosque.” For this reason, some Zionists have claimed that Muslims have no religious connection to Jerusalem. However, this is a serious mistake, and has fueled the Islamist retort that “the Jewish Temple never existed, or, if it did, that it was in Jerusalem, Bethlehem or some other place.”<sup>28</sup> Who is this “Allah,” whom the Muslims regard as their god? As documented by Irfan Shahid, Georgetown University Professor Emeritus of Arabic Language, Christian Arabs in the Byzantine Period used the word

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<sup>27</sup> Steve Runciman, *A History of the Crusades. Volume One: The First Crusade*, Cambridge University Press, 1951, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Rood, “Diagnosis: Historical Amnesia: Is the Dome of the Rock a Mosque?” *Sacred History Magazine* January/February 2006, 40-49, 75), 48; Revision available at [https://www.academia.edu/29199532/Diagnosis\\_Historical\\_Amnesia\\_Is\\_the\\_Dome\\_of\\_the\\_Rock\\_a\\_Mosque](https://www.academia.edu/29199532/Diagnosis_Historical_Amnesia_Is_the_Dome_of_the_Rock_a_Mosque) <accessed 23 May 2019>. Perhaps the Waqf authorities are familiar with Benjamin Mazar’s views, and are aware of the thesis that locates the temple ruins in the City of David? At any rate, Silwan, the village located there, is considered by the *Waqf* as East Jerusalem, under Palestinian control, and therefore is contested by Israel. There is an enormous amount of information about the conflict over Jewish rights there. To begin, read the Wikipedia article written from the Israeli perspective, entitled “City of David.” The reporting of this issue is incredibly tendentious; go to the article there entitled “Silwan” written from the Palestinian perspective.

“Allah” to translate the word “God” in inscriptions and texts in the Byzantine era.<sup>29</sup> It nearly goes without saying that Muslims, Jews, and Christians do not agree about the nature and character of God. The differences among the People of the Book (as Jews and Christians are known in Islam) are not about who He is, but rather about His nature and how He has acted in history. The People of the Book agree that God is the creator of the universe and their sovereign. While Muslims and Jews see God as completely transcendent, totally unlike man, Christians understand Him as a triunity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Son became a man to better communicate his love for his creatures, and to atone for their sins. Muslims believe that Jesus, ‘Isa, was a prophet, born of the Virgin Mary, that He ascended into heaven, and will return to judge the quick and the dead, and to establish His Kingdom.

The Muslim Umayyad Dynasty, which established its first capital in Jerusalem, built the Dome of the Rock in 691. This dynasty built a highly symbolic building to convey important messages about the new ruling religion. The interior of the Dome of the Rock is well preserved with its original decorations still intact. The beautiful mosaic epigraphy and iconography is drawn from the images of St. Ephrem’s poem “Paradise” with its depictions of white grapes.<sup>30</sup> The poetry featured in these epigraphs captures the polemical assertions of the newly triumphant religion.<sup>31</sup> Such worship, indeed, is forbidden in normative Sunni Islam. The following verses, translated by Palestinian photographer Said Nuseibeh, contain both Quranic material and pious phrases, prayers, and comments which rebuke what Muslims considered to be heretical Christian teachings circulating in the region during the seventh century. When we consider these verses, we must remember that in those days most biblical teachings were delivered orally. People did not have a handy pocket bible to check Scripture. The mosaic

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<sup>29</sup> Irfan Shahid, “Two Pre-Islamic Arabic Inscriptions from Hira (Iraq)” Lecture at Claremont Graduate University, March 11, 2003. See also *Timothy George, Is the Father of Jesus the God of Muhammad?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

<sup>30</sup>The scholarship of Christoph Luxenberg (a pseudonym) has been picked up globally, as in this article: “Raisins,’ not ‘Virgins,’ Quran scholars say,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, January 27, 2018, <https://globalnation.inquirer.net/163694/raisins-not-virgins-quran-scholars-say> <accessed 22 May 2019>. Luxenberg’s extremely scholarly monograph, *The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran* (Berlin: Verlag Hans Schiler, 2000) examines the unvocalized Quranic text and asserts that it is not only Aramaic, but a collection of hymns and homilies used by Syriac Christians in Pre-Islamic Arabia.

<sup>31</sup> John Julius Norwich, *Byzantium* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 68–9.

epigraphy inside the Dome of the Rock attests to the differing interpretations of God circulating in the seventh century, emphatically proclaiming His sovereignty, power, and unity, particularly against the concept of the Trinity. These verses especially repudiate ideas about Jesus that imply a carnal understanding of his birth.<sup>32</sup>

In the Name of God.  
 The Beneficent, the Merciful...  
 No god exists but God alone,  
 Indivisible without peer.  
 Say, God is One,  
 God is central—  
 Birthing no child, or birthed in turn—  
 Nothing and no one is comparable.  
 Praise be to God who never fathered a child.  
 No peer exists in all of creation,  
 Nor has God need of counsel.  
 In every way elevate and magnify God!  
 The Lord giveth life,  
 giveth death—  
 the power of all things made possible.  
 When God ordains a matter  
 God merely says to it, “BE,”  
 and it is.

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<sup>32</sup> Translations by Palestinian photographer Said Nuseibeh, and are taken from Oleg Grabar and Said Nuseibeh's *The Dome of the Rock* (New York: Rizzoli, 1996). I have changed the word “Allah” to “God” for emphasis in some places because I believe it is important to recognize and remind Muslims that the God of Abraham is the God of Ishmael and Isaac. For an excellent treatment of that subject, see Tony Maalouf, *Arabs in the Shadow of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003). See also <https://www.islamic-awareness.org/history/islam/inscriptions/dotr> <accessed June 4, 2019.>

God is indeed my Lord as well as your Lord.

So serve and worship your Lord:

this is the straight path of righteousness.

Verily God witnessed: there is no God but God!

The angels and those endowed with knowledge of fairness

declare: No god exists but God alone, all-cherished, all-wise!

Lord of two worlds—

All praise goes to God.

The religion before God Surrender: the people who were given the Books  
did not argue

about this until after receiving knowledge

and they became envious of one another.

The verses regarding Jesus are pointed:

So believe in God and all the messengers,

and stop talking about a Trinity.

Cease in your own best interest!

Verily God is the God of unity.

Lord Almighty! that God would beget a child?

either in the Heavens or on the Earth?

Go alone is the best protector.

O People of the Book!

Don't be excessive in the name of your faith!

Do not say things about God but the truth!

The Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, is indeed a messenger of God:

The Almighty extended a word to Mary and a spirit too.

Neither Christ nor the angels in heaven scorn servitude and worship of God.

Whosoever looks upon worship, consider it something beneath him...

they will be swept unto God in the end.

O God, bless your messenger  
and servant, Jesus son of Mary.

Peace be upon him  
the day he was born

the day he dies,  
and the day he is raised again.

Say only the truth about Jesus over  
whom you dispute:

he is the son of Mary!

it is not fitting that God should beget or father a child.

Glory be to God!

Muhammad's centrality in the Islamic faith is attested, too, putting him in the continuous line of prophets from Adam on:

Whoever denies the signs of God...

God is swift in judgement

Muhammad is a messenger of God,

The Lord God bless him,

And God's angels and all the messengers.

bless and invoke peace upon him,

by the grace of God.

Angels and God, all praise the Prophet.

So you who consider yourself a believer,  
go ahead, honor and pray for him too.  
Muhammad is a messenger of God.  
May the Lord God bless him  
and, come the Day of Resurrection,  
accept his intercession  
on behalf of his own community.  
Muhammad is a servant and messenger too!  
Angels and God, all praise the Prophet.  
So you who consider yourself a believer,  
go ahead, honor and pray for him too.  
Go has prayed for the Prophet Muhammad,  
so peace and God's blessings be upon him,  
by the grace of God.

The decorations inside the Dome of the Rock are highly significant. Lavish mosaics are primarily gold, and are original to the seventh-century structure. Depictions of pearl and gem-drenched crowns, lush gardens, flowing water, stately palms and trees of all kinds, and radiant cities combine to convey a heavenly garden. The absolute sovereignty of God, His majesty, and His goodness are signaled through the richness of these shimmering mosaics. The verses date from the earliest years of Islamic rule in Jerusalem. The polemical nature of these epigraphs makes the purpose of the building unmistakable. Just as the architecture of the monument trumpets the triumph of Islam over Christianity, its mosaic embellishments admonish mankind to serve a completely transcendent God, and that Jesus, was not God. The message of these inscriptions is anti-Trinitarian, and the earliest evidence we have of any Quranic verses. The relationship between the Syriac poetry of St. Ephrem and the gardens depicted in the mosaics decorating the Dome of the Rock are a tangible bridge between the bible and the Quran.

## Muslim Toponyms

The sanctity of the *Haram al-Sharif*, the “Noble Sanctuary,” known also to Muslims as “*Al-Aqsa*,” the “Farthest Mosque,” has been interpreted in a variety of different ways over time in the Islamic world. It encompasses today’s Temple Mount entirely — not only the Dome of the Rock and *Al-Aqsa*, but also other structures dating back to the period of the Crusades and Mamluk eras. Muslims, like the Byzantines before them, and the Israelites before them — and Jews today — appropriated the sanctity of the Temple Mount, or *Bayt al-Maqdis*, to develop, legitimize, interpret, and contest ideas about the divine source of political legitimacy in the Holy Land. And according to the believers, Muslim Arabs who’d come to Jerusalem in the seventh century, the site of the Temple Mount was the location of the temple of Solomon, a place where they found ruins, an esplanade of sufficient size to garrison an army.

Jerusalem was the first direction of prayer designated by the Prophet, and in the earliest phase of his teachings, Muhammad directed his community to follow Jewish traditions and only later differentiated the two communities by differentiating them. The Jewish practice of prostration was proscribed to be allowed only on Yom Kippur, for example, to differentiate it from Muslim practice. Jerusalem’s significance to Islam was cemented by *al-Isra*, the Night Journey of Muhammad from Mecca to Jerusalem, and *al-Miraj*, the Ascension of the Prophet Muhammad to heaven, where he met with Moses and other Jewish prophets. Muhammad rode on the back of *al-Buraq* — the winged creature which transported him to the Farthest Mosque — from where he was sleeping next to the Kaaba in Mecca. The Jewish *Chag*, or Pilgrimage Festival, became a Holy Day, while the Muslim *Hajj* became the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, and a lesser pilgrimage to pray in Jerusalem. According to Islam, it was during his ascension that Moses and Muhammad agreed that Muslims should pray five times a day. Islamic sources agree on the point that this ascension started from the Rock, mostly identified with the Stone of Foundation (*Evn Shetiyah* in Hebrew) dealt with in Jewish sources. Sufis claim that this Rock is a living being. This is proved by the fact that, after *al-Isra* and before *al-Miraj*, the Prophet Muhammad greeted it by saying, “Peace be upon you, o Rock of Allah.” Umar’s “first desire in entering *Aelia Capitolina* was to find the place of *al-Miraj*, whose features he had learned directly from Prophet Muhammad’s telling, and

to build a mosque there....”<sup>33</sup> According to al-Tabari, the tenth century Abbasid chronicler,

On the authority of Raja ibn Hiwan, When Umar came from al-Jabiya, to Aelia... he said, “Bring me Ka’ab!” And he was brought to him, and Umar asked him “Where do you think we should put the place of prayer?”

“By the rock,” answered Kaab.

“By God, Kaab,” said Umar, “you are following after Judaism.”

“I saw you take off your sandals.”

“I wanted to feel the touch of it with my bare feet,” said Umar. “But no. We shall make the forepart a qibla. Go along! We were not recommended concerning the rock, but we were commanded concerning the Kaaba!”

So Umar made the forepart the qibla. Then Umar went up from the place where he had prayed to the heap of garbage in which the Romans had hidden the temple in the temple in the time of the children of Israel. And when this place came into their hands, they uncovered part of it and left the remainder. Umar said “O people, do as I do.” And he knelt by the heap and knelt on a fold of his cloak.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Abdul Hadi Palazzi, quoted in Judith Mendelsohn Rood, “Diagnosis: Historical Amnesia: Is the Dome of the Rock a Mosque?” *Sacred History Magazine* January/February 2006, 40-49, 75), 48; Revision available at:

[https://www.academia.edu/29199532/Diagnosis\\_Historical\\_Amnesia\\_Is\\_the\\_Dome\\_of\\_the\\_Rock\\_a\\_Mosque](https://www.academia.edu/29199532/Diagnosis_Historical_Amnesia_Is_the_Dome_of_the_Rock_a_Mosque) <accessed 23 May 2019>.

<sup>34</sup> Bernard Lewis, *Islam: Religion and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 3, excerpted from Al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Rasul w'al Muluk*, ed. M.J. de Goeje et al (Leiden: Brill, 1879–1901). Palazzi notes in his footnote 14: Cf. *Muhammad Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Akhbar al-Rusul wa al-Muluk (History of Messengers and Kings)*, especially the chapter dealing with al-Miraj of “*Bab Sayyidna Muhammad*” and “*Bab ‘Omar.*” See also Jalal al-din as-Suyuti, *Tarikh al-Kulafa* (History of the Caliphs) and Mujir al-Ayn al-Muqaddasi, *Al-uns al-jalil fi tarikh al-Quds wa al-Khalil (The Noble Society in the History of Jerusalem and Hebron*, manuscript, al-Azhar Library).

The Muslim link to Palestine is through Jerusalem, based upon the identity of the Dome of the Rock with the Night Journey and Ascension to Heaven of Muhammad, described in the Quran as happening only at the indeterminate “Furthest Mosque,” which traditionally has been identified with Jerusalem. The reason for the journey to the “Furthest Mosque” was for Muhammad to ascend to heaven to meet with Moses and the biblical prophets on the site of the Temple, where the *Sakinah* (Arabic) or *Shechinah* (Hebrew) — the Glory of God — had once rested. And the location of that Temple, by the sixth century A.D., was believed to be today’s Temple Mount.

This tradition of removing one’s shoes upon entering a holy place is an echo of the Jewish practice, one that is depicted in the mosaic floor of the synagogue of Sepphoris. There, Abraham and Isaac are pictured on Mount Moriah. Their shoes lie under a tree, near the ram. This practice of course goes back to Moses and the burning bush, but what is important here is that the practice of taking off one’s shoes upon entering the Hasmonean Temple was observed even by Alexander the Great, a legend that Eliav retells in a section that lists other practices following the destruction of the Temple, including the rending of clothes, prostration, ritual cleansing, and circumambulation. Eliav stresses the rekindling of interest in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament among Constantinian Christians, especially the Palestinian Christians of the fourth and fifth centuries.<sup>35</sup>

Abdul-Hadi Palazzi, the former Secretary-General of the Italian Muslim Community, who has since disappeared in fear for his life and has left Islam for Hinduism following the publication of his views, explains that Ka’ab al-Ashraf “was a rabbi converted to Islam who, because of his learning... was regarded as the Caliph’s special counselor for all matter connected to the history of Israel.” Together, Umar and Ka’ab were reported to have cleansed the site of the ruined temple, which we can now understand included archeological evidence of a basilica and other structures in dating to the fourth or fifth century, and likely concluded an octagonal foundation of a *martyrium* on the tomb of the two James and Zechariah, possibly destroyed by the Persians in 614 A.D. Importantly in this connection, the Quran includes Zechariah among the prophets. When ‘Abd al-Malik constructed the Dome of the Rock, his

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<sup>35</sup> Eliav, 230-1.

Christian artisans used the iconography of St. Ephrem's poem "Paradise" to decorate what experts agree was envisioned as the throne room of Christ upon His return to judge the living and the dead.

The Muslims of the seventh century thus considered the rock (*al-Sakhra*) to be the site of the Jewish Temple, which Umar had learned "directly from the Prophet Muhammad" was on Mount Moriah, which towered over the city. The importance of the site was so great that the Umayyads built palaces adjacent to the Temple Mount. This Sunni dynasty was engaged in an ongoing jihad against Byzantium. The first Umayyad caliph, Mu'awiya, declared his caliphate in Gethsemane, as related to me by scholar Irfan Shahid. Patricia Crone and Michael Cook asserted in their explosive book *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World*, that these early Muslims were rebuilding the Jewish Temple. Yet almost immediately Islam reconceived itself independently of the bible, retelling its own story from Adam to Muhammad. Jerusalem thus became known in Islam as "*Thalith al-Haramayn*," the "Third of the Two Holy Places," after Mecca and Medina. During the entirety of the history of Islam, the tension between its biblical roots and its independent traditions was felt most sharply in Jerusalem.

Since Muhammad had changed the direction of prayer away from Jerusalem and toward Mecca, Umar ordered that a Friday mosque (*jami' masjid*) be built on the southern side of the Temple Mount, in the manner designed by Muhammad in Mecca. The Dome of the Rock (*Qubbat al-Sakhrah*) was completed in 691 by the Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik. It represents the Muslim recognition of the story of Israel as it is recorded in the Quran. Umar, according to Islamic Tradition, had identified the rock as the site of Solomon's Temple and also as the place whence Muhammad had ascended into heaven during the Night Journey. He wanted to affirm those traditions even more than the Jewish ones. He also had a polemical reason for restoring the *martyrium*: the Holy Sepulcher, known in Arabic as *Kanizat al-Qiyama*, the Church of the Resurrection, which had apparently been repaired in the brief Byzantine restoration in Jerusalem, was at that time juxtaposed with the continued, ruined site of the Temple, covered in refuse, and named "*Al-Qumama*" or "The Dump" as a late Byzantine reproach to their enemies, the Jews. As we saw earlier, the Byzantine Christians evidently had begun to call the Temple Mount "*Al-Qumama*" following the Sasanian invasion to denigrate their arch-enemy, the Jews, a polemic the Muslims picked up to oppose the Byzantines. Restoring the sanctity of the traditional site of Solomon's Temple, the Umayyad dynasty protected

the Rock from further abuse and resanctified it as a site of pilgrimage early in the history of Islam. This tradition was intensified after an outlawed group of Muslims, challenging the Umayyads, stole the black stone from the Kaaba in Mecca and prevented Muslims from performing the Hajj. When the Umayyads lost control of Mecca and Medina, Abd al-Malik built the Dome of the Rock to emphasize Umayyad control over the Holy Land, and that, as an alternative to the now inaccessible Mecca, Jerusalem became a Sunni pilgrimage center. He transferred the Umayyad capital to the more important city of Damascus in 661 A.D..

Thus it was that the Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik hired Christian masons and artisans to build the Dome of the Rock as a *mashhad*, or “place of witness”— a “*martyrium*” — a commemorative building in the shape of an octagon. A mosque is a building designed for congregational prayer, modeled on the first mosque Muhammad built in Medina. Literally, a mosque is any place for prayer, or “*masjid*” in Arabic. Strictly speaking, then, the Dome of the Rock is not a mosque. Instead, it “witnesses” the miracle of Muhammad’s Night Journey and Ascension. The *mashhad* was built to embody the Islamic triumph over the Byzantines, using the Byzantine’s own architectural vocabulary. The Dome of the Rock dominates the Jerusalem skyline, the crown of the first capital of the first Sunni dynasty, the Umayyads. Like the Byzantines, who had demonstrated their supersession of Judaism by rebuilding the Church of the Sepulcher but leaving the Temple Mount in ruins, the Umayyads extended Muslim power over Christianity by reasserting the sanctity of the site of the Jewish Temple. When his successor Walid al-Malik reasserted control over Mecca, Jerusalem’s position as a pilgrimage site was eclipsed. Nevertheless, Walid built the grand congregational Friday mosque on the southern side of the mount on the ruins of a Byzantine basilica in 705 A.D. to emphasize the Night Journey, and it became known as the Al-Aqsa (the Furthest) Mosque.

The result is that Muslims face towards Mecca with their backs toward the Rock, a polemical point which anti-Muslim writers never fail to make.<sup>36</sup> However, Umar and Ka’ab’s point of view regarding the significance of the Rock reflects two attitudes, each of which emphasizes — respectively — “hiatus or continuity” between Islam and the

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<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, if Martin’s hypothesis proves true, and the temples were actually located in the City of David, then Muslims would actually be prostrating themselves towards them.

Bible. The one tradition emphasizes Islam's continuity with the revelation of the Jewish prophets and the New Testament, while the other tradition emphasizes Islam's unique claim to the Rock. According to Abdul-Hadi Palazzi, "In their respective collocation, both of them are rooted in reality, and have more or less influenced the development of Islamic canonical expertise."<sup>37</sup>

At an assembly in the Syrian military camp at Jabiya in 637, the Caliph Umar declared the lands which surrendered unconditionally to his armies as *fay* (lands that would pay tribute to the central government, and which were to be held as a perpetual trust for all Muslims). Thus, Syria and Iraq were regarded as lands subject to the *kharaj* (land tax assessed upon non-Muslim landholders). According to the Jabiya agreement, revenue from the conquered territories was to be collected and given to the central government, and those who had participated in the campaigns of expansion would be enrolled in the *diwan* (imperial) registers. Those so enrolled would be entitled to fixed stipends and land grants. The lands were thus not divided and parceled out among the military, but instead were controlled directly by the central government. Muslims would not settle these lands and pay the '*ushr* (land tax assessed on Muslim proprietors, i.e., the tithe): rather, the original inhabitants would remain on their property, but would pay the *kharaj*. Under Islamic law, *fay* lands were thus held by the state, but its use was left in the possession of their inhabitants, who paid tribute from the revenues of the land to the central treasury of the state. Over the course of time the population increasingly became Muslim. The distinction between Hijazi and Syrian Muslims blurred, and the Muslims of Syria began, in effect, to pay the *kharaj* along with the non-Muslims because they lived on conquered lands worked by non-Muslims. When the Mamluk territories, encompassing the later Ottoman provinces of Sidon, Damascus, Aleppo, Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, Tripoli (Libyan), Bengazi, the Hijaz, and Yemen, were conquered by the Ottomans, they were exempted from paying the normal *miri* (imperial land) taxes because of their status as *kharaj* land, unlike the Hijaz and Basra, which were categorized as provinces paying the '*ushr* tax.

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<sup>37</sup> Palazzi, quoted in Rood, "Diagnosis: Historical Amnesia."

### Medieval Islam and Jerusalem

Medieval Muslims traced the history of faith in God, *Allah*, (the term used by Arab Christians for God before Islam and to this day), from Adam through the Jewish, Christian, and Arab prophets as recorded in the Quran. The 10th-century Muslim historian Muhammad ibn Ahmad Shams al-Din al-Muqaddasi wrote in his description of Syria and Palestine that “in Jerusalem is the oratory of David and his gate; here are the wonders of Solomon and his cities,” and that the foundations of the Al-Aqsa Mosque “were laid by David.” Nasir-i Khusraw, an 11th-century Persian travel writer, recorded in his description of the Haram that “Solomon — upon him be peace! — who, seeing that the rock was the Kiblah point, built a mosque round about the Rock, whereby the Rock stood in the midst of the mosque, which became the oratory of the people.” The Umayyad Dynasty was influenced by Jewish converts to Islam, as evidenced by the hadith collection about Jewish history known as the *Isra’iliyaat* literature.<sup>38</sup> Fred Donner has asserted that in the earliest period of Islam, a group of anti-Trinitarian believers — consisting of Jews, Christians, and Arabs — intentionally sought to overthrow Byzantine sovereignty over Jerusalem.<sup>39</sup> A recently studied inscription from a mosque near Hebron confirms the fact that until the mid-twentieth century, the Muslim world considered Jerusalem’s Dome of the Rock to be the successor to two ancient Jewish shrines that formerly stood atop the Temple Mount.<sup>40</sup> The previously overlooked dedicatory inscription from the Mosque of Umar in Nuba, a village nearly 26 kilometers (16 miles) southwest of Jerusalem, mentions the village as an endowment for the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque.<sup>41</sup> What’s striking is that the Dome of the Rock is referred to in the text as “the rock of the *Bayt al-Maqdis*” — literally, “The Holy Temple” — a verbatim translation of the Hebrew term for the Jerusalem temple that early Muslims employed to refer to Jerusalem as a whole, and to the *mashhad/martyrium* in particular, which in the Islamic view also marks the place from which Muhammad ascended into heaven during his night journey in particular.

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<sup>38</sup> <https://www.islamic-awareness.org/hadith/ulum/israel> <accessed 22 May 2019>.

<sup>39</sup> See Donner.

<sup>40</sup> Borschel-Dan.

<sup>41</sup> Under the Ottomans it was part of the Nebi Daoud (The Prophet David) Waqf on Mount Zion controlled by the Dajani family, see Rood, *Sacred*, 63, 172–3.

In a mosque located in the village of Nuba, outside of Jerusalem, is a limestone block into which a Kufic inscription is carved, inserted above the *mihrab*, the niche pointing toward Mecca, and reads:

In the name of God the merciful, the compassionate, this territory, Nuba, and all its boundaries and its entire area, is an endowment to the Rock of *Bayt al-Maqdis* and the al-Aqsa Mosque, as it was dedicated by the Commander of the Faithful, Umar ibn al-Khattab for the glory of God (Allah).

Two Muslim scholars who previously described the inscription ascribed it to the seventh century, the time of Umar. Two Israeli researchers, Assaf Avraham and Peretz Reuven, who presented their findings during a conference on Jerusalem archaeology, dated it later, to the ninth or tenth centuries CE, based on the Arabic writing's orthography and formulation comparable to dedicatory inscriptions from mosques in Ramla and Bani Naim. The distinction between the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock in the Nuba inscription, according to Avraham and Reuven, "together with the Hadith tradition and [Arabic] literature praising Jerusalem [from the 11th century], leads us to posit that the term *Bayt al-Maqdis* as it appears in the Nuba inscription... alludes directly to the Dome of the Rock." What is important here is the renewed interest in the medieval Muslim traditions surrounding Jerusalem and the Dome of the Rock, traditions that consistently identify the *Haram al-Sharif* with Solomon's Temple."

Avraham and Reuven emphasized traditions describing Muslim "[r]ites imitating activities performed in the Jewish temple were held in and around the Dome of the Rock...." They claim that "Performers of those rituals purified themselves, changed clothes, burned incense, anointed the stone with oil, opened and closed drapes and lit oil lamps." Avraham believes that "In effect, the Muslims saw themselves as the ones continuing the biblical tradition of the temple," ... they considered themselves the 'new Jews.'" In that vein, it could be said that the Muslims believed they were building the Third Temple in the Seventh Century in the form of the Dome of the Rock. Coins minted by the Umayyad featuring the menorah — both seven-branched and even five-branched, attest to this identification. The Umayyads minted coins with a Menorah on one side along with the Shahada, or "Witness" declaring Muslim belief: There is no god but God (Allah); on the obverse it reads "Muhammad is the Messenger (*Rasul*) of God."

According to numismatist Dan Barag, these coins date to around 696/7.<sup>42</sup> Those who seek to emulate these ancestors are called *Salafis*, and their movement is often referred to in Arabic as the *Salafiyyah*, and its first major ideologue was the Egyptian anti-imperialist Rashid Rida. Salafism rejects these Umayyad artifacts as evidence of heretical “Judaizing,” denying the legitimacy of the *Isra’iliyaat* literature completely and condemning the Umayyads as apostates.

Jerusalem’s connection to Islam is thus profound. Strictly speaking, the Dome of the Rock is not a mosque, but a *mashhad*, a special building marking the place of Muhammad’s Night Journey and Ascension, at the site of the Jewish Temple. Yet once you are inside it, the impression that you get is that you are standing in the Throne Room of Jesus, the messiah who is to return to establish His Kingdom on Earth. Yet, on the model of Mecca and Medina, the entire city of Jerusalem has been sanctified by the location of the *Haram al-Sharif* within its walls.<sup>43</sup>

### **The Great Wars of the Medieval Period: The Development of Sunni Islam, Shiite Islam, and the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem**

Islam changed global politics in the medieval period to a degree that today few realize.<sup>44</sup> The Persian Sasanian Dynasty collapsed entirely; but over the centuries the dynasties that ruled Persia in the name of Islam continued to deeply influence world history. When the Umayyad Dynasty was defeated, the center of Islam shifted from Damascus to Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid Dynasty. Shiite Islam took root just beyond the

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<sup>42</sup> Amanda Borschel-Dan, “Archeologists expose Muslim-Jewish ‘dialogue’ in Jerusalem from 1,300 years ago,” *Times of Israel*, 8 December 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/archaeologists-expose-muslim-jewish-dialogue-in-jerusalem-from-1300-years-ago/> <accessed 22 May 2019>. This excellent article contains much other interesting information.

<sup>43</sup> Rood, “The Problem of the *Haramayn* in Jerusalem During the Ottoman Period,” *MESA Abstracts 1995 Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, 64-69. Available at [https://www.academia.edu/12495419/The\\_Problem\\_of\\_the\\_Waqf\\_al-Haramayn\\_in\\_Jerusalem\\_During\\_the\\_Ottoman\\_Period\\_](https://www.academia.edu/12495419/The_Problem_of_the_Waqf_al-Haramayn_in_Jerusalem_During_the_Ottoman_Period_) <accessed 23 May 2019>.

<sup>44</sup> I have examined the themes in this article more deeply in the following, “The Beginning of the End of Sunni Preeminence: Muhammad Ali and Jerusalem.” *Arab Studies Journal*, Spring 1996, 86–95; “The Palestine National Authority and the Death Sentence,” *The Cultural Lives of Capital Punishment*, edited by Austin Sarat, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005; “Mehmed Ali as Mutinous Khedive: The Roots of Rebellion,” *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 2002, 8; *Sacred Law in the Holy City: The Khedival Challenge to the Ottomans as seen from Jerusalem, 1829–1841*, Leiden: Brill, 2004.

reach of the Abbasids, and the great Seljuk Empire fought against them in a series of battles against them and the Byzantine Empire—including the ancient kingdom of Armenia, which had accepted Christianity in 300 A.D. and which was the strongest church in the Middle East allied with Constantinople. Palestine and Syria became the frontier between the Sunni Seljuk Turks, fighting in the name of the Abbasid caliphate against the Shi'ite Ismaili Fatimids, transforming the Holy Land into a military frontier, the site of the Crusades, a series of wars poorly understood today. To the Muslim historians of this era, the Holy Land was known as *Jund Filastin*, the military district of Palestine, with its new capital, Ramle, under the Province of *Bilad al-Sham*, Damascus.

The Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim, ignited the Crusades by invading Jerusalem. He tore down its walls, destroyed the *martyrium* of the Holy Sepulcher, and prevented Christians from making the pilgrimage to the Holy City. As a result, the Crusades were launched to reclaim Jerusalem for Christendom. The Crusaders became infamous for massacring Jews, Muslims, and Eastern Christians, but the jihad against the Armenian and Assyrian Christians during the Muslim conquests were atrocious as well.<sup>45</sup> The Crusaders rebuilt the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and hospitals, convents, monasteries, and churches in Jerusalem and throughout the Holy Land, which now expanded in the popular imagination to the north, into the Levant and Iraq. The French Crusaders allied themselves with the Armenians who were holding back the Seljuks in their battle against the Shiites. The Crusaders called their polity the "Kingdom of Jerusalem." The Knights Templar used the Dome of the Rock as the Temple of Solomon and the Al-Aqsa Mosque for their garrison. The Crusaders embarked upon an extensive rebuilding project which included building a tomb marking the burial place of James the Lesser (and Zechariah?) next to the Dome of the Rock, where it remains to this day, known as the Dome of the Chain (*Qubbat al-Silsila*). The map in Grabar and Kedar dates from 1936; it indicates that the Byzantines had built a structure there in 319 A.D., and that the Crusaders merely restored it.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> J. Theron and E. Oliver, "Changing perspectives on the Crusades," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74(12018), a4691, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i1.4691>, available at <http://www.scielo.org.za/pdf/hts/v74n1/09.pdf> <accessed 23 May 2019>.

<sup>46</sup> Grabar and Kedar, 134. Is it possible that the octagonal *martyrium* itself, and not only the smaller, round structure, was this tomb?

When Saladin (Salah al-Din) defeated the Crusaders in 1187, he endowed the Mamilla district, where he had established his headquarters, as a trust in his charitable foundation, called the *Salahiyyah Waqf*.<sup>47</sup> This trust, logically, also administered the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and other Christian and Muslim institutions established before 1187 and during the Ayyubid period. After Saladin expelled the Crusaders, Jerusalem became a spiritual center for *mujahidin* (warriors and administrators of the Sunni Muslim dynasties ruling Syrian and Egypt) where many of them retired and were buried, near the site of the Persian/Jewish massacre of the Christian population of Jerusalem in the seventh century, in the district known as Mamilla. Saladin endowed a cemetery there, and it became the most important Muslim and Christian cemetery in Jerusalem during the Middle Ages.

The other cemetery, built on the east side of the city outside the Herodian wall where the Golden Gate is located, and where it is said that the Muslims built their cemetery to prevent the return of Jesus, reasoning that since He is of priestly lineage, He would be forbidden from walking on any graves. This cemetery became important during the Ottoman era, shifting Jewish worship from near the Gate of Mercy/Golden Gate to the Western (Wailing) Wall sometime in this period. Among the Muslim tombs located in Mamilla, there were Christian tombs dating from the Crusader period in the small remaining area of the cemetery. Thus it was that over the long history of Jerusalem Mamilla and West Jerusalem became associated with the non-Jewish inhabitants of the city.

The dynasty that Saladin established, the Ayyubids, was eventually replaced by the Mamluks, who made Jerusalem an important spiritual center. As slaves, retired military commanders, along with other patrons of Sunni Islam, including wealthy women eager to protect their wealth, built Muslim religious edifices and established schools, hostels, hospitals, and other institutions as pious endowments, including stipends for their custodians. These places stand today as a monument to that era in Jerusalem's history. Many of these slaves were Christians — Armenians, Georgians, Circassians, and Greeks — who'd been converted to Islam, making the connections between the Muslims and Christians during this era became more complex than history books tell. During the Fatimid and Mamluk eras Jews returned to the city, although they

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<sup>47</sup> Rood, *Sacred*, 153.

were banned from living there on at least two occasions, but they quickly returned, playing important financial and economic roles over the long centuries of the Middle Ages. During the late years of the Mamluk period economic decline caused by many factors, the most important of which was the Black Plague, turned the Holy City into a backwater until the arrival of the Ottoman Turks.

### **The Ottomans and The Holy Mountain (Jabal al-Quds) and the Land of Palestine (Ard Filastin)**

The Ottomans followed a well-articulated Sunni system of imperial land tenure based on the Levitical concept that asserts that God is the owner of the land, and the state and its subjects are but its possessors, who are to use of it justly for the benefit of its subjects. As such, the sovereign had the right to dispose of the land — to utilize it for its peoples' benefit — as he saw fit within the administrative laws of the empire. The right of *usufruct*, as the scholars name it, is earned by properly using the property — keeping it productive — and ensuring that the state can tax its produce so that it will be able to sustain the safety and prosperity of its subjects. The root of Ottoman identification of Jerusalem with Mecca and Medina lay both in their status as the three holy cities of Islam and in their juridical status following the original Muslim conquest of Syria. The Ottomans, after their conquest of the Arab provinces and the creation of the Eyalet (Province) of Damascus during the years 1517–1520, recognized existing practices regarding the taxation of arable land in the Province of Damascus. In keeping with the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, upon their conquest of the Arab provinces, the Ottomans declared these conquered territories as belonging to the *bayt mal al-muslimin* (the common treasury of the state), to be used for the benefit of all Muslims, and by extension, the *dhimmi*s, or protected minorities living among them. As such, under the Ottomans, the conquered lands of Syria continued to be considered *kharaj* lands whose *usufruct* could be granted or leased out in the name of the *bayt al-mal* by the Sultan as *imam* (leader), of the Muslim community. The Ottomans organized the systems administering *awqaf*, *timars* (military land grants), and *iltizams/malikanes* (tax farms) on the varying types of land that they conquered. The Ottomans also had a well-articulated system for administering trade, and all other forms of production and property, based upon the sixteenth-century *Siyasetname* (Administrative Law Code) of Sulayman the Magnificent. Devised by the brilliant Ebu Su'ud Effendi, the Shaykh al-Islam (Chief Jurisconsult of the Empire) based upon the Shari'ah and the Qanun

(administrative law), this code stipulated that land could be disposed of (in the legal sense of disposition or use) in three ways: it could be assigned as a grant in return for military service, it could be leased directly to cultivators, or it could be held in perpetual trust for the Muslim subjects of the empire as *waqf*. Many parcels of land throughout the Ottoman Empire's Arab provinces were divided and subdivided into fractions, some of which were assigned as military estates and some of which were assigned as *waqf*, while other portions may have been private property or shared pasture land. The land tenure system was designed to prevent the permanent alienation of land from the state, with one single exception: the assignment of land by the Sultan to an individual as *milk* (private property). This property always would revert ultimately to the state upon the death of the owner and his descendants.

Some two-thirds of the actual sum of the *jizya* (per capital poll tax on non-Muslim subjects of the Empire, *dhimmis*) revenues collected in the district of Jerusalem in the first half of the nineteenth century ended up in the hands of the provincial governor of Damascus, who at the time also served as the *amir al-hajj*, the commander of the *hajj* caravan from that city. It followed that the Porte would entrust this official with the collection and disbursement of the *jizya*. In other words, under the Ottomans, taxes paid by Jews and Christians in Jerusalem and its environs actually were sent outside of their territories to support the pilgrimage caravan to the Muslim Holy Cities in the Hijaz and the *Haramayn Waqf*. Jerusalem, governed within the framework of Ottoman provincial administration, derived its status, then, from Muslim land law, but was not identified with Palestine under Ottoman rule. During the period of Sultan Mahmud II's reforms in the 1820s, the Ottomans explicitly identified the Muslim sanctuary in the city of Jerusalem, and its important imperial *awqaf*, with the exempted *Sharifate* (the Office of the Descendants of the Prophet) of Mecca and Medina (known to the Ottomans and other Muslims as the *Haramayn* (the Two Sanctuaries)). Unlike current Palestinian usage of the term, during the Ottoman period "*haramayn*" did not refer to the al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock, or to the buildings of the *Haram al-Sharif* in Jerusalem and the Tomb of Ibrahim al-Khalil (Cave of *Machpelah*) in Hebron, each of which had their own *awqaf* in addition to becoming attached to the *Haramayn waqf* during the centralization of religious institutions under a new ministry by the Ottomans in the nineteenth century. The term traditionally had a specific meaning to Muslims, including the Ottomans: it referred only to the Holy Cities of the Hijaz.

Jerusalem was called "*thalith al-haramayn*," (the third after the Two Holy Places). When, near the end of his life in 1566, Sulayman the Magnificent dedicated additional revenues and produce from throughout *Bilad al-Sham* (the Syrian Provinces of the Ottoman Empire) in support of the *Khasseki Sultan Waqf* (The Endowment of His Beloved Wife), for example, one of the titles he used to describe himself was "*khadim al-Haramayn*," "Servant of the Two Holy Cities," referring to the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina. Indeed, this relationship was manifested in the special fiscal relationship of Jerusalem with the *Haramayn* that was central to Ottoman administration of the city, particularly during the reform period of Mahmud II, all the way up to the Turkish defeat in WWI.

Under Islamic law, a *waqf* is a legal entity, comprising land or property whose revenues are set aside to benefit the entire Muslim community and its non-Muslim inhabitants who were considered as having joined the *ummah* by agreeing to accept Islamic rule. It has long been thought that this stipulation meant that such trusts were endowed for charitable purposes, and that it was the charitable purpose of such *awqaf* which made them valid and sound under Islamic and Ottoman law. However, that is not the case. A valid Islamic *waqf*, the *waqf sahih*, came to mean an endowment that is made from lands that pay the *ushr* or *kharaj* tax. The meaning of the *waqf* in the Ottoman context is that such lands can never be permanently alienated from the central treasury of the Islamic state — *bayt mal al-muslimin*. Property and land so endowed thus became in essence inalienable, removed from legal transfer, as church property is in the West.

Since the ownership of such property ultimately belongs to God, only the use of the property, and the produce and revenues that it yields can be allotted to the beneficiaries of the *waqf*. The logic of this arrangement is based on the Islamic notion of the common good of the people residing in a just state, whose resources are exploited and protected for the benefit of all Muslims. In the mid-1820s, Sultan Mahmud II began to implement reforms in *waqf* administration throughout the empire. He sought to reassert direct state control over all *awqaf* in the empire, based upon the formal recognition of the previously uncodified, but inherent distinction between canonically valid and invalid *awqaf*. This distinction was always inherent in the Ottoman system: Mahmud formalized it in order to reassert control of all *miri*—state lands in the empire. From this period onward, under Ottoman law, there were two officially recognized forms of *awqaf*: *waqf sahih* (the valid *waqf*) and the *waqf ghayr sahih* (invalid *waqf*). Valid *awqaf* thus were located in Syria, Iraq, and the Hijaz. There were three types of the

"invalid" *awqaf* accepted by the Ottomans until 1825. The first type allowed the revenues of land to be made *waqf*, while the substance of the land, and its right of use and possession, were kept by the treasury; the second, the right of use is given as *waqf*, while the substance and revenues remain with the treasury; and the third type assigned both possession and revenue to the *waqf*, while the substance remains with the treasury. Under Ottoman administrative law after 1826, all *awqaf* not falling under the category of *sahih* were invalidated, since they were established upon land that had been alienated at some point from imperial lands.

It is often thought that charitable and religious trusts were valid because they were established for ostensibly religious or charitable purposes. However, this is a misplaced assumption that has caused great confusion in the interpretation of the institution of the *waqf* in the Ottoman period. What is important is not the purpose of the *waqf*, nor the type of possession, but the *nature of the land* in the Ottoman system of land tenure. These reforms reiterated that the lands of Syria, including the *sanjaqs* of Jerusalem, Nablus, and Sidon were not *waqf*. That this was the clear situation is the Ottoman response to a request made on 28 May 28, 1837, recorded in the registers of the Islamic court in Jerusalem. The governing council (*majlis*) of Jerusalem asserted in a petition asking the Sultan to bar a group of Ashkenazi Jews from conducting trade in the city because "the lands of this region are *miri* and *waqf*."<sup>48</sup> The Muslim authorities of the city clearly understood that the land in the region was state land, and had been set aside as *waqf*. This request the Porte denied. Indeed, in other cases, the Porte ruled that foreigners could purchase *waqf* property in order to restore it to productivity and usefulness. The term "Haramayn" in Palestinian usage came to mean first, Jerusalem and Hebron, referring to the two sanctuaries — Al-Aqsa and Sayyidna Khalil, and only later, during the Palestinian era, did the term come to refer to the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock.

Remarkably, a new political toponym appeared in the Ottoman records of the nineteenth century: *Jabal al-Quds*, "Mountain of the Holy (City of Jerusalem)."<sup>49</sup> This usage is analogous to the more famous use of the term "Mount Lebanon" for the Maronite-majority enclave, that after the massacres of 1860 became an autonomous

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<sup>48</sup> Rood, *Sacred Law in the Holy City*, 188–9.

<sup>49</sup> Johann Büsow, *Hamidian Palestine: Politics and Society in the District of Jerusalem, 1878–1908* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

region (*mutasarriflik*) under the Ottomans. Jerusalem became the first *mutasarriflik*, or autonomous region, in Syria following Muhammad 'Al's withdrawal in 1841.<sup>50</sup> It's possible that this term comes from the medieval Muslim literature on Jerusalem, a point that needs further research. Clearly, by the nineteenth century, in the Ottoman lexicon, the *Sanjak*, or sub-district of, *Jabal al-Quds* included the Old City of Jerusalem and encompassed its hinterland, extending north to Nablus, East to Jericho, south to Dura, and West to Jaffa.<sup>51</sup> This language extended the holiness of the city of Jerusalem to its agricultural hinterlands, sanctifying the entire region as holy — "*al-Arabi al-Muqaddasa*," The Holy Lands — a Quranic term (5.20–21) that arises in an order issued by 'Abdullah Pasha to the notables of Jerusalem on the eve of Muhammad 'Ali's invasion of Syria.<sup>52</sup> During the Muhammad 'Ali period an important order issued by his son and viceroy, Ibrahim Pasha, refers to all of the Province of Damascus variously as *Eyalet Shamiyah* or *Bilad Shamiya*, dates from 12 February, 1835. In it, he applies it to *al-Bilad al-Qudsiyah*, the Holy Land, as well as regions as far away as Aleppo.<sup>53</sup>

During much of the Ottoman period, *Jabal al-Quds* was administered as a part of the Province of Damascus, making it Syro-Palestine a unit in Muslim thinking. The Ottomans administered Jerusalem from the ancient port of Acre, so important during the Crusader period, which had again become a fortified city under the Ottoman governor Jezzar Pasha and his successor, Abdullah Pasha, following the defeat of Napoleon there in 1799. During the Khedival Period — when Muhammad 'Ali and his son Ibrahim rebelled against the Ottoman Empire — Jerusalem was governed from Cairo.<sup>54</sup> Other *sanjaqs* of the southern part of the Provinces of Sidon and Damascus: *Jabal Nablus*; *Filastin*, encompassing Gaza, Jaffa, Ramla, and Lydda; and Gaza, Acre, Tulkarem, Jenin, and Hebron, were all tied to Jerusalem through the Muslim legal system, evidenced by documents regarding cases from these towns scattered throughout the court registers.

*Jabal al-Quds* and the mountainous lands of the *sanjaq* of Nablus (*Jabal Nablus*) were distinguished geographically from what is called in the court registers "the land of

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<sup>50</sup> Rood, *Sacred*, 204.

<sup>51</sup> Rood, *Sacred*, 44–6, 63.

<sup>52</sup> Rood, *Sacred*, 95.

<sup>53</sup> Rood, *Sacred*, 143–5.

<sup>54</sup> Rood, *Sacred*, 5–7.

Palestine" (*ard filastin*) which encompassed the coastal towns of Gaza, Ramla, and Lydda (Lod).<sup>55</sup> This distinction tallies with the description of Palestine given by Volney in the late eighteenth century, who described it as a geographical unit including all of the land "between the Mediterranean to the West and the chain of mountains to the East, and two lines, one drawn to the South, by Khan Younes, and the other to the North, between Kaisaria [Caesarea] and the rivulet of Yafa [Jaffa]." He noted that "Palestine" was "almost entirely a level plain, without either river or rivulet in summer, but watered by several torrents in winter" and that it was "a district independent of every pashalic [*sanjaq*]," which occasionally had "governors of its own, who reside at Gaza under the title of Pashas; but it is usually, as at present, divided into three appanages, or *melkana*, [*malikane*] viz. Yafa [Jaffa], Loudd [Lydda/Lod] and Gaza."<sup>56</sup>

Thus, the term *ard filastin*, "the land of Palestine," was used during this period to refer specifically to a geographical area in agricultural use and divided into tax farms (*malikane*) whether administered as independent *sanjaqs* or attached to adjacent *sanjaqs*.<sup>57</sup> Historically this land was controlled directly by the central government in Istanbul by leasing it to Ottoman officers. In the period before the invasion, 'Abdullah Pasha, governor-general of Sidon, obtained the lease. Notwithstanding the fact that the Khasseki Sultan *'imaret* was endowed with lands in the vicinity of Lydda and Ramla, the important point here is that a significant portion of these rich agricultural lands were not attached to the imperial *awqaf* of Jerusalem, and thus were not administered by the notables of the city. To the north and east, the *sanjaq* of Jerusalem was bounded by the *sanjaqs* of Acre, Nablus, and, across the Jordan River, by the *sanjaq* of Karak. To the south lay Hebron, sometimes nominally a part of the *sanjaq* of Jerusalem, but in fact a

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<sup>55</sup> Rood, 45–6. Also see Haim Gerber, "'Palestine' and other Territorial Concepts in the 17th Century," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 30: (November 1998), 563–72.

<sup>56</sup> M. C. F. Volney, *Travels Through Syria and Egypt in the Years 1783–1785*, Vol. II, (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1788, 2nd ed.), 327–8. Volney described Gaza as "a town of some importance . . .not withstanding (*sic*) its proud title as the capital of Palestine [i.e. the geographical name of the coastal plain, as described above], it is no more than a defenseless village" of two thousand people, who supported themselves primarily by the weaving of cotton on some five hundred looms and manufacturing soap. *Ibid.*, 332–4, 340. Also Mrs. Finn, "The Fellaheen of Palestine," *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement* (1879): 34. Other administrative terms were also used: *nahiyah* for province, and *liwa* for subdistrict, for example, but here I'm simplifying for clarity.

rebellious and nearly autonomous town with a powerful and militant leadership of its own. The use of the *filastin* in the Islamic court records during the nineteenth century was specific, and did not include the *sanjaqs* of Jerusalem, Hebron, and Nablus, tallying with Volney's description.<sup>58</sup>

In 1852, in the context of the Crimean War, the Ottomans issued an imperial order confirming the status quo of Christian "Holy Places" — specifically the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and its dependencies in the Old City and the Convent of Dayr al-Sultan — as well as the Sanctuary of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives, the Tomb of the Virgin Mary in Gethsemane. The Ottoman Empire collapsed as a consequence of declaring a *jihad* and allying itself with Germany against the British on November 14, 1914.<sup>59</sup>

### **The British Empire and The League of Nations Mandate of Palestine**

British Protestants sought to restore what they invariably called "Palestine" to the Jewish people. Having established themselves in Jerusalem with the founding of Christ Church and the first European consulate in the Middle East, they took it upon themselves in the 1830s to become the protectors of Jews in the Ottoman Empire. In this era, Anglicans, Presbyterians, and the non-denominational movement of dispensationalists of the nineteenth century all invariably and uncritically called the Holy Land "Palestine." Even Blackstone's *Jesus is Coming* uses Canaan and Palestine for the Jewish homeland, and, surprisingly, even today's *MacArthur Study Bible* mislabels a map anachronistically "Palestine Under the Herods."

When the British conquered "Palestine" on November 11, 1917, the traditional Christian appellation was adopted. This explains why the League of Nations Mandate, covering Judea, Samaria, the Galilee, Philistia, and Jordan was granted by the League of Nations over what was called by them "Palestine." During the Mandate Era (1922–1947) all of the residents of the area were known as "Palestinians." When the Zionists

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<sup>58</sup> Compare Bernard Lewis' analysis entitled "Palestine: On the History and Geography of a Name," *International History Review* 11 (1980): 1–12. Judith Mendelsohn Rood, *Sacred Law in the Holy City* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 85, f.n.1. See also Douglas Howard, "It Was Called 'Palestine': The Land, History, and Palestinian Identity." *Fides et Historia* 35/2 (Summer/Fall 2003), 61–78; and Zachary Foster, *The Invention of Palestine*, PhD. Dissertation, Princeton, 2017.

<sup>59</sup> Editors, "Ottoman Empire declares a holy war," History.com, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/ottoman-empire-declares-a-holy-war>, February 20, 2019 <accessed June 1, 2019>.

established the State of Israel, those Jews and Arabs who accepted citizenship and their descendants are “Israelis” while those who rejected it came to be known as “Palestinians”: those refugees who fled the fighting and those who lived in Samaria and Philistia, areas that Israel did not conquer in 1948. Egypt established Gaza as the “State of Palestine” in 1948, but it soon was simply incorporated into Egypt. The Jordanians occupied Samaria and Judea from 1947–1967, incorporating these territories into “Transjordan.”

The toponyms “Palestine” and “Palestinians” can be understood in its modern Christian and Muslim usage as the rejection of Jewish sovereignty. Conversely, “Israel” then represents those who believe in the right of the Jewish people to national self-determination. The use of the term “Palestine” by Arab Christians and Muslims is understandable from a historical perspective, but it is incorrect to describe Jesus as a Palestinian. He was, even more than Nathanael, a “true Israelite.” However, if it is understood that it is anachronistic to call “the Holy Land” in the time of Jesus “Palestine” evangelicals ought to follow the example of the New Testament writers, who intentionally used the word “Israel” not least because of its messianic significance. “Israel” is the specific “Holy Land” that the Lord claimed as His earthly kingdom.

The British Mandate stipulated in Article 12 that:

All responsibility in connection with the Holy Places and religious building or sites in Palestine, including that of preserving existing rights and of securing free access to the Holy Places, religious buildings and sites and the free exercise of worship, while ensuring the requirements of public order and decorum, is assumed by the Mandatory.<sup>60</sup>

### **Palestinian Toponyms**

When the Mandate for Palestine was established by the League of Nations in 1922, the British Empire was truly global: stretching from the British Channel to Hong Kong, with enormous regions under its control. The British, who had controlled Egypt since 1882, also had been ruling India (and what is now Pakistan) since 1858. After WWI, it appeared that they would continue to do so forever. British subjects included large,

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<sup>60</sup> Dumper, Michael. *The Politics of Sacred Space: The Old City of Jerusalem and the Middle East Conflict*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 19, 108–110.

restive Muslim majorities, particularly after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, for the British, the symbolic value of Jerusalem had many dimensions: their political control over Jerusalem was a Muslim issue and not merely a Jewish one. Importantly, the British had expelled their Hashemite allies from Mecca and Medina, enabling the Saudis, whom the British deemed to be preferable allies, to rule the Hejaz. To compensate the Hashemites, the British created three Hashemite monarchies in Iraq, Syria, and Transjordan; Jerusalem as a consolation to them for losing control of the Muslim Holy Cities in the Hejaz.

The anti-Turkish feelings of the Arabs in the final years of the Caliphate led them to reject Ottoman jurisprudence and to establish an Arab Caliphate based upon the Golden Age of Islam when the first four caliphs governed as legitimate successors to Muhammad. Palazzi's characterization of the members of the Brotherhood apply to the members of the British-created Supreme Muslim Council of Palestine. The British appointed "Hajj" Amin Al-Husseini to head the Council, despite the fact that he had no training in the Islamic sciences — having served only as a minor official in the Ottoman army. He joined the Arab nationalists opposed to the Ottomans during World War One. As an Arab nationalist with family roots in Jerusalem, he was familiar with the old Ottoman-era Naqshabandiyyah Sufi order, and was aware of the Wahhabist circles in the Middle East. He was in communication with the Egyptian cleric Hassan al-Banna. Together, they established the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood in Jerusalem, eventually allying their cause with the Nazis during the Second World War.

Under the Palestinian Mandate, the British charged the Supreme Muslim Council with administering the Islamic properties on the same basis as the Ottomans, but neither the British nor the Palestinian Muslims were interested in the development of Ottoman law over the centuries. Instead, they based their jurisprudence on Salafist principles, articulated by the Wahhabis during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Ottomans defeated the Wahhabis as rebels, but they survived and became the core ideology of Saudi Arabia, and spread throughout the Arab world during the secular period of Arab nationalism. During this period, the Hashemites in Transjordan were directly involved with Palestinian Muslims and Christians living under the Mandate because of their role in administering Christian and Muslim institutions and properties in the West Bank and Jerusalem. These relationships developed closely, particularly among the intellectual elites. The legal, medical, educational, engineering, scientific,

architectural, and journalistic professions in Palestine and Transjordan took on a British flavor as many Arabs and Jews went to England for their educations. This elite was secular, and developed quite independently of the Muslim institutions and associations of the era.

The British created an entirely new Muslim bureaucracy in Palestine. The office of the “*mufti*” became the chief Muslim official in Palestine, and the new “Supreme Muslim Council” (often called the “Arab Higher Committee” by the mandatory officials), was designed to administer Muslim religious institutions throughout the region. The role of the *mufti* under the Ottomans had no resemblance to the early British incarnation of the office. Under the Ottomans, however, the *mufti* issued opinions on matters of law, but had no political power. Under the British, the office oversaw all of the endowed Muslim and Christian lands and their produce in Palestine, resources that became the basis of Muslim opposition to Zionism. The British set up Christian-Muslim Associations throughout Palestine to foster Arab nationalism. The Supreme Muslim Council published an important guide to the Haram al-Sharif, written by Jerusalem historian Aref el-Aref in 1925 (and republished in 1935), which stated the site of the Dome of the Rock

... is one of the oldest in the world. Its sanctity dates from the earliest (perhaps from pre-historic) times. Its identity with the site of Solomon’s Temple is beyond dispute. This, too, is the spot, according to universal belief, on which “David build there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burn offerings and peace offerings.”<sup>61</sup>

The guide informed visitors that the fact that the Dome of the Rock was built atop the site of Solomon’s Temple was “beyond dispute.” And even as late as 1951, once he’d become the mayor of East Jerusalem under Transjordan — El-Aref’s history of the Dome of the Rock reaffirmed the traditional Islamic and Christian viewpoint unequivocally, stating that “the ruins of Solomon’s Temple are under al-Aqsa” and that Umar built a mosque atop the former building’s site.

### **The Muslim Brotherhood**

The Muslim Brotherhood is a modern ideological movement that was founded in Egypt

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<sup>61</sup> Rood, “Diagnosis: Historical Amnesia.”

in 1928. Ideologically it was shaped by the anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism in Egypt and the Middle East generally, and by the Arab-Jewish conflict in mandatory Palestine specifically.<sup>62</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood has long been the most important of the Sunni opposition groups in the Arab world. Its aim is to reestablish the Caliphate and to govern according to its literalist interpretation of the Quran and Shariah. While legal in Transjordan and then Jordan, it was banned in Egypt and Syria because of numerous assassinations and attempts to overthrow their governments. Violent splinter groups of the Brotherhood have arisen worldwide. Rashid Rida, Hassan al-Banna, and Sayyid Qutb are the chief ideologues of the movement. They sought to create a vanguard to oppose the secularization of Islamic society, which they thought was accelerated through the introduction of imperialism, capitalism, Zionism, socialism, and communism in the period leading up to the First World War. The Salafist Movement wherever it exists rejects all Muslim regimes since the death of 'Ali as illegitimate and un-Islamic. Wahhabi doctrine has been at the heart of Salafism since its first irruption in 1740 when they rejected the legitimacy of the Ottoman Empire.

The Arabs remember Turkish rule as a time of oppression and subjugation. Arab nationalist animosity regarding the historic legacy of the Ottomans burns hot to this day: from this perspective, the Ottoman defeat was at once a judgment on the Turks and a challenge to the Arabs, who struggled between the various ideological options available to them in the period between the world wars and thereafter.<sup>63</sup> The entire twentieth century framed the failures of all of their ideological movements to solve the political dilemmas posed to the Arabs by the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

The Islamicization of the Palestinian resistance to Zionism began with the British creation of the office of the *mufti* in 1918 and the appointment of Hajj Amin Al-Husseini as to that office in 1922. Traditionally, a *mufti* is a religious authority, or jurisconsult, who issues decisions relating to Islamic law. Under the British Mandate, for the first time the *mufti* became the highest Muslim official in Palestine. He was also named president of the newly created Supreme Muslim Council, becoming the officially

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<sup>62</sup> Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 55–6.

<sup>63</sup> Stephen Merley, *The Muslim Brotherhood in the United States* (New York: Hudson Institute Center on Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Muslim World, April 2009).

recognized religious and political leader of the Palestinian Arabs. The fact that the *mufti* and his policies were opposed by the majority of the Palestinian Arabs for many different reasons, including those who took exception to his interpretation of Islam and Zionism, has emerged in Palestinian and Zionist historiography only recently.<sup>64</sup>

Following the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924, the now “Grand Mufti” co-founded, with Hassan al-Banna, the Muslim Brotherhood, officially in Cairo, in 1928. The theology of the Muslim Brotherhood is anti-imperialist, anti-Western, and anti-secularism. On 23 September, 1932, King Abdul-Aziz Ibn Saud united Saudi Arabia into a single kingdom based upon the literalist form of Islam known as Salafism, because it looks back to the original Muslim community in Mecca and Medina as the purest form of Islam. Salafism rejects Sufism, Shi’ism, Christianity, and Zionism. Although secular nationalism became the most important stream of political thought in the Middle East, Salafism was the underlying theological source of anti-Zionism and anti-imperialism during the interwar period. The Saudi-Hashemite rivalry over the establishment of a new Arab Caliphate is an under-appreciated factor in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict; during the interwar period; the Muslim Brotherhood mobilized Muslim resistance to the Great Britain throughout the Empire, opposed to both of the new monarchies.

Hajj Amin has continued to influence Palestinian political culture remains profound to this day through the Muslim Brotherhood, qua Hamas, which adapted Salafism to stake the Islamic claim to political supremacy in what was British Palestine. Hajj Amin, who served as a soldier in the Ottoman army, where he was stationed in Smyrna and witnessed the Turkish extermination of the Armenians, an event that left him deeply impressed by Turkish racial nationalism. He traveled to Damascus to support Faisal, who had declared an Arab state in Syria only to be expelled by France. On Amin’s return to Palestine in 1921 he soon became involved in riots against the Balfour Declaration and Jewish immigration. He became a fugitive from British justice for his radical politics, but then was nevertheless pardoned, and placed in control of all former Ottoman *awqaf* properties and the Islamic court bureaucracy in Jerusalem and throughout Palestine by Herbert Samuel, the High Commissioner in Mandatory Palestine. Al-Husseini rejected and dissolved the secular-nationalist Moslem-Christian

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<sup>64</sup> Hillel Cohen, *Army of Shadows: Palestinian Collaboration with Zionism, 1917–1948*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008).

Associations established by the British and began emphasizing the idea that the Palestine was *waqf*—the possession of the Muslim *ummah* in perpetuity. In the absence of Muslim sovereignty during the Mandate, he merged the idea of *waqf* with the category of state land (*timar*).

Following the Mandate Period, the administration of Muslim institutions in Palestine shifted to the Transjordanian Ministry of Religious Foundations. Transjordan had de facto sovereignty over al-Haram al-Sharif (aka the Temple Mount) and paid the salaries of the Muslim officials employed in the Islamic court. In the earliest stage of the mandate, one of Hajj Amin al-Husseini's first acts as mufti was to close the Mamilla cemetery and rededicate the *Salahiyyah Waqf* to the building an Arab Muslim university and commercial district on the site.<sup>65</sup> This modernizing project, conceived in the early days of the Mandate, marked a hopeful period when the young mufti was working with Jews to establish a new commercial and cultural center in Mamilla.<sup>66</sup> The YMCA and the King David Hotel anchored the posh shopping neighborhood adjacent to the site in the New City. The Supreme Muslim Council built the Palace Hotel, a beautiful example of late-Ottoman architecture, now rebuilt as luxury condominiums and boutiques, to provide income for the development of the future university. The *mufti* articulated the idea that Palestine itself is a *waqf* sometime between 1929, when the Palace Hotel opened, and 1935, when he founded the official Muslim Brotherhood chapter in

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<sup>65</sup> "Muslim scholars and religious leaders have dealt with such issues for centuries, and in seeking to resolve such difficulties ruled that a cemetery not in use for 37 years is considered *mundras* — an abandoned cemetery that has lost its sanctity. In fact, in 1946, the grand mufti of Jerusalem, a supporter of Hitler, presented plans to build a Muslim university of 15 buildings on the entire Mamilla cemetery (now Independence Park). In fact, we submitted the drawings of that proposed university to the High Court. The mufti was relying on the concept of *mundras*, which was and is invoked throughout the Muslim world. Today, it is widely sanctioned and practiced throughout the Arab world, in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Palestinian territories." Hier, "Right of Reply: A center of hope and reason" *Jerusalem Post*, Nov. 11, 2008. See also: Israel Matzav, "Jerusalem Museum of Tolerance" *Blogspot*, February 4, 2006, <http://israelmatzav.blogspot.com/2006/02/jerusalem-museum-of-tolerance.html> <accessed June 4, 2019. See also Uri Kupferschmidt, *The Supreme Muslim Council: Islam under the British Mandate for Palestine* (Leiden: Brill, 1987).

<sup>66</sup> Yildirim Yavuz, "The Influence of Late Ottoman Architecture in the Arab Provinces: The Case of the Palace Hotel in Jerusalem," *EJOS*, IV (2001), M. Kiel, N. Landman & H. Theunissen (eds.), *Proceedings of the 11<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Turkish Art, Utrecht - The Netherlands, August 1999*, No. 44, 1–22

Jerusalem in support of the Arab Higher Committee's opposition to Zionism. Hajj Amin was able to rally a force of about two thousand Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood volunteers who fought in the Negev against the nascent Israeli state, and to field a Palestinian militia under the leadership of Qassam al-Ahmad, who was killed at Qastel and who has become the eponymous inspiration for the armed brigade of Hamas today.

The Muslim Brotherhood became the channel for Salafist ideas during this time. Outlawed for decades in Egypt and Syria, after 1948 clandestine cells operated in Muslim towns and villages in the West Bank and Gaza under Transjordanian and Jordanian rule, even when the cells in Egypt and Syria were practically wiped out. As a result of the 1948 war, Transjordan took possession of the Temple Mount and the administration of waqf properties and the Islamic courts in the West Bank as protector and guardian of the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem and Haram al-Khalil in Hebron in 1950. The Hashemite dynasty administered the Islamic institutions in Jerusalem until 1988, when King Hussein relinquished his sovereign claim to the Palestinian National Authority.

In 1964, President Gamal Abd Al-Nasser, Egypt, created the Palestinian Liberation Organization to fight a guerilla war against Israel. The PLO's Muslim leadership included members of the Muslim Brotherhood, but the majority were secular nationalists, many of whom were nominal Christians. For the next thirty years, the PLO waged battle ostensibly with the support of the majority of all Palestinians, and, although the corruption and authoritarian nature of Arafat's rule became well-known, they were willing to overlook his flaws in order to present a unified front against Israel, to share in his increasing power and international status, and to hold onto some sense of dignity. Egypt took over the Gaza Strip in 1948 using what Nasser claimed was the "State of Palestine" to infiltrate groups of Palestinian fighters into Israel until his ignominious defeat in 1967. In the 1970s and early 80s, Israel permitted Saudi Arabia to fund an alternative group of Muslim administrators and officials, which eventually led to the establishment of the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, as the Gazan branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. For disgruntled Palestinians, Hamas emerged as an alternative to the failed policies of the PLO in the late 1980s. Jordanian employees of the Islamic institutions in the West Bank were sympathetic to, if not members of, the Muslim Brotherhood.

On the eve of WWII, Hajj Amin al-Husseini began organizing jihadist cells throughout the Arab Middle East. The Brotherhood infamously allied with the Nazis during the Second World War, bringing ignominy to Palestinian cause. The British outlawed the Brotherhood and sought the arrest of the mufti, who fled to Syria. He encouraged European Muslims to fight with the Nazis. Among the biggest losers of WWII were the thousands of Palestinians who worked for the British during the war.<sup>67</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood is a modernist movement, inspired not only by Islam, but by revolutionary Marxism.<sup>68</sup> Their greatest critic until his occultation, Palazzi viewed the Muslim Brotherhood as the “main instrument” for what he called the “Wahhabinisation of the Arab milieu.” Its founder, Hassan al-Banna, was, in his view, “uneducated in the Islamic sciences.” He called the Brotherhood the “basic militants of Islam.” The Brotherhood, and the followers of groups that grew out of the Brotherhood, like al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and Da’esh, are all “from a religious point of view — laypersons”

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<sup>67</sup> Ofer Aderet, “12,000 Palestinians Fought for U.K. in WWII Alongside Jewish Volunteers, Historian Finds,” Haaretz, May 30, 2019, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-historian-12-000-palestinians-fought-for-u-k-in-wwii-alongside-jewish-volunteers-1.7309369> <accessed June 2, 2019>.

<sup>68</sup> During my doctoral studies in Jerusalem in the Islamic Court from 1985–7 I interviewed Shaykh ‘As’ad al-Imam al-Husseini, the former imam of Al-Aqsa Mosque during the Mandate, about his involvement with the Muslim Brotherhood in that era. He explained that during the Ottoman era, the Muslims of Jerusalem were members of the *Naqshabandiyyah Sufi* movement. When the Young Turks ousted — and executed — Arabs nationalists in Istanbul, they turned to the British who were then supporting them in Arabia. However, they began to oppose British imperialism following the First World War. Disappointed that an Arab State had not been established in Syro-Palestine, and following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Muslims in Mandatory Palestine reorganized themselves into the new Muslim Brotherhood being formulated then by Hassan al-Banna. The connection between Hajj Amin al-Husseini and Hassan al-Bana is poorly understood, but after the abolition of the caliphate in 1924, and the creation of the Supreme Muslim Council and the British appointment of Husseini as the Grand Mufti, the relationship between the Egyptian Brotherhood and the Palestinian branch was close indeed, as was evidenced during the Second World War. British missteps caused by their cold divide and rule policies reified political antagonisms between Jewish Zionists and Palestinian Muslims and Christians. The British established Muslim-Christian Associations in Mandatory Palestine, laying the groundwork of the secular Palestinian Nationalism that took root following the Second World War. The Muslim Brotherhood, condemned for its alliances with the Nazis and for its defeat by the Zionist forces during the Israeli War of Independence, disappeared from view for many decades, surfacing again only in 1987 when Hamas officially took on its mantle.

who lack training in “the basic... Islamic sciences....”<sup>69</sup> Like Hajj Amin Al-Husseini, who was a minor officer in the Ottoman Army, members of the Brotherhood continue to be “appointed as ‘imams’ of important mosques....” Under the Ottomans, the Ministry of *Awqaf* and Religious Affairs issued certificates and diplomas in Islamic Law to regulate the speech and teachings of religious officials; the seminaries in Saudi Arabia and Egypt took over this role in the twentieth century. Whereas in the nineteenth century, the Ottoman reformers had pursued diplomatic relations on the basis of international law and treaties in an effort to end the wars on its frontiers to the West and East, in the twentieth century the Salafist Wahhabis adhered to perpetual holy war against non-Muslims. Ultimately, the Ottoman efforts and modern Turkey was established upon the basis of ethnic nationalism, a basis that led to the expulsion and eradication of the Armenians and Assyrians from its much-reduced territories. A key issue for the Brothers has always ever been its infamously implacable rejection of Zionism.

Paralleling these developments, in 1924, the Supreme Muslim Council accepted the Hashemite King Hussein Bin Ali as the custodian of the *Haram al-Sharif* and Christian sites in Palestine. Under the terms of the mandate, the Hashemites followed British policies carefully, and, in 1951 annexed East Jerusalem and the West Bank.<sup>70</sup> Following the Israeli War of Independence and the Palestinian *Nakba* in 1948, the Transjordanians, who were the allies of the British during the Second World War, occupied the West Bank, including Jerusalem. The restoration of the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque to Hashemite control enhanced their legitimacy as Muslim leaders. Palestinian and Transjordanian families — Christians and Muslims — developed close relationships, and the demographic profile of Jordan became more complex. The Arab tribes who had developed Transjordan were now increasingly in the shadow of the urban professionals who fled to Transjordan following the *Nakba* — as the Palestinians call their catastrophe, which many believed was brought upon them by Hajj Amin al-Husseini. Amman reorganized the Palestinian government under Hashemite administration, transforming the kingdom from an Arabian one to a

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<sup>69</sup> Quoted in Rood, “Diagnosis: Historical Amnesia.”

<sup>70</sup> Philip Mattar. *The Mufti of Jerusalem: Al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni and the Palestinian National Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 21–3.

compound society blending the Arabian tribes with Palestinian urban and rural elites. Egypt declared Gaza “Palestine” administered by Cairo.

Until the end of the Six Day War, under Jordanian control, the Palestinian Muslims came to understand the “Two Sanctuaries” as Jerusalem and Hebron, rivalling Saudi Arabia’s Mecca and Medina. In 1949, Transjordan was renamed the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Following the armistice, rumors began circulating that Lebanon and Jordan were preparing for impending peace talks.

King ‘Abdullah opposed to the internationalization of the Old City of Jerusalem as a *corpus separatum* — a separate enclave under “international control” — a concept whose roots go back to the idea of a Christian protectorate over Jerusalem in the nineteenth century.<sup>71</sup> He explained:

The demand for the internationalization of the Jerusalem was the strangest and most unbalanced of the Arab national aims. It was one that disregarded Arab rights and interests by handing over to international control and wrenching Jerusalem from the possession of the Arabs. It was my duty to stand resolutely and firmly in the defence of the Arab character of the Holy City and resist internationalization in all its aspects.<sup>72</sup>

On 16 July, 1951, a former Prime Minister of Lebanon was assassinated, and four days later, on 20 July, 1951, King Abdullah of Jordan was assassinated on the stairs of Al-Aqsa Mosque. His grandson, the future King Hussein, was also hit but a medal pinned to his chest at the insistence of his grandfather deflected the shot. The assassin was a Palestinian from the Husseini clan. Media reports asserted that the assassin was from “a secret order based in Jerusalem known only as ‘the Jihad.’”<sup>73</sup> This was a clear signal that the Muslim Brotherhood would kill any Arab leader who entertained notions of making peace with Israel. From that day until the end of the Six Day War, Transjordan’s policies in East Jerusalem were driven by the Salafist agenda. Although the Hashemites and

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<sup>71</sup> Bernard Wasserstein, *Divided Jerusalem: The Struggle for the Holy City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) and Ruth Kark, *American Consuls in the Holy Land, 1832–1914* (Detroit: Wayne State, 1994).

<sup>72</sup> Quoted by Michael C. Hudson in ‘Asali, K.J., ed. *Jerusalem in History* (NY: Olive Branch Press, 1990), 261.

<sup>73</sup> Paul Ghali, “Constant Threats on Lives Tie Hands of Arab Leaders,” *Corpus Christi Times*. (4 August 1951).

Israel engaged in secret diplomatic relations during this era, Arab thinking about Jewish sovereignty was framed by resistance. Mamilla was in a No Man's Land, and for many years after the area was nearly abandoned, a potent symbol of the Arab–Israeli War. By 1965, “A Brief Guide to the Dome of the Rock and Haram al-Sharif,” published by the Supreme *Awqaf* Council, completely avoided mentioning the ancient Jewish temples. Despite the fact that Muslim texts and historians had for centuries associated the Temple Mount with David and Solomon, that narrative was expunged in favor of the Salafist position denying its Jewish connections.

### **Palestinian Nationalism**

The Israeli victory in 1967 united Jerusalem and brought the entire West Bank under Jerusalem's control. Transjordan became Jordan, and the *Waqf* administration, was left under Jordanian control with Israeli acquiescence. In 1964, the Palestinian Liberation Organization was created with the support of the Soviet Union. Palestinian nationalism metamorphosed into a secular movement — uniting Palestinian Christians and Muslims against Israel.<sup>74</sup> It also united the Palestinian Resistance against the Hashemites, culminating in the failed rebellion in Jordan in what became known as Black September, 1970. From the point on, the Jordanians opposed the Palestinian Liberation Organization, driving them into Lebanon, which in turn led to the destructive Israeli war against them, a war that drove many of Israel's Maronite allies to emigrate to Israel after 1982.

Israel's relationship with the walled city has been fraught. On the one hand Jerusalem is the eternal capital of the Jewish people, but on the other, it is a real place with possibly the most complex history of all the cities in the world. Reluctant to disturb the historical status quo over Jerusalem's holy sites, the State of Israel and the Jerusalem Municipality have worked at cross-purposes since 1967.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> For a good history of these developments, see Yitzhak Reiter and Jon Seligman, “1917 to the Present: *Al-Haram Al-Sharif*/Temple Mount (*Har HaBayit*) and the Western Wall” in Grabar and Kedar, 231–273, and Nazmi al-Jubeih, “1917 to the Present: Basic Changes, But Not Dramatic: *Al-Haram Al-Sharif* in the Aftermath of 1967,” *ibid*, 275–289.

<sup>75</sup> W.C. Harrop, former U.S. Ambassador to Israel, 1992–93, review of Amir S. Chesin, Bill Hutman and Avi Melamed, *Separate and Unequal: The Inside Story of Israeli Rule in East Jerusalem* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). *Middle East Policy*, 7(June 2000), [http://www.mepc.org/journal\\_vol7/harrop.html](http://www.mepc.org/journal_vol7/harrop.html) <accessed April 24, 2010>. 31 of Jerusalem.

In 1983 *Mufti Sa'ad al-Din Al-'Alami*, the well-trained Muslim official with over fifty years of experience as a teacher, judge, and jurisconsult, published an account of the Supreme Muslim Council's relationship with Israel concerning the Temple Mount. The book includes a collection of documents and photographs pertaining to all events and issues relating to the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa, and Muslim responses to them, since 1967. During this period, Muslims were alarmed that Jewish and Christian groups began to talk about the rebuilding of the Temple on what Al-'Alami called "*Jabal al-Bayt*" "The Mountain of the House" — literally "Temple Mount" where the "buildings of the two mosques, *Al-Aqsa* and *Al-Sakhra* — stand."<sup>76</sup> His work reveals the political tension between the traditional Muslim and the Salafist versions of sacred history and Jerusalem's place in Islam, between recognizing the Jewish history of the Temple Mount and denying it.

In 1987, the Muslim Brotherhood was reborn in Gaza as Hamas. The 1988 Hamas Charter declares that all of Palestinian land is *Waqf* — endowed in perpetuity to the Muslim *ummah* — asserts in Article 11:

The Islamic Resistance Movement believes that the land of Palestine is an Islamic Waqf consecrated for future Moslem generations until Judgment Day. It, or any part of it, should not be squandered: it, or any part of it, should not be given up. Neither a single Arab country nor all Arab countries, neither any king or president, nor all the kings and presidents, neither any organization nor all of them, be they Palestinian or Arab, possess the right to do that. Palestine is an Islamic Waqf land consecrated for Moslem generations until Judgment Day. This being so, who could claim to have the right to represent Moslem generations till Judgment Day? <sup>77</sup>

Palestinian scholar Nur Masalha has characterized Hamas's claim that Palestine is an Islamic *waqf* as "the main innovative idea" that the Islamic Resistance Movement

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<sup>76</sup> Sa'ad Al-Din Al-Alami, *Documents of the Supreme Muslim Council 1967-1984* (In Arabic) (Jerusalem: Dar Al-Taba'ah Al-Arabiyya, 1984), 11.

<sup>77</sup> "Hamas Covenant: The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement, 18 August 1988," The Avalon Project at Yale Law School <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/hamas.htm> <accessed June 4, 2019>.

has contributed to the Arab-Israel Conflict.<sup>78</sup> The Hamas charter refers to the land of Palestine as *waqf*, that is, set aside as an eternal charitable endowment for the Muslim community. However, to the contrary, the claim that all Palestine is *waqf* has been the official position of the Muslim Palestinian political establishment since before the days of the British Mandate. Despite the fact that it does not fit with the theory or practice of Islamic land tenure during any other period in Muslim history. This is exactly the disastrous position of the Palestinian leadership that led to the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948. Hamas reduces Islamic law and history by imagining the Salafist dream:

This is the law governing the land of Palestine in the Islamic Sharia (law) and the same goes for any land the Moslems have conquered by force, because during the times of (Islamic) conquests, the Moslems consecrated these lands to Moslem generations till the Day of Judgment. It happened like this: When the leaders of the Islamic armies conquered Syria and Iraq, they sent to the Caliph of the Moslems, Umar bin-el-Khatab,[sic] asking for his advice concerning the conquered land - whether they should divide it among the soldiers, or leave it for its owners, or what? After consultations and discussions between the Caliph of the Moslems, Omar bin-el-Khatab and companions of the Prophet, Allah bless him and grant him salvation, it was decided that the land should be left with its owners who could benefit by its fruit. As for the real ownership of the land and the land itself, it should be consecrated for Moslem generations till Judgment Day. Those who are on the land, are there only to benefit from its fruit.

This position would set into motion the disastrous failure of the Palestinian Authority to negotiate a bilateral treaty of peace with Israel as envisioned by the Oslo Peace Process. Not knowing that Hamas would succeed in scuttling the process, on July 28, 1988, King Hussein of Jordan relinquished the Hashemite claim to Jerusalem, as well as the right to govern the West Bank or the Palestinians. The Islamic court employees were now to be paid by the PLO, preparing the way for the Palestinian National Authority, led by the PLO, to take over the administration of Islamic institutions in

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<sup>78</sup> Nur Masalha, *The Bible and Zionism: Invented Traditions, Archeology, and Post-Colonialism in Palestine-Israel* (London: Zed, 2007), 233.

Jerusalem. Later that year the PLO issued a Declaration of Palestinian Independence. From 1970–1988 Jordan (which many Zionists long considered the “Arab State” originally envisioned in 1920 — an idea that seems to now be permanently repudiated due to Jordanian demands on the Trump administration relative to its “Deal of the Century”) remained deeply involved in Palestinian affairs. Under the terms of the 1994 Israeli-Jordanian Peace Treaty, the Hashemite family remains the Custodian of the Islamic and Christian Holy Places in Palestine, and continues to support the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

The Oslo Accords recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and allowed the exiled leadership to return to the still-disputed territories in 1993. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan remains the Custodians of the *Haram al-Sharif* to this day, and the *waqf* continues to be administered by it, now in coordination with the Palestinian Authority. Palestinian Christian lands and properties: i.e. the Greek Orthodox, Catholic, Russian Orthodox, Armenian, Syriac, Ethiopian and Copt churches, monasteries, hostels, hospitals, residences, and agricultural lands, continue to be administered as perpetual endowments under Muslim sovereignty — a situation that has lasted since the Crusades and even dating back to Byzantine times. This sheds light on the recent pronouncement that Jordan’s King Abdullah is asserting his control over the Church of the Holy Sepulcher as the protector of the Christians of Palestine is a startling reminder of the persistence of Muslim sovereignty into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, an ironic situation in the aftermath of the recent Salafist jihad against Iraqi and Syrian Christians.<sup>79</sup>

To hold onto its legitimacy, the Palestinian Authority, established in 1993, cooperated fitfully with Hamas until civil war that broke out between them in 2005 when the latter took over Gaza, killing and expelling all members of the Palestinian Liberation Organization. Until the Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000, The Palestinian Authority has used the term “*Haramayn*” — “the Two Sanctuaries” primarily to refer to the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa, although it sometimes referred also to Hebron and Jerusalem.<sup>80</sup> Suddenly the position of the Supreme Muslim Council overtly adapted the Salafist

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<sup>79</sup> Daoud Kuttab, “King Abdullah Vows to Complete Restoration of Church of Holy Sepulchre,” *Al-Monitor*, May 20, 2019, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/05/jordan-king-donation-restoration-church-jerusalem.html> <accessed June 2, 2019>.

<sup>80</sup> Rood, *Sacred Law in the Holy City*, 24–71. See also Grabar and Kedar, 182.

position. Ikramah Sabri, then *Mufti* of Jerusalem, famously claimed at the beginning of the Al-Aqsa Intifada that, “There is no evidence that Solomon’s Temple was in Jerusalem; probably it was in Bethlehem or in some other place.”<sup>81</sup> At that time, Palazzi castigated the Palestinian Authority for repudiating “... the Jewish heritage [of Islam] as a whole, with the clear attempt to remove it even from historical memory.” Palazzi lamented the sad fact that Muslims are so ignorant of their own history that they are “really inclined to take these words for granted, notwithstanding the fact that they contradict both historical evidence and Islamic sources.”<sup>82</sup> The issue was so provocative that the *Shaykh of Al-Azhar*, the head of Islam’s most venerable and greatest religious university, located in Cairo, in an article entitled “Does Solomon’s Temple Exist Under the Current Al-Aksa Mosque in Jerusalem?” published in *Al-Ahram*, November 2, 2000, felt compelled to explain the connection of *al-Aqsa* to the historical Jewish Temples.

In July 2009, Avi Diskin, head of the Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency), told the Israeli cabinet that Egyptian cleric Sheikh Youssef al-Qaradawi of the Muslim Brotherhood “had allocated some \$25 million for the purchase of property and to build Hamas charitable institutions that would expand the group’s reach in Jerusalem.” In addition, Diskin told the Israeli cabinet that although “there has been a drop in terrorist activity both in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank,” foreigners affiliated with the global Islamic jihad movement were trickling into Gaza, and that “ Hamas continued to develop its armament capabilities inside Gaza, even though the organization was not currently carrying out attacks.”<sup>83</sup> This activity points to the importance of properly understanding the evidence in the Islamic law records relating to the historic role of the Islamic institutions in administering Islamic *awaqf* in practical and political terms in order to prove that such claims cannot be substantiated according to Islamic law.

Amid clashes between Palestinians and Israeli police on the Temple Mount in October 2015 the *mufti* of Jerusalem again reiterated the claim that there was never a Jewish temple atop the Temple Mount, and that the site has been home to a mosque

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<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Rood, “Diagnosis: Historical Amnesia.”

<sup>82</sup> Quoted in Rood, “Diagnosis: Historical Amnesia,” 2006.

<sup>83</sup> Herb Keinon, “Limits on Settlement Freeze Being Set,” *Jerusalem Post*, July 19, 2009.

“since the creation of the world.”<sup>84</sup> Sheikh Muhammad Ahmad Hussein told Channel 2 that the site was a mosque “3,000 years ago, and 30,000 years ago” and has been “since the creation of the world.” “This is the Al-Aqsa Mosque that Adam, peace be upon him, or during his time, the angels built,” the *mufti* said.

In 2016 Jordan and the Palestinian Authority put forward a UNESCO resolution that ignored Jewish and Christian ties to the Temple Mount and referred to the controversial holy site solely by its Muslim names, “Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif,” and defined it only as “a Muslim holy site of worship.”<sup>85</sup> It will be interesting to see if the Jordanians and Saudis will take up Palazzi’s brave call for a return to the traditional Muslim view of Jerusalem. Before he vanished, he pled with his fellow Muslims:

To remember the historical milieu compels every sincere observer to admit there is no necessary connection between *al-miraj* and sovereign rights over Jerusalem since, in the time when the Prophet... consecrated the place with his footprints on the Stone, the city was not a part of the Islamic State – whose borders were then limited to the Arabian Peninsula – but under Byzantine administration. Moreover, although radical preachers try to remove this from exegesis, the Glorious Quran expressly recognizes that Jerusalem plays for the Jewish people the same role that Mecca has for Muslims. We read in *Surah al-Baqarah*: “... They would not follow thy direction of prayer (*qiblah*), nor art thou to follow their direction of prayer; nor indeed will they follow each other’s direction of prayer...” All Quranic annotators explain that “thy *qiblah*” is obviously the Kaabah of Mecca, while “their *qiblah*” refers to the Temple Site of

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<sup>84</sup>Ilan Ben Zion, “Jerusalem mufti: Temple Mount never housed Jewish Temple,” *Times of Israel*, 25 October 2015. [http://www.timesofisrael.com/jerusalem-mufti-denies-temple-mount-ever-housed-jewish-shrine/?fb\\_comment\\_id=1019824818038421\\_2274578679229689](http://www.timesofisrael.com/jerusalem-mufti-denies-temple-mount-ever-housed-jewish-shrine/?fb_comment_id=1019824818038421_2274578679229689) <accessed 22 May 2019>.

<sup>85</sup>Raphael Ahren, “UNESCO adopts another resolution ignoring Jewish link to Temple Mount,” *Times of Israel*, 26 October 2016. <http://www.timesofisrael.com/unesco-adopts-another-resolution-erasing-jewish-link-to-temple-mount/> <accessed 22 May 2019> and “UNESCO adopts controversial resolution on Jerusalem Holy Sites,” *The Guardian*, October 26 2016. [www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/26/unesco-adopts-controversial-resolution-on-jerusalem-holy-sites-israel](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/26/unesco-adopts-controversial-resolution-on-jerusalem-holy-sites-israel) <accessed 22 May 2019>.

Jerusalem. To quote just one of the most important of them we read in Qadi Baydawi's *Commentary*: "Verily, in their prayers Jews orientate themselves toward the Rock (*al-Sakhrah*), while Christians orientate themselves eastward...."

Palazzi reminded Muslims that,

As opposed to what sectarian radicals continuously claim, the Book that is a guide for those who abide by Islam—as we have just shown—recognizes Jerusalem as the Jewish direction of prayer... After... deep reflection about the implications of this approach, it is not difficult to understand that separation in directions of prayer is a mean[s] to decrease possible rivalries in [the] management of [the] Holy Places. For those who receive from Allah the gift of equilibrium and the attitude to reconciliation, it should not be difficult to conclude that, as no one is willing to deny Muslims... complete sovereignty over Mecca, from an Islamic point of view... there is not any sound theological reason to deny an equal right of Jews over Jerusalem.<sup>86</sup>

We have seen that those who resisted the Islamic State paid with their very lives in defense of their museums, artifacts, and historical sites.<sup>87</sup> Inspired by them, we should insist on nothing less than renewed commitment to the appreciation and study of the Jerusalem's legacy. Telling the truth about history in all its complexity will be the strongest antidote to the politicized historical amnesia that prevents us from learning the truth about history. Israelis and Palestinians — as joint heirs to the promises of the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine share a history that has been told in the language of the political rhetoric of toponyms. Only a generous theology of history will enable us to discern the work of redemption taking place in Israel and among her neighbors.

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<sup>86</sup>Quoted in Rood, "Diagnosis: Historical Amnesia."

<sup>87</sup>Khaled Asaad, the 82-year old scholar who had worked for more that 50 years as Palmyra's head of antiquities was tortured and killed by ISIS militants. I dedicate this article to his memory. Mark Strauss, "Archeologist's Execution Highlights Risks to Historian's Guardians," *National Geographic*, <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/08/150820-syria-archaeologist-isis-protecting-artifacts/> <accessed June 2, 2019>.

Jerusalem, in the words of an Islamic court document written in the nineteenth century, was once the “desire of all the nations.”<sup>88</sup> The Israeli Supreme Court, in a decision about the excavation of King David’s Palace in the tiny village of Silwan just outside the walls of the Old City in East Jerusalem, ruled in favor of the dig, explaining that

the rich historical past of the country... is folded layer upon layer in its earth. The chronicles of the country and the land, the nations who dwelt there, have been relegated to the pages of history books, buried over the course of years under the earth and have turned into its hidden treasures. ...Though Israel is a young country, it has deep roots in the history of mankind and throughout the length and breadth of the country, the earth is saturated with the remnants of ancient civilizations that lived in and created on this land for thousands of years, both before and after the common era.

Like the City of David, Jerusalem itself

has both national and international importance, and is not only important to the Jewish people, rather it has importance to anyone who wishes to investigate the history of the area which is the cradle of the monotheistic religions. The importance of the archaeological research isn't only to understand the history of the land and to verify the truth of the facts we know from our sources, but ... sheds light on the development of human culture. Therefore, its importance overrides nations and borders.<sup>89</sup>

With Israel’s reunification of Jerusalem, the first redevelopment of the long-neglected neighborhood of Mamilla commenced with the building of its eponymous mall, bringing the toponym back into use. Readers who recognize the place name know that Mamilla is now, ironically, the home of the L.A.-based Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance. When the Jerusalem municipality chose the Mamilla Pool/Cemetery to become the home of the Museum of Tolerance, the Muslim

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<sup>88</sup>Rood, *Sacred*, 4.

<sup>89</sup>Quoted in Rood, “What We Choose to Remember.” Unfortunately, I can no longer find the citation for the Israeli Supreme Court decision cited here. Perhaps someone can help me to track it down.

community in Israel fought the decision. The Israeli Supreme Court ruled that, because the Supreme Muslim Council had closed the ancient cemetery for redevelopment, there were no legal grounds to prevent the construction of the museum. It ruled that the State of Israel, as the custodian of public land, had the right to use it as it chose, despite its dark history. And so, ironically, the site of that infamous massacre is now, we pray, a place to consider the meaning of toleration framed by our faith in the redemptive history of Jerusalem.

As followers of Yeshua, may we see the history of the Church to be just as much our patrimony as the history of the Jewish people. May we have the spiritual insight and courage as believers to recognize that from the vantage point of history, we can see that the children of Abraham are all heirs to a story. The biblical metanarrative is graced with a generous theology of history that beckons all of us to worship. God is working providentially for His purposes. He is Lord of All, and Jerusalem belongs to Him. Let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and the return of the Great King, who will restore all things. While He tarries, let us work.

***Judith Mendelsohn Rood** is Emeritus Professor of History and Middle East Studies at Biola University. Rood received her BA in History at New College (Sarasota, Florida), her MA in Arabic and International Relations at Georgetown University, and her PhD at the University of Chicago in Modern Middle Eastern History. Rood specialized in the Ottoman history of the Levant with a special focus on Jerusalem and its hinterlands before the rise of political Zionism. She was the first female scholar to study the Islamic Court records of Jerusalem as a source for socioeconomic and political history. Her monograph, *Sacred Law in the Holy City*, published by Brill in 2004, focuses on the period during which Muhammad Ali governed Egypt and Syria — including today's Lebanon, Syria, Israel, the Palestinian areas, and Jordan — as a rebel against the Ottoman Empire. Rood has also written extensively about Jewish Christians in the Holocaust and about Islamic civilization.*

## Chronology

Note: I use the traditional dating system; the use of B.C.E (Before the Common Era) and B.P. (Before the Present) are not helpful in this context.

**Ancient History: 3200 B.C. to 1000 B.C.** First artifacts found in the City of David from the late Bronze Era.

**The First Temple Period: 1000–586 B.C.**

**The Second Temple Period: 538 B.C.–70 A.D.**

Babylonian/Achaemenid Autonomous Persian Province of *Yehud Medinata* 587 BC–332 B.C.

The Sasanian Period: 224–651 A.D.

Hellenistic/Hasmonean Period: 322 B.C.–70 A.D.

**The Roman Period (Aelia Capitolina): 135–326 A.D.**

**The Byzantine Period: 326–638 A.D.**

**The Early Arab Period: 638–1099 A.D.**

The Umayyads: 638–750 A.D.

The Abbasids: 750–1250 A.D.

The Fatimids: 766–1171 A.D.

The Fatimid Caliph Abu 'Ali al-Mansur al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah (996–1021).

Destroys Walls of Jerusalem and Church of the Holy Sepulcher 18 October 1009.

Warfare between the Shi'ites and the Sunnis encompasses Syro-Palestine, leading to the Crusades, launched to recover the Christian holy sites and restore pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

**The Crusader Period: 1099–1187 A.D.**

**The Ayyubid Period: 1187–1250 A.D.**

Establishment of Sunni Islam in Arab Middle East by Salah al-Din al-Ayyubid (Saladin).

Khwarazmian Turks, Allied with the Ayyubids, sack Jerusalem, 1244 A.D.

Baghdad Falls to Mongols/Seljuks 1258 A.D.; repulsed from ME by Mamluks in 1260 A.D.

**The Mamluk Period: 1250–1517 A.D.**

**The Ottoman Period: 1517–1917 A.D.**

The Ottoman Jihad in Palestine: November 14, 1914.

**The British Mandate for Palestine Period: 1922–1948**

The Abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate 3 March 1924.

Founding of the Muslim Brotherhood: 1928 (official date).

**The State of Israel and Transjordanian Period: 1948–1967**

**The Establishment of the PLO and the Palestinian Authority: 1964–2019**

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## **Movie Review: *Patterns of Evidence: The Moses Controversy***

Mahoney, Timothy. Documentary. Fathom Events, 2019.

<https://patternsofevidence.com/moses/>

**Stan Meyer | Jews for Jesus Sr. Staff**

Investigative filmmaker Tim Mahoney takes viewers on a second journey back to the origin of Israel's Exodus. In his sequel, *Patterns of Exodus: The Moses Controversy*, his odyssey leads viewers through the academic halls of England, to the dry wildernesses of Qumran and the Sinai, and concludes in the damp marshes of the lower Nile where the Exodus began. Through this journey he asks leading Near Eastern scholars: Did Moses write the first five books of the Jewish Scriptures? What *patterns of evidence* are necessary to answer this all-important question? According to Mahoney, the central question is: Was there a written Semitic language available to Moses, in the fifteenth century BCE; and were the ancient Hebrews literate in that language? He believes that Mosaic authorship stands or falls on this pattern of evidence.

Mahoney interviews leading scholars William Devers (University of Arizona), Donald Redford (Penn State), Douglas Knight (Vanderbilt), and Orly Goldwasser (Hebrew University), who contend that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch. One reason they offer is that the Hebrews would have been illiterate, and that Proto-Hebrew (pre-Exilic Hebrew) did not emerge until the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Consequently, the Pentateuch as a completed text did not emerge until the fourth century BCE. Drawing on the theory of Douglas Petrovich (The Bible Seminary), Mahoney argues that Hebrews were literate in Proto-Sinaitic (PS), an ancestor of the Northwest Semitic languages, and that there is enough evidence of its use in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when the Hebrews dwelt in Egypt.

PS inscriptions were first found at Serabit el-Khadim by archaeologists Hilda and Flinders Petrie (1904), and later at Wadi el-Hol (1999) in the lower Nile Delta, the region where conservative scholars place Goshen. In 1916, Alan Gardiner suggested that PS was an ancestor to Proto-Hebrew, and in fact is the missing link between

Hieroglyphic and the first alphabetical languages. He argued that 24 Hieroglyphic characters became the letters for the ancestor to the Semitic languages. Scholars agree that these inscriptions date to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century BCE, the time when most Evangelicals place the Exodus. Mahoney argues these inscriptions, their likeness to Hebrew, and their dating, dispel the argument that the Hebrews were illiterate or that Moses did not have access to a written language. Moreover, Mahoney goes on to argue that Proto-Sinaitic was the ancestor of Early Hebrew (Hebrew 1.0), and ultimately the father of all Western languages. From this he leads to the conclusion that this pattern of evidence supports Mosaic authorship, the historicity of the Exodus, and consequently the trustworthiness of the Bible.

The cinematography is masterfully shot with aerial views of Qumran, the Nile, and the Sinai; exotic sweeping scenes of the Nile and the Sinai; and special effects of Mt. Sinai, the Exodus, and the drowning of the Egyptian army. His interviews with mainstream scholars felt natural, as they sympathetically put forward their contentions. I particularly enjoyed Goldwasser's interview, who smirked knowing she was being a foil for Mahoney's theory but played along anyway, poking at his argument. In a heartfelt interview with Dever, the Near Eastern scholar related that he was raised a conservative Christian and was even ordained a minister. But at Harvard, he began to doubt the Biblical authorships and the historicity of the Bible. He related that today he is an agnostic. Mahoney left the interview on that sad note, underscoring for his viewers the centrality of the question of Mosaic authorship and historicity of the Exodus.

Mahoney weaves his personal history into the film, and relates how an academic search for Biblical authorship and historicity is foundational to the question: Can we trust the Bible? He ponders this question in a beautiful ornate Medieval cathedral with towering stained glass windows, as a wide-angle lens leads our eyes up stone pillars to a towering ceiling high above. I felt Mahoney pursued his questions sensitively, without the cheap drama and conspiracy tones in Discovery Channel features and *In Search Of* films.

I was not completely convinced with all of Mahoney's supplementary conclusions including that (1) the Biblical Joseph invented Proto-Sinaitic; and (2) Hebrew is the ancestor of all our Western languages—therefore language is the Gift of the Jews. Moreover, (3) even if Proto-Sinaitic was the language of Moses and the Hebrews, I'm not sure by itself it overwhelmingly convinces skeptics of Mosaic authorship of the

Pentateuch and the historicity of the Exodus. There are a number of other issues that also must be wrestled with.

Still, just as many of us want to know what language Jesus spoke, as a Jewish person it is exciting to discover what language Moses may have written the Torah in. Moreover, for those of us who are Jewish, and began learning Hebrew at twelve in anticipation of our Bar/Bat Mitzvah, and who continue reading Hebrew in the synagogue throughout our lives, it is fascinating to find out the possible birthplace of our language. Moreover, for those of us who have celebrated Passover every year since childhood, read the drama of Haggadah at the Seder table, and watched the drama of *The Ten Commandments*, this film adds color and sound to the story of Passover around the table each spring. It reminds us that historical and archaeological evidence suggest this Jewish narrative is a real story, that it happened in time and space, when the God of Israel intervened in the course of human events and was recorded in our Torah. *Patterns of Evidence: the Moses Controversy* premiered in theatres March 14 and will be out in DVD this summer (date TBA).

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# **Review: *Israelism and the Place of Christ***

**Rich Robinson**

Steven Paas, ed. *Israelism and the Place of Christ: Christocentric Interpretation of Biblical Prophecy*. Zürich: Lit Verlag, 2018.

This volume of thirteen essays, edited by Steven Paas, presents a number of traditional Reformed viewpoints on the significance of the Jewish people/Israel in light of the coming of Christ. The subjects cover a wide range, and include Old Testament prophecy, New Testament exegetical issues, the Jewish-oriented praxis of some Christians, and the place (or lack thereof) of the modern state of Israel in God's plan.

The focus is explicitly "christocentric" and the question Paas raises in Preface II is, "In the final analysis, is the Bible about Israel *and* Christ or is the Bible about Christ *only*?" (italics original). In addition, "The authors' guiding principle is the assurance that God loves the world. In Christ His salvific promises to Israel have been completely fulfilled and directed to the cosmos." So the two large issues are whether maintaining any ongoing election of Israel and future role in God's plan vitiates the centrality of Christ, and whether it denies the universal in favor of the particular. At the end of the day, the book upholds an either/or approach rather than a both/and.

Some of the essays engage in positive explorations of biblical and theological data; others seems more to be reacting to what an author perceives as the unhealthy directions some Christians have taken. Only two authors are North American; many are Dutch, one is South African, and two are British. Paas himself is from the Netherlands, and the perspectives of the book are therefore often fresh and engaging for North American readers.

One point to note is that several authors distance themselves from "replacement theology," preferring to see the Church as a continuation of, not a replacement for, Israel, which now is "enlarged" with the addition of Gentiles. This is not necessarily mere semantics, and may offer a fruitful approach to the relation of the Church and Israel. Many authors also denounce anti-Semitism, much needed in light of "facts on the ground" and the implications of some forms of supersessionism.

For the purpose of this review, it may be helpful to group the chapters into types of material as follows.

## Exegetical Essays

**Ezekiel:** Colin Chapman writes on “Christian Interpretation of Ezekiel’s Prophecies About the Restoration of Israel.” Chapman argues that Ezekiel’s prophecies were fulfilled in the incarnation, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus. Never coming to full fruition in the Old Testament period, seven of Ezekiel’s prophetic themes (in chapters 34–48) are taken up by NT writers as fulfilled in Jesus. “Ezekiel’s prophecy concerning the restoration of Israel can *only* be related to Ezekiel’s immediate context and to the incarnation of Christ and therefore can *not* be related to the recent return of Israel to the land” (*italics original*). This essay is helpful concerning the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s themes in the ministry of Christ; the point at issue being then whether the prophet also spoke in some way of a future for national Israel.

**Acts 3:** Bram Maljaars, a Dutch Studies scholar who moved into biblical studies, offers “The Times of Refreshing and Restoration of Everything: Acts 3:17–26.” Here the main point is that Acts 3:17–26 has not been correctly translated. Maljaars finds that the traditional understanding presents grammatical, logical, and theological problems which are solved with a new translation of Acts 3:19–21:

Therefore, repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, *now that* the times of *revival* have come from the presence of the Lord, 20 and that he *has* sent Jesus Christ, who had been appointed to you, 21 whom the heaven *had to contain* until the times of restoration of all things, about which God had spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. (emphasis original; boldface in original)

**Romans 11:** O. Palmer Robertson’s “The Israel of God in Romans 11” is reprinted from a previous book. Here the focus is on “and so all Israel will be saved.” The argument is that Romans 11 deals largely with ethnic Israel’s *present*, not future. Robertson includes a discussion of *achris hou* (“until”, v. 25) and takes the *kai houtos* (v. 26) to mean “and in this way” (expressing manner) and not “and then” (expressing temporal sequence). Exploring five options for the meaning of “all Israel,” he concludes that it refers to all believers in Christ, for believing Gentiles “come *into Israel!*” (*italics original*). Regardless of one’s stance on Romans 11, no one can take exception with these thoughts:

In terms of the spread of the Gospel today, it is essential that Jewish Christians recognize their fellowship with Gentile Christians to be a vital

element in the conversion of additional Jews....At the same time, it is essential that Gentile Christians seek out a binding fellowship with Jewish Christians. For the conversion of Jews will enrich the experience of the Gospel by the Gentiles immeasurably.

**Zechariah 14:** Jos M. Strengtholt is a historian and missiologist currently serving as an Anglican priest in the Netherlands. His contribution is “Zechariah 14: ‘Why Not Take It Literally?’” He begins with a humorous look at what an overdone literal reading can lead to. As with other authors, he finds fulfillment to lie in the past; the famous verse describing how “his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives” came to fruition when Jesus stood at that place at his first advent. A helpful section links portions of Matthew and Revelation with eschatological verses in Zechariah, showing a close connection—a connection which for Strengtholt affirms a first-century fulfillment (and therefore nothing beyond).

**Psalms 2/Acts 4:** An additional exegetical essay is Martin Van Veelen’s “Who are the Goyim? The Heathen/Peoples in Psalm 2 and Acts 4.” Among his affirmations are that “The Church that has been gathered by the Apostles (2:1) is not the *replacement* of Israel but the *legal continuation* of Israel” (italics his); and that the appeal to Psalm 2 in Acts 4 indicates that “the unbelieving part of Israel is taking the place of the rebellious heathen peoples of Psalm 2:1. This part of Israel has turned itself from *am* into *goyim*.”

### **Practical Theology**

Theo Pleizier, assistant professor of practical theology at Groningen, offers “In Spirit and Truth’: John 4:24. Practical–Theological Considerations on Israel in Christian Spirituality.” This is a reflection on Jewish “spirituality” in the Christian faith and is partly a response to the Netherlands-based organization Christians for Israel. It is also a response to the adoption of Torah observance and Jewish practices in some Christian congregations. As he well puts it, problems arise “when the focus upon Israel creates a theological tension which puts the spiritual orientation upon Christ under pressure.” Furthermore, “it may be asked whether this expression of philosemitism is a kind of supersessionism in disguise, the annexation of Jewishness into a Christian framework” — or as it is often called in North America, “cultural appropriation.” It is a good question to raise; though in this connection, interestingly we find a mixed attitude among North American rabbis to the desirability of “Christian seders.” And he adds,

Finally, we have to distinguish between rituals that belong to Jewish believers because of their Jewishness and Christian rituals that enact the narrative of Christ. Christians should leave the combination of Passover and Holy Communion to Jewish believers in Christ, enabling them to express their Jewishness and their Christian faith, without taking over Jewish rituals in a non-Jewish environment.

Thus Pleizier appreciates the possibility of a distinctive spiritual life possible for Jewish believers in Jesus. And this great quote: “Finally, it is part of the riddle of history, that while postponing judgment and doing justice, Christians engage in disputes. The practice of disagreement is a Christian spiritual practice.” A word to the wise amidst disagreements on the future of the Jewish people!

### **Historical Theology**

Erik van Alten, a Reformed scholar working in Ukraine, contributes “John Calvin on Israel and the Church from Acts,” in which the Reformer uses Ephesians 2:14 as the key to Acts, such that there remains no place for unfulfilled prophecies to be realized for the Old Testament people of Israel.

### **Biblical Theology**

Gregory K. Beale’s “Israel’s Land in Relation to the New Creation” has been adapted from his book *New Testament Biblical Theology*. Here the focus is, as the chapter title indicates, specifically on the land, with the author’s thesis being that “My contention in this section is that the land promises will be fulfilled in a physical form, but that the inauguration of this fulfilment is mainly spiritual until the final consummation in a fully physical new heaven and earth.” Through a well-crafted examination of specific texts, Beale argues that within the Old Testament, as well as Second Temple Judaism, the land promises are universalized, as they continue to be in the New Testament.

Joost van Meggelen, a theologian and minister in the Netherlands, writes on “The Restoration of Israel’s Kingdom.” *Contra* Calvin, the disciples’ question in Acts 1:6 is not foolish; the “restoration of all things” (= “the restoration of the kingdom” in 1:6) will take place at Christ’s return (a different view than that of Bram Maljaars above). Jesus does not fault the disciples for asking, but corrects them concerning the time frame; the conclusion reached is that “Luke uses the question of the disciples and its answer in

Acts 1:6–8 to point out the theme of the book of Acts: Israel's restoration and God's kingdom are realised by means of the proclamation of the Gospel all over the world."

### **Missiology**

Duane Alexander Miller is an Anglican serving in Spain, with connections in the US, Great Britain, and the Middle East. His essays concerns "Israel, the Nations and the Mission of the Church." The author relates that he moved away from Christian Zionism, a position he once held. Abraham's and Israel's election, as well as the Mosaic covenant, were all "*for the sake of the nations*" (emphasis original). All is now fulfilled in Jesus. Nuancing this, he writes that

What then is Israel? Nothing in this chapter has proposed that the Church replaces Israel as the people of God. That sort of language, while quite venerable, is too crude to summarize what we have learned. It is more accurate to say that Jesus is the Israel of God. Whosoever is in Jesus Christ is incorporated into the Israel of God.

An interesting section on missions to Muslims is included in which this dose of realism is offered: "Nor do I have any hope for the flourishing of Arab Christians under a sovereign Palestinian state should one come into being. Arab Christians in Israel are second-rate citizens there. They will be second-rate citizens in a sovereign Palestine." Finally, a salutary warning: "Christian Zionism misunderstands the election of Israel to the point where the *missio ad gentes* can become distorted or secondary" (italics original).

Two additional essays call for comment: Raymond Potgieter's "Gnostic Traits of Israelism and Messianism" was to me the most obscure chapter in the book. The author rehearses the history of Zionism and the views of various Jewish subgroups on the Messiah. He concludes that

this chapter has sought to establish that views extracted from particular Scriptural passages that are used to support a particular chronological process or processes in order to claim an idealistic idea of the imminent return of Jesus Christ risk Modern Gnostic tendencies, which lead to various kinds of Pseudo-Messianism.

Finally, mention must be made of Stephen Sizer's "The Jewish Temple: Past, Present and Future." It is unfortunate that Sizer was included in this volume, given his numerous controversies over anti-Semitic remarks, and several violations of agreements made with church authorities.<sup>156</sup> The view that a future Temple is not in God's plans is certainly a legitimate one to take; however, the author is given to repeated sensationalism: "many" hold viewpoints that "could very well start World War 3"; "The thousand words painted by this picture is an essay on fundamentalist Christian Zionist fantasies...A fantasy world in which there are no Palestinians..." Rather than address current writings only, an old survey from 1989 and a 1970 book from Hal Lindsey are marshalled in support of the author's contentions.

Working with Jews for Jesus, I was well-placed to fact-check one statement. Quoting a Jews for Jesus article by Zhava Glaser, Sizer writes, "Some Messianic Jews (that is, Jewish believers in Jesus) are also sympathetic to the idea that a Temple is necessary for Jews to atone for their sins." Implying that this represents Glaser's viewpoint, he quotes from her article:

Though some Rabbis might minimize the revealed system of worship and its requirements, can the individual Jew neglect what God says? Can there be a 'proper' Judaism without a priesthood, an altar, a sacrifice and a place on earth where God meets the individual?

Unfortunately he neglects to include the next sentence: "Isn't it ironic that it takes the New Testament to tell of the new altar, the everlasting sacrifice and the new high priest through whom gentiles as well as Jews are made holy?" Glaser is saying the exact opposite of what Sizer implies.

He concludes, "How tragic that, while the good news of Jesus is intended to bring peace and reconciliation with God and healing between nations, some Christians are fuelling religious hatred, causing divisions and seem bent on inciting an apocalyptic war." Whether this essay equally pours fuel on a fire rather than working to reconcile, I leave to the reader to judge.

I have not yet mentioned the introductory essay by the editor, "Introduction: The Bible and Israel." (I was once taught that introductions should be read last!) Steven Paas is a Reformed/Evangelical theologian who has served in both the Netherlands and

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<sup>156</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen\\_Sizer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_Sizer)

Malawi. In his wide-ranging chapter, Paas offers a summary of a Reformed viewpoint on the subject. In his view, neither replacement of Israel by the Church (allowing for anti-Semitism to take hold), nor a continuing election for the Jewish people (allowing for “syncretistic judaizing”) are based in Scripture.

Naturally for a reader this will raise the usual hermeneutical questions: is “christocentric” (as opposed to, say, “christotelic”) the best adjective to use in understanding the nature of the Old Testament? What does it mean to move “beyond” the literal meaning? Should terms be employed that are not used in the New Testament (Israel [not Israel’s institutions] as a “shadow”; Christ “absorbs” Old Testament Israel). What does it mean to read the Old Testament “in light of” Christ? Exegetically, who does Romans 2:28–29 say “true Jews” are, and is the “root” in Paul’s olive tree metaphor Christ, Israel, or something/someone else? Who is the “all Israel” of Romans 11:26? But this chapter is the presentation of a position, not a conversation among several viewpoints; and as summary it does well.

One interesting point Paas makes is that for OT Israel the people, land, and religion were inseparably linked. For that reason, one cannot simultaneously claim that modern Israel is not a fulfillment of prophecy and still argue that the Jewish people and religion have a special ongoing place in God’s salvific plans. Nor, vice versa, can one reject Judaism’s religious claims and still affirm that modern Israel fulfills prophecy. People, land, and faith are an inseparable package. It must be noted, though, that many, including a good number of Jewish followers of Jesus, distinguish the *people* from the *modern religion*, believing that God’s election of Israel the people still stands. On the other hand, acceptance of Judaism as a faith that depends on rabbinic authority and tradition is another matter, even in conversations internal to the Jewish community.

A separate section of the introduction on anti-Semitism is welcome, since theological ideas do not occur in a vacuum. One point Paas makes, sure to be debated, is that giving Jewish people a special status, whether positive or negative, “has not worked out for the well-being of the Jews.” Alleged philosemites have turned out to be antisemitic when their hopes for a massive Jewish conversion have been disappointed. And calls to return to “the Jewish identity of Christianity” can be confusing, because which Jewishness is intended? Paas is well aware of the renewal of modern anti-Semitism in Europe along with white nationalism (my term); white ambitions, he says, may clash with ideas of the special place of

Jewish people, considering them a competitor.

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All in all, this is a stimulating volume whether or not one agrees with the authors' positions (and their views are not identical). Its genesis is unclear, but it seems it may be coming in response to what is happening "on the ground" in the Netherlands and elsewhere. The highlights for me were the exegetical essays, which were well crafted, and the essay on practical theology. Sometimes one gets the impression that some authors are arguing against older viewpoints, such as traditional dispensationalism as opposed to the progressive dispensationalism which is now widely held. Recently, some covenant theologians have also argued for a "progressive covenantal view" (see *Perspectives on Israel and the Church: 4 Views*, ed. Chad O. Brand, B&H Academic, 2015). The important book *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel and the Land* (ed. Gerald R. McDermott, InterVarsity Press, 2016), a specifically *non*-dispensational defense of an ongoing and future place in God's plan for Israel the people and the land, is mentioned in passing but not interacted with.

The book is for the most part a robust contribution to a Reformed view on Israel and the Jewish people. Some readers will disagree vigorously with the book's conclusions, while others will seek to find points of agreements along with areas where they diverge. One may hope for future face-to-face interactions between the authors and those of different positions.

**Review: *What Should We Think About Israel?***  
**J. Randall Price, ed. Eugene, OR: Harvest House**  
**Publishers, 2019.**

**Reviewed by Rich Robinson**

We live in a time of increasing hostility toward the state of Israel, often as a cover for an underlying anti-Semitism. Then too, we live in a time when many are simply uninformed (or unconcerned) about the history of modern Israel and the place of the Jewish people in God's plan. These two trends intersect when churches for whom biblical teaching about the Jewish people is simply not on the radar also advocate for justice in the Middle East. With the best of intentions, the result can at times be a heady mix of misinformation and uninformed passions.

This timely collection of eighteen essays (plus introductory matter, afterword, and appendices) can be of help. The authors range from Americans to Europeans and from Jews to Arabs; most come from a dispensational background. They focus largely on modern Israel in its Middle Eastern context but also delve into the larger issues of the Jewish people as a whole. Their audience is "anyone who may feel either uninformed of the biblical teaching concerning Israel or who may feel confused by the negative climate that surrounds Israel's role in the Middle East conflict..."

**Summary**

Mark Bailey's introduction, "Why Should we Think About Israel," sets the tone for the book. Balanced and well-written, it states that "it is important to think about Israel because of why God chose the people, preserved them, and made promises to them" (p. 30).

It would be impossible in the length of a review to describe in detail the eighteen essays. They are divided into three groups. Part One—the largest portion—is "Israel's Politics"; Part Two is "Israel's Problems"; and Part Three concerns "Israel's Prospects." The rationale for this division is not always transparent. For example, the BDS movement is covered in Part Two but could equally fit into part one. Most of parts Two and Three broaden out beyond the state of Israel to matters concerning the entire Jewish people.

Surveying the topics addressed, Part One asks “What Should We Think About” the Zionist movement; the modern State of Israel; Christian support for Israel; Israel’s right to the land; Jerusalem as the capital of Israel; the Temple Mount; relations between Jews and Arabs; Israel’s “occupation”; and the plight of the Palestinians. Moral, exegetical, and historical arguments all figure throughout the essays. Even those who are familiar with the first two kinds of arguments will likely learn something from the historical material; I found Randall Price’s essay on the Temple Mount very instructive in that regard.

Part Two, on “Israel’s Problems,” addresses the Holocaust; contemporary anti-Semitism; the BDS movement; and replacement theology. The middle two essays are especially critical as they address matters currently of great concern to European and American Jewry as well as to students caught up in BDS and Palestinian controversies on their campuses.

Part Three asks about “Israel’s Prospects” and includes the role of the Jews in world history; Israel’s future; the Jews as a chosen people; Jews who become Christians; and Palestinian Christians. Randall Price provides an afterword on “Why We Should Think More About Israel,” asking what the solutions to misinformation and problems will require: namely, a proper biblical interpretation; political action (e.g. standing against BDS); and prayer. The first appendix provides an interview with Meno Kalisher, an Israeli pastor, about relations with Arabs and Arab Christians. The second reprints a 2012 dialogue between David Brickner (executive director of Jews for Jesus) and John Piper (former pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church and founder of [desiringgod.org](http://desiringgod.org)) addressing some of the relevant issues. Both appendices help ground the subject of the book in the human dimension.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

The authors come from a variety of ethnic and national backgrounds; some who are not from the Middle East have nevertheless spent time there interacting with people on the ground. This provides a breadth which nevertheless is at times mitigated by the fact that most of the contributors have a dispensational background. That plays out most strongly in Thomas Ice’s essay, in which he talks about the seven-year tribulation and a literal thousand-year millennium, in my opinion unnecessarily bringing in eschatological matters that may put off non-dispensational readers.

What can also become problematic is the insistence on the part of several contributors that theirs is “the biblical” position that is arrived at through a “literal” reading of the text. While we all strive to hold biblical positions, we should be careful of implying that those with whom we disagree (some of whom are friendly towards Jewish evangelism!) are “unbiblical.” Nuance and a healthy humility (“I believe this to be the biblical position...”) would go further. As to the “literal” reading, no cognizance is given to the issue of genre, for example the need to read apocalyptic texts differently than historical ones. (The word “genre” does not even appear in the book.) Clearly the level of scholarship of the assembled authors would indicate their awareness of the issue of genre, so perhaps it is the desire to speak to a certain audience and not complicate matters that leads to oversimplified comments on what is “biblical” and “literal.” At best, this is an attempt to communicate to the man or woman on the street; at worst, it can lead to undue suspicion towards brothers and sisters from other theological traditions.

These shortcomings are nevertheless minor in comparison to the strengths of the essays — each of which, by the way, comes with a response page in which readers can register their agreements *and* disagreements. And so I want to warmly commend the book; no matter their background, everyone will learn something at some point. Among the essays I personally found most helpful were Randall Price on the Temple Mount (some important and enlightening historical information here); Tim Sigler on Jewish–Arab relations (balanced and a helpful overview in a short space); Paul Wilkinson on Israel’s “occupation” (an important historical and documentary chapter); Justin Kron on the plight of the Palestinians (based on his own journey and conversations); Olivier Melnick on the new anti-Semitism; and Tuvya Zaretsky on the BDS movement. I see that most of these concern issues that are current political tinderboxes; and they may prove the most helpful chapters to those caught up in the debates on their campuses and elsewhere.

Twenty years ago a book like this might have been seen as “preaching to the choir.” Today many are not yet in the choir, for they simply don’t know enough to “sing.” And so, just as we have the “four sons” at the Passover seder, this book will prove helpful for several kinds of readers. First, for the son or daughter who asks, “What does it mean that we stand with Israel?” In this case, it will help them further understand what they already believe. It may also prove valuable for the one who asks, “What does it mean that **you** stand with Israel?” — but they may also need to

hear from other, non-dispensational voices (here I recommend Gerald McDermott's *The New Christian Zionism* and his more popularly written *Israel Matters: Why Christians Must Think Differently about the People and the Land*).

There is also benefit for the one who asks, uncertainly, "What's all this about Israel?" and for the one who doesn't know how to ask because, maybe, the whole issue has never been on their radar.

We need more books like this, particularly from a wide swath of Christian theological and ethnic backgrounds. I encourage you to add this to your library today.

## **From the Israeli Scene**

Yom HaShoah 2019

The Holocaust remembrance day in Israel was on the second of May this year. I was invited to a Messianic school in Jerusalem to take part in an event of remembrance. This is the second time in my six years in Israel that I have had this honor. The first time was in my first year, while studying modern Hebrew at the Hebrew University. That remembrance day had been with other students and teachers of the university; this second one was in a local school with primary students and their teachers. Both of these days included some memories from the Holocaust, songs, and speeches. Both of them had a procession of a kind. And the loss could be felt, as it would have been the experience of some present at the events. For one speaker at both events, that was actually the case.

The notable difference between these two days was not the age difference between participants. The greatest difference was that in the school, the hope in Jesus in the middle of unimaginable suffering was clearly present. He was there in words, songs, and prayers – as he had been there beside the suffering eighty years ago. With him there was no room for bitterness, hate, or revenge. There was hope that surpassed the sorrow.

This was my first time experiencing in practice a Jewish approach to the Holocaust through faith in Jesus. Also, this was my first time experiencing this unbelievably hard topic being taught to children. From some others, I had heard of experiences where the teaching didn't go too well. And for that I'm not at all surprised. I do not envy the teachers who have to teach a topic that is hard for themselves, and to which they are also one generation closer than their pupils. It is much easier to transfer a trauma over generations than to put a stop to it – while still remembering and respecting your past. And here I experienced something going right. A delicate and respectful, personal but not bitter approach to the Holocaust. I have no other experiences in this but here the hope and forgiveness in Jesus clearly made it possible.

So remember what happened. And remember those who are teaching their history to future generations.

Terho Kanervikkoaho