

Focus On Israel

Jerusalem — The Ancient And The New — Reunited

By Kenny Gross

When the State of Israel was proclaimed on May 15, 1948 and it was furiously attacked on all sides by its surrounding Arab neighbors duly aided by Iraq, Libya and others, the Old City of Jerusalem—the eastern portion—was in the hands of the Arab legion of Jordan. This army was British trained and led. It was the pride of the Arab world.

The volunteer forces of the Hagana and the Irgun were hammering at the walls of the Old City in a desperate effort to free its entrapped Jewish population which had lived in the Jewish Quarter for centuries and which contained the western wall of the Temple. Beyond this quarter were Mount Scopus (site of the first Hebrew university and Hadassah Hospital), Mount of Olives (the ancient and modern Jewish cemetery) and numerous places of religious and historical import such as Rachel's Tomb.

Only a few more days were needed to break through on a large front—a small breach had already been achieved—when acting under extreme pressure from The United Nations, Ben Gurion sadly agreed to a cease-fire. These arbitrary cease-fire lines subsequently formed the boundary of Israel and Jordan and divided Jerusalem in two parts with no natural divisions. Barricades and unsightly barbed wire marked the prohibited areas. Arab legionnaires stood on high perches on walls overlooking the western (Jewish) section, toying with loaded rifles, while Israeli children played in the streets below.

Chaos ruled in the Israeli sector because of numerous detours and blocked entrances and exits. Christian Arabs—acceptable to both sides—became prosperous smugglers. This situation could not hold indefinitely and all were expectantly awaiting a realistic solution from the United Nations truce officials but nothing was forthcoming. Terrorism on the part of the Jordanians abounded. The U.N. had arranged for a weekly Israeli

convoy to the university and hospital on Mount Scopus, for maintenance purposes. The route traversed areas of no man's land and some Jordanian controlled. It was not long before the unarmed convoy was attacked and butchered with a disastrous loss of lives. No reaction by U.N.

Access to the western wall by Jews for prayer, was part of the Armistice agreement. This never materialized. Jews were forbidden.

This explosive situation finally detonated in 1967. The Jordanians, despite appeals from Israel and others, joined Egypt and other Arab nations in the onslaught of June 1967 which culminated in the 6-day war. They shelled the Israeli sector of Jerusalem. Israel retaliated, not with shell fire (this may have damaged holy places of Christians, Muslims and Jews), but with localized actions by paratroops, a number of whom sacrificed their lives so that the city could be spared. On the 5th day, East Jerusalem and the Old City fell into Israeli hands.

Jerusalem—the whole of Jerusalem—was free. The Kotel (western wall) was thrown open to all. I danced with Yeshiva Bochers (students) round and round the enlarged square. We hugged the wall and prayed silently with streaming eyes. This was the climax of 2000 years. I had never before realized the force of the emotion for Jerusalem, that had been built up in me over generations of yearning.

But sorrow and reality were soon to follow. The Jordanians had desecrated things precious to Jews. The cemetery on Mount of Olives had been reduced to rubble. Headstones had been removed and smashed to be used in

the building of roads. It took my family 9 years to trace the whereabouts of my grandfather's grave. The old approach way to the western wall was used as a lavatory.

In the U.N. a sudden turn manifested itself. During the 6-day war Israel was heroic, was the victim of Arab aggression and all peoples prayed for its survival. When victory was assured, violent attacks on Israel by a number of heads of states were suddenly unleashed by such as De Gaulle, Kosygin and his satellites in eastern Europe and from other surprising sources such as Great Britain, Pakistan and India.

Israel was guilty of becoming a victor—no longer a recipient of sympathy—the victory was too convincing. The Arabs were now the aggrieved party—the victim of aggression. Israelis were bewildered at this dramatic change and for the first time, began to feel the sting of attacks at U.N. (usually for selfish political reasons) by nations always regarded as friendly. Overnight the popular cause of Israel became a subject of bitter tirades. And so it has been since.

Israelis, when they recovered from this shock, began to realize and to openly declare that the only true and reliable friends, proven in time of need, were their brothers, the Jews of the Diaspora. Never again would they depend on the friendship of nations. And so it has been to this day.

This realization soon made itself evident when the plans for the future of the West Bank—now reverted to its historical name Judea and Samaria—were debated. Jerusalem must be developed in such a way that

it could never again be isolated nor surrounded by Arab forces.

New "Shikunim" (building complexes) were planned and built on "open" areas on the entire perimeter of Jerusalem. New roads extending to the whole of Judea and Samaria were built to enable new settlements to be established on strategic high points throughout the area—all this with the security of Israel and its center point Jerusalem, in particular, in mind. Jerusalem must be protected from every angle and the hinterland of Judea and Samaria must be covered with settlements to ensure this.

This program proceeded with ever increasing momentum, especially since Menachem Begin's election in 1977. The future of Jerusalem, and therefore of Israel, depends upon its ability to withstand attacks, in particular, from the north and east. The only way to plan this is to build more and more settlements.

This policy has, at times, proven unpopular with even some of Israel's friends—such as the U.S.A. but in the matter of survival, Israel is prepared to be unpopular. She learned her lesson in 1967.

And so it has been resolved and reconfirmed by Jews, the world over, that Jerusalem must never again be divided—one city—the capital of Israel once more,

with guaranteed access by all peaceful peoples to their revered holy shrines.

And every settlement that is established in Judea and Samaria is another bastion to secure this. Let us not be overimpressed by criticism—even in this U.S.A. and elsewhere when this policy is attacked. Every political attack on the settlement programmed is an attack on the integrity of Jerusalem. A concession on "settlements" will invite a demand for the "return" of East Jerusalem to the Arabs.

Jerusalem (City of Gold), united and whole, must be established beyond any doubt before the settlement program is complete, come what may. The distances from Jerusalem to Hebron, Jericho, Nablus (ancient Shechem) are in terms of 20 to 30 miles. This is how close the avenging enemy is to Jerusalem.

Nothing, politically, compares to the security of Jerusalem in importance to Israel. This is a single-minded objective which brooks no interference. When this has been achieved, then Israel can settle terms for the integration of the Palestinian Arabs either into Jordan or Israel, not into an autonomous Arabstan, but as free and rightful citizens. With patience, tolerance and understanding on the part of all, this can and will be achieved. This is our dream.



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