MOSHE MA'OZ

The Role of the Temple Mount / Al-Haram Al-Sharif in the Deterioration of Muslim–Jewish Relations

For both Jews and Muslims the Temple Mount and the Old City of Jerusalem constitute highly important religious, cultural, political and national centres. For centuries Jews in the diaspora prayed in the direction of Jerusalem, vowed never to forget it ('If I forget thee Jerusalem, may my right arm wither'); and blessed one another 'Next year in Jerusalem'. The Zionist-Jewish movement (since the 1880s) – although predominantly secular – has considered Jerusalem (Zion) as the political and cultural centre of the Jewish people.

By comparison, the Palestinian-Arab national movement has, since the 1920s established its national and political-cultural centre in East Jerusalem, while the Haram al Sharif, particularly the Al-Aqsa Mosque, has continued to be a top religious shrine for Muslims. They termed it *Awla Al-Qiblatayn* (the first prayer direction before Mecca); *Thani Masjidayn* (the second mosque after Mecca); a place where Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven (*Isra' and Mi'raj*).

This article will examine the changes in Muslim–Jewish mutual relations, especially since 1967, at both government and public levels. Special attention will be given to the development of both Islamic Judeophobia and Jewish Islamophobia, which have been associated with the dispute over the Temple Mount and East Jerusalem.

Introduction

For the last 47 years, on 5 June, many Jews in Israel and abroad have celebrated the military victory known as the Six Days War (1967) and the 'liberation' of East Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. For Jews this euphoric occasion meant a return to the Temple Mount (*Har HaBayit* in Hebrew) after more than 2,000 years of exile.

By contrast, millions of Muslims around the world, and especially in Palestine, mourn this event as a historical trauma and an immense *naksa* (defeat). For them the conquest of East Jerusalem (*Al-Quds Al-Sharif*) and the *Al-Haram Al-Sharif* by the Jews occurred after more than 1400 years of Muslim rule (with the exception of the Crusader conquest).

For both Jews and Muslims the Temple Mount and the Old City of Jerusalem are hugely important religious, cultural, political and national sites. For centuries Jews in the diaspora prayed in the direction of Jerusalem, vowed never to forget it ('If I forget thee Jerusalem, may my right arm wither'; Psalms 137:5), and blessed one another with 'Next year in Jerusalem'. The Zionist-Jewish movement (since the 1880s) – although predominantly secular – has considered Jerusalem (Zion) to be the political and cultural centre of the Jewish people.

By comparison, the Palestinian-Arab national movement established its national and political-cultural centre in East Jerusalem in the 1920s, while Al-Haram Al-Sharif, particularly the Al-Aqsa Mosque, has continued to be a foremost religious shrine for Muslims. They called it *Awla Al-Qiblatayn* (the first prayer direction before Mecca), *Thani Masjidayn* (the second mosque after Mecca), and *Isra'* and *Mi'raj* (the place from where Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven; Al-Qur'an 2:144; 17:1).

Failing to acknowledge the particular sanctity of this shrine for Islam and overwhelmed by its spectacular military victory and the historic magnitude of this event, the Israeli government decided in June 1967 to annexe East Jerusalem to West Jerusalem; and in July 1980 the Knesset (Israel's parliament) passed a law to this effect. However, Israel also granted control of the Temple Mount to the authority of the Jordanian *waqf* (religious trust) . Since then, many Israeli governments have rejected requests by Muslim lead-

Northeast exposure of Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount, in the Old City of Jerusalem.

ers, largely Palestinians, for sovereignty over East Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. Israeli governments have declared them to be 'disputed' places.

Furiously reacting to the Israeli occupation of the Haram, East Jerusalem and other Arab territories, many Muslim political and religious leaders called for a *jihad* (holy war) to 'liberate' these sites. Periodically, Muslims have used violence against Israeli and Jewish targets, causing severe bloodshed and destruction. These leaders have employed not only anti-Zionist, but also anti-Semitic language in their campaigns against Israel. A major case in point was at a special conference held at the Al-Azhar Academy in Cairo, 1968, attended by hundreds of Muslim religious leaders, arriving from most parts of the Arab and the Muslim world (Al-Azhar 1968: *passim)*.

By contrast, a growing number of Jews, particularly in Israel, developed an Islamophobic attitude, partly in reaction to Muslim Judeophobia and partly as a rejection of the Muslim claim to the Temple Mount. This hostile attitude has persisted with the backing of Jewish rabbis and with little interference from Israeli authorities. All this has transpired despite the gradual development of pragmatic, conciliatory approaches by Arab and Muslim leaders since the late 1970s (excepting revolutionary Iran and militant Muslim groups).

This article will examine the changes in Muslim–Jewish mutual relations, especially since 1967, at both governmental and public levels. Special attention will be given to the development of both Islamic Judeophobia and Jewish Islamophobia, which have been associated with the dispute over the Temple Mount and East Jerusalem. But, first, this should be placed within a brief historical perspective.

Changes in Muslim–Jewish relations and the issue of Jerusalem

For many centuries, including under Ottoman-Muslim rule (1453–1918), the Jews were considered as *Ahl Al-Kitab* ('People of the Book'), or *Ahl Al-Dhimma* ('Protected People') by the Muslim state; being only partial believers, they were given an inferior political and judicial status compared with Muslims. They had to pay *jizya* (poll tax; Al-Qur'an 9:29, 5:60) and suffered other legal and social restrictions. From time to time Jews were subject to acts of oppression and violence by fanatic rulers and the mob. However, by and large they were tolerated by Muslims and largely cooperated with them in commerce, the arts and sciences, and the like. For long periods Jews occupied senior positions in government administration and the economic life of the state. Like Christians, Jews were granted communal autonomy within the *millet* (nation, community) system and in personal matters, as well as in education, religious worship and other social and cultural issues. On the whole, Jews were treated better than their Christian fellow subjects since they were mostly loyal to the Muslim

(Ottoman) state, whereas Christians were suspected of collaborating with hostile European powers. Furthermore, for centuries Jews under Islamic rule were much safer than their brethren in various Christian countries, where they were frequently persecuted and subjected to great humiliation and violence (pogroms, for example). These anti-Jewish attitudes reflected Christian anti-Semitism.

On the other hand, with a few exceptions, Jews in Muslim lands did not experience anti-Semitism. As the noted scholar of Islam, Bernard Lewis, wrote in 1984:

> One important point should be made right away. There is little sign of any deep rooted emotional hostility directed against Jews … [in Muslim lands…] such as the anti-Semitism of the Christian world. There were, however, unambiguously negative attitudes. These were in part the 'normal' feelings of a dominant group towards a subject group, with parallels in virtually any society. (Lewis 1984: 32)

Indeed, Jews in Muslim countries used to occasionally praise the Islamic state for its benevolent treatment, while aspiring to the destruction of 'evil' Christianity. For example: 'God did not bring along the Kingdom of Ishmael only in order to rescue Jews from the evil one (Christendom)'; 'The Kingdom of Ishmael is moderate'… 'is a benevolent kingdom' (Lazarus-Yaffe 1968: 268). Yet, one significant but rare exception to this Jewish Islamophile attitude was articulated by the great Jewish Rabbi and scholar Maimonides (d. 1204), who labelled the Kingdom of Ishmael 'the most hateful nation towards Jews' (*Iggeret Teyman* 1952: 98–9; Stillman 1979: 241). Apparently he referred to the *Al-Mohads* rulers who harshly persecuted Jews in the mid-twelfth century and possibly forced Maimonides to temporarily convert to Islam.

Another rare anti-Islamic expression by a Jewish Rabbi, Rahamim Falaji, in nineteenth century Izmir, related to a mosque (the Al-Aqsa) in Jerusalem, hinting in his prayer at a wish for the destruction of this mosque (BZ Kedar, *Haaretz*, 7.8.2009). As with Maimonides' assertion, Falaji's uncommon expression by no means reflected the attitude of most Jews toward Islam and its holy shrines in Jerusalem. On the contrary, Jews were extremely grateful to the Ottoman-Muslim state for absorbing hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees who were fleeing from the Spanish-Christian inquisition in the late fifteenth century. Jews were also grateful to the Ottomans for permitting them to settle in Palestine, notably in Jerusalem: by the year 1800 Jews in Jerusalem – many of them non-Ottoman subjects – numbered some 2,000 people, among 9,000 inhabitants; and in 1914 – 45,000 of 70,000 (Parfitt 1987: 33–8). Furthermore, the Ottoman authorities allowed Jews to pray at the Western Wall, but not on the Temple Mount. The Ottomans also protected Jews in Jerusalem and elsewhere against periodic harassment by local Muslim zealots (Cohen 1976: *passim*; Grajewsky 1977: 112–16). During the nineteenth century the Ottoman authorities protected Jews against a newly-emerging form of anti-Jewish sentiment on the part of local Christians; namely anti-Semitism. This new phenomenon was manifested in a series of 'blood libels' against Jews in the region, particularly in Damascus in 1840. Such accusations, inspired by old European-Christian anti-Semitism (including the Dreyfus Affair) were intermittently employed by some Ottoman Christians against their religious and economic Jewish rivals. It is possible that they were aiming to destroy their Jewish enemies while trying to forge a common agenda with their Muslim neighbours against the alleged Jewish crimes. As it turned out, some Muslims in the region were influenced by this new trend and from time to time used the 'blood libel' weapon against Jews (Frankel 1997: *passim*; Levi 1994: 40).

The impact of the Arab–Zionist conflict

A turning point occurred with the advent of the Zionist-Jewish movement and its enterprise in Palestine since the late nineteenth century, which included the purchasing of Arab land and, indirectly, evicting Arab peasants. Gradually more and more Christians and Muslims developed not only an anti-Zionist attitude, but also anti-Semitic sentiments (although some did distinguish between Zionists and Jews). Some Christian Arabs expressed these hostile positions in order to forge a common Arab nationalist stance with Muslim Arabs. Jerusalem constituted a major venue for such cooperation, with Muslims and Christians in Jerusalem even signing an anti-Semitic petition (Mandel 1976: 39, 49, 51, 55). With the appearance of the Palestinian-Arab national movement, Muslims assumed a major role in the anti-Zionist anti-Semitic current. Indeed the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin Al-Husayni, during the 1920s and 1930s, was the major leader of this trend, as well as the head of the Palestinian National Movement. He used the

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The men's side of the Western Wall.

Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif issue as a vehicle for his pan-Islamic and pan-Arab campaign against Jews and Zionists. Fomenting anti-Jewish riots, he demanded from the British mandatory authorities that they prohibit Jewish prayers at the Western Wall (*Al-Buraq*), which Muslims considered to be part of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. He and other Muslim leaders also alleged that the Jews were conspiring to destroy the Temple Mount Mosque and rebuild their ancient temple (Porath 1976: 201). These allegations and other Muslim actions, together with Jewish reactions, led to the bloody 1929 riots, starting at the Western Wall and spreading throughout Palestine.

Following the 1929 riots, the Mufti convened a pan-Islamic congress in Jerusalem (1931) with the aim to promote solidarity, support and defence for Al-Aqsa and Al-Buraq. Subsequently, monetary contributions were made by Muslim organizations to renovate the Al-Aqsa Mosque and construct the Al-Aqsa University.

The issue of the Haram Al-Sharif also continued to engage the Mufti and the Palestinian National Movement during the Arab-Palestinian rebellion (1936–9) against the British and the Jews. The Mufti, leader of the 'Holy Jihad' group, was deeply involved in this rebellion. He was also imbued with Nazi anti-Semitism and expressed his adoration of Hitler. During World War II he cooperated with the Nazis and found refuge in Berlin during the period 1941–5. He coordinated campaigns with Hitler and other Nazi leaders against the British 'oppressors' in Palestine as well as against the Jews. At his request Nazi leaders 'promised to destroy the Jewish national home in Palestine and engage in the battle against world Jewry' (Mattar 1988: 99, 105).

The Mufti endeavoured to spread his anti-Semitic views among Palestinian Arabs, particularly the youth (the 'Nazi Scouts'). Nonetheless, a sizable Palestinian opposition, led mainly by the notable Nashashibi family, did not share the Mufti's views. Many of them opted to coexist and to cooperate with the Jewish Zionist movement, particularly in Jerusalem.

Indeed, the mainstream of the Zionist (secular) movement also sought coexistence and cooperation with the Arabs. It did not aspire to dominate the Temple Mount and rebuild the Jewish temple, but only to control the Western Wall as a historical national symbol. Hence, Dr Haim Weizmann, a prominent leader of the Zionist Movement, signed an agreement with Prince (later King) Faysal (son of Husayn, Sharif of Mecca) in January 1919. Although the agreement was never implemented, article VI reads as follows: 'The Mohammedan [Muslim] holy places [in Jerusalem] shall be under Mohammedan control'. Weizmann and other Zionist leaders also publicly denied (in 1928 and 1931) any Jewish intention to dominate or blow up the mosques on the Temple Mount (Laqueur and Rubin 1991: 68–72).

Significantly, in 1937 and 1947 the Zionist movement even accepted (albeit reluctantly) two plans for the partition of Palestine, whereby Jerusalem would not be under its control at all. The first was the British Peel Commission Report (1937), suggesting that Jerusalem should be under British control; the second was the Partition Resolution of the United Nations (1947), which assigned 'a special international regime for the city of Jerusalem (including the holy places)' (*ibid.* 48–9, 95–8).

On the other hand, Jewish radical leaders – religious and secular alike – not only wished to control the Western Wall, but also to rebuild the Ancient Temple. Public photos were displayed of Jews holding Zionist flags with the Star of David next to the

Dome of the Rock Mosque. Militant Jews also demonstrated in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, chanting anti-Arab and anti-Muslim slogans, calling for the return of the Western Wall into Jewish hands (Porath 1976: 214–15). Furthermore, radical right-wing secular Jews even plotted to 'liberate' the Wall by military force and to blow up the mosques. Among them was the Revisionist movement Beitar (and later in 1947 the Stern Gang), as well as a few former members of *Haganah* (a mainstream underground organization).

Nevertheless, the Beitar youth movement ignored the pragmatic approach of the Zionist leadership toward the Western Wall issue. Inspired by Rabbi Kook, then Chief Rabbi, and in reaction to the Muslim hostile presence at the Wall, Beitar initiated a major demonstration there on 15 August 1929. As a response Muslims demonstrated the following day, chanting that Al-Aqsa and Al-Buraq belonged to them, and burnt Jewish prayer books at the Wall. This critical event led to a vicious cycle of violent riots and killings in Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed, Tel Aviv and elsewhere, claiming the lives of 137 Jews and 116 Arabs.

Other cycles of Arab–Jewish violence and killing – not directly related to Jerusalem – were initiated by militant Palestinian nationalists during the 1936–9 rebellion against both the British and the Jews. In reaction to Palestinian terrorist actions, the right wing *Irgun* (another underground organization) also conducted terrorist operations against non-combatant Arabs (such actions were repeated in late 1947 and early 1948). However, the mainstream Haganah was relatively more restrained.

During the 1948 Arab–Israeli war, the Temple Mount did not play a major role in the Palestinian-Zionist conflict. Only King Abdallah of Jordan made great efforts to protect the Haram Al-Sharif and the Old City of Jerusalem against potential Israeli attacks. Israel's Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion did not initiate any military moves to take control of East Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. Jerusalem was not mentioned at all in Israel's Independence Charter in May 1948. In 1949 West Jerusalem was proclaimed as Israel's capital and until the 1967 war Israel avoided taking any steps to take East Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. Israel periodically filed complaints to the UN against Jordan for denying Jewish access to pray at the Western Wall. This was a breach of article VIII of the Jordanian–Israeli Armistice Agreement of 1949.

The Temple Mount and the Dome of the Rock, one of the most important religious sites in the Old City of Jerusalem.

1967: the turning point

As indicated above, in the aftermath of the June 1967 War, the Muslim–Jewish conflict over the Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif was revived, greatly enhancing manifestations of Muslim Judeophobia and Jewish Islamophobia in the region. Thus, the critical historical change in the status of the Temple Mount, East Jerusalem and other occupied territories ignited among Muslims feelings of despair, vengefulness and religious solidarity. In particular, conservative and zealous Muslims deepened their ideological religious attachment to Al-Haram Al-Sharif, elevating its importance and vowing to liberate it by means of a *jihad* against their Jewish enemies. Similarly, many Jews in Israel and abroad were deeply moved by the recovery of the Western Wall, the symbol of their historical national ethos. But among zealous Jews, the Messianic longing to rebuild the Temple was heightened by the intention to blow up the mosques – symbols of Islam – that had 'desecrated' the Temple Mount. These mutual hostile attitudes have been accompanied by denials of each other's attachment to their respective holy shrines.

Vis-à-vis this militant Jewish–Muslim symmetry, the political and religious leaders of both sides have mostly adopted asymmetric and/or ambivalent positions regarding these critical issues, partly to advance political and national objectives, and partly to please their militant groups. Simultaneously, attempts have been made by the relevant governments, as well as by various global organizations, to settle this dispute, but to no avail.

Ambivalent and changing attitudes in Israel: manifestations of Islamophobia

The ambivalent positions in Israel regarding the Temple Mount in East Jerusalem emerged immediately after the 1967 war. General Mota Gur, the (secular) commander of the paratroopers' battalion that conquered the Old City, proclaimed at the time that '[t]he Temple Mount is in our hands … also the Western Wall … you paratroopers returned it to the nation's bosom after 2000 years.' General Shlomo Goren, Chief Rabbi of the Israel Defence Forces, sounded the *shofar* (ram's horn) as a token of the Messiah's return. He also then contemplated the destruction of the Haram Mosques and reconstruction of the Jewish Temple (Reiter 2001: 113–20; see also Chen 2010: 29 ff.). Subsequently, East Jerusalem was annexed to Israel, and the Maghribi Quarter was destroyed in favour of a large square at the Western Wall. But, at the order of Moshe Dayan, Israel's then defence minister, no Israeli flags were raised on the Temple Mount, and the Muslim (Jordanian) *waqf* authorities were allowed to control and administer the site. Jews were permitted to visit this site but not to pray there. Israel's chief Rabbinate had prohibited Jews from visiting the Temple Mount, owing to theological-Halachic (Jewish law) injunctions. Other notable rabbis stated that such visits and prayers by Jews could spark a religious war and a Muslim *jihad* that would result in bloodshed and the deaths of many Jews (Reiter 2001: 119).

Other rabbis and a growing number of militant Jews – religious and secular alike – have pressured Israeli governments to permit prayer on the Mount, while several of them, including members of the Knesset, have ignored the prohibitions imposed by the government and the Chief Rabbinate. Furthermore, growing groups of fanatical Jews such as 'the Faithful of the Temple Mount' and more than a dozen Temple Mount organizations have preached to destroy the mosques and rebuild the Temple. For this very purpose they have prepared designs for the Temple and its altar, as well as garments for the priests, and they have also tried to raise a red heifer in order to use its ashes to purify the Temple. These fanatical groups have been inspired by senior Orthodox rabbis, including the Western Wall rabbi (Rabinovich and Bronstein 2009: 403). Probably under the influence of these messianic groups 30 per cent of Israeli Jews and 45 per cent of national religious Jews in Israel currently support the rebuilding of the Third Temple (over the ruins of the mosques), while the great majority of Israeli Jews wish to maintain Israeli control over the Temple Mount (Reiter 2001: 135). Furthermore, various youth groups have periodically staged demonstrations at that site, attacking Muslim passers-by, and chanting 'we shall erase Amaleq … the Temple will be built – the mosque will be burnt … Muhammad is dead … death to the Arabs' (Kashti 2014).[1] These anti-Muslim and racist anti-Arab demonstrations have constituted a major part of the Islamophobic trend which has increased since 1967. Influenced also by Muslim, Arab and Palestinian terrorism (see below), this trend has been significantly expressed both in word and deed. For example, the late Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, a former Sephardi Chief

1 According to the Bible, Amaleq was a deadly enemy of the Israelites that must be eliminated, Exodus 17:14.

Rabbi and leader of the Shas party, said in one of his weekly sermons (January 2012): 'Islam is an ugly religion … and we should pray for the death of the Palestinian Ishmaelites [Muslims]'. In his book *Torat Ha'Melekh* ('The King's Teachings'), Rabbi Yitzhak Shapira, backed by many others, called for the killing of the children of gentiles [Arabs and Muslims] during wartime. In March 1994, Dr Baruch Goldstein (an American-Jewish-Israeli fanatic) murdered 29 Muslim worshippers at the main mosque of Hebron. Other Jewish fanatics have occasionally killed Arabs, damaged mosques and burned copies of the Qur'an in the West Bank. In 1984 a Jewish zealot, Yehuda Etzion, and his comrades attempted to blow up the Mosques on the Temple Mount.[2]

To be sure, Israeli political and religious leaders have strongly denounced these and other Islamophobic crimes, while Israeli courts have sentenced several of these Jewish terrorists to prison. Senior rabbis have argued that these acts did not represent authentic Judaism. A large group of Jewish rabbis and Muslim imams issued a warning in 2012 that manifestations of 'anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are likely to destroy the entire humanity'. Similarly, Yaakov Perry, a former head of Israel's security services, stated in 2013 that 'if the Jewish militants were to sabotage the Mosque, it would mean the end of the world … the eruption of a world war between us and the Muslim world'.[3]

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has on occasion denounced Jewish atrocities against Muslims. He has also prevented Jewish militants from praying on the Temple Mount, reneging on his previous promises to them. But in September 1996, he ordered the opening of an ancient tunnel adjacent to the Temple Mount, thus provoking Muslim riots and Israeli retaliations. This event claimed the lives of many Muslim youths and Israeli soldiers (Reiter 2001: 117, 162).

Even more critical was the visit of General (retired) Ariel Sharon – then leader of the Likud opposition – accompanied by hundreds of soldiers at the Temple Mount (28.9.2000), with the permission of Ehud Barak, the (Labour) PM. This visit provoked a long series of violent Muslim riots known as the *Al-Aqsa Intifada*, which caused the deaths of hundreds of Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews. Millions of Muslims all over the world protested, calling for the liberation of Al-Aqsa and the Haram Al-Sharif (Ramon 2003: 76, 338). As we will discuss below, several Muslim militant organizations assumed the name Al-Aqsa in their struggle against Israel. This includes also the recent war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza (July–August 2014). Hamas flags carry a picture of Al-Aqsa, and Palestinian children chant 'we shall return to Al-Aqsa'. Many Palestinians protested at the Al-Aqsa Mosque against Israeli attacks in Gaza (*The Algemeiner,* 4.8.2014).

Although cautious to avoid any further provocation on the Temple Mount, most Israeli governments (even before the aforementioned *intifada*) failed to achieve a political settlement regarding the problems of the Temple Mount and East Jerusalem, as well as other Palestinian territories. In fact, to the contrary, all Israeli governments since 1967 have endeavoured to Judaize East Jerusalem, including the Old City. They have built new Jewish neighbourhoods, thus extending Greater Jerusalem further into the West Bank, evicting Palestinian residents, destroying Arab buildings, and allocating only a small fraction of the city budget to East Jerusalem (UN General Assembly, Resolution 64/20, 28.1.2010). Most Israeli governments have proclaimed that Jerusalem will remain 'united forever', reflecting the views of most Israeli Jews (80 per cent and 68 per cent of Knesset members). About 70 per cent of Israeli Jews support Israeli sovereignty over the Temple Mount. A recent reflection of these positions was seen on 'Jerusalem Day' in late May 2014, when Prime Minister Netanyahu proclaimed that

> Jerusalem was united 47 years ago. It will never be divided; we will never divide our heart – the heart of the nation. Jerusalem is also Mount Zion and Mount Moriah (the Temple Mount), the Western Wall – Israel's eternal. (*Haaretz,* 29.5.2014)

Common and diverse Muslim attitudes: the growth of Muslim Judeophobia

As indicated above, millions of Muslims around the world reacted furiously to the 1967 Israeli occupation of the Haram Al-Sharif including Al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock Mosque, as well as East Jerusalem and other Palestinian and Arab territories. Political (secular) and religious leaders and groups called for a *jihad* to liberate these sites. They expressed not only

2 Ramon 2003: 336; *Haaretz,* 9.6.2013; 8.7.2014; 8.9.2010; 8.12.2010; 29.1.2001; 17.3.2001; *The Washington Post,* 2.4.2011.

3 *Haaretz,* 9.9.2011; 17.11.2011; 30.3.2012; 24.9.2012; 13.5.2014; Haas 2014.

Dan Lundberg, 2011. Creative Commons, BY-SA-2.0

Looking towards the Mount of Olives from the south side of the Temple Mount where the Dome of the Rock is located.

anti-Zionist but also anti-Semitic positions, both in the media and also in textbooks. Among these leaders were Egypt's presidents Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar Sadat, the Syrian presidents Hafiz and Bashar al-Assad, the Iraqi President Sadam Hussein, the Saudi King Faysal, Iran's leader the Ayatollah Khomeini, the Palestinian Chief Yassir Arafat and many other Muslim leaders. In 1972 Anwar Sadat stated: 'Jews are a nation of liars and traitors … striving to control the world'. King Faysal and Mustafa Tlas (the Syrian defence minister) referred to 'blood libels' against Jews, while others mentioned the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (Ma'oz 2010: 10–11; Fatah pamphlet 1969; Radio Cairo, 25.4.1972). The 1973 war against Israel was termed a *jihad* by Syrian and Egyptian leaders (as it was by Arafat earlier).

In addition to the 1973 war, Muslim radical groups launched numerous attacks against Israeli and Jewish targets in various parts of the world (Munich 1972, Buenos Aires 1994, Haifa 2003, and many other places). Several of these radical groups carry names relating to Jerusalem or the Al-Aqsa Mosque, such as Iran's *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem) force, Egyptian *Ansar Bayt Al-Maqdis* (supporters of Jerusalem), Fatah's *Shuahada A-Aqsa* (Martyrs of Al-Aqsa). In addition, Hamas's TV channel is called Al-Aqsa; and the Islamic movement in (northern) Israel, led by Shaykh Raad Salah, has used the title Al-Aqsa for most of its anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish activities and organizations. (Nuhad 2013: 155–65; Larkin and Dumper 2012: 31 ff.; *Haaretz,* 5.3.2014)

On the other hand, although condemning the continued Israeli occupation of Haram Al-Sharif and East Jerusalem, a growing number of Muslim leaders and governments have maintained either open or secret relations with Israel. Several of them have also suggested a peaceful settlement of the Jerusalem issue. Egypt's President Anwar Sadat, on his historic visit to Israel in November 1977, stated at the Knesset that: 'Jerusalem is the crux of the matter' and demanded that East Jerusalem and the Islamic holy shrines be returned to Arab sovereignty as a condition for an Arab-Israeli peace. During the negotiations at Camp David (1978) and subsequently, he also suggested raising an Islamic flag on the Temple Mount, applying Arab sovereignty to all of the Old City except for the Western Wall, and permitting free access to places of worship to all believers. Possibly at Sadat's request, the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Ali Jad Al-Haqq, issued a special *fatwa* (religious opinion) in 1979, permitting Egypt's peace treaty with Israel on the grounds that East Jerusalem and the holy places be returned to Muslim hands. (Ma'oz 2010: 90 ff.; Reiter 2001: 272 ff.)[4]

Israel's (Likud) Prime Minister Menachem Begin initially suggested that the holy shrines be administered by the various religious communities, that the Islamic holy places be managed by a representative of Arab states, or even become a sort of 'Muslim Vatican'. However, later, Begin changed his mind and insisted on Israeli sovereignty over the entire city of Jerusalem. This position was approved by the Knesset in July 1980, when a unified Jerusalem was proclaimed the eternal capital of Israel. In response, Sadat stopped negotiations with Israel concerning Palestinian autonomy, and the Mufti of Egypt withdrew his *fatwa*.

4 For Sadat's speech at the Israeli Knesset, see Laqueur and Rubin 1991: 389–98.

The Western Wall Plaza.

The failure of diplomacy

In the Oslo Agreement between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel (1993) the Jerusalem issue was deferred for at least three years until a permanent agreement could be reached. Such negotiations took place only in July 2000, at Camp David, and in Taba in January 2001. The PLO then demanded full control of the Temple Mount and East Jerusalem, but it conditionally accepted US President Bill Clinton's suggestion to divide East Jerusalem and the Old City between Israel and Palestine. Accordingly, the Palestinians would have control over the Temple Mount and the Old City, and Israel would control the Western Wall and a section below the mount, as well as the Jewish Quarter. Israel's Prime Minister at the time, Ehud Barak, initially agreed in principle to this suggestion, but later changed his mind at Taba and agreed only to a special regime for the holy places; this without Palestinian sovereignty over the Temple Mount, naming it 'the holy of the holiest (for Jews)'. At that stage, Israel still preferred a Jordanian role for the Temple Mount; and in the peace agreement (September 1994) Israel granted 'high priority' to the Jordanian historic role at this shrine (Ramon 2003: 483–4). However, most Arab and Muslim states opposed this suggestion, giving priority to the PLO and considering the Haram Al-Sharif a Pan-Islamic issue.

Significantly, in March 2002 the Arab League (22 Arab states), backed by all Muslim states (57 members including the Arab countries) issued an unprecedented peace plan. For the first time it offered Israel peace, security and normal relations, provided Israel agrees to the creation of a Palestinian State along the 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital. This peace initiative, originated by Saudi Arabia, has been reconfirmed by the Arab League several times since, including in 2014, but with no official response from Israel.[5] Ehud Olmert was the only Israeli prime minister to *de facto* accept this peace initiative. During his negotiations with the Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas (2008) he agreed – without his cabinet's approval – to the creation of a Palestinian State along the 1967 lines. East Jerusalem would be the capital of this state, while the holy shrines of the three reli-

5 Ma'oz 2010: 12–13, 24–5; *Haaretz,* 29.11.2011, 24.9.2012; an interview with Saudi Prince, Turki Al-Faysal in *Haaretz,* 8.7.2014.

gions will be without sovereignty and administered by representatives of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Palestine, Israel and the United States. Abbas did not accept this unique Israeli offer, and asked for further considerations. Olmert then faced strong domestic opposition, including from his Defence Minister Barak and Foreign Minister Livni, so that he virtually became a lame duck. In February 2009 he lost to Netanyahu in the national elections. Since then, Netanyahu has not responded to the repeated proclamations of the Saudi/Arab peace initiative, including a new offer by Abbas: namely, that in the framework of peace, the Western Wall and the Jewish Quarter would be under Israeli control, and there would be freedom of worship in the Old City. Since 2013, Netanyahu's third government has adopted uncompromising positions regarding East Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, as well as other Palestinian issues. The nine months of negotiation (from July 2013) with Abbas, under the mediation of US Secretary of State John Kerry, ended in failure. Kerry blamed both parties for this failure, but remarked: 'Israel could become an apartheid state if it does not reach peace with the Palestinians' (*New York Times,* 13.7.2014).

The Israel–Hamas war, which took place in July–August 2014, further aggravated Muslim–Jewish relations in East Jerusalem and beyond (*Al-Monitor,* 15.9.2014). Indeed the radicalization of the Israeli government and of the right-wing groups – including more manifestations of Islamophobia – has provoked even greater Muslim anti-Semitism among the Palestinians (93 per cent) and other Arab and Muslim nations (74 per cent) (*Jewish Exponent*, 15.7.2014). Militant Muslims and Jews in Europe also share this hatred for one another. For example, Jews in Germany recently protested against the (allegedly largest) Islamic anti-Semitic demonstration which took place in Berlin during the Al-Quds March on 25 July 2014 (*Al-Monitor,* 27.8.2014). These two dangerous trends – Judeophobia and Islamophobia – could well lead to a new Muslim–Jewish global war.

By contrast, an agreed settlement on East Jerusalem between the two sides would significantly reduce these perilous trends in the region and the world over. It would enable Israel to improve relations with the Arab and Muslim world, as well as the international community. To reiterate what Anwar Sadat said in his Knesset speech in 1997, 'Jerusalem is the crux of the matter'. Similarly, Ahmad Qurie, a senior PLO leader, stated in 2010: 'Jerusalem is a key to peace; it is also a key to war and perpetual conflict. There cannot be a solution to the problems of the region without first solving the problems of Jerusalem' (UN Session, Rabat, 2.7.2010). ■

Moshe Ma'oz is Professor Emeritus of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, and Senior Fellow at the Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. He received his BA and MA from Hebrew University and a PhD from Oxford University (1966). He has been a lecturer at the Hebrew University since 1968; Visiting Professor or Fellow at Harvard University, Columbia University, Brookings Institute, United States Institute of Peace (WDC), Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study of Humanism. He has given lectures and seminars in the US, Europe, China, Japan, Australia and Africa. He has also participated in many dialogues with Palestinian scholars; served as adviser to several Israeli governments and the Knesset. He has published 20 books and 65 articles on the political and social history of the Middle East, notably Syria and Palestine, as well as on Muslim–Jewish relations, for example, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine* (Oxford University Press, 1968); *Syria and Israel* (Oxford University Press, 1995); *Muslim Attitudes to Jews and Israel* (Sussex Academic Press, 2010); *Palestinian Leadership on the West Bank* (Frank Cass, 1984). Email: momaoz(at)hotmail.com

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