

Share Jerusalem

Jerome M. Segal

At one and the same time, Joseph Alpher is too pessimistic about the possibility of resolving the Jerusalem question and too optimistic about halfway measures.

The core of the Jerusalem issue is the question of sovereignty over East Jerusalem's three regions: the historic walled city; the downtown areas surrounding the Old City that constitute the remainder of what had been East Jerusalem when the city was under Jordanian control, 1948–1967; and the vast, heterogeneous area of the West Bank that Israel added to East Jerusalem after unifying the pre-existing city during the 1967 war.

This last area, "the eastern enlargement," is roughly nine times the size of pre-1967 East Jerusalem. It includes Jewish neighborhoods constructed since 1967, Mount Scopus, the Mount of Olives, Palestinian villages and quasi-urban areas, a Palestinian refugee camp, an airport, an industrial zone, agricultural land, and substantial other undeveloped land. It should not be imagined as a continuous urban environment.

Fortunately, Israelis and Palestinians do not, in general, view the same parts of the city as most important. A substantial number of Israeli Jews are prepared to give Palestinians sovereignty over the more remote areas of East Jerusalem and also to affirm the idea of a smaller Yerushalayim as long as it includes West Jerusalem, Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, the Old City, the Mount of Olives, and Mount Scopus. Palestinians have a different but analogous prioritization, emphasizing Arab rather than Jewish neighborhoods. Only 1% to 2% of the entire city is passionately valued by majorities in both communities: the Old City and the Mount of Olives.

These differential attachments form the underlying basis for the two-cities approach: Yerushalayim and Al Quds. The additions of areas

outside Jerusalem (of Abu Dis to Al Quds, and of Maale Adumim to Yerushalayim) are fine points. There can be two cities, but they must overlap in the Old City, the heart of both Yerushalayim and Al Quds. Palestinians will not accept as Al Quds a region that excludes the Old City. For Palestinians (who constitute 90% of its residents) the Old City is Al Quds. This cannot be changed by redefinition.

Just because the Old City is a distinct entity, already surrounded by substantial walls, with only a few gates that allow entry and exit, it can feasibly be part of both cities and both states. The key is symmetry with respect to formal sovereignty and actual governance. Three possibilities emerge:

1. Both sides claim sovereignty; neither exercises it. Rather, there is joint administration, with separate functional responsibilities. They agree to disagree on abstract

sovereignty.

2. The two states collectively exercise joint sovereignty, a rare but not unknown international concept. This resolves the formal question of sovereignty. Again they agree on actual administration.

3. Both sides follow King Hussein's suggestion that "God has ultimate sovereignty" over the Old City, and agree on actual administration.

Palestinians will accept any of these approaches. Today, most Israelis will not. The real issue is how to change Israeli public opinion. Three factors are important.

On the moral level, Palestinians have an equal right to the city. And yet even on the Left, this is rarely stated. In this much over-talked conflict, serious moral discourse hardly exists. Yet this is the key to true resolution.

Israeli willingness to compromise, even on the Old

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City, is significantly affected by pragmatic considerations. Ben-Gurion agreed to internationalize Jerusalem. While Jerusalem is the key to a comprehensive peace agreement, most Israelis, quite reasonably, have strong doubts that a peace treaty will yield real peace. Palestinians (and Israelis) need to take steps that will give their next generation a more nuanced historical narrative, one that provides at least comprehension of how the other side came to its view of the conflict. Here the United States can play an important role, funding a "Next Generation Initiative" directed at all Israeli and Palestinian youth.

The larger Islamic world needs to support a true compromise on Jerusalem and change how Jewish national

rights to Jerusalem are understood within Islam.

The American Jewish community can play a role in bringing this about. In particular we should undertake an historic Jewish-Islamic dialogue, including local dialogue and study groups as well as international meetings. When Abraham died, Isaac and Ishmael came together to bury him. Drawing on this common lineage and heritage is our hope for the future.

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An American Jewish Perspective

Carolyn Greene

Virtually no words draw more sustained applause from American Jewish supporters of Israel than the resolute declaration of successive Israeli leaders that a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty will remain the capital of the Jewish state. This government policy reflects Israeli public consensus, and the organized American Jewish community has consistently backed this position — reiterated by government leaders from Begin to Barak.

Yerushalayim...she'mehaberet et Yisrael zeh lazeh. "Jerusalem...the city that unites the people of Israel" (Jerusalem Talmud, Baba Kama 7:7). Such is the sway of this extraordinary city — the capital of ancient Israel and successor independent Jewish states, the spark of Jewish imagination, and the embodiment of Jewish national identity for more than 3,000 years. There has been a continuous Jewish presence in the city for three millennia, with the exception of a few periods in history when Jews were forcibly barred from living there by foreign conquerors.

This talmudic affirmation still rings true today as Jerusalem remains at the heart of Jewish passions, politics, and peacemaking. Perhaps no single issue unites the American Jewish community, Israelis, and Jews worldwide more than the notion that Jerusalem will remain the undivided capital of Israel and should be formally recognized as such.

No one disputes that Jerusalem also has profound

significance to Islam and Christianity. Yet, unlike Jews for whom Jerusalem is part of a religious legacy, Muslims and Christians look toward *specific* holy places. Professor Krister Stendahl made this point in the *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*: "For Christians and Muslims the term [holy sites] is an adequate expression of what matters. Here are sacred places, hallowed by the most holy events, here are places for pilgrimage....But Judaism is different...its religion is not tied to 'sites' but to the land, not to what happened in Jerusalem, but to Jerusalem itself."

While history can neither dictate nor limit the search for pragmatic solutions to complex contemporary issues, it does provide a context for understanding competing claims. History cannot be dismissed as irrelevant, for without chronicling the past it is nearly impossible to understand the present, let alone consider a future reconciliation.

Additionally, on the moral level, Israel not only safeguards the religious sites of various faiths, but government policy has been fully mindful and protective of the rights and needs of adherents of all religions to worship in their holy places. A final status agreement on Jerusalem could offer Muslims and Christians continued control over certain holy sites without *de facto* sovereignty.

The divided Jerusalem of 1949–1967 evokes