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# Jerusalem's Role as a Holy City for Muslims

Chad F. Emmett

When Pope John Paul II made his historic March 2000 pilgrimage to the Holy Land, he did so with the hopes of building bridges and fostering peace. While in Jerusalem, he scheduled a meeting with Jewish, Christian, and Muslim leaders to symbolize his ongoing desire for religious reconciliation. The meeting turned out to be less than conciliatory, especially in regard to Jerusalem. When Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau of Israel's Ashkenazic community praised the pope for his "recognition of Jerusalem as its united, eternal capital," some audience members shouted out that the pope had not recognized Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem. (The pope supports a long-standing Catholic policy which calls for the internationalization of Jerusalem so that all faiths may worship in peace). Next Sheik Taysir Tamimi, "deputy chief justice of the Palestinian Islamic courts," called for an independent state of Palestine with "its eternal capital" Jerusalem. The pope, who sat with his head in his hands throughout the speeches, responded in his prepared text by stating: "Religion is the enemy of exclusion and discrimination. . . . Religion and peace go together."<sup>1</sup>

Peace among the religious communities of Jerusalem remains as elusive as ever as two peoples, Israelis and Palestinians, battle against each other for territorial control and political sovereignty over the city. Both nations want Jerusalem as their capital, entirely or partially. The Israeli government claims the city as its "eternal and undivided capital," while most Palestinians are striving to have the Arab sectors of East Jerusalem recognized as the capital of their hoped-for state of Palestine.

These competing claims to the city are based on an intertwined presence in which both groups selectively use differing interpretations of history to emphasize the sanctity of the city and their desire to control it. Former mayor of Jerusalem Teddy Kollek describes Jewish attachment to Jerusalem as follows:

Jews care intensely about Jerusalem. The Christians have Rome and Canterbury and even Salt Lake City; Muslims have Mecca and Medina. Jerusalem has great meaning for them also. But the Jews have only Jerusalem and only the Jews have made it their capital. That is why it has so much deeper a meaning for them than for anybody else. . . . There are some Israelis who would give up the Golan, . . . and some who would give up the West Bank. But I do not think you can find any Israelis who are willing to give up Jerusalem. They cannot and will not. This beautiful golden city is the heart and the soul of the Jewish people. You cannot live without a heart and soul. If you want one simple word to symbolize all of Jewish history, that word would be Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup>

Palestinian historian, and native Jerusalemite, Walid Khalidi describes the equally strong ties of Muslims and Palestinian Arabs to Jerusalem:

Without East Jerusalem there would be no West Bank. It is the navel, the pivotal link between Nablus to the north and Hebron to the south. Together with its Arab suburbs it is the largest Arab urban concentration on the West Bank. It is the former capital of the *sanjak* (district) of Jerusalem under the Ottomans, as well as of mandatory Palestine. The highest proportion of the Palestinian professional elite under occupation resides in it. It is the site of the holiest Muslim shrines on Palestinian soil. Muslims first turned to it in prayer before they turned to Mecca. Toward it the Prophet Muhammed journeyed on his mystical nocturnal flight and from it he ascended to within “two bow-lengths” of the Throne of God. . . . Within its precincts are buried countless generations of Muslim saints and scholars, warriors and leaders. It evokes the proudest Palestinian and Arab historical memories. It contains the oldest religious endowments of the Palestinians, their most prestigious secular institutions—the cumulative and priceless patrimony of a millennium and a quarter of residence. Architecturally it is distinctively Arab. In ownership and property, it is overwhelmingly so. It is the natural capital of Arab Palestine.<sup>3</sup>

While both groups claim the city as holy, they differ on the territorial extent of that holiness. For Jews, Jerusalem the city is holy, no matter what its boundaries. Hebrew University professor Zwi Werblowsky explains, “For the Jewish people Jerusalem is not a city containing holy places or commemorating holy events. The city as such is holy.”<sup>4</sup> That holiness now extends to the greatly expanded boundaries of the city claimed by Israel in 1967. Muslims have a similar view of Mecca in which they view the entire precinct of the city as holy and therefore off limits to non-Muslims. For Muslims, the sanctity of Jerusalem, however, is based primarily on its sacred Islamic sites. Jordanian judge Adnan Abu Odeh writes, “In its essence the holiness of Jerusalem is an attribute of the holy places themselves” whether they be Muslim, Christian, or Jewish. He then explains how over time a certain degree of holiness has been extended to the quarters of the city which surround these sacred sites, primarily within the Old City’s walls, but he feels “it is stretching the point [for Israel] to call ‘holy’ every building, every neighborhood and every street corner that has been built up around the walled city, extending out many kilometers in some directions.”<sup>5</sup>

These competing claims to the extent and level of sanctity of the city prompted Palestinian philosopher Sari Nusseibah to state, “If Israelis fail to appreciate the significance of [the Palestinian] claim, I do not see how they can hope for anyone, including the Palestinians, to appreciate their equally strong spiritual claim.”<sup>6</sup> The strong claim of the Israeli Jews to Jerusalem is perhaps more familiar to Western Christianity, but as Nusseibeh and Khalidi suggest, there is an equally strong claim by Palestinian Arabs that must be understood and considered in the final status negotiations on Jerusalem. The foundation of the Palestinian claim is also religious.<sup>7</sup>

This paper will thus seek to describe the less-familiar ties of Islam to the city and will place current Islamic attachments to the city within the context of the on-going Jewish-Muslim rivalries for the control of sacred space. It is hoped that a better understanding of the strong religious and historical attachments to the city on the part of not only Jews and Christians but also Muslims might result in a fair and equitable sharing of Jerusalem.

### The Sacred Space of Jerusalem

In the early days of Islam, Muslims indicated their submission to Allah (God) by prostrating themselves in prayer, not toward Mecca, but toward the holy city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem's role as the first *qibla* (direction of prayer) is indicative of its holy status to Muslims, who consider themselves heirs to the prophets of Judaism and Christianity and who therefore respect the city where so many of the prophets lived and taught. Muhammad most likely was aware of the Jewish tradition of praying toward the Holy City and therefore designated it as the focus of prayer as if to invite the Jewish "people of the book" back into the familiar fold of God. There is no record of how or when Jerusalem became the focus of prayer (most likely before the *hijra*, or emigration, to Medina in 622 C.E.). There is, however, record of how its brief status as the first *qibla* was supplanted by Mecca, most likely within a year or two of Muhammad's arrival in Medina.<sup>8</sup> The Qur'an states:

The Fools among the people will say: "What hath turned them from the *Qibla* [Jerusalem] to which they were used?" Say: "To Allah belong both east and west: He guideth whom He will to a way that is straight." . . . Now shall we turn thee to a *qibla* that shall please thee. Turn then thy face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque [Mecca]. Wherever ye are, turn your faces in that direction. (2:142-44)

With the changing of the *qibla* from Jerusalem to Mecca, the holy status of Jerusalem might certainly have waned were it not for another important event—the Night Journey of Muhammad to Jerusalem—that further linked Islam to the city of its two monotheistic predecessors. The Qur'an describes the Night Journey (*isra'*) in these terms:

Glory to Allah who did take His servant for a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque [Ka'ba in Mecca] to the Farthest Mosque [al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem] 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 all things. (17:1)

In Islamic tradition,<sup>9</sup> Muhammad was transported to Jerusalem by a white, winged horse called Buraq, who was then tethered at the Western Wall of the vacant Temple Mount. On the Mount, Muhammad led fellow prophets Abraham, Moses, and Jesus in prayer. He then ascended with the archangel

Courtesy Chad Emmett

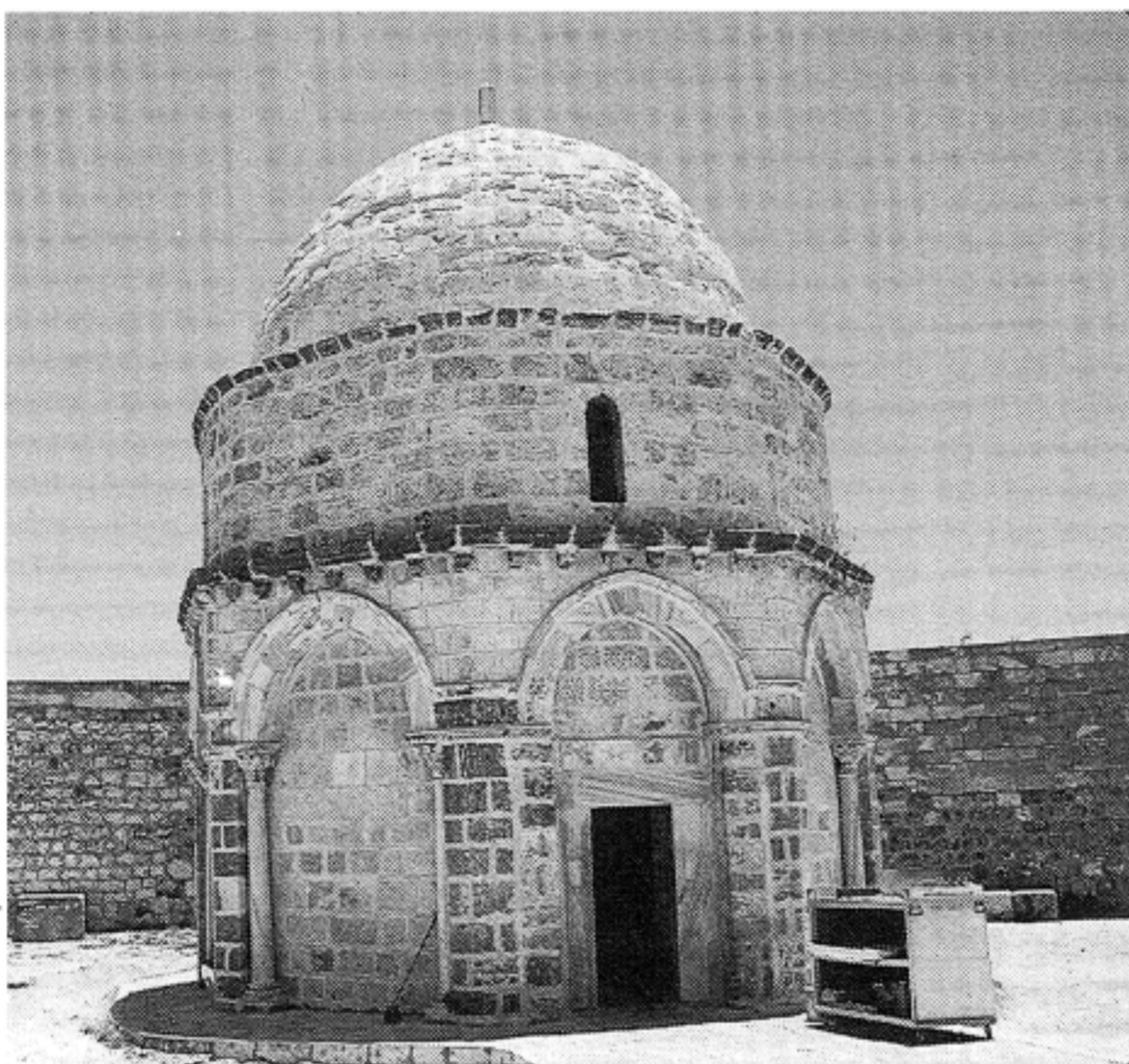


FIG. 1. Mosque of the Ascension, 1995. Built on top of the Mount of Olives, this site is revered and shared by Muslims and Christians as the place where Jesus ascended to heaven. Muslims consider Jesus to be a major prophet.

Gabriel through the seven heavens, where he met those prophets called to preside over the celestial spheres—Adam, Enoch, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, John the Baptist, Jesus, and finally Abraham.<sup>10</sup> Armstrong suggests that this Night Journey “symbolized the Muslims’ conviction of continuity and solidarity with the older faiths” and that it also “revealed the transference of Mecca’s holiness to Jerusalem,”<sup>11</sup> making it a holy site as well. From the beginning, it was clear that Jerusalem was meant to be another religious focal point for Muslims.

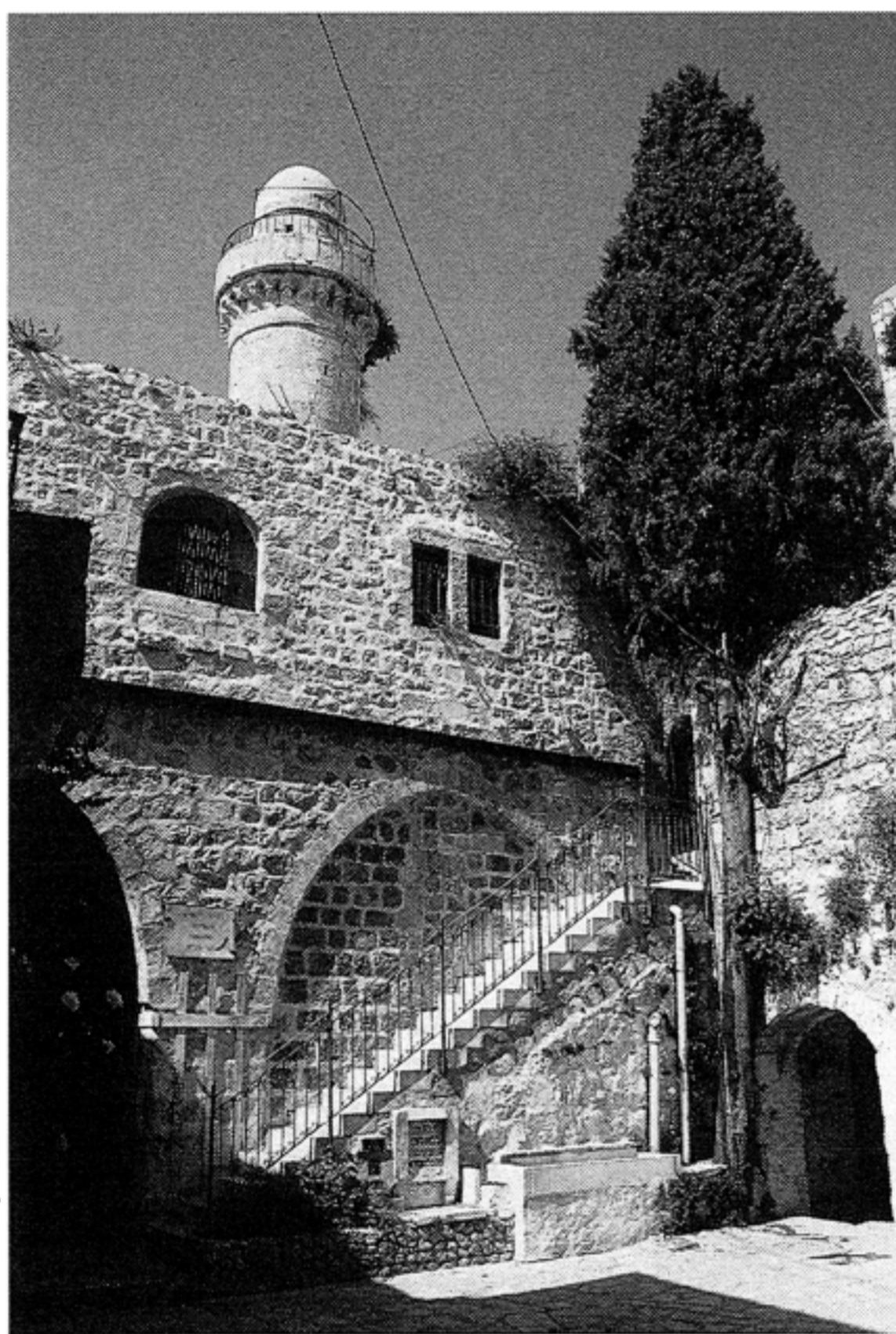
Later associations with sites attributed to various prophets have served to solidify the attachment of Muslims to the city. Muslim sacred sites in Jerusalem include these three: on the Mount of Olives, a mosque that marks the site of the ascension of Jesus (fig. 1); to the north of the city, a mosque that commemorates the burial site of the prophet Samuel; and on Mount Zion, the Tomb of David (fig. 2), which, while once a mosque, is still claimed as a Muslim *waqf* (religious endowment, pious foundation; see “Current Issues” below). In addition to these sacred sites, Jerusalem’s religious landscape is marked by many other mosques and monuments. There are also numerous Islamic schools and institutions, cemeteries where generations of Muslims are buried, and significant tracts of *waqf* land.

While past events have imbued Jerusalem with its sanctity, future events also add to its holiness. Muslims believe that Jerusalem will be the “place of the second and final *hijra*”<sup>12</sup> (the first exodus being from Mecca to Medina), the site where the virtuous people of the earth will be gathered in safety. It will also be the place of resurrection. On the eve of the Day of Judgment, God will send the best of his creations to Jerusalem and its surrounding holy land. Then the *mahdi* (Messiah-like figure) will come to Jerusalem, bringing justice and bounty to the earth.<sup>13</sup> Those believers who pray, reside, fast, or die in Jerusalem are accorded special blessings.<sup>14</sup>

### Historical Ties and Tolerance

The religious ties to the city are also strengthened by the long historical presence of Muslims in the city. The Muslim Arab conquest of Christian

Byzantine Jerusalem occurred in 638 C.E. While the conquerors were most likely aware of the biblical events associated with the city, the city had not yet been attributed as the destination of Muhammad's Night Journey. Nonetheless, Jerusalem was still a desirable prize. The most accepted account of the conquest tells of Patriarch Sophronius surrendering to no one other than 'Umar, the second caliph. Unlike other conquerors, 'Umar sought not to destroy. He issued a covenant in which, among other things, he promised the Christian residents of the city "the surety of their persons, their goods, their churches, their crosses . . . and the cult in general."<sup>15</sup> 'Umar's magnanimity was further demonstrated when he declined an offer from the patriarch to pray in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (known to local Christians as the Church of the Resurrection) in fear that doing so would result in its becoming a Muslim shrine. Instead he walked out of the church to another location to pray. There a commemorative mosque was



Courtesy Chad Emmett

**FIG. 2.** The Tomb of David (lower level) and Cenacle (upper level), 1995. Once used as a mosque, this site is still viewed by Muslims as sacred. The building is also venerated by Jews, who use the first floor as a synagogue, and by those Christians who regard the second floor as the site of the upper room where Christ partook of the Last Supper.

eventually built; its successor (fig. 3) still stands overlooking the courtyard of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. 'Umar issued a charter forbidding Muslims "to pray on the steps" of the church "or to build a mosque there." He later accepted an offer to pray in the Nea Church but again ensured that the church would remain under Christian control.<sup>16</sup>

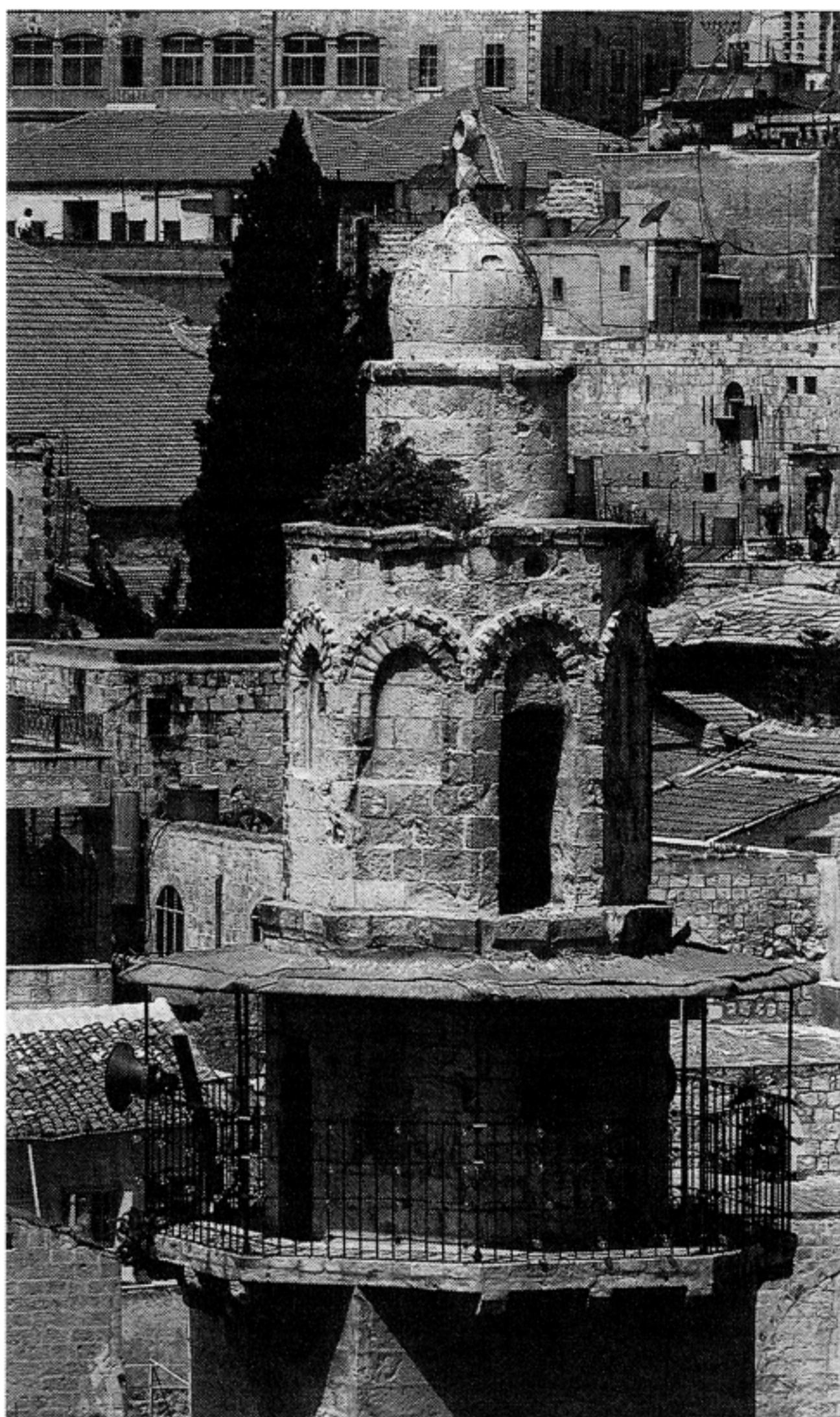
During his visit to Jerusalem, 'Umar visited the Temple Mount and in respect for its sanctity—due to its association with the Temple of Solomon—ordered that it be cleaned of its long accumulation of garbage. He then oversaw the building of a mosque at the southern end of the platform. The Christian pilgrim Arculf described the unassuming mosque in 680 C.E. as "an oblong house of prayer" that was "pieced together with upright planks and large beams over some ruined remains." He reported that the mosque was said to "hold three thousand people."<sup>17</sup> It was later replaced by

the al-Aqsa Mosque (see fig. 3 on p. 106).

The next monument to rise on the Temple Mount was the Dome of the Rock—the oldest and perhaps most beautiful of all Islamic monuments. It was built over the large outcropping of rock at Mount Moriah’s summit, which Muslims revere as the point of Muhammad’s ascension on his Night Journey into heaven and respect as the site of Solomon’s temple. Caliph Abd al-Malik oversaw the building of the monument from the Umayyad capital of Damascus.

There has been much debate as to why the Dome was built. Some scholars, basing their conclusions on the ninth-century writings of Ya’qubi, have suggested that Abd al-Malik built the Dome of the Rock as a rival place of pilgrimage to the Islamic shrines of Mecca and Medina, which were controlled by his challenger, Abdalah ibn Zubayr. However, the more prevalent view is that the mosque was built in rivalry with Christianity and in an attempt to attract Christian converts.<sup>18</sup> According to Muqaddasi, a medieval Arab historian from Jerusalem, splendid mosques were built throughout the region in order that Muslims would have something to admire other than the beautiful Byzantine churches. “And in like manner,” he wrote, “is it not evident how Caliph Abd al-Malik, noting the greatness of the Dome of the Holy Sepulcher and its magnificence, was moved lest it should dazzle the minds of Muslims and so erected, above the Rock, the Dome which is now seen there.”<sup>19</sup>

From the conquest of ‘Umar in 638 to the conquest of Allenby in 1917, excepting the Crusader interlude, Jerusalem was under Islamic control.



Courtesy Chad Emmett

FIG. 3 Minaret of the Mosque of Omar, 1994. Omar (‘Umar) prayed on this site rather than praying in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. This mosque is the successor of the original mosque that was built across from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to commemorate his prayer.

However, while viewed as the third most holy city in Islam and graced with one of its most magnificent mosques, Jerusalem was never proclaimed an Arab or Islamic capital. Dynastic capitals emerged first in Damascus and later in Baghdad, Cairo, and Istanbul, but never Jerusalem. The city was bypassed even by the Umayyads as a provincial capital, with Ramla, on the coastal plain, being established to function in that capacity. Jerusalem's lack of political prominence as an Arab/Muslim capital has been used by Israel to bolster its claim to the city as its eternal capital.<sup>20</sup> Muslims, however, consider their treatment of Jerusalem as further evidence of its sanctity and prominence. Sari Nusseibeh explains:

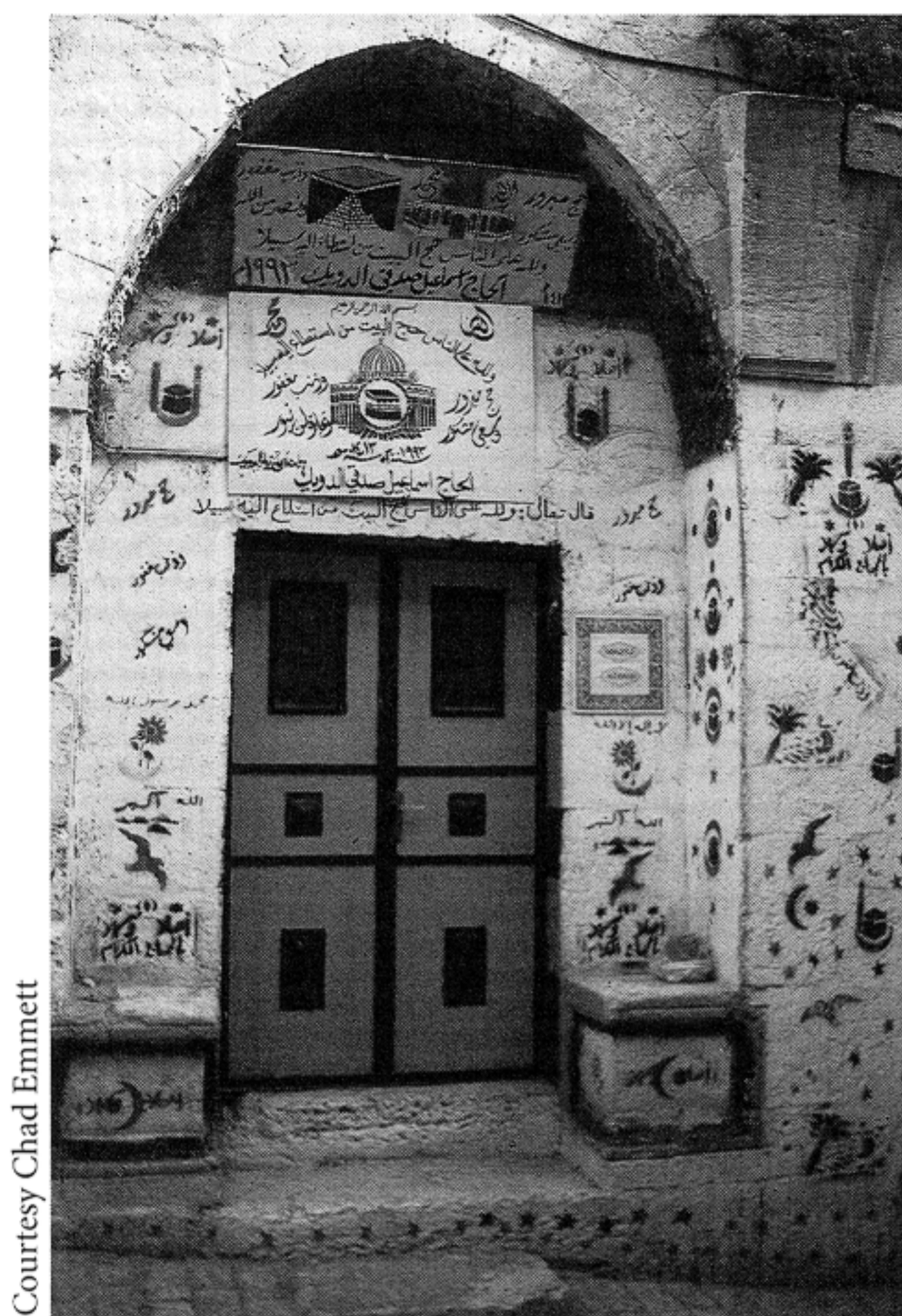
Jerusalem has always occupied a 'semi-divine' status in Islam, which explains its so-called non-centricity in the political context. . . . From the Muslim point of view, therefore, Jerusalem was never regarded as a political capital or center, not because the Arabs thought little of it, but on the contrary—because they believed that its status was sanctified.<sup>21</sup>

Throughout Islamic rule, Jerusalem was never viewed as being exclusively Muslim in character. Christians and Jews, as “protected minorities” (*dhimmis*), were always permitted to live in the city.<sup>22</sup> Relations between these three communities were not always pleasant—witness the edict from al-Hakim (ruling from Egypt) to destroy the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 1009—but they were at least tolerant. Examples of this tolerance span more than a millennium. As mentioned above, ‘Umar willingly allowed Christians to remain in the city. Initially he forbade Jews, who had been ousted by the Byzantines, from returning to the city, but then in a change of heart, he invited seventy Jewish families from Tiberius to settle in the city near the Pool of Siloam.<sup>23</sup> When Saladin regained the city for Islam from the Crusaders, he allowed the Christians of the city to peacefully surrender without a bloodbath like that of the Crusader conquest, in which the Muslim and Jewish residents of the city were massacred. During the centuries of Ottoman rule, the Christian and Jewish communities of the city prospered under the *millet* system, which accorded rights to non-Muslim religious communities in the empire. It was during this regime in the 1800s that the Jewish population of the city surpassed the Arab population.

## Current Issues

The once peaceful relations between Jerusalem's religious communities disintegrated with the rise of Jewish and Arab nationalisms (fig. 4) in the early twentieth century. Both sought sovereignty from the Ottomans and then both fought to oust the British. These nationalist aspirations, when combined with Jewish, Christian, and Muslim ties to the Holy City, have resulted in intense competition for control of the city (fig. 5). Based on a long historical presence and religious attachment, the Muslims of





Courtesy Chad Emmett

FIG. 4. House in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City, 1994. The house was decorated to celebrate a family member performing the *hajj*. While most of the images relate to the pilgrimage, the focal point is the Dome of the Rock, which has become a symbol of Palestinian nationalism.

spaces claimed by both Muslims and Jews further threaten Islamic areas of Jerusalem.

Prior to 1948, Muslims lived, not only in the traditional Muslim quarter of the Old City (see map), but in newer quarters beyond the city walls. Located within these quarters were lands and buildings designated as *waqf*, holdings that are bequeathed or endowed toward the perpetual maintenance of a family or religion. These holdings cannot be sold. Revenues gained from the rent or lease of the properties are used to support a variety of religious endeavors. For example, Islamic waqfs in Jerusalem have been used in the establishment and maintenance of mosques, religious schools, cemeteries, public baths, hostels for pilgrims, homes for the needy, soup kitchens, and orphanages. Due to its sacredness, Jerusalem during Ottoman times had more waqfs per capita than any other major Ottoman city. However, when Israel gained control of West Jerusalem in 1948 and then East

Jerusalem, and in fact the entire Islamic world, show no signs of being willing to relinquish their claims to control. Adding further resolution to their steadfastness are the ongoing encroachments by Israel on Palestinian territory in the city and restrictions of Palestinian ability to live and worship in the city. Since 1947, Israel has systematically diminished Palestinian-controlled lands through such policies and procedures as declaring landowners absentee, not issuing building permits, and destroying homes built without such permits.<sup>24</sup> For perceived security purposes, Israel often restricts Muslim access to the mosques of the city (fig. 6). Further hardship for and weakening of the Muslim and Christian communities of the city comes through the non-issuance of Jerusalem residence permits to lifelong residents of the city. Attempts by some Jews to usurp control of sacred

Jerusalem in 1967, many waqf holdings came under Israeli control.<sup>25</sup>

One of the most noted expropriations of an Islamic waqf involves competing Israeli and Palestinian claims to the Western Wall. As noted above, when Muhammad journeyed to Jerusalem, he tethered his horse at the Western Wall, which as the last remaining vestige of the temple complex—it being part of the retaining wall that supported the large platform of the temple mount—had particular sanctity to Jews. Muslims have attributed sanctity to the same site; holy, not only because of Buraq, but also because the wall was an integral part of the Haram al-Sharif (Noble Sanctuary) where the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque are located. In 1193 C.E., the pavement in front of the wall was made a waqf. Then in 1320 C.E., a quarter for Moroccan Muslims who settled in the Holy City was established as a waqf (to support Moroccan pilgrims to the Holy City) on land located just west of the wall.

Throughout the centuries of Islamic control, the Jews of Jerusalem were allowed to pray at the wall in a narrow corridor (300 m by 4 m) abutting the Moroccan (Maghrebi) quarter. During the British era, violent conflicts arose between Muslims and Jews over ownership and use of the



Courtesy Chad Emmett

FIG. 5. Graffiti—"Jerusalem is Arab forever." This 1995 message was spray-painted in the Old City in response to the Jewish slogan stating Jerusalem is the eternal capital of Israel.



Courtesy Chad Emmett

FIG. 6. Exiting the Haram al-Sharif, 1997. As these Muslim worshippers leave after Friday prayer, they are watched by Israeli soldiers on the wall and on the ground. A bombing a few days earlier had led to heightened security, a reminder of the constant tension in Jerusalem.

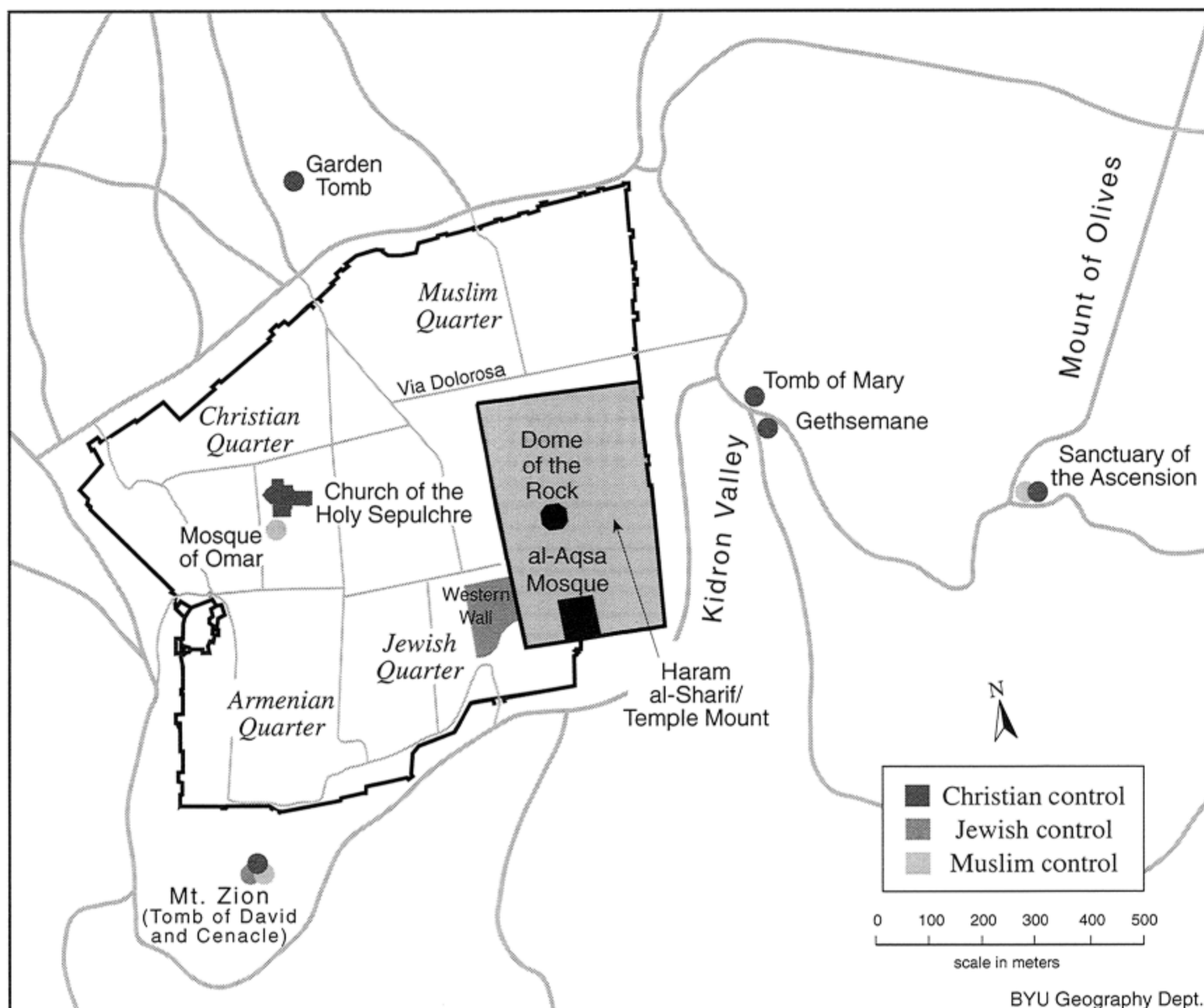
wall. In an attempt to settle the dispute, a British commission issued a report that recognized both Muslim and Jewish sanctity of the site, acknowledged Muslim ownership of the wall, and guaranteed continued Jewish access to the wall. This “status quo” lasted until 1948, at which time the Jordanian government restricted Jewish access to the wall. In June 1967, just four days after the Israeli conquest of East Jerusalem, 650 Arab residents of the Maghrebi Quarter were evicted with only two hours’ notice and their 135 houses were bulldozed to the ground by the Israeli government in order to open up access to the wall. The expansive Western Wall plaza now extends out across Muslim waqf lands (fig. 7).<sup>26</sup>

Rising above the Western Wall plaza is what Jews call the Temple Mount and what Muslims call the Haram al-Sharif (see map). It is holy to Jews as the site of former temples and of a future temple, while it is holy to Muslims primarily because of its association with Muhammad’s Night Journey as well as its association with past prophets like Solomon and Jesus. Because of the dual nature of its sanctity, the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif is probably the most contentious piece of territory in the entire Holy Land. Muslims consider the whole enclosed platform of the Haram al-Sharif as a sacred mosque. It is therefore *haram* (forbidden) for peoples



Courtesy Chad Emmett

FIG. 7. Western Wall and plaza, 1997. The Western Wall is significant to the Muslims as the wall where Muhammad tethered his horse during the Night Journey. Both Muslims and Jews consider the Western Wall as the only remaining part of Solomon’s temple complex. The plaza in front of the wall was created in 1967.



### Sacred Sites in Jerusalem

of other religions to pray on the site.<sup>27</sup> Muslim control, which dates back to 'Umar's conquest, was challenged during the British Mandate as Zionist Jews sought to reclaim lost lands and sacred sites. In response to Jewish assertion of increased rights at the Western Wall, the Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajji Amin al-Husseini, stated in a 1930 memorandum to the Shaw Commission that "active widespread propaganda" was being "undertaken by the Jews with a view to influencing the London Government and other powers as well as the League of Nations in order to take possession of the Western Wall of the Mosque at Aqsa." He then asserted that this was being done so that Jews could "take possession of the Mosque of al-Aqsa gradually on the pretense that it is the temple."<sup>28</sup>

Whether real or perceived, Jewish attempts at taking control of the mount did not come to fruition. The British government refused to grant greater rights, and during the nineteen years of Jordanian rule of partitioned Jerusalem (1948–67), Israeli Jews were denied access to the wall and Temple Mount. All this changed in June 1967, when, during the conquest of East Jerusalem, Israeli soldiers gained control of the long-forbidden Temple Mount. Israeli control was short-lived. In recognition of its sanctity

to Islam, General Moshe Dayan had the Israeli troops take down the Israeli flags and leave Islam's third most holy site. He then restored control of the Haram al-Sharif to the Muslim waqf, which continues to administer the area. Waqf officials remain ever vigilant of Jewish designs on the Mount.

Since 1967 there has been a crescendo of Jewish efforts (sometimes supported by Christians) to regain control of the Mount in hopes that the temple can be rebuilt and the Messiah can come. These efforts only seem to strengthen the resolve of Muslims to hold onto their sacred site. A quick overview of some of these activities serve well to illustrate why Muslims now worry, as did Hajj Amin al-Husseini earlier, about Jewish encroachments and eventual control of the Haram al-Sharif. In 1969 an Australian Christian (most likely of deranged mind) ignited a damaging fire in the al-Aqsa Mosque. While his motives were unclear, Muslims viewed the arson attack as a challenge to their control. On Easter Sunday 1982, Allan Goodman, "a follower of the extremist Kach group," opened fire in the Dome of the Rock in an attempt to "liberate" the Temple Mount from Muslim control. Two were killed in the shooting, which was followed by riots "in and around Jerusalem in which at least 184 people were injured."<sup>29</sup>

In 1983, more than forty Jews were arrested in Jerusalem for planning to take over the Temple Mount. Four of the group were armed young men "caught trying to break through an underground passage" onto the Haram al-Sharif. The next year, Israeli security forces thwarted another attempted assault on the Mount. They found a stash of grenades and explosives smuggled onto the Mount and more arms, including mines, rockets, and high explosives, stashed outside of the city. A Christian group from the United States paid the legal fees for the first group, and it is suspected that financial backing for the second group also came from American Christians. One of the investigating officials explained the motive for the planned attacks as wanting "to obliterate the Muslim presence on the Mount so that the Messiah would arrive" for either the first or second time.<sup>30</sup>

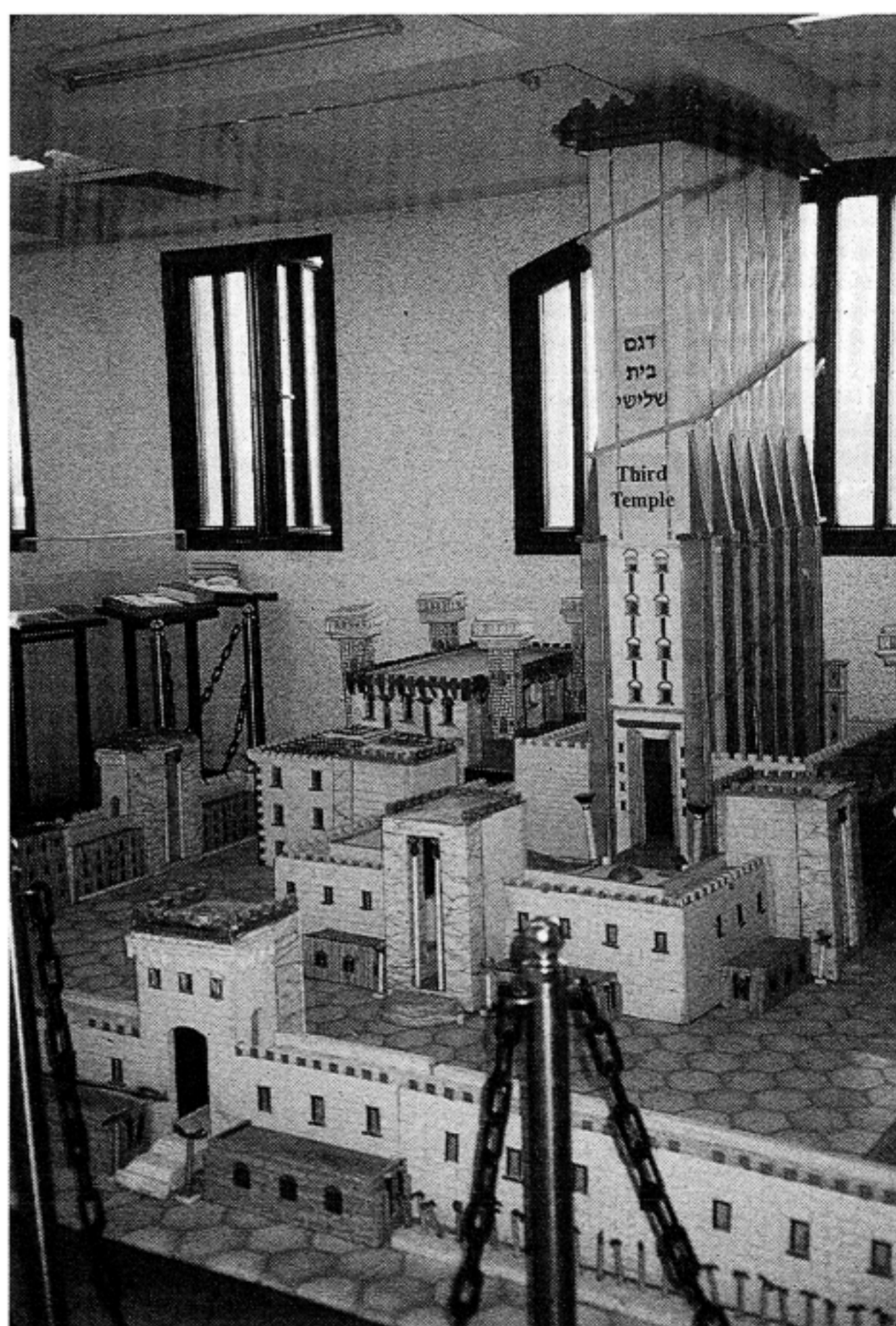
In 1984 members of the Jerusalem Temple Foundation (also supported by American Christians) planned another attack on the Haram al-Sharif so that, in the words of its leader, they could "help fulfill prophecy and thus hasten the coming of the Messiah." One of the members of the group, an Israeli reserve pilot, had even talked of bombing the Muslim mosques on the Mount so that war would break out with the Islamic world and then the Messiah would bring deliverance.<sup>31</sup>

Knowing of these previous incursions, Muslims strongly protested the 1998 expansion of an archeological tunnel extending from the Western Wall to the Via Dolorosa in a line parallel and adjacent to the Temple Mount. The tunnel, a water passage which filled temple era cisterns, exposes Herodian era ruins and runs under the Muslim quarter and many Muslim monuments. Muslim opposition to the tunnel is based on fear that

the tunnel could be used for future attacks on the Mount and on concern for the structural damage it has caused to historical buildings above.<sup>32</sup>

Among Jews there are varying degrees of interest in the Mount. Many see the Western Wall as close enough and holy enough for now and are content to wait for the temple. Others, however, want to hasten the day by removing the mosques (fig. 8). Most Jews choose not to ascend onto the Mount for fear of violating the sacred space where the Holy of Holies would have been located—a location much debated but never determined. Still others are anxious to begin praying on the Mount even without the temple. In 1994, members of the Temple Mount Yeshiva, who advocate rebuilding the temple, entered the Haram al-Sharif and started to bend and sway as if praying. This angered waqf officials, who had police remove the Yeshiva students.<sup>33</sup> In 1997 a Jerusalem Magistrate Court judge ruled that Jews could pray on the Mount after the leader of Hai Vekayam was arrested for attempting to pray there. This prompted the Chief Rabbinical Council to reaffirm its position which forbids Jews from entering the Temple Mount—a position which is at odds with the Committee of Rabbis from Judea and Samaria.<sup>34</sup> Former waqf leader Adnan Husseini repeatedly stressed that Islam will never allow Jews to pray on the Mount. They can enter the Mount as visitors but cannot pray.<sup>35</sup>

Preparations for the building of the Temple have included yearly ceremonies in which “cornerstone[s] for the Third Temple” are laid outside the Old City walls of Jerusalem;<sup>36</sup> rallies by members of the Movement for the Establishment of the Temple with members calling for “No Dome of the Rock and mosques, but an Israeli flag and the Temple,”<sup>37</sup> and pamphlets being thrown onto the Haram al-Sharif by members of the Kach group, calling for the removal of the mosques to Syria or Iran and the building of the Third Temple.<sup>38</sup>



Courtesy Chad Emmett

FIG. 8. One version of the temple some Jews wish to construct on the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount after removing the Muslim mosques located there. The model is displayed in a museum at the Temple Mount Yeshiva in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City.

In the meantime, Muslims have moved ahead with their own plans for the Haram al-Sharif. In order to accommodate more Muslims for prayers, the vaulted area underneath the southeast corner of the Haram al-Sharif, once known as Solomon's Stables, has now been turned into the Marwani Mosque. In order to make the area more accessible and safer, the waqf administration recently knocked out a new entrance. Jews protested that this change to the Temple Mount was a violation of the status quo for holy places while Muslims believe they have the right to make changes that will safely accommodate the growing numbers of Muslims who gather for prayers.

### Afterword: Prayer for Peace

And so it continues, three religions and two peoples continuously at odds over control of one city. Both peoples and all three religions have compelling claims to the city. In a spirit of justice and equality and in recognition of Jerusalem's sanctity to Muslims, Christians, and Jews, I see no other way for the city to ever know peace than through sharing.<sup>39</sup> No one group is entitled to exclusive control. Jerusalem must be shared. It can be shared as an international city with equal authority granted to all three of its religions as envisioned in the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan, or it can be shared as an undivided, shared capital of the states of Israel and Palestine.<sup>40</sup> As Muslims, Jews, and Christians learn to equitably share their beloved Jerusalem, it will no longer be a "burdensome stone" (Zech. 12:3) in which conflicts abound.

We are commanded to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Ps. 122:6). We should work and pray for that peace now. We should, in the words of Howard W. Hunter, "not take sides" but instead recognize that both "Jews and the Arabs [Muslim and Christian] are children of our Father" and "children of promise" and that "the purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to bring about love, unity, and brotherhood of the highest order."<sup>41</sup> We can promote that high order by recognizing the sanctity of Jerusalem to all of Abraham's children and encouraging them to share the sacred city peacefully.

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1. Alessandra Stanley, "At Meeting of 3 Faiths, Disharmony in 3 Parts," *New York Times*, March 24, 2000, A6.
2. Teddy Kollek, "Jerusalem," *Foreign Affairs* 55, no. 4 (1977): 701–16.
3. Walid Khalidi, "Thinking the Unthinkable: A Sovereign Palestinian State," *Foreign Affairs* 56, no. 4 (1978): 705.

4. Meron Benvenisti, *City of Stone: The Hidden History of Jerusalem* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 53.
5. Adnan Abu Odeh, "Two Capitals in an Undivided Jerusalem," *Foreign Affairs* 71, no. 2 (1992): 183–88.
6. Teddy Kollek, "Whose Jerusalem?" *New Outlook* 33, no. 1–2, (1990): 18–21.
7. Christian Palestinians also view Jerusalem and environs as holy and have been very involved in the Palestinian nationalist movement. See Chad F. Emmett, "Nationalism among Christian Palestinians," *Arab World Geographer* 2, no. 3 (1999): 202–19.
8. F. E. Peters, *Jerusalem: The Holy City in the Eyes of Chroniclers, Visitors, Pilgrims, and Prophets from the Days of Abraham to the Beginnings of Modern Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 179.
9. From the eighth century on, Jerusalem has been the traditional site of the farthest mosque; however, some early Islamic scholars suggested that if Muhammad's ascension into the heavens was part of his Night Journey then the farthest mosque, or distant shrine, was heaven and not Jerusalem. Peters, *Jerusalem*, 183.
10. Karen Armstrong, *Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 224; Ziad Abu-Amr, "The Significance of Jerusalem: A Muslim Perspective," *Palestine-Israeli Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture* 2, no. 2 (1995): 23–31.
11. Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, 224.
12. Abdul Aziz Duri, "Jerusalem in the Early Islamic Period: Seventh–Eleventh Centuries A.D.," in *Jerusalem in History: 3000 B.C. to the Present Day*, ed. Kamil J. Asali (London: Kegan Paul International, 1989), 116.
13. Duri, "Jerusalem in the Early Islamic Period," 105–25.
14. Walid Khalidi, *Islam, the West, and Jerusalem* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 1996), 6–7.
15. A. Fattal, *Le Statut légal des non-musulmans en pays d'Islam* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1958), 45–46, as quoted in Peters, *Jerusalem*, 185.
16. Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, 228–29.
17. G. Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems* (Beirut: Khayats, 1965), 89–113, as quoted in Peters, *Jerusalem*, 195.
18. S. D. Goitein, *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1966), 135–40.
19. Al-Muqaddasi, *Description of Syria, including Palestine*, translated and annotated by G. Le Strange, *Palestine Pilgrims Text Society* 3 (New York: AMS Press, 1971), 22–23, as quoted in Peters, *Jerusalem*, 198.
20. In 1996, Israel celebrated the three-thousandth anniversary of David's establishment of the city as the capital of the Kingdom of Israel.
21. Sari Nusseibeh, quoted in Maher Abukhater, "Jerusalem Can Remain United but Should Be Shared," *Al-Fajr*, March 12, 1990, 5.
22. Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, 231.
23. Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, 233.
24. For example, of the seventy-three square kilometers that make up East Jerusalem, 34 percent has been expropriated from Palestinians for the use of Jewish settlers (population now at 170,000) and an additional 44 percent has been declared "unzoned" for Palestinian construction. Walid Khalidi, *Islam, the West, and Jerusalem*, 13. The Palestinian village of Isawiya (on the northeast side of Mount Scopus), with a pre-1967 size of 10,000 dunams, has been gradually whittled down by the Israeli authorities to just 660 dunams. Graham Usher, "Returning to the Source: The Politics of Housing in East Jerusalem," *Jerusalem Quarterly File*, no. 1 (1998): 19–22. Between 1967 and 1987, 540 Arab homes in Jerusalem were demolished by Israeli authorities, and since the Oslo agreement in 1993, over a hundred homes have been destroyed. Rashid



Khalidi, "Transforming the Face of the Holy City: Political Messages in the Built Topography of Jerusalem," *Jerusalem Quarterly File*, pt. 2, no. 4 (1999): <http://www.jqf-jerusalem.org/journal/1999/jqf4/khalidi.html>.

25. Michael Dumper, *Islam and Israel: Muslim Religious Endowments and the Jewish State* (Washington, D.C.: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1994), 1–11.

26. *Memorandum on the Israeli Violation of the Religious Status Quo at the Wailing Wall, Jerusalem* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1968).

27. As a Brigham Young University student in Jerusalem in 1982, I experienced firsthand this prohibition on religious activity. During a field trip to the Mount, our religion professor had us gather in the shade of the Dome of the Rock to read a few New Testament scriptures about the temple. Before long, waqf officials broke up the gathering, scriptures went back into our backpacks, and our instructor apologized for not knowing the rules. These rules against non-Muslim prayer and study evolved out of experiences at the Western Wall and the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, where allowing Jews to pray gradually led to their bringing in tables, benches, and religious fixtures, which were then utilized to strengthen Jewish claims.

28. Roger Friedland and Richard D. Hecht, "The Politics of Sacred Place: Jerusalem's Temple Mount/*al-haram al-sharif*," in *Sacred Places and Profane Spaces: Essays in the Geographics of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Jamie Scott and Paul Simpson-Housley (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 21–61.

29. Bernard Wasserstein, "Trouble on the Temple Mount," *Midstream: A Monthly Jewish Review* 28, no. 7 (1982): 5–9.

30. Barbara Ledeen and Michael Ledeen, "The Temple Mount Plot," *The New Republic*, June 18, 1984, 20–23.

31. Ledeen and Ledeen, "Temple Mount Plot," 20–23.

32. Ilene R. Prusher, "A Trip into Jerusalem's Tunnel of Trouble," *The Christian Science Monitor* October 1, 1996, 1, 5.

33. Lisa Pevtzow, "Apocalypse Now," *Jerusalem Post*, International Edition, March 5, 1994, 10–11.

34. Haim Shapiro, "Etzion Held Again for Mount Prayer Bid," *Jerusalem Post*, International Edition, August 6, 1997.

35. Adnan Hussein, interview by author, August 4, 1997, Jerusalem.

36. Shawn L. Twing, comp., "Temple Mount Faithful Lay Cornerstone for Third Temple," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* (January/February 1998): 40.

37. Jake Abrams, "Wanted: The Third Temple," *The Jerusalem Report*, October 12, 1998, 14.

38. Nina Pinto, "Waqf Closes Temple Mount after Kach Provocation," *Ha'aretz*, July 23, 1999.

39. The idea of sharing territory to avoid conflict goes back to Abraham. When there was strife between the herdsmen of Abraham and the herdsmen of his nephew Lot, Abraham said to Lot, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left" (Gen. 13:8–9).

40. See Chad F. Emmett, "The Status Quo Solution for Jerusalem," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 26, no. 2 (1997): 16–28.

41. Howard W. Hunter, "All Are Alike unto God," *1979 Devotional Speeches of the Year: BYU Devotional and Fireside Addresses* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1980): 32–36.