HOW HOLY IS PALESTINE TO THE MUSLIMS?

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ACCORDING to *Webster's International Dictionary*, the word 'holy' means: (1) set apart or dedicated to the service or worship of God or a god; (2) dedicated to or laying claim to being dedicated to a sacred or selfless purpose; (3) venerated because of association with someone or something holy. In *Random House Dictionary*, the meaning, among others, is: 'specially recognised as, or declared, sacred by religious use or authority'.

I think the meaning should be regarded historically and not only statically. In developed religions, the world is divided into two definite parts, one of which is given special treatment. This special part is called 'holy' or 'sacred', and is distinguished from the other part by taboos, rituals, worship, and other acts of veneration. [See p. 35, *Introduction to Religion*, by W. L. King, Harper, 1954.]

Also, something can be 'holy' or 'sacred' by contiguity or association. To quote from the same book: 'Religions at all levels of development frequently build shrines and houses of worship at their sacred spots. These places of worship . . . sometimes gain a sacredness in their own right; for not every temple, church, synagogue or mosque is built at a place that was formerly sacred. Its very construction hallows the spot, however unholy before. Nevertheless, a multitude of them have been built on locations previously sacred to the faith—the place of the founder's birth, the scene of one of his great deeds, the site of some striking event in the history of the religion, or a locality bearing some association with a hero or saint. Jerusalem, called the Holy City by Christian, Jew and Moslem, is an excellent illustration' [p. 37, ibid.]. In this sense, Jerusalem, the Holy City, has endowed the rest of Palestine with holiness by contiguity and association. Moses, the founder of the Jewish faith, was never associated with Jerusalem; but his having been a Jewish leader and Jerusalem having been chosen by David as his capital and by Solomon as the site of the Temple, with the association between the three Jewish leaders, have had the effect of making Jerusalem holy for the Jews for their entire history. Historical or legendary association may also endow a place, such as a site, a town, or even a country, with sanctity. This hardly

needs illustration, as it is prevalent among many nations and in many religions. The Promised Land is sometimes regarded as 'holy' because of the ancient Jewish belief that God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants. This 'holiness' does not require the presence of any ancient buildings, monuments, or even relics. Palestine, the Holy Land, is 'holy' to the Jews, although, after the first century A.D., and for a considerable time, they ceased to have anything physical in the country to which they could direct their veneration. The Jewish religious presence was almost effaced. The position, in so far as Christianity and Islam are concerned, is different. The two faiths constantly had their historical and legendary associations fortified by actual presence and by historical monuments and shrines.

Holiness can also develop as a side-effect, or as an offshoot, of nationalism. This particular case applies to Palestine from the Muslim point of view. Although Palestine as a whole was not regarded by Muslims in the early period of Islam as particularly holy in its entirety, yet it became so, as a result of the Crusades which forced upon the Muslims the idea of its holiness, by extension. The Jewish immigration, in bulk, after 1918, reinforced the idea further.

Of the three or four concepts of 'holiness' mentioned above, those applicable to Christianity and Islam seem to be more comprehensive, in the sense that they fulfil all the essential characteristics of holiness. There are the religious, the historical, the concrete, and the continued-presence elements, with popular traditions and folklore.

Palestine, known by its various other names as 'The Promised Land', 'The Land of the Book', 'The Land of Canaan', 'The Holy Land', and 'The Land of Israel', was known to the Arabs and the Muslims as 'Filistin' or 'Filastin', which is another version of 'Philistia' or, perhaps, the Hebrew name 'Pelesheth'. The territory promised to Abraham and his seed (Gen. 15 : 18–21) was bounded on the east by the river Euphrates, on the west by the Mediterranean, and on the north by the 'entrance of Hamath, and on the south by the "river of Egypt" '. This vast territory is what the Israelis now claim to be their rightful patrimony, and they, on the basis of the legendary 'Land of Promise', have founded their true, but unavowed, policy of expansion. There is, over the entrance of the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, a map showing the 'Land of Promise' in its Biblical boundaries. Palestine was only a part of this territory, extending in the north from the southern end of the Lebanon mountains and in the south to the wilderness of Paran (known in Arabic now as Badiat al-Tih).[1]

[1] According to G. Harold Lancaster, 'The Land of Promise' comprises East Africa, Uganda, Abyssinia, Somalia, the Sudan, Nubia, Egypt, Arabia, Palestine, Syria, the Syrian desert, Mesopotamia and the district of the Persian Gulf [p. 177, *Prophecy, the War and the Near East*, Marshall Bros., London, 1919].

Under the Arabs, Filistin extended from Rafah in the south, to Al-Lajjūn (Megiddo) (part of the Plain of Esdraelon), and from Jaffa in the west to Jericho in the east [Al-Istakhri, quoted p. 92, *Chrestomatha Arabica*, by Aug. Arnold, London, 1853]. The country across the Jordan, from Aila, the modern Aqaba or Elath, up to the north of Beisan (Bethshan), used to belong to Filistin. Tiberias used to belong to Jordan, and the northern parts of Palestine, north of the Plain of Esdraelon, used to belong to the Province of Syria [p. 94, ibid.]

This Arab division was not permanent. It underwent various modifications and alterations, under diverse rulers. The latest Arab name, just before, or for a short period after, the British Occupation, was 'Southern Syria', because Palestine then was mainly divided between the Wilayets (Governorates) of Damascus and Beirut, both in Syria as it was then constituted, with Jerusalem and its environments forming what was then internationally known as the 'Sanjaq Mustaqil'—'Self-Governing Prefecture'.[1] Nevertheless, the name 'Filistin', thanks mainly to Arabic literature, historiography, geography and Islamic tradition, was kept alive. In Christian literature, Palestine as The Holy Land also looms large. To take one or two points in the history of the name, Palestine under Constantine was divided into three provinces: Palestina Prima, Palestina Secunda, and Palestina Tertia. Under the Turks, after 1517, Syria was divided into five Pashaliks, or provinces, and one of them was the pashalik of Palestine [p. 138, *Travels Through Syria and Egypt*, vol. ii, London, 1787 by M. C. F. Volney]. Apparently, this division roughly corresponds to the Arab division of the country, where there were three principal towns to control the three districts around them, namely, Beisan, Qisaria (Caesarea), and Ramla. Under the Turks, Gaza, and sometimes Jerusalem, was the principal town in the south instead of Ramla [ibid.] The Arabic Qisaria was known under the Romans as Caesarea Palestinae [p. 185, *Dr. Smith's Classical Dictionary*, London, 1904].

The Arabs in the south, and south-east were constantly connected with Palestine throughout its history. Some authorities even go to the length of saying that the Canaanites were Arabs. The Idumeans, the Moabites, and the Nabathaeans were more Arab than anything else, and these had a great deal to do with the history of Palestine under the Jews, the Greeks, and the Romans. Herodes I, commonly known as Herod the Great, King of the Jews, was an Arab. The Arabs were known to have carried out an extensive trade between the Red Sea and the

[1] Previously, under Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ma'nī (1590–1633), Palestine and greater Syria were integrated into one unit called 'Arabstan'—the Land of the Arabs [p. 648, *The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopaedia*, Michigan, 1953].

[2] It is interesting to note that after the collapse of the Jewish rebellion in A.D. 135, even Judea was named Syria Palestinae [p. 509, *A History of the Roman Empire*, by J. B. Bury, London, 1925].

Mediterranean, across the Sinai Peninsula, and from Aila or Elath to Gaza. One of the ancestors of the Prophet, Hāshim ibn Abd-Manaf, is buried in Gaza.[1] The second Caliph of Islam, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, was taken prisoner at Gaza in one of the trade missions before Islam, 'because it (Palestine) was the route for the people of Hejaz' [p. 94, *Chrestomatha Arabica* by Arnold, London, 1853]. Even the Prophet himself is said to have passed through the same route, and some Christian authorities claim that the Prophet, on one of his commercial journeys, met, at a monastery in Sinai, a Christian monk who initiated him into a certain version of the Christian religion.

Thus the Arabs, before Islam, were aware of the existence of Palestine and of what was happening there. Kings of Arabia were in contact with Jews in Palestine, and according to a tradition in Kitāb al-Aghānī (tenth century), a phase of the settlement of the Jews at Medina in Hejaz is associated with one of the great Jewish revolts of A.D. 66–70, or 132–5 [p. 211 (note), *A History of Jerusalem* by J. Gray, London, 1969]. This author says in the same place that 'Muhammad himself had seen the cities of Syria on his humbler trading expeditions, and was evidently aware of, and indeed horrified by, the havoc wrought by the Persian invaders and their Jewish allies in the sanctuaries in Jerusalem'. According to the commentary of Al-Khāzin, the Qur'ānic verse: 'But who does greater wrong than he who bars the sanctuaries of God from having His name mentioned in them and who busies himself to destroy them' refers to Titus Vespasianus, the Roman, and his fellows 'who attacked the Israelites, slaughtered their fighters, took into captivity their families, burned the Torah, destroyed Beit al-Maqdis and cast carrion into it and slew swine in it, and this remained in ruins until the Muslims rebuilt it during the reign of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab'. Palestine is also said to have been referred to in the Qur'ānic verse: 'And We gave them (Mary and Jesus) a shelter on a lofty ground having meadows and springs' [p. 686, *The Holy Qur'an* by Muḥammad Ali, Woking, 1917].

But Palestine, already known by Arabs and Muslims before the Arab conquest to be holy because of Judaism and Christianity, both recognized and revered by Islam, did not acquire its particularly Islamic sanctity until a few years after the beginning of the Prophet's mission. The first significant act in this direction occurred when the Prophet ordered the Muslim worshippers to turn their faces in prayer towards Jerusalem when the Muslims were still in Mecca. When they moved to Medina, they continued to turn their faces in the same direction for about 16 or 17 months, after which time the Prophet ordered the direction to be changed to Mecca [Al-Khāzin's commentary, p. 103, Cairo, A.H. 1331, and

[1] Al-Istakhri, as quoted on p. 94, *Chrestomatha Arabica* of Arnold, London, 1853.

Al-Tabari, vol. 2, p. 265, as quoted by Dr. I. M. Husseini in his *The Arab Character of Jerusalem* (in Arabic), Cairo, 1968). The second significant act in the evolution of the Islamic holiness of Palestine is the ascension of the Prophet into heaven from Jerusalem, from a spot somewhere near or in the area of the Temple. This is enshrined in the famous Qur'anic verse: 'Glory be to Him who made His servant to go at night from the sacred mosque to the remote mosque of which we have blessed the precincts, so that We may show to him some of Our signs.' The accepted interpretation of this verse has it that the reference here is to Jerusalem, 'The significance being that the Prophet shall inherit all the blessings of the Israelite prophets, including the Holy Land' [p. 561, *The Holy Qur'an*, Muḥammad Ali, Woking, 1917]. The 'remote mosque', according to tradition, is said to be an ancient holy place of Proto-Islam, and to have been founded only 40 years after the foundation of the Ka'ba (in Mecca) by Abraham. Jerusalem was therefore the first *qibla* (direction in prayer) in Islam, before the Ka'ba in Mecca, which is the second, and the 'remote mosque' or 'Al-Aqsa', as it is better known, is the third sacred sanctuary in Islam, with the Ka'ba in Mecca and the Prophet's sanctuary in Medina as the first and second respectively. The word 'precincts' in the above-quoted verse is said to refer to the environs of Jerusalem, or even to the whole of Palestine. The Prophet is reported to have said: 'Journeys should not be made except to three mosques: this my mosque (in Medina), the sacred mosque (in Mecca), and Al-Aqsa Mosque.' [Al-Bukhari, as quoted by Dr. I. M. Husseini in his book referred to previously.] Al-Suyūti, in his lesser collection of traditions, reports a saying by the Prophet to the effect that 'God, the Supreme Being, has blessed what lies between Al-Arish (in Egyptian Sinai) and the Euphrates, with a special sanctification of Palestine'. He is also reported to have said about Beit al-Maqdis (Jerusalem sanctuary) that 'it is the land of the in-gathering and of aggregation; go to it and worship in it, for one act of worship there is like a thousand acts of worship elsewhere'. Another reported tradition says: 'Whoever dies in the Jerusalem sanctuary is as if he has died in heaven.' Ibn-Abbas reports that the Prophet said: 'Whoever goes on pilgrimage to the Jerusalem sanctuary and worships there in one and the same year will be cleared of his sins.' This explains in a way the keenness of the Muslims on making a subsidiary pilgrimage to Jerusalem, after or before their main pilgrimage to Mecca. It is highly desirable for Muslims to begin their pilgrimage rites in Jerusalem. Many eminent Muslims in the early period of Islam, such as Ibn-Umar, Mu'āth, and Ka'b al-Ahbār, put on their ritual pilgrimage vestments in Jerusalem before proceeding to Mecca.

Muslims believe, according to a tradition or a popular legend reminiscent of a similar Jewish and Christian one, that the Day of Judgement

will be in Jerusalem. A story in popular repertory runs that on the Day of Judgement, when Christ is sitting on the wall between the Golden Gate and Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the Prophet on the mountain opposite, a single hair will be stretched from a column there across the valley, over which the multitudes assembled on the Haram (the area where Al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock stand) will have to pass. The hills will recede and the valley deepen, and the righteous will walk fearlessly across, well knowing that, if they falter, their guardian angels are ready to hold them up by their forelocks, and save them from tumbling headlong into hell, which is gaping beneath. Thus will they cross until only a handful are left, who seem ill at ease, and reluctant to set foot on so narrow a bridge. Muḥammad inquires why they linger, and is informed that they are the wicked Muslims who, having now been smitten with a sense of their misdoings, and realizing that their virtue will not suffice to help them over the abyss, are awaiting the Prophet's pleasure on this side in fear and misgiving. Muḥammad looks stern, and rebukes them for their neglect of his rules and ordinances; and then he smiles a little to himself, and in a moment is across the bridge and among them. They then repent, and so they cross the bridge without mishap [p. 87, *The Prince of the East*, by H. C. Lukach, London, 1913]. This legend is in some way similar to another relating to the Prophet's ascension into heaven. The Prophet, on the night of the ascension, worshipped in the sanctuary in Jerusalem, in the company of his predecessors, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, before he was escorted up a ladder of light to the presence of God in the seventh heaven. His magic steed, the Burāq, was in the meantime tethered only a short distance from the site of the present Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Wailing Wall is more familiarly known by Muslims as the Buraq Wall. During this ascension night, some commentators assert, verse 44 of Sura 43 in the Qur'an was revealed [see the commentaries of Al-Khāzin and Al-Nasafi]. The ascent, according to tradition, was from a rock. About this rock there are many legends in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Sir John Maundeville gives a number of such legends in the account of his visit to Jerusalem around the year A.D. 1322 [pp. 170–1, *Early Travels in Palestine*, Bohn's Library, London, 1848]. In Islam, the tradition is that the Prophet, on the night of the ascension, prayed on the right of the rock, and that when he started to ascend the ladder on his way up to heaven, the rock rose from its place and attempted to follow. The angel Gabriel stopped it, and it is said that the rock spoke at that time, as it spoke to the Caliph 'Umar when he visited the spot after the surrender of Jerusalem to the Muslims. On the Day of Judgement, according to another tradition, the Ka'ba in Mecca will come to the Rock (*Sakhra* in Arabic). God's throne will then rest upon the Rock. Other legends or traditional stories about the Rock

are still current among Muslims. They are inextricably interwoven with Jewish and Christian traditions. For further examples see *Jerusalem* by M. Join-Lambert, Elek, London, 1958; and also p. 222 in *A History of Jerusalem* by J. Gray, mentioned previously.

Such legends and stories are not peculiar to Islam. Indeed, they are universal, in all religions. I would like to refer the sceptical reader, by way of illustration, to the story of Elijah ascending into heaven in a fiery chariot, the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, and the revelation of St. John the Divine. There is also the passage in St. Matthew about Jesus talking with Moses and Elias. The story of St. Iranius, bishop of Lyons in the second century, is similar to the Prophet's ascension.

All Islamic traditions and sacred writings point to the unmistakable fact that Jerusalem is holy for all Muslims, second only in holiness to Mecca and Medina. It is the first *qibla* and the third of the sacred cities. The only sanctuaries precedent to Al-Haram in Jerusalem are the Ka'ba in Mecca and the Haram (sanctuary) of Medina.

For all these religious reasons Jerusalem is holy to the Muslims. The names in Arabic, by which it is known by Arabs and Muslims, is Al-Quds, Beit al-Maqdis, and Al-Beit al-Muqaddas—all of which derive from the triliteral root of QDS, which means 'holy', 'sacred', or 'hallowed'. Sometimes Jerusalem is called also Al-Quds al-Sharīf—'The Noble Jerusalem'. The word 'sharīf', 'noble', is normally added to the names of exceptionally sacred shrines. Thus Al-Haram, where Al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock stand, is called Al-Haram al-Sharīf.

The triple holiness of Jerusalem does not weaken the Muslim case; rather, it reinforces it. Islam believes in Judaism and Christianity, and regards their founders, such as Moses, David, Solomon, and Jesus as prophets, equal to Muhammad. In the Qur'an, there are no fewer than 8 chapters bearing names of Hebrew prophets and having Hebrew associations. David and Solomon alone are mentioned no fewer than 33 times in the Qur'an. In the whole of the New Testament, these two names are not mentioned more than 30 times, the share of Solomon being only 8 as against 17 in the Qur'an. The belief of Christians in the Old Testament is not to be taken as a detraction from the sanctity of the New Testament.[1] A relevant story is told by the pilgrim Felix Fabri (and quoted by Col. Sir C. M. Watson in his book *The Story of Jerusalem*, London, 1912, p. 256), that the Muslims took away a place called The Tomb of David from the Christians for the following reasons. 'The Jews have many times begged the Sultan to give them that place, that they may make an oratory of it, and they beg it of him even to this day; while the Christians always

[1] Incidentally, Zion is not only the holy hill in Jerusalem, the Hebrew theocracy, and Jerusalem for the Jews, but it is also the Christian Church and the Kingdom of Heaven for the Christians.

refused it to them. So, at last, the Sultan inquired wherefore this place was holy. When he was told that David and the other kings of Jerusalem of his seed were buried there, he said: "We Saracens also count David holy, even as the Christians and the Jews do, and we believe the Bible as they do. Wherefore, neither the Christians nor the Jews shall have that place, but we will take it for ourselves."' Felix Fabri, a Dominican Father from Germany, visited Palestine in 1480 and 1483. Palestine was then under the Mamluk Sultans of Egypt.

However, these Islamic religious feelings were concretized in the course of subsequent history. Jerusalem surrendered to the Arabs under 'Umar, the Second Caliph, in the year A.D. 637, and continued to be in Arab hands for nearly 900 years, and in Muslim hands for nearly 1,300 years, with a break of about 90 years when Jerusalem was in the hands of the Crusaders. Jerusalem then was not a Jewish city; it was a completely Christian one. The Arabs did not take it from the Jews, who after the years A.D. 70 and 135 had almost entirely disappeared. Nothing of the Jewish Temple remained after A.D. 70, and the Jews, after the last rebellion in A.D. 132–5, ceased to have any significant existence in Palestine as a whole, and from that time, 'the Jews were destined to be a kingdom not of this earth' [p. 14, *The Decadence of Judaism in Our Own Time* by Moshe Menuhin, Beirut, 1969]. In the covenant between the Muslims and the Patriarch of Jerusalem, it was stipulated to the Christians that 'no Jews shall reside with them'. History records, on the authority of two Greek historians, Eutychus and Theophanes, and of Muslim historians, that 'Umar was led to the spot from which the Prophet ascended into heaven. 'The precinct was encumbered with debris of the recent Persian destruction and with the rubbish of the Christian city to such an extent that the gate at the southwest by which they entered was almost totally filled up. But that presented no obstacle to Umar, and the proud prelate felt obliged to crawl first on all fours and clear a way for his guest. It was then that 'Umar inaugurated the clearing of the famous rock above the cave. The pollution here apparently prevented its immediate consecration, so that the first sanctuary of Islam in Jerusalem was on the site of Al-Aqsa Mosque' [pp. 219–20, *A History of Jerusalem* by J. Gray, Robert Hale, London, 1969]. John Gray adds to this that 'it is recorded that as 'Umar stood on the site of the Temple in the shabby patched shift of clothes in which he had ridden up from Medina to Syria, the Patriarch Sophronius shed tears and muttered into his beard the quotation from the Book of Daniel (12 : 11) about the abomination of desolation standing, where he should not, as Theophanes casts an invidious glance at 'Umar's interest in the holy places also of Christianity. "Diabolical hypocrisy" is the venomous remark of the Byzantine Chronicler, but this is in itself evidence of

the moderation of the great-souled, wise ruler of Islam, who in reverent simplicity regarded Jerusalem as the Holy City of both faiths' [p. 220, ibid.]. It is also recorded that it was a converted Jew who helped the Caliph in finding the Rock [p. 169, *Jerusalem* by Michel Join-Lambert, Elek, London, 1966].

In this visit, 'Umar is said to have ordered the erection of a mosque. Arab historians are not agreed as to the identity or the exact location of this mosque. But it must have been a very primitive one, somewhere to the south of the Temple area.[1] Conder, in his book *The City of Jerusalem* [John Murray, London, 1909], says ' 'Umar prayed in Justinian's basilica of the Virgin. He is said to have visited the Sakhra (Rock), which he purified.' Eutychus says that in Constantine's time 'the rock and the parts adjacent thereto were ruinous, and were thus left alone. They cast dirt on the stone, so that a great dunghill was piled upon it, wherefore the Romans (or Byzantines) neglected it, and did not pay it the honour which the Israelites were wont to do, neither did they build a church over it, for that our Lord Jesus Christ said in the Gospel, "Behold your House shall be left unto you desolate." Umar caused it to be purified, and then someone said, "Let us build a temple with the Stone for Qibla"; but Umar answered, "Not so, but let us build the shrine so as to place the stone behind it." ' Perhaps there was in the minds of early Muslims some vague association between the Black Stone in Mecca and the Stone or the Rock in Jerusalem. This may have endowed the Shrine of the Rock, or the Dome of the Rock, as it is popularly known, with an enhanced sanctity.

The Dome of the Rock, or Qubbat al-Sakhra in Arabic, was built by Abdul-Malik, the fifth Umayyad Caliph of Damascus, around the year 72 of Hijra (A.D. 691). It is built over the rock which is associated in Jewish and Islamic traditions with Abraham's intended sacrifice of his son and with Solomon who built the Temple. Abdul-Malik built also about the same time the Dome of the Chain (Qubbat al-Silsilah), so called from the Islamic tradition that David, recognized as prophet in Islam, was given a chain of silver by the Archangel Gabriel, which he used to suspend there when he wanted to give his judgement. A bell was attached to the chain, and when the litigants pulled the chain, the bell would ring only if the litigant who pulled the chain was innocent; otherwise, the bell would not ring, or, according to another tradition, the chain itself would recede until well beyond the reach of the culprit. Another tradition still has a different version: 'In order to discriminate between

[1] This mosque is believed to have been built of wood in the year A.H 15 (A.D. 637), capable of accommodating about three thousand worshippers [p. 66 in a pamphlet in Arabic, published in Amman, on the burning of Al-Aqsa Mosque on 21 August 1969].

right and wrong, Solomon, Son of David, hung up a chain between heaven and earth, in such wise that he who was in the right could reach up to it, but he who was wrongful could not do so. Now it happened that a Jew, to whom one hundred dinars had been given, denied having taken them. The matter was put to decision by the chain. Then, the Jew, who had melted down the hundred dinars and secreted them in his walking stick, gave this stick to the rightful owner of the money, at the same time swearing that he had returned the hundred dinars to him. The plaintiff, however, swore that he had not received them. From that day onwards, the chain was wont to levitate. It is said that the chain was in place of the said dome [pp. 172–3, *Jerusalem* by Michel Join-Lambert, Elek, London, 1966]. The Dome of the Chain is also called 'Mahkamat al-Nabī Dawūd'—'The Judgement Seat of the Prophet David'. Over the niche is written the Qur'anic verse: 'O David, verily we have made thee a viceregent, judge then between men with truth.'

The Dome of the Rock is believed to have been built for two other purposes, apart from the religious motive of concretizing the pious sentiments of Muslims regarding the Sacred Rock. One of them, as recorded by some Christian writers, is to distract the attention of Muslims from the magnificent Christian buildings and shrines, and to build for the Muslims something of which they could be proud. The other purpose, sometimes referred to in Arabic histories, is that Abdul-Malik thought to make Jerusalem a great Muslim religious centre, and a serious rival to Mecca and Medina. Abdullah ibn al-Zubair, a claimant of the Caliphate, was then in control of those two holy cities, and Abdul-Malik thought that he could divert pilgrimages to Jerusalem, and 'he conceived the idea of making Jerusalem the Qibla for the faithful, and, as he had no access to the Black Stone at Mecca, of inducing them to perambulate the Sakhra (the sacred rock) instead' [p. 238, *The City of Jerusalem* by C. R. Conder, John Murray, London, 1909]. He called Jerusalem Al-Quds, the Holy City, and it has since borne this name among the Arabs and Muslims. Among Arab historians, Al-Ya'qūbi, writing two centuries later, and Al-Muqaddasi (tenth century), a native of Jerusalem, confirm that the Dome of the Rock was built by Abdul-Malik. Al-Muqaddasi, after speaking about the building of the Umayyad Mosque by Al-Walīd, son of Abdul-Malik, says that 'in like manner, it is evident how the Caliph Abdul-Malik, noting the greatness of the Dome of the Holy Sepulchre and its magnificence, was moved lest it should dazzle the minds of the Muslims, and so erected above the Rock the present dome' [pp. 36–7, *Palestine* by Norman Bentwich, London, 1946].

This may strengthen the belief that Jerusalem for the Muslims could have been developed, with political help, into a city equal to Mecca and

Medina, and the Rock could have attained a sublime position equal to that of the Black Stone. Al-Muqaddasi, a tenth-century citizen of Jerusalem, already quoted, says 'verily, Mecca and Medina have claims to superiority on account of the Ka'ba and the Prophet, but in fact, on the Day of Judgement these two cities will come to Jerusalem and the perfection of all three will be united together'. The respective values of the three cities as places of prayer are stated to be as 10 for Jerusalem, 20 for Medina, and 30 for Mecca; but certain commentators, like Anas ibn Mālik, put the three of them on an equal footing [pp. 167–8, *Jerusalem* by Michel Join-Lambert, London, 1966].[1] Ludolph von Suchem, a Christian pilgrim from Germany, who visited Palestine in 1336–41, has this to say about the Dome of the Rock: 'The Saracens pay the greatest reverence to the Lord's Temple, keeping it exceedingly clean both within and without . . . They call it "The Holy Rock", not "The Temple", and therefore they say to one another, "Let us go to the Holy Rock". They do not say, "Let us go to the Temple". They call the Temple the "Holy Rock" because of a little rock which stands in the midst of the Temple area, fenced about with an iron railing. I have heard it said by Saracen renegades that no Saracen presumes to touch that rock, and that Saracens journey from distant lands devoutly to visit it. Indeed, God has deigned to show respect to this Rock in diverse ways, and has wrought many miracles thereon, as the Bible bears witness to us both in the Old and the New Testaments' [p. 249–50, *The Story of Jerusalem* by Col. Sir C. M. Watson, London, 1912]. This pilgrim may be simply reporting what he heard from people, and his description of the Rock at that time is inaccurate. The author, Col. Watson, gives a long extract from this pilgrim about the numerous traditions attached to the Rock, and then remarks as follows: 'Some of these traditions are, of course, absolutely baseless, as for example, that the Dome of the Rock was built on the same plan as that of the Temple of the Jews, and that the Golden Gate was in existence in the time of our Lord; but the extract is interesting as showing the manner in which traditions gradually accumulated in connection with the Sacred Rock, just as they did round the Holy Sepulchre and the Church of St. Mary on Mount Sion.'

The Umayyads enhanced the position of Jerusalem still further by the building of Al-Aqsa Mosque, sometimes referred to by Christian authors as 'Solomon's Temple'. The motive for the building must have been the establishment of a monument or a shrine to commemorate Al-Masjid al-Aqsa in the revelation, or, as some authorities say, to replace the primitive mosque of Umar by a sophisticated and solid one. It is not very clear

[1] Al-Idrisi, the famous Arab geographer (A.D. 1154), regarded Al-Aqsa and the Cathedral mosque of Cordova as the greatest Muslim shrines in his lifetime, giving precedence to the former over the latter [p. 68 in a pamphlet in Arabic published in Amman, 1969, on the burning of Al-Aqsa Mosque on 21 August 1969].

from Arab historians how Al-Aqsa Mosque developed. Christian authorities are divided on the same question. It is claimed, on the one hand, that the basilica of the Virgin of Justinian was converted into a mosque, and, on the other hand, that materials from this basilica were used in the building. It is not easy now to represent to the mind the original structure of the Mosque as built by al-Walīd (705–15), because it was repaired and altered on various occasions. During the Caliphate of the Abbasid Abū-Ja'far al-Mansūr (758–75), the Mosque was damaged by an earthquake, and was later repaired. Another earthquake caused the Mosque, during the Caliphate of the Abbasid Al-Mahdi (775–85), to be rebuilt in an altered form. In 1060, the roof fell in, and was repaired. Col. Watson, in his book *The Story of Jerusalem*, p. 190, already referred to, says that 'the Mosque of Aksa was completely transformed, and many additions were made to it'. Theodorich, who visited Jerusalem in 1172, describes it in the following words: 'Next comes, on the south, the Palace of Solomon, which is oblong, and supported by columns within, like a church, and, at the end, is round like a sanctuary, and covered by a great round dome, so that, as I have said, it resembles a church. This building, with all its appurtenances, has passed into the hands of the Knights Templars, who dwell in it and in the other buildings connected with it, having many magazines of arms, clothing, and food in it, and ever on the watch to guard and protect the country. They have below stables for horses, built by King Solomon himself in the days of old, adjoining the palace, which stables, we declare according to our reckoning, could take in ten thousand horses with their grooms.' Col. Watson adds to this the following remark: 'The new church here referred to, which was on the east side of the Mosque of Aksa, was not finished when Saladin captured the city (1187), and only the foundations remain, as he pulled it down, as well as many of the other additions made by the Templars, as he endeavoured to restore the Mosque to the condition in which it was, before the Christian occupation of Jerusalem (1099). It is easy to understand, having regard to the many changes which have been made in the Mosque of Aksa since its original foundation in A.D. 691 that its architectural history presents considerable difficulties, and that there are a number of different theories with regard to it. Of these theories, one of the least probable is that it was an adaptation of the great Church of St. Mary, built by the Emperor Justinian in the sixth century.'

Al-Muqaddasi, in 985, was the first to give us a description of Al-Aqsa. It is claimed that the building dates from very ancient times. According to one of the traditions, it was begun by Shem, the father of the Semites, forty years after the building of Ka'ba in Mecca. According to Burhan al-Dīn al-Fazari, quoted by Michel Join-Lambert in his book *Jerusalem*,

already referred to, Mary, mother of Jesus, who had been received in the Temple, had something to do with the Mosque. 'In Jerusalem, Allah revealed to Mary the good news of the coming of Jesus.' There is in the Mosque a mihrab (niche) called the Mihrab of Zacharia, the father of St. John the Baptist.

Inside the area of the two great sanctuaries, there are other shrines with Biblical associations, such as the two mosques of Qubbat Mūsa (Dome of Moses) and of Kursi Suleiman (Seat of Solomon). In the neighbourhood of the Dome of the Rock, there are smaller domes built by various distinguished Muslims over the centuries. These are the domes of al-Mi'rāj (Ascension), of the Prophet's Niche (Mihrāb al-Nabī), of Joseph, Moses, Solomon, Al-Khadr (St. George), and of David's Niche (Mihrāb Dawūd).

Around the Haram area and inside it, there are many minarets, halls, fountains, and cisterns built over the centuries, carrying inscriptions of the names of the founders. Inside Jerusalem, mosques at one time numbered 34. Many Zawiyyas or hospices were built for the comfort of pilgrims from all over the Islamic world. Among the famous ones are the Nagshabandiyya hospice for the pilgrims from Turkistan and Uzbeckistan, the Indian hospice, and the Qadiriyya hospice for the Afghani pilgrims [pp. 46–7, *The Arab Character of Jerusalem* by Dr. I. M. Husseini, Cairo, 1968 (in Arabic)]. There are other Zawiyyas, such as the Adhamiyya, Mawlawiyya, Khanki, Sheikh Jarrah, and Abus-Su'ūd.

John Gray in his book *A History of Jerusalem* says: 'Other parts of this spaced area within the Sacred Precinct have similar associations representing the growth of tradition throughout the ages, and various features have been added to the Precinct, such as schools and colleges, hospices for pilgrims and the more spectacular features of ornamental fountains and the open-air pulpit of the judge Burhān al-Dīn [d. 1456].'

Apart from the two main Muslim sanctuaries in Jerusalem, there is the 'Umari mosque opposite the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, on the site of which the Caliph 'Umar is said to have performed his prayer, having refused to pray in the Church for fear, as he told the accompanying prelate, that the Muslims might regard the Church as holy and try to take it for themselves. There is also the famous mosque of the Prophet David on Mount Sion. This was captured by the Israelis in the 1948 war with the Arabs, and has now been transformed into a synagogue. The Buraq mosque, another of the lesser sanctuaries, is contiguous to the Haram area from the west. According to tradition, the site is the place where the Prophet tethered his Buraq (or holy steed) before ascending into heaven. The wall of the Haram there is called by the Jews 'The Wailing Wall'. The place is an Islamic waqf (religious endowment) known as the waqf of Abu Madyan, after the name of one of the North African

sheikhs. The Jews claimed this as their own early during the British Mandate, and the issue was referred to an international commission under a Swede. The final finding of the commission, as laid down in its report, published in December, 1930, was that the Western Wall (the Wailing Wall) was an exclusively Muslim waqf property, and that the pavement between the wall and the North African quarter was also a Muslim waqf. But, after the Arab–Israeli war of 1967, this area was levelled down, and the North African quarter was demolished and the inhabitants were forced to leave.

Schools and colleges in Jerusalem were numerous. They used normally to be attached to mosques and hospices, and sometimes hospices themselves used to be centres of learning. In many cases, libraries were attached to the sanctuaries, as in the case of all the famous Muslim cathedral mosques, such as Al-Azhar (Cairo), Al-Zaitūna (Tunis), and Al-Qarawiyyīn (Fez). Of these schools and colleges, Al-Salāhiyya, Maimūniyya, Nasriyya, Tankiziyya, Arghūniyya, Khātūniyya, and Ashrafiyya were famous. Al-Salāhiyya was established by Saladin after the recapture of Jerusalem, and continued for a long time to be widely known in the Islamic world. The school was, however, handed over to the French Catholics by the Ottomans after the Crimean War (1853–6) with Russia. But, during the First World War, the school was revived by the Turks on modern lines, and many foreign languages were taught there. In 1917, the British gave it back to the French Catholics. The Nasriyya School was later known as Al-Ghazāliyya, after the name of the great Muslim theologian Abū-Hāmid al-Ghazāli who stayed there and was able during his stay in Jerusalem to work on his *magnum opus*, *The Revival of the Sciences of Religion*. The Ashrafiyya School was built by Al-Ashraf Qaitbay, the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt in 1482. The author of *Al-Uns al-Jalīl* describes it as 'the third gem in the Haram area after the Dome of the Rock and the Dome of Al-Aqsa'.

These Muslim monuments, especially Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, have always been the object of reverence and solicitude by Arab and Muslim rulers, not to mention the millions and millions of devout Muslims all over the world. Al-Aqsa Mosque was built by the Umayyad Caliph al-Walīd. Some Arab historians, however, say that it was begun by Abdul-Malik and only completed by his son al-Walīd. We have already referred to repairs carried out at the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa. Abū-Ja'far al-Mansūr (758–75), the second Abbasid Caliph, al-Mahdi (775–85), and Al-Malik al-Mu'azzam Isā (d. 1227) carried out repairs, improvements and additions. The Fatimid Caliph, Al-Zāhir, rebuilt in 1033 Al-Aqsa Mosque previously rebuilt by Al-Mahdi. In both cases the Mosque was ruined by an earthquake. In 1066 the Fatimid

Caliph Al-Mustansir, repaired the northern side of the Mosque. In 1168, Nur al-Dīn Zengi had a pulpit made for the Mosque, to be installed after the recapture of Jerusalem from the Crusades. This famous pulpit was unfortunately burnt down by fire on 21 August 1969. In 1217, Al-Malik al-Mu'azzam built the northern porches. Later on, other important repairs were carried out at the Mosque by order of the Mamluk Sultans Qalawūn, his son Al-Nāsir, Sha'bān, Hasan, Qaitbay, and Al-Ghūri. The Ottoman Sultans who kept the Mosque in good repair were Suleiman (1520–66), Mahmud II, Abdul-Hamid I, Abdul-Azīz, and Abdul-Hamid II (came to the throne in 1876). During the British Mandate, the Mosque was repaired by Muslims in 1922, 1927, and 1938–48.

The Dome of the Rock has also been looked after with tenderness and reverence. It was repaired by Al-Ma'mūn, the sixth Abbasid Caliph, in 831 and by Al-Zāhir, the Fatimid Caliph, in 1016. After the reconquest of Jerusalem by the Muslims in 1187, the Dome sanctuary was repaired by the Mamluk Sultans Baibars, Al-Nāsir, Barqūq, and Qaitbay, and by the Ottoman Sultans Suleiman, Mustafa I, Mahmud I, Mahmud II, and his two sons Abdul-Majīd and Abdul-Azīz. The additions made by the last two sultans were completed in 1853 and 1874 respectively. The Ottoman Caliph Abdul-Hamid II provided the sanctuary with carpets and rugs of the first quality and caused the Qur'anic chapter Yāsīn to be inscribed on the walls in beautiful handwriting.[1] The most famous among these sultans, in so far as Jerusalem is concerned, is Suleiman. It was he who built the present walls of Jerusalem (1542).

During the Arab–Israeli war of 1948, the Dome of the Rock was damaged by Israeli shells. The Iraqi and the Sa'udi governments, together with other Muslim governments, helped in the repairs, which were finally completed in 1965. There was a special ceremony on this occasion, and many leaders in the Muslim world came to Jerusalem to attend it.

For the maintenance of these and other holy shrines, Muslims from early times have consecrated buildings and lands. The most important of such religious foundations are those of Abu-Madyan of North Africa, Saladin, and Khaski Sultan (wife of Sultan Salim, the Ottoman). The latest foundation, shortly before the termination of the British Mandate in 1948, was that of Mrs. Amīna Khālidi.

In addition to all these Islamic associations, Jerusalem is unforgettable for other historical relationships. The great Arab and Muslim historical figures and Muslim men of religion who are closely related to Jerusalem and who lived or sojourned in Jerusalem are countless. In the

[1] He also provided a candelabra, which was installed in the middle of the Dome.

early period of Islam, a great number of famous Muslims came to Jerusalem, notably 'Umar, the second Caliph, Khalid ibn al-Walīd and Abu-Ubaida, two distinguished Arab commanders, Mu'awiya, the first Umayyad Caliph, Amr ibn al-'As, and many of the Prophet's companions, including Bilāl, the Prophet's mu'ezzin (caller to prayer), and Abu-Nu'aim, the first man to call to prayer in Jerusalem. Of the great Muslim men of religion and mystics, the first who come to one's mind are two famous women: Umm al-Dardā and Rābi'a the mystic. The latter lived and died in Jerusalem, and her tomb is a landmark on the Mount of Olives. There also are the four leading Muslim theologians and holy men, namely Al-Awzā'i, Ibrahim ibn Adham, a great mystic, Al-Shāfi'i, the founder of a Muslim religious school, and Abū-Hāmid al-Ghazāli, the great theologian and mystic, who lived in Jerusalem near the Gate of Mercy, very close to the Haram area, where he worked on his great book on the sciences of religion around the year 1095. Many of the Prophet's companions and other famous men in theology and Islamic history visited the city at various times and lived in it, and several were buried there.[1] Sulaiman, the seventh Umayyad Caliph, arranged for his bai'a (investiture) to take place in Jerusalem. Al-Mansūr, the second Abbasid Caliph, and Al-Mahdi, the third Abbasid Caliph, both already mentioned in connection with repairs at Al-Aqsa Mosque, visited the city, the former twice. A famous visitor to Jerusalem under the Franks was Usama ibn Munqidh in 1140.

Jerusalem has always been regarded by the Muslims as a holy city. It has been treated with greatest reverence. Apart from desecrations by the Chaldeans and by the Romans, when the Jewish Temple was destroyed, the only two desecrations suffered by the Muslim holy places were, first, during the Crusades and secondly, during the recent Israeli occupation after the June war of 1967. The first one was at the hands of the Christians, who in their excessive zeal, forgot to reciprocate the outstanding Muslim tolerance at the conquest of Jerusalem in A.D. 637, and the second was at the hands of the Jews, who forgot how the Muslims had revered the Jewish sacred shrines and traditions and preserved them for them. The Christians, when Jerusalem was conquered by the Crusaders in A.D. 1099, committed unspeakable acts of sacrilege and wholesale murder in the Haram area. So many thousands of Muslims, men and women, were brutally massacred that blood was said to have risen up to the ankles in the area [p. 528, *An Introduction to Medieval Europe* by Thompson and Johnson, New York, 1937]. Michel Join-Lambert has this to say in his

[1] Harold Lamb, in his book *Persian Mosaic*, London, 1943, writes that Umar (Omar) Khayyam, the poet of the Ruba'iyyat, is said to have made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. In one of the chapters [pp. 106–9], he describes the holiness of the Jerusalem sanctuaries and how keen Muslims are to visit them.

book *Jerusalem*, already mentioned: 'The status of the Muslims was completely reversed; from having been the masters they now became the servants, and sometimes slaves. They were deprived of all their edifices; the mosques were converted into churches.' When one contrasts this behaviour with the humane and tolerant behaviour of 'Umar in 637 and of Saladin in 1187,[1] one cannot escape the conclusion that Muslims, to say the least, have been more sinned against than sinning. With the exception of two isolated incidents, notably under the Fatimid Caliph Al-Hākim,[2] the holy places in Jerusalem have been well protected and respected under the Muslims; and Jerusalem has never ceased to be Al-Quds al-Sharīf (The Noble Jerusalem), even under the Ottoman Turks, up to the conquest of Jerusalem by the British in 1917 and until now. I quote here from the translation of a proclamation by Colonel Ali Fu'ad, Turkish commander of Jerusalem, which was posted throughout the city a few days before its surrender to the British on 9 December 1917: 'Jerusalem, the Holy, which during thirteen centuries has been the second religious site to Muslims, and the first religious site to Christians, has until now been protected by Turkish soldiers striving for general unity under the shadow of the Ottoman Sultanate . . .' At 8 o'clock in the morning on 9 December 1917, the Arab Mayor of Jerusalem delivered a letter of surrender from the Civil Turkish Governor, in which the Governor said: 'For two days now shells have fallen on some of the places in Jerusalem the Noble (Quds Sharīf) which is a holy sanctuary to all. The Ottoman Government, to safeguard the religious places from destruction, have withdrawn the soldiers from the City. And functionaries have been appointed to guard the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and Al-Aqsa Mosque, and other religious places . . .' [pp. 170–1, *Palestine and the World* by F. G. Jannaway, London, undated]. This should be contrasted with the Israeli behaviour in 1948 when their shells fell on the Haram area and damaged the Dome of the Rock, and with their failure to afford sufficient protection to the holy places, which resulted in the burning of Al-Aqsa Mosque on 21 August 1969.[3] These facts speak for themselves. Saladin allowed the Jews to come back to Jerusalem. The Crusaders earlier on and the Israelis later on forced Muslims to leave Jerusalem. What a contrast! Incidentally, in this context I cannot help referring to a persistent habit of some Christian and Jewish writers, who either ignore completely that there was a

[1] But many Western historians still persist in their prejudice against Islam in this respect. For instance, Herbert J. Muller, an American historian, has this to say: '. . . except Mohammedanism, which shared its tradition as the most militant, exclusive and intolerant of the World's religions' [p. 3, *Religion and Freedom in the Modern World*, the University of Chicago Press, 1963].

[2] The Jews are accused of having instigated the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 1010 [p. 200, *Cairo, Jerusalem, Damascus* by B. S. Margoliouth, London, 1907].

[3] In the Israeli Proclamation of Independence, 15 May 1948, the following commitment is made: 'The State of Israel . . . will safeguard the sanctity and inviolability of shrines and holy places of all religions . . .' [p. 187, *A Treasure Hunt in Judaism*, by Harold P. Smith, New York, 1950].

brilliant Arab–Muslim civilization in the Middle Ages,[1] especially in Spain, and regard the long period of 800 years there as non-existent, or, when writing about Palestine, ignore the historical fact that the Arabs ruled the country for nearly 900 years. The book by Jannaway, apparently a Zionist, from which I have just quoted, has one single brief sentence on the subject of the long Arab rule of Palestine. He says: 'In A.D. 350, Julian, the Apostate, gave the Jews permission to return and rebuild their Temple, a work they never carried out.' Now here is the sentence immediately following: 'Comparative peace followed for many centuries, and then what ups and downs!' [pp. 169–70, ibid.]. A long stretch of nearly 900 years obliterated at one stroke. Another Jewish author, Cecil Roth, in a chapter on the Islamic rule of Palestine, calls this Islamic period of as long as 1300 years 'The Islamic Interlude', in his book *A Short History of The Jewish People*, East and West Library, Oxford, 1943.

Another Zionist writer, William B. Ziff, in his book *The Rape of Palestine*, London, 1948, has the following to say about the Arabs: 'Actually there are no "Arabs" anywhere... History gives it as a fact that the Arabs never settled Palestine.' His book teems with these flagrantly unhistorical and frenzied statements, especially in the chapter entitled: 'Does an Arab Race Exist?' The Israelis now have taken up the idea and they are trying hard to prove that there has never been such a thing as 'Arabs' or 'Arab Race'. Now, if that is so, where, by the same token, is the 'Jewish people' or the 'Jewish Race'? What is more amazing is the bold claim made by Golda Meir, the Israeli Prime Minister, in a television interview during her recent visit this year to London, that there has never been such a thing as 'Palestine'.[2]

Before I close this chapter on Jerusalem as a holy city of Islam, I would like to refer to two important examples of veneration accorded to this city. The first was the result of the Crusades, which gave Jerusalem a new significance in the eyes of the Muslims. The Crusaders were not regarded as Christians, impelled only by religious zeal, but were found to be Europeans who were desirous of expansion and conquest—an adumbration

[1] Draper, in his book '*The Intellectual Development of Europe*, vol. ii, p. 42 (London, 1909), deplores this attitude in the literature of Europe in the following terms: 'I have to deplore the systematic manner in which the literature of Europe has contrived to put out of sight our scientific obligations to the Muhammedans. Injustice founded on religious rancour and national conceit cannot be perpetuated for ever.'

Howell-Smith says: 'But there seems to be a conspiracy of silence among popular historians about the earlier renascence which the Muhammadan Arabs of Spain and Sicily... had introduced into Europe' [p. 782, *Thou Art Peter*, London, 1950].

Christopher Dawson, a well-known Catholic writer, deplores this conspiracy of silence, and says: 'All this brilliant development of culture is completely ignored by the student of Medieval history' [p. 134, *Medieval Religion and other Essays*, quoted by Howell-Smith on p. 783 of his *Thou Art Peter*].

The deficiency in Western historical literature on Arab civilization in Spain is supplied to a great extent by Joseph McCabe in his book *The Splendour of Moorish Spain*, London, 1935.

[2] Here is another example of intellectual dishonesty. *The Domesday Dictionary*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1964, writes as follows under 'China': 'A semitropical island situated north of the Philippines and south of Japan and Okinawa.' Obviously, the reference is to Formosa, and China proper is therefore non-existent!

of European colonialism and imperialism later on. This blend of Christianity and imperialism was counteracted by a blend of Arabism and Islamism. It sharpened the Arab–Muslim interest in Jerusalem, and the proof of it is the lavish care bestowed upon Jerusalem by the Ayyubid and the Mamluk Sultans. Muslims, after the recapture of Jerusalem, treated all the inhabitants with great tolerance. They even felt strong enough at one time to try and get rid of the cause of trouble between Muslims and Christians. It is said that the Ayyubid Sultan 'Īsa al-Mu'azzam, successor to his father Al-Adil, conceived the idea of destroying Jerusalem, and accordingly sent, in 1219, a party of masons and sappers to destroy it. His idea was 'the humane and advanced one that the only way to avoid disputes between the two religions was to render the city common property' [p. 206, *Cairo, Jerusalem and Damascus* by D. S. Margoliouth, London, 1907]. We read also in the same book that some authorities assert that his workmen reduced the whole city to a heap of ruins with the exception of the great Christian and Muslim sanctuaries. This is only a passing phase in the history of the city, and when it fell into the hands of the Muslims again in 1244, it became the centre of attention for the Ayyubid, Mamluk, and Ottoman Sultans ever after. I have given a general account of the acts of restoration, building and repairs carried out at various periods by these Sultans, including the building of the present walls in 1542 by the Ottoman Sultan Sulaiman. But a further elaboration of these acts, especially by the Mamluks, is needed to show the increased interest in the city as a result of the Crusades. Margoliouth says: 'Baibars I, who built a mosque over the supposed tomb of Moses, is said to have instituted the festival ('Id an-Nabi Mūsa) in honour of the Prophet Moses, which to this day serves as a sort of counterpoise to the Greek Easter. He renewed the stonework which is above the marble of the Dome of the Rock. Outside the city on the north-west he built in the year 1264 a khan or hospice, which he adorned with a door taken from the Fatimid Palace in Cairo, and on which he settled the revenues of several villages in the neighbourhood of Damascus. The building contained a mill and a bakehouse, as well as a mosque. Its purpose was to harbour visitors (perhaps belated visitors) to the city, and an arrangement was made for the distribution of bread at the door. Baibars also repaired the Dome of the Chain.

'The Sultan Ketbogha is credited with having done some repairs to the stonework of the Dome of the Rock, and having rebuilt the wall of the Temple area which overlooks the Cemetery of the Bab al-Rahmah (Gate of Mercy) in the year 1299. His successor Lājīn renewed the mihrab (niche) of David in the southern wall near the Cradle of Jesus.

'The great builder Muhammad an-Nāsir naturally left some memorials

of his taste in Jerusalem. He faced the front of the Aksa Mosque with marble, and opened in it two windows to the right and left of the mihrab, in the year 1330. He had the domes of the two chief edifices regilt, so well, says Mujīr al-Dīn, that, though in his time 180 years had passed since the operation, the work still looked brand-new. He rebuilt the gate of the Cotton-merchants (Qattānīn) in very elaborate style.

'The Sultan Sha'bān grandson of Al-Nasīr, built the minaret near the Gate of the Tribes (Bāb al-Asbāt) in the year 1367. He renewed the wooden doors of the Aksa Mosque, and the arches over the western stairs in the Court of the Dome, opposite to the Bab an-Nasr, nine years later.

'The great Sultan Barkūk built the Muezzin's (caller to prayer) bench opposite the mihrab in the Dome of the Rock, and repaired the Sultan's Pool (Birkat al-Sultan) outside Jerusalem on the west. In 1394, a governor named Shihāb ad-Dīn al-Yaghmūri, appointed by Barkūk, placed on the western door of the Dome a marble slab containing a declaration that various imposts instituted by former governors had been remitted.

'The following Sultan Faraj placed on the wall of the Bab al-Silsilah a slab declaring that in future the Sultan's representative at Mecca and Medina must be a different person from the governor of Jerusalem, which was to form an administrative unit with Hebron' [pp. 208–12, ibid.].

'Other sovereigns who have left inscriptions in the Dome (of the Rock), commemorating work done by them in restoring or beautifying it, are the Fatimid Caliph Zahir (A.D. 1022), who rebuilt it after it had fallen in, in consequence of the earthquake of the year 1016; Saladdin (1187), who renewed the building; the great Cairene builder, Nāsir, son of Kala'un (1318 and 1319) and the Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II; the last repaired the Dome in the first third of the nineteenth century . . . Another of the many isolated buildings is a little Sebil or drinking fountain built in 1445 by the Mamluk Sultan Kaitbai' [pp. 219–22, ibid.]. Luke and Keith-Roach in their book *Handbook of Palestine*, London, 1930, give a glowing picture of the building and restoration activities during the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. They also have this to say about Jerusalem: 'The many hostels and colleges built in Jerusalem during the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries show that in those centuries Jerusalem was a city affording opportunities for study to large numbers of people, who doubtless came from all over the Moslem world to visit the holy sites and to gain learning. Each of these colleges was endowed with land, whose revenues went to their support. To discover the land allotted to the maintenance of each college would provide an interesting study and might result in the provision of the money needed for their repair and reestablishment as seats of learning' [p. 85, ibid.].

This, in my view, explains the redoubled interest in the City shown by the Mamluk and Ottoman Sultans as a result of the Crusades.

The second example is the large number of books written on Jerusalem by various Muslim and Arab authors, some of which are still in manuscript. Prominent among these are 'The Merits of Beit al-Maqdis', 'My Journey in the Valley of Al-Quds', 'The Merits of Al-Quds', 'The Comprehensive Compendium of the Merits of Al-Aqsa Mosque', 'The Incentive of the Soul for the Visit of Al-Quds', 'The Exhaustive Study of the Merits of Al-Aqsa Mosque', 'The Merits of Beit al-Maqdis', 'History of Jerusalem and Hebron', 'The Jerusalem Journey', 'The Stimulant of Love on the Merits of Jerusalem and Damascus', and others [p. 81, *The Arab Character of Jerusalem*, by Dr. I. M. Husseini, Cairo, 1968 (in Arabic)].

Before concluding my account of Jerusalem, there is one other point I would like to add here, which has significant bearing on the position held by Jerusalem from the Islamic and Arab point of view as a result of the Crusades. This is that Jerusalem was regarded as the gateway to Jordan and to the holy cities of Arabia, Medina and Mecca. It is said that in the year A.H. 578 (A.D. 1182), a Crusader garrison stationed in Kerak and Shaubak in Transjordan planned an expedition to Medina in Arabia to dig up the Prophet's grave and carry away his remains to Europe. The story, as stated by Mujīr al-Dīn al-Hanbali in his history of Jerusalem and Hebron, goes on to say that ships were fitted out for the purpose and were dispatched from Suez through the Red Sea to Hedjaz. But Al-Nāsir Salah al-Dīn frustrated the attempt [p. 44, *The Arab Character of Jerusalem*].

Hebron is the second holy city in Palestine and, perhaps, even holier than Jerusalem. It is called 'Al-Khalīl', or 'Khalīl al-Rahmān', abbreviated from 'The City of the Friend of God', the friend of God being Abraham [p. 899, vol. 9, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*]. It is reputed to be the oldest city in the world, or at least one of the oldest. It is the burial place of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, with their wives, as well as of Joseph. The mosque, known as 'Haram Ibrahīm'—The Sanctuary of Abraham —or Al-Haram al-Ibrahīmi, is supposed to be originally a Crusaders' Church. Hebron was the first capital of David. The Crusaders captured it in 1099, but it was retaken by Saladin in 1187.

The sacredness of the town for the Muslims derives from the twofold fact that Abraham is the father of the Arabs as well as the Jews and that the Jewish prophets and leaders, and their wives, buried there are regarded with reverence and sanctity by Muslims. Abraham is usually referred to by the Arabs as 'Abūna Ibrahim al-Khalīl'—'Our Father Abraham the Friend'. Abraham is said to have pitched his tent under the oaks of Mamre. Josephus regards Hebron as an Edomite (Arab?), and not a Jewish, city. The city shared the fate of Palestine as a whole under the

Romans, Byzantines, and Arabs and Muslims. In 1912, there were only 2,000 Jews among 22,000 Muslim Arabs.

The sacredness of the town centres round the Haram which consists of the Mosque, on the south side. It is believed that the Mosque was originally a building erected by the Crusaders in 1167–87, probably on the site of a church. Two openings in the floor are said to lead to the Cave of Macphelah. There are, above ground, six shrines of Isaac and Rebecca, of Abraham and Sarah, of Jacob and Leah. The oldest building of the Mosque dates from 1331, under the Mamluk Sultan Muhammad Ibn Kalawūn. The Mosque is also famous for its pulpit of twelfth-century workmanship, similar to that of Al-Aqsa.

This is another example of a town, venerated by Jews, Christians, and Muslims. I think such towns in Palestine could have continued to be respected and worshipped in by the followers of the three great religions if the Crusaders and the Zionists had not introduced a nationalist and secular element into their endeavour. The example of Sultan 'Īsā al-Mu'azzam, referred to above, could have served as a guide.

Hebron is one of the sacred places in Palestine to which pious visits are made by Muslims. The Prophet is said to have given Hebron as a fief to one of his famous companions, Tamīm Ibn Aus al-Darī. The descendants of this holy man are still in existence and in large numbers in Hebron, Nablus, Beersheba, and Transjordan. Mujīr al-Dīn al-Hanbali, in his book on the history of Jerusalem and Hebron, gives accounts of the ancient and Arab families in Hebron. Luke and Keith-Roach in their *Handbook of Palestine* [p. 112, London, 1930], have this to say about Hebron: 'Except for a small Jewish community, Hebron is a Moslem town, and, owing to its connexion with Abraham, is a place of intense Moslem veneration. The town . . . is a remarkably complete specimen of an Arab city.' Not very far from Hebron, to the west, somewhere near Bait-Jibrīn, the battle of Ajnadīn was fought in A.D. 634. Amir, an Arab commander, routed a large Byzantine army.

Another town of Islamic and Arab significance is the town of Gaza, or Ghazza in Arabic, in the south of the maritime plain between Mount Carmel and the frontier of Egypt. It was the southernmost of the five allied cities of Ascalon, Ashdod, Gath, Ekron, and Gaza of the 'Pelishtim' or Philistines, the non-Semitic people who were inhabiting the country of Peleshat in the plain. In the course of history Gaza has been the scene of innumerable battles. Its affinities in antiquity were generally with Egypt. In the course of the great war between Egypt and Assyria, and also between Syria and Egypt, the Philistine plain generally, and Gaza particularly, became strategically important. The strife between the Jews and the Philistines dragged on, until the Maccabaeans succeeded in

subjugating them. The Assyrians captured the town in 734 B.C., and it was ruled also by the Babylonians and Persians, apart from the Egyptians. Alexander the Great took it after a protracted siege, and it was contested for a long time by the Ptolemies and the Seleucids. In 96 B.C. it was seized by Alexander Jannaeus and destroyed. A new Gaza was built some distance to the south. After Herod, the town came under the Roman province of Syria. Under the Romans, Gaza enjoyed a peaceful and prosperous life. The Arabs conquered it in A.D. 634.

Gaza was the meeting-place of three trade routes, besides the direct route from Egypt to Damascus. The first was the frankincense route from the Yemen through the Hejaz to Petra and off to Gaza; the second was the sea route from the east, to Elath (Aqaba) and then to Petra or Gaza; the third connected Gaza with lower Mesopotamia by way of Petra and Jauf. For Gaza the most important route was the frankincense route. When Alexander the Great took Gaza, the booty included vast stores of frankincense. The demand for this commodity in ancient worship was very great. Gaza was then the largest city in Palestine and Syria [p. 109, Luke and Keith-Roach]. Gaza is still an important market-place for the southern part of Palestine. In 1912, there were about 40,000 people, of whom 150 were Jews.

Muslim tradition regards Gaza as the birth-place of Solomon. It is somewhat holy in the eyes of Muslims because the Prophet's great-grandfather Hāshim, a rich trader from Mecca, died in Gaza and was buried there.[1] Hence Gaza is called Hashim's Gaza. 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb, who became the second Muslim Caliph, was captured at Gaza and taken prisoner before Islam.[1] It is also holy because it is the birth-place of Al-Shāfi'i, the founder of one of the four religious schools of Sunni Islam.

The mosque of Hashim, which contains the tomb of the great-grandfather of the Prophet, is one of the principal monuments of Gaza.

Ramla, a town between Jaffa and Jerusalem, was founded in the year 716 by the Umayyid Caliph Suleiman, son of Abdul-Malik, builder of the Dome of the Rock. The word 'ramla' means 'a spot of sand'. The Arabs have a historical custom of calling newly-founded towns by names which indicated the nature of the site or the terrain. This is exemplified in the names of Basra, Barqa, Hadbā, Hijr, etc. Suleiman built a palace for himself, part of which is still standing. But the most remarkable monument of the town is the Tower of Ramla, which is still standing, built early in the fourteenth century to serve as the minaret for the mosque, known as the White Mosque, Al-Jami' al-Abyad, now in ruins, outside the town, built by Suleiman. The building was restored by Salāh al-Dīn (Saladin)

[1] Al-Istakhri, as quoted on p. 94, *Chrestomatha Arabica* by Arnold, London, 1853.

in 1190, and Sultan Baibars built a minaret and a dome in 1268. Other restorations were made during the period of Sultan Muhammad al-Nāsir, as indicated by an Arabic inscription above the door, dated 1318. The Tower is sometimes called the Tower of the 40 Martyrs, according to a Muslim or Christian tradition to the effect that 40 martyrs are buried under the mosque. Inside the town, there is the Great Mosque (Al-Jami al-Kabīr), which is claimed to have been originally a Christian church of the twelfth century.

The Umayyad Caliphs were generally interested in Palestine. Apart from their magnificent buildings in Jerusalem and Ramla, they built palaces in Jericho, such as the palace of Hishām, and used to visit the lake of Tiberias in the north. In fact, the lake of Tiberias used to be visited by later Caliphs.[1]

Nablus, the ancient Sechem, is a large Palestinian town between Haifa and Jerusalem, along the road on the hills and through the Plain of Esdraelon. According to one tradition, Nablus is the Holy House (Beit ul-Maqdis) and not Jerusalem. It is famous, among other things, because of the Samaritan community which has lived there since the eighth century B.C. There are three large mosques in the city. The Great Mosque (Al-Jami' al-Kabīr) is believed to have been originally a basilica built by Justinian, and later rebuilt by the canons of the Holy Sepulchre in 1167. The two other mosques, Al-Khadra and Al-Nasr, are also believed to be of Crusading origin. The former, Al-Khadra, stands on the traditional spot where Joseph's brethren brought his coat to his father Jacob. A little farther to the north of Jami' al-Masakīn, is a mosque beside which is the traditional spot where Jacob's sons are buried. The Well of Jacob lies just outside the eastern end of the city. A famous Muslim mystic, namely Shaikh Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi, traces his descent to Nablus.

As we go up north in Palestine, Muslim associations become comparatively thinner. It is especially in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries that the northern part of Palestine became prominently involved in political and military affairs. The battle of Hittīn in 1187 took place near Tiberias, when the Crusaders were defeated by Saladin. The village is also reputed to be the burial-place of the Prophet Shu'aib (Jethro). To the north-west of Jenīn, the battle of Ain Jalūt took place between Mamluk Baibars and Kotuz of Egypt on the one hand and the Mongol hordes on the other in A.D. 1260.[2] About the middle of the 18th

[1] In his book '*Ahsan al-Taqasīm*, Al-Muqaddasi says, 'the tomb of Abu-Husaira, one of the earliest and closest companions of the Prophet, lies outside the town of Tiberius, to the south.'

Ibn-Battūta, another Arab traveller, records that just outside the town lie the tomb of Sukaina, daughter of Al-Husein, grandson of the Prophet, and, according to popular tradition, the tomb of one of the grandsons of Ali, the fourth Caliph.

[2] Under Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ma'nī II (1590–1635) of Lebanon, Safad, Tiberias, and Nazareth came under the rule of the Ma'n dynasty [p. 729, *History of the Arabs* by Philip K. Hitti, London, 1961].

century, Shaikh Dāhir al-Umar[1] made himself master of central Palestine, with Acre as his capital. His successor Jazzār Pasha ruled the country as far north as the Dog River and Baalbek in Lebanon, with Acre again as the capital. He is known for his buildings, especially the famous Jazzar Mosque in Acre. In 1799 Acre was successfully defended against Napoleon, and there are still in northern and central Palestine stories and legends about the part played by the people of Jenin, Tulkarm, Nablus, and the surrounding villages in dispatching contingents against Napoleon. In 1832, Ibrahim Pasha from Egypt destroyed Acre, and again contingents were sent from those towns and villages to repel the Egyptian army. In 1840 Acre was bombarded by British and Austrian vessels.

The position of Palestine as a holy country for Muslims derives very strongly from the Crusades. These wars, as already stated, were not only inspired by religious zeal for the safeguarding and protection of the Christian holy shrines in Jerusalem and its environs. But they were also inspired by the desire of conquest and expansion. The Crusades did not conquer Jerusalem alone, but they conquered the whole of Palestine. 'When the Byzantine Emperor Alexius I despatched appeals to the West for volunteers to help stem the advance of the Turks through Asia Minor, Pope Urban II, at the Council of Clermont in 1095, skilfully utilized this plea to call for a great independent military expedition not so much to aid the Greek Christians as to expel the Muslims from Palestine . . . The First Crusade was launched in an atmosphere of intense religious emotion, and was conceived as part of the grand counter-offensive against Islam which was already being conducted on two fronts, in Spain and across the central Mediterranean towards North Africa. A third front was now to be opened in the Levant . . . This unprovoked assault by the "Franks" of the distant West . . .' [p. 158, *A History of Medieval Islam* by J. J. Saunders, London, 1965].[2] This inimical spirit continued to smoulder even until the end of the First World War. More than one book was written in the West about 'The Last Crusade'.[3] General Sarrail, the French High Commissioner in Syria, during his first visit to Damascus, went to see the tomb of Saladin. He is reported to have said: 'Saladin, nous sommes ici!' —'Saladin, we are here!'

It is little wonder that Arabs and Muslims regard Palestine as holy, as a reaction to such aggressive designs. In March, 1920, when the Syrian Congress met in Damascus, Feisal was proclaimed King of both Syria and Palestine. The reaction to the Balfour Declaration of 1917 from the

[1] 'A bedouin whose father was installed by the Shihabi governor of Lebanon as Shaykh over the Safad district, young Zāhir (Dāhir) made his political début about 1737 by adding Tiberias to his Shaykhdom' [pp. 731–2, ibid.].

[2] Perhaps the Jewish occupation of Arab Palestine, supported and protected as it is by the Christian West, may be regarded as an extension of the same attitude.

[3] For instance, *The Last Crusade* by Donald Maxwell, John Lane, London, 1919, 1920.

Arab and Muslim worlds is understandable. The same historical pattern was repeated after nearly 800 years. The Jewish immigration into Palestine under the Mandate (1920–48), and the establishment of Israel in 1948, have had the electrifying effect of making Palestine holy in a wider Islamic frame and in a narrower Arab one. Now the question of Palestine, especially after the Israeli Occupation of Jerusalem, June 1967, and the subsequent partial burning of Al-Aqsa Mosque, is no longer a local one, concerning only the Arabs of Palestine or the Arab world, but it has also become the concern of the Islamic world, as attested by the Islamic summit conference at Rabat in Morocco from 22 to 24 September, 1969. The speeches of the heads of states at the conference and the communiqué at its conclusion emphasized the importance and significance of Palestine as a whole in the eyes of the Muslims. The Pakistani President said at the conference that Pakistanis, ever since the Balfour Declaration of 1917, had constantly supported the Arab cause 'which we have looked upon as the collective Islamic cause of Palestine.'[1]

All these major factors, religious and otherwise, play their collective role in making Palestine a holy country to the Muslims. Inside Palestine, there are many minor factors which reinforce this sentiment. There are, for instance, the religious and popular festivals all the year round. In Jerusalem, there is the festival of Nabi Mūsa (the Prophet Moses) which begins on the Friday before the Orthodox Good Friday. This has already been referred to, and it is believed that the original purpose of this festival was for the Muslims to come mainly from Hebron and Nablus, and to gather in Jerusalem in large numbers to be ready for any eventuality, in case the Christians, under Crusading influence from Europe, took it into their heads to start trouble during Easter. This festival concerns mainly Jerusalem, Hebron, Nablus, and the environs of Jerusalem, including Jericho. The other festival, held for three days in June, is that of Nabi Sālih (the Prophet Salih, an Arab prophet), which takes place in Ramla, between Jaffa and Jerusalem. This is also supposed to have been originally an arrangement for the concentration of the largest number of Muslims as a precaution against any mischief intended by the Crusaders or their sympathizers in the country. Later, another popular festival is held for ten days in September around Jaffa and called Nabi Rubīn (Prophet Ruben). In Gaza, another festive gathering takes place outside the town.

In the north of Palestine, there is the festival of Nabi Shu'aib (Prophet Jethro), somewhere near Hittin, famous for Saladin's victory in 1187. It is now almost exclusively a Druze Festival.

[1] It is well worth noting here that it was not the Oriental Christians or the Oriental Jews who showed fanatical attachment to Palestine and claimed it as their exclusive Holy Land, but only the Western Christians and Jews.

But there are also many locally sacred shrines or spots all over Palestine. They are shrines of prophets, saints (awliya), sheikhs or great men, and the traveller will find them dotted from north to south and from east to west. Each of these is called in Arabic mazār, mesh-hed, qabr, qubbah, maqām or wali. There is, for instance, in Jericho, a shrine, popularly thought to be the tomb of Ali, son-in-law of Muhammad. Near Nablus, there is the shrine of sheikh Nabi Billan, and on Mount Gerizim, to the south of Nablus, there is a shrine in the name of Wali Abu-Isma'il. On Mount Carmel, there was a sacred grove known as Shajarat al-Arba'īn, and a tomb called Qabr al-Majdūbi. In the village Al-Mesh-had (ancient Gath-Hipher), between Al-Rainch and Saffūriya, north-east of Nazareth, there was, according to Dalman, a shrine for the Prophet Jonah, or Yunus in Arabic, which shows a clear association with Muslim tradition. At Safad, in the north, there was a maqām (shrine), very holy to the people around, called maqam Sheikh Abu-Qamīs. Another one was that of Sheikh Hadīd. On the northern shore of the Lake of Galilee, there was a shrine called maqam Sheikh Ali As-Sayyād. For further information, I would refer the reader to pp. 78–82, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. xi. There are also tombs of famous Muslim historical personages to be found all over the country. Aqaba (Elath), or Aila in classical Arabic, for instance, is the reputed burial place of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, son of Ali and once a claimant of the Caliphate.

Another very close tie between Palestine and Muslims, Arabs and non-Arabs, is the number of ancient Islamic and Arab families which still live in Palestine, or used to live in the areas captured by the Israelis in 1948, when almost all the Arabs were forced to leave their homes. For instance, in Nablus there are families which trace their ancestry to Al-Jarrāh, father of the great Arab general Amir ibn al-Jarrāh. In Jerusalem, Jenin and Safad, there are, or were, families descended from Beni Makhzūm, the tribe of Khalid ibn al-Walīd, the greatest Arab general in the very early period of Islam. The Tamīmis, descendants of Tamīn al-Dārī, a companion of the Prophet, are spread in Hebron, Nablus, and Beersheba.

The foregoing account about how holy Palestine is to the Muslims will, it is hoped, show that Arab and Muslim roots are very firmly embedded in the country. The Arab rule for 900 years, and the subsequent Muslim rule for nearly 400 years, during which the Jews, not to mention the Zionists, had almost no religious or secular existence, cannot be expunged at will and denied capriciously. This long period of about 1,300 years of continuous and integrated rule should be contrasted with only about 73 years of united and truly independent Jewish rule in the country, after which the Hebrew United Monarchy broke up into two quarrelling and fighting

kingdoms, those of Israel, which lasted until 722 B.C., and Judah, which lasted until 587 B.C. [p. 8; *The Decadence of Judaism in Our Time*, by Moshe Menuhin, Beirut, 1969].

If the Zionists claim that Palestine is their country on the basis of a religious sentiment dating from 2,000 years ago, the Arabs and the Muslims of Palestine have a more forceful claim. Of course, it is no good bringing forward cogent arguments in favour of the Arab and Muslim case at a time when the maxim Might is Right reigns supreme, even when there is a United Nations whose *raison d'être* is to safeguard legitimate rights and to settle disputes equitably and peacefully. It is as though Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, was speaking on behalf of the Palestine Arabs when he wrote: 'In countries where we have already lived for centuries we are stigmatized as aliens, often by those whose ancestors were not yet settled in the land where our forefathers had always suffered affliction. Who is the alien in a country only the majority can decide, for it is *a question of Might* like everything else in relations between nations . . . In the present state of the world, and probably for a long time to come Might precedes Right. It is useless therefore for us everywhere to be good patriots, as were the Huguenots, who were forced to emigrate. If we could only be left in peace . . .' [p. 92, *Theodor Herzl* by Israel Cohen, New York, 1959]. Yes, if the Arabs of Palestine had been strong enough to defy and defeat the Balfour Declaration, as the nationalist Turks under Mustapha Kemal were able through sheer military strength to tear up the iniquitous arrangements, Israel would not be in existence now. Might is Right, as Herzl said.