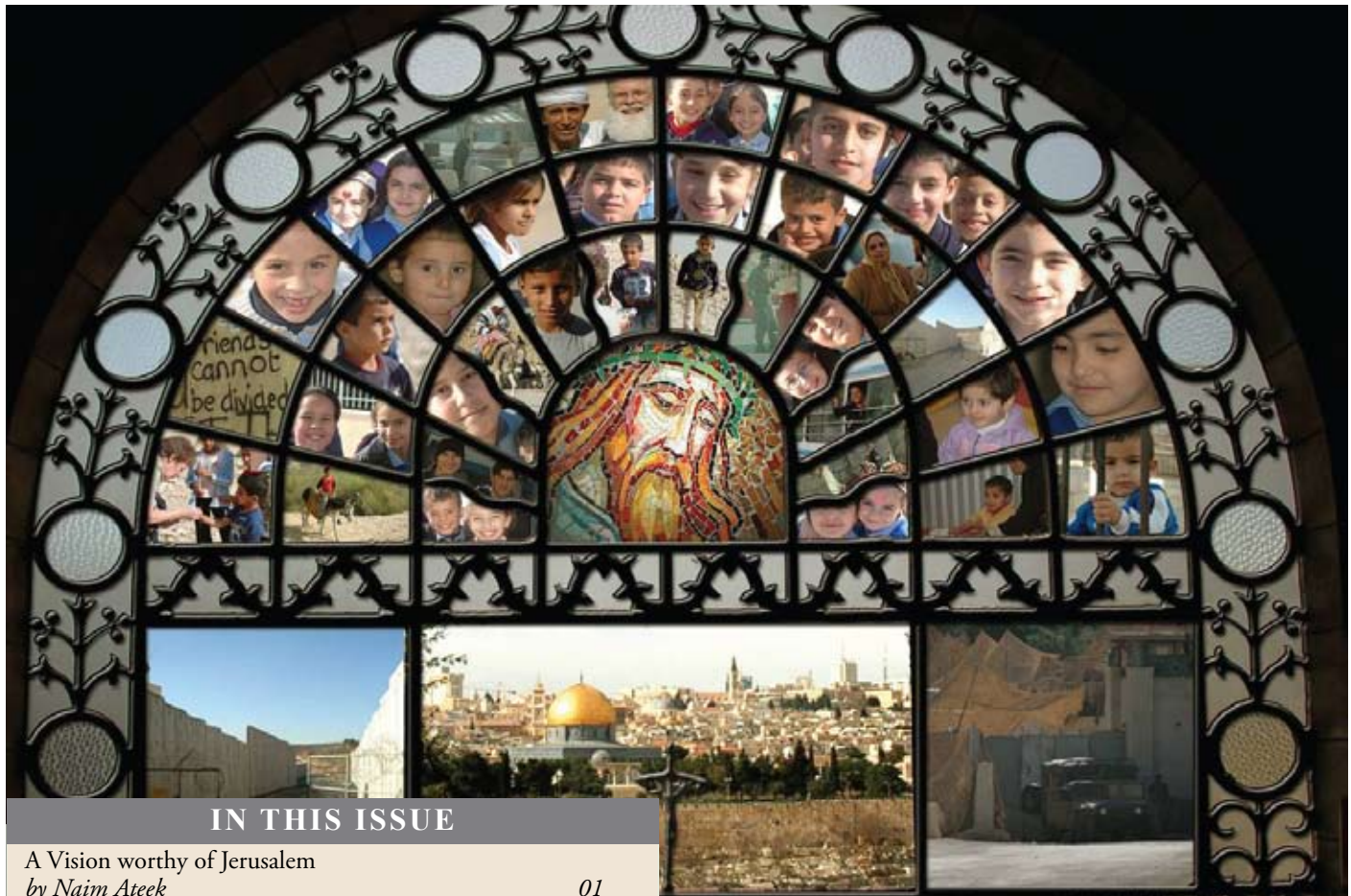


CORNERSTONE

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION BY SABEEL ECUMENICAL LIBERATION THEOLOGY CENTER

JERUSALEM The Heart of the Conflict



Dominus Flevit, picture created by Kerri Whitehead

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A Vision worthy of Jerusalem

by Naim Ateek

From the beginning of the conflict over Palestine, it was clear that the heart of the conflict is the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is unique among the cities of the world. It is holy to the three Middle Eastern monotheistic religions. That is why in the 1947 Partition Plan of Palestine, the UN wanted to keep Jerusalem outside the equation of the two states and



A street in the old City of Jerusalem

designate it as a separate entity to be governed by a special UN charter.

Presumably, the UN saw that the universal religious significance of Jerusalem should not be limited to the relatively few million inhabitants whether Muslims, Jews, or Christians who were living in Palestine then, or who would be living in the two proposed states.

Jerusalem's religious significance has always encompassed billions of people beyond its immediate geography. Nevertheless, it is an integral part of Palestine (and now Israel) and it is mandatory to find a just solution for the city in its immediate context and one that works for both Palestinians and Israelis. There is no escape from this reality. Jerusalem has always been and will continue to be the heart and pulse of the land. The land without Jerusalem would be like a body without a head. The sooner this fact is acknowledged

by all people inside as well as outside the land, the sooner the conflict will be resolved.

Sadly today, it is the government of Israel that is seeking to wrest Jerusalem from the peace equation and monopolize it. If that happens, Palestine will be left "headless." In fact, Israel is emasculating the city of Jerusalem. Its exclusive solution for the city stems from a philosophy of military power and hegemony. Jerusalem has always been the spoil gained by military power. Today, through a wide variety of laws and regulations, (illegal under international law) Israel is seeking to ethnically and religiously cleanse Jerusalem of its Palestinian - Christian and Muslim - inhabitants. The objective is to make Jerusalem an entirely Jewish city as much as possible. Hence, the Israeli government has been deviously devising and concocting ways

to drastically reduce the indigenous Palestinian population.

The basic injustice lies in the Israeli original premise regarding the land and its people. Since the state of Israel has become militarily powerful and was able in the 1967 war to control all the land, its theological position became more pronounced. Israel's basic position is that all the people in the land, whether Muslim or Christian, are basically aliens. The fact that these indigenous people have deep roots in the land and have been living here for millennia is beside the point. Their theological premise still applies. They are all foreigners. The land is promised by God and belongs to the Jewish people. Muslims and Christians might have land rights including religious holy places, but as far as the Jewish religious premise goes, they all remain foreigners and, in principle, they could be dispossessed of



The gifted poet of Psalm 87, like the writer of Jonah, began with an inclusive God who loves and cares for all people equally, and that affected his theology of God's people. To believe in an inclusive God touches a chain reaction that must impact our relations with others, even our enemies.

the land. Such an ideology or theology preceded international law, but for Jewish religious extremists it transcends all human laws. Its roots, for them, are found in "divine" laws.

When one looks at the situation of Jerusalem today, it is possible to surmise that the government of Israel encourages the flow of western Christian tourists and pilgrims. Obviously, Muslim pilgrimage is at a standstill largely due to the fact that most Islamic countries have no diplomatic relations with Israel. But Jerusalem is even out of bounds for most of the local Palestinian Muslims and Christians who live in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Ironically, it is easier for Palestinian Muslims to go to Mecca as pilgrims than to come and pray at the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Is it possible that the government of Israel is intentionally trivializing Jerusalem for Muslims to make it easier to force itself on the Haram area and claim a part of it as what happened at the Abrahamic Mosque in Hebron.

When the "holy place" is acquired and occupied by military force what happens to the holy? Does it retain its holiness? Or is its holiness marred? Can the holiness be retained apart from truth and justice? Can unethical and immoral action override the holy and annul its sanctity? These questions are worth pondering when people reflect on what

is happening in Jerusalem today.

The antidote to such exclusive claims is found in the theology articulated by the composer of Psalm 87. The genius poet who penned this religious poem envisioned Jerusalem as an open city where God welcomes to it people of all ethnic and racial backgrounds, including the worst enemies of the ancient Israelites.

*"I will include Egypt and Babylonia
When I list the nations that obey me;
The people of Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia
I will number among the inhabitants of
Jerusalem."*

*Of Zion it will be said that all nations
belong there and that the almighty will
make her strong. The Lord will write a
list of the peoples and include them all as
citizens of Jerusalem...." (GNB)*

Babylon was the empire that destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the Kingdom of Judah. Egypt and Philistia were enemies of the Israelites. Yet in this Psalm God considers all those people as citizens of Jerusalem. The New Revised Standard Version says that God registers them all as having been born in Jerusalem. It is an inclusive vision of Jerusalem for friend and foe. It is the city of God that embraces all of God's children.

The Psalmist's vision of Jerusalem critiques all exclusive theologies of his time as well as ours. Most importantly,

it presents a theology of God that can inform our theology of neighbor. Many times in the past we have tended to begin with our theology of neighbor because the neighbor is more tangible to us than God.

We have quoted 1 John 4:20-21, "*Those who say, 'I love God,' and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.*"

In an age of religious extremism and fanaticism, it is important to have a sound theology of God in order to have a sound theology of neighbor. It is our exclusive concepts of God that lead us to exclusive views of others. This is why we see the negation and repudiation of others. When some people believe that "their" god discriminates against others, they practice discrimination. That is why we notice that some of the worst prejudices and racism are religious. The chain reaction begins with a belief in a discriminatory and biased god and then moves on to touch their fellow human beings.

The gifted poet of Psalm 87, like the writer of Jonah, began with an inclusive God who loves and cares for all people equally, and that affected his theology of God's people. To believe in an inclusive God touches a chain reaction that must impact our relations with others, even our enemies.

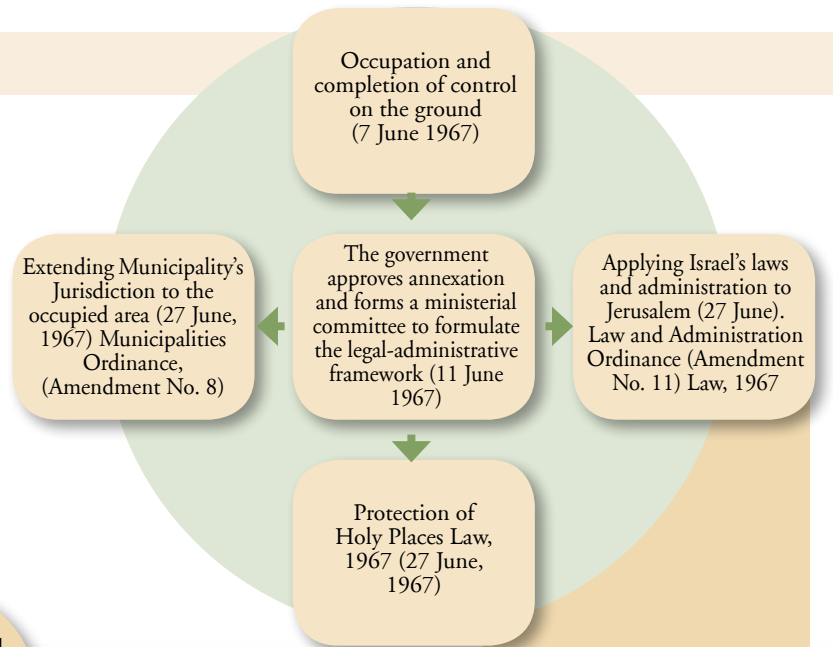
This is the antidote to any exclusive theology of Jerusalem. We must continue to lift up this theology, emphasize it, work for it, and pray for its implementation.

*The Rev. Naim Ateek is the Director of
Sabeel, Jerusalem*

Main Stages in Consolidating Israeli Control over Jerusalem Contrary to International Law

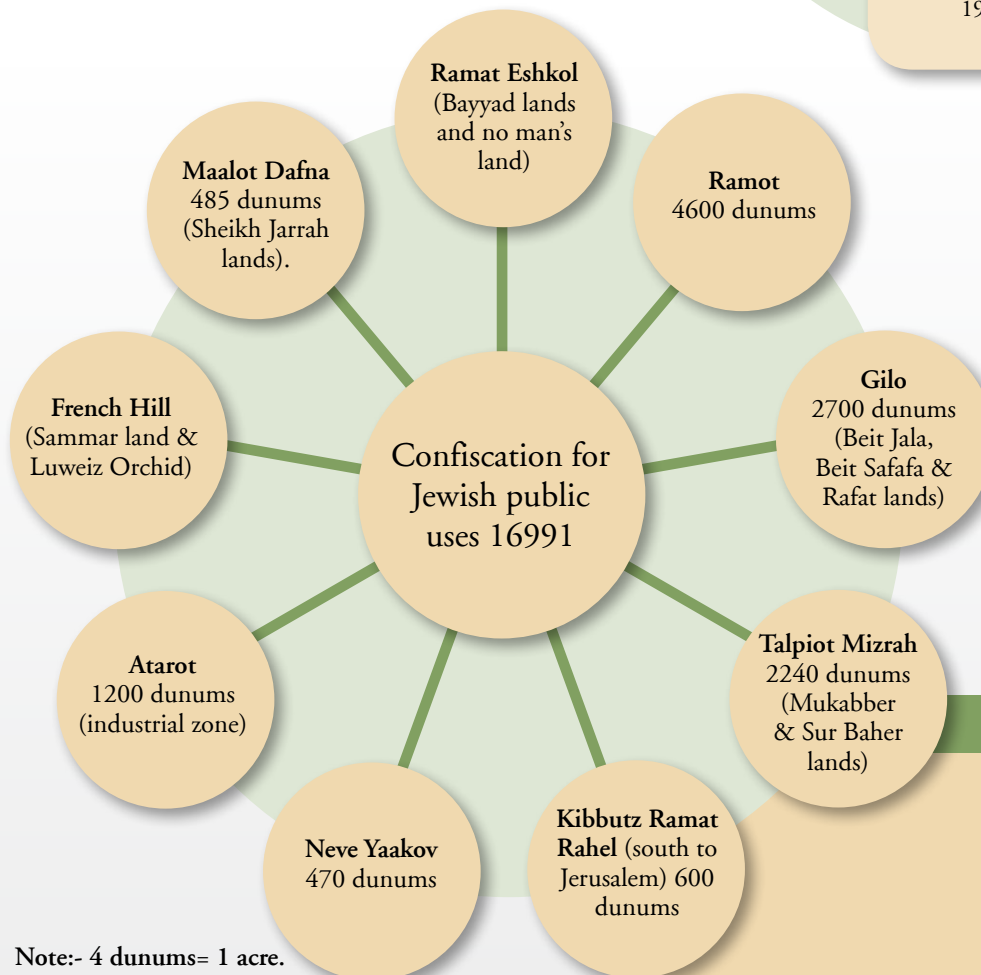
by Usama Halabi, Advocate

The following diagrams were reproduced, by permission, from the booklet “Israeli Laws and Judicial System as Tools for Accomplishing Political Objectives in Jerusalem”, compiled by advocate Usama Halabi for “The Civic Coalition for Defending the Palestinian’s Rights in Jerusalem.



Stage 1

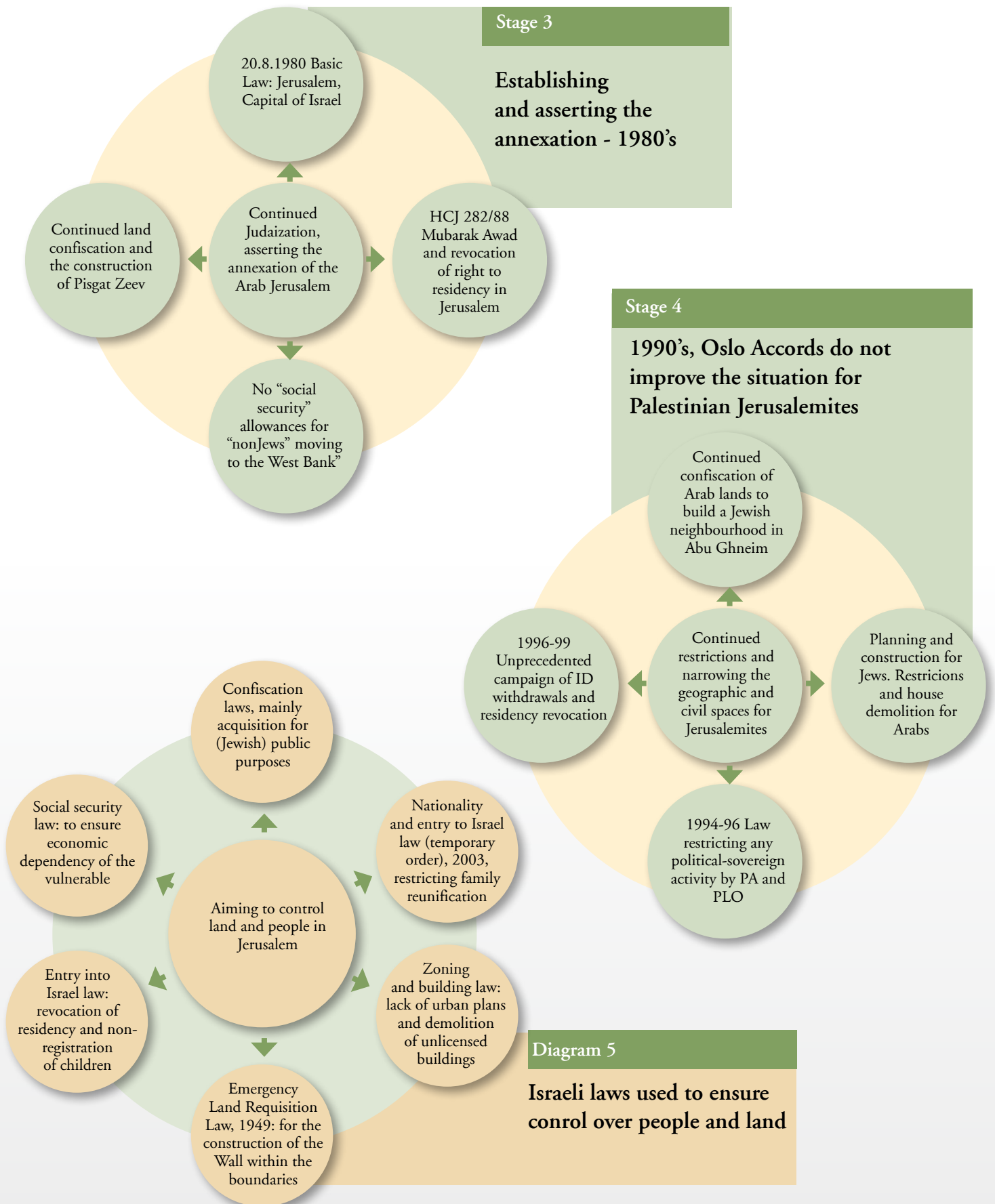
The creation of the legal framework for annexation - June 1967



Stage 2

Confiscation of land for “public purposes” 1968-1970

Note:- 4 dunums= 1 acre.



The Eyes of the Heart

by Dr. Ali Qleibo

Nostalgia, longing, and an unfathomable sense of loneliness envelop Jerusalem in a halo of huzon; sublime melancholy; a bittersweet refrain whose echo reverberates behind every step in Jerusalem. My vision of Jerusalem is intimately personal.

Jerusalem floats as a vision of gold. Yellow ochre, cream, grey, pink, and red bounce off the meleki and mizzi stones from which the City of Light has been hewn imparting a magical luminescent quality. This variety of carved stone: white meleki stone, cream-coloured limestone and red-coloured and grey crystalline dolomite give Jerusalem its unique character. The setting sun reflected on the cream-coloured limestone facade of both ancient and modern structures gives them a golden hue. The light bounces off the facades of sumptuous Mamluk and Ottoman edifices, dissolves the spectrum of lustrous colours, and soaks Jerusalem's labyrinthine alleys in a haze of translucent amber honey.

A euphoric blend of sounds, smells, and images - documented in my paintings and literary works - heightens the poignant melancholic nostalgia.

The first aroma that assails one upon entering Damascus Gate, immediately



Jerusalem as a vision of gold, painting by Dr. Ali Qleibo

after walking down the stairway, is that of roasted coffee from Izhiman's Coffee Shop at the juncture of Al-Wadd St. and Suq Khan al-Zeit. The aroma of freshly roasted coffee and ground coffee dissolves in that of freshly baked bread and merges with the pungent aroma of pickles, olives, and cheese in the Al-Hidmi Grocery. Gradually the smell of pickles gives way to rose water. Deep beyond Suq Khan al-Zeit, in the far southern corner of the spice market, at its articulation with Bazaar St., the aromas of the Old City reach their peak with the smell of zalabieh.

Round golden fritters glitter in the zalabiah shop on one side of David St. Meters of colourful textiles hang outside the cloth shop on the opposite side of the street. Herbs, perfumes, incense, and spices from the spice market drench the air. Aromas, colours and shapes vie with each other to intoxicate and thrill eye and nose.

The Jerusalem of the early fifties lives on. Our Friday visits to mother's grandmother in her ancient tower house hewn of Herodian stones in "Baab al-Item" survives intact in my mind. Dream and reality weave the fabric of my memory of my mother's grandmother Aisha - the deep blue eyes and the blonde braid - into the rich tapestry of Al-Quds. Widowed and left with six children at 26, she tied her hair into a single braid and made a vow of celibacy that lasted from 1909 until she passed away in the seventies. A Nuseibeh, she lived in the ancient family home, like all members of patrician families, north of Al-Aqsa. In my mind's eye I still see her, already very old, seated on the windowsill, the mastabah, watching the hubbub of the Via Dolorosa below and the Herodian



tower rising above her home. From the same window mother remembers watching the procession of Nebi Musa in the street below as it made its way to St. Stephen's gate. A mere child of nine, little did she know that she would be the sister-in-law of the handsome Qleibo carrying one of the Jerusalem family banners.

Nebi Musa, the fanfare, the old families, their banners, and their endowments along with the Herodian tower have ceased to exist. My uncle



In a photo exhibit at my daughter's school, I ran into a sixty-year-old photo of Aisha's intact window in the shadow of the Herodian tower. The black-and-white photo conjured my image of Jerusalem; the Jerusalem that still lives in my heart.

Dr. Ali Qleibo is an anthropologist, author, and artist. A specialist in the social history of Jerusalem and Palestinian peasant culture. Dr. Qleibo lectures at Al-Quds University. He can be reached at aqleibo@yahoo.com.

who carried the family banner is long dead. In fact, almost everyone I knew and whose lives were intertwined with Jerusalem's history as established by the Caliph Omar in the seventh century and as confirmed by Saladin in the twelfth century have passed away. Time changes and rearranges. Ancient monuments have fallen into disrepair, edifices have disintegrated, and stones have been put into secondary usages in new buildings. Barely a few familiar traces have survived the tremor of the Nakba and the Six-Day War.

In a photo exhibit at my daughter's school, I ran into a sixty-year-old photo of Aisha's intact window in the shadow of the Herodian tower. The black-and-white photo conjured my image of Jerusalem, the Jerusalem that still lives in my heart.

My generation has inherited the heavy weight of our predecessors' defeats. The battle of Jerusalem, pending a miracle, is lost.

All is gone. All is vanity.

We live in longing.

Jerusalem of my youth lives in me.

I stand on the rooftop of the Austrian Hospice and overlook the illegal shacks, the TV antennas, the satellites, the black plastic water reservoirs or the piles of rubbish.

I still see my city with the eyes of a lover. Like an old married couple, I see my love always as at first sight... forever young. I do not stop at the wrinkles. I go beyond them to the image I once glimpsed when I first fell in love.

The reality is that of the heart.



by kind permission from Yabous Productions archive

AlQuds The Culture of the Soul

by Rania Elias

Al Quds/Jerusalem, the city that has captured the soul and heart, a physical place where people live and a spiritual place that lives in people's hearts and minds, is this year being celebrated as the Capital of Arab Culture.

Palestinians appear at first sight to be drained and exhausted due to the Israeli occupation and the political situation. But as an assertive society with a rich heritage, Palestinians have been able

to express themselves and have their powerful voices heard through culture and art.

With all that has been going on in Jerusalem, it is very meaningful that this special focus should be on this city this year. The celebration of Jerusalem has meant not only the celebration in Jerusalem but also in every city, village and refugee camp in Palestine. And what has been exciting is the way in

which the celebration has been adopted not just in the Arab world but in Europe as well. The celebration is not just about culture and art, but about the long history and foundation of Arab civilisation in this city.

The occupation has choked our culture in more ways than people seem to realize: trying to deny the majority of the population access to high art, trying to make us ignorant about our culture, closing borders, preventing artists from coming to Palestine, denying entry visas to international cultural workers, and imposing restriction of movement on Palestinian artists. And this year the vicious attacks by Israeli police on cultural events and attempts to ban them from happening through the use of force. They even try to crimp our imagination and turn us into a helpless population. In the face of all these measures, the resolve to pursue activities has become a greater challenge.

Development of cultural activities and artistic freedom were and still are our mission and Jerusalem institutions have managed to execute many projects, organize festivals, produce films and plays, set exhibitions, renovate museums, inaugurate music schools and much more. High artistic standards, diversity and themes are taken into consideration when making plans and organizing events despite difficult circumstances.

In this pressured environment, Jerusalem is advancing its revival, and cultural life is also flourishing. Throughout the years Palestinian civil society, cultural organizations as well as official bodies have worked hard to strengthen cultural

organisations in Jerusalem. They have encouraged sustainable development and supported infrastructure and activities, thus challenging the cultural isolation of Jerusalem due to the closure of the city. Their efforts have also challenged Israeli government policies to Judaize Jerusalem and to reduce and confine Palestinian presence.



We believe in an open, vital, civilized free Jerusalem, It's culture, history and architecture inspired by its natural beauty, together with a just and peaceful life for our future generations is our aspiration for the future of the Capital of Palestine, our beloved city, Al-Quds.

A vibrant cultural scene exists in Jerusalem and is used as a continuing tool for social economic development and maintaining and preserving our Palestinian cultural identity. Most of the cultural institutions' objectives are based on keeping our culture strong, engaging the community and empowering the

youth. Culture in Jerusalem is shared, learned and passed on from the older generations to the new.

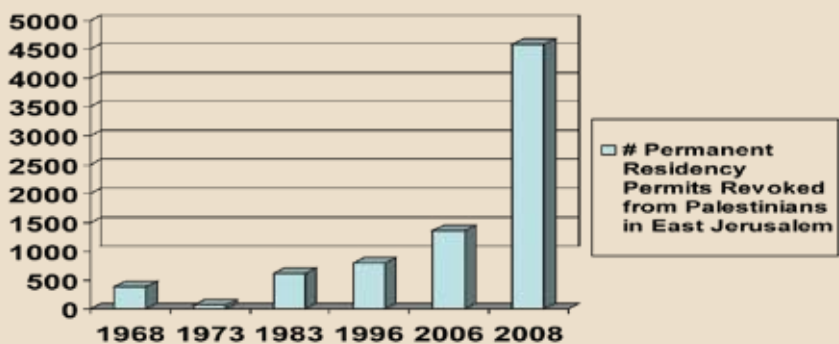
If you have carefully chronicled the monthly prestigious Palestinian publication, "This Week in Palestine" you can learn about the vibrant calendar of community and cultural activities and events in Jerusalem. But the main problem is to provide access to people due to the closure of Jerusalem by Israeli military checkpoints and the apartheid wall, and to create opportunities and improve and enhance cultural activities.

Cultural organizations working for Jerusalem need the voices and efforts of people from around the world to challenge Israeli measures in the city.

We believe in an Open Vital Cultural Civilized Free Jerusalem.

To us..... its quality infrastructure, culture, history and architecture, inspired by the natural beauty, with a just peaceful life to our future generations, and real freedom to our people, is our aspiration for any future for the Capital of Palestine our beloved city....al Quds.

Ms. Rania Elias, Director - Yabous Productions.



Rescinding of Permanent Residency Status in East Jerusalem



Youth Conference

A pilgrimage, loosely defined, is a journey to some form of holy place. Every year, everyday, Christian pilgrims come in droves to Israel and Palestine to visit what they call the holy land. Most of them, having grown up hearing about these places from stories and scripture, focus their minds and bodies on the place itself: the Nativity Church, the Wailing Wall, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Of course, as a Christian organization, we at Sabeel certainly understand the value of visiting holy sites; but for us, the emphasis of a pilgrimage is a little different.

Here, we like to focus on the journey itself. Not the actual trip overseas, or

over land, but the journey, the self-conscious struggle that one must go through to really see the special nature of this place. This journey is not purely spiritual, and not merely physical. It is an individual and collective transformation, one that results only through an active engagement with a place through the people in it.

Over the years, we have developed a conference for a small group of young adult Christians which aims to engage that pilgrimage experience at several levels. In a two week trip, participants spend each day traveling to different parts of Israel and Palestine, immersing themselves in religion and

culture through discussions, lectures, barbeques, community volunteering, cultural activities and contextual tours.

We've been holding youth conferences for four years, integrating members of our local Palestinian Christian and Arab Israeli community with a number of international participants. In the past we've had participants come from Sweden, South Korea, Canada, Scotland, The United States, The U.K., The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Norway, Holland, Denmark and India. Both in Palestine and abroad, our participants come from all kinds of religious, economic, and social backgrounds, but they are

usually interested and active in their faith as well as the cause of Palestinians and religious and political issues surrounding that cause. We often have, but are not limited to seminarians, university students, journalists, social workers, clergy members, and social activists.

Each year our conference is slightly different, because of the ever-changing socio-political situation here and because of the different people we have participating, but there is always a core program that we continue to emphasize with every group. We have many goals for the conferences, but most fundamentally, we are attempting to offer an alternative

pilgrimage opportunity to young adults, one that emphasizes people and the human relationship with land and holy sites, rather than simply the things in themselves. For us it is a way of presenting the political realities of the region through a discourse that emphasizes equality and justice - for Palestinians and Israelis - rather than one of sovereignty and control. Not wanting to simply tell people what is going on and what to think about it, we try to let them see and decide for themselves through discussion, reflection, and personal involvement with the issues at hand.

We hope that over the course of our two weeks together, we will have helped

prepare our young participants with some of the tools, experiences, and relationships that have proved useful to us-so that when they return home, they will be able to serve as active and critical advocates for justice and peace in their own local communities.

This year, we are working hard to make the young adult conference better than ever. We are recruiting new participants and sponsors everyday, so if you or someone you know is interested in joining us, please fill out an application from our website and send it to youth@sabeel.org!

By Clayton Goodgame

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel!”

Advent is about yearning, anticipation, longing: “*O Come, O Come Emmanuel!*” we will sing and pray as we make the advent journey to Christmas. Mary caught the hopes of so many, then and now, when she sang:

“God has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. God has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich empty away” (Luke 2:53-54).

Christ came to earth to bring about this new reality: a Godly realm where the oppressed are lifted up; where the meek, the hungry, and the peacemakers are blessed; where all nations stand before God’s penetrating gaze.

As we wait and prepare ourselves this advent for the coming of the Christ-child into our midst once again, each of us can resolve, with the World Week of Peace of the World Council of Churches (www.oikoumene.org/events-sections/wwppi.html), to Pray, Educate and Advocate in our own communities: that justice will be done, that peace will reign, that all peoples may flourish with life in fullness. That is the eternal promise of the baby in the manger who challenges us as the risen Christ.

O Come, O Come Emmanuel! O Come, O Come Emmanuel!

Blessings and Peace this Advent-tide
best wishes for a happy Christmas and good 2010
from all at Sabeel

Glimpses of our Activities

Special Worship Service held at the Dominican Church to lift up prayers for Jerusalem.



A two-day interfaith workshop organized by Sabeel



Jerusalem and Nazareth participants on a spiritual, social and cultural two-day field trip to Deir Hanna.



Omar Nassar head of Arrabeh Council.



At the village of Sakhnin





Samih Ghanadre introducing his book about Christian Muslim relations-Nazareth



Sabeel children on a historic tour of Nazareth.



Cultural evening with Mrs. Naela Azzam Lebes folklore researcher from Nazareth



Young Adults from Jerusalem and Nazareth doing volunteer work in Ein Qenya, the Golan Heights.



Nazareth Young Adults at Kufr Qassem helping with the olive harvest.



Reflection on the Sabeel Fall Witness Trip

by *The Rev. Richard K. Toll, D.Min., D.D.*

Since 1983 I've been traveling to the occupied territories, taking groups from my parishes to stay at St. George's in East Jerusalem. I have participated in many Sabeel events, and have experienced the first and second intifadas at close quarters. Throughout this time I have assumed and hoped that for the sake of Israel and the Palestinians that a final peace solution

would come into being. I fought for support of a two-state solution at the national convention of the Episcopal Church USA in 1991 and helped win the resolution even though there was intense opposition by visitors from the Jewish Federation who informed us "You cannot tell Israel what to do". That statement was as true then as it is now.

After all these years it is obvious that Israel has no desire for a two-state solution as outlined by the terms of international law and based on 1967 borders and the sharing of Jerusalem.

The Sabeel witness visit this past month showed us new major expansion of settlements on the West Bank, more than I ever imagined since my most previous visit there in November 2008. Confiscations of land, destruction of villages, more by-pass roads and construction of the wall has shaken off the entire population of Palestinians. And the wall also separates Palestinians in one neighborhood from Palestinians nearby. The wall is so very ugly in the

Bethlehem area especially and is used to choke off any hope for the thousands of Palestinians who live there.

We observed families being evicted from their homes in the Sheik Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem, and the machinery of ethnic cleansing continues. Our trip was aptly entitled "The Ongoing Nakba". Evictions and land confiscation are visible everywhere and moving at a fast pace.

I used to hope Israel would come to its senses because it is insane to think what they're doing will solve the problem in a peaceful way. It's obvious they do not want a peaceful solution and have a military solution for everything. It is also insane that the U.S. government continues to support Israel in view of a continuing arrogance and contempt for international law and human rights. Most recently, our government's refusal to uphold the UN's Goldstone Report on Israel's devastating war on Gaza is a sign Washington's policy with regard to Israel's occupation is not changing, as we had hoped it would.

I was very saddened by what we witnessed on our trip, by the extremes of the Israeli right and the unconditional support of the American government. Our U.S. policy allows Israel's aggression to continue, making us as much at fault as Israel, since we have enabled that nation its belligerence without consequences.

For the sake of Israel, Palestine, the U.S. and the entire world, I hope very soon all parties will come to their senses.

As for Sabeel, we will continue our work in Hope for Justice and Peace in God's world.

The Rev. Richard K. Toll is coordinator of Friends of Sabeel, North America.

Excerpt from the book:

“JERUSALEM 1913”

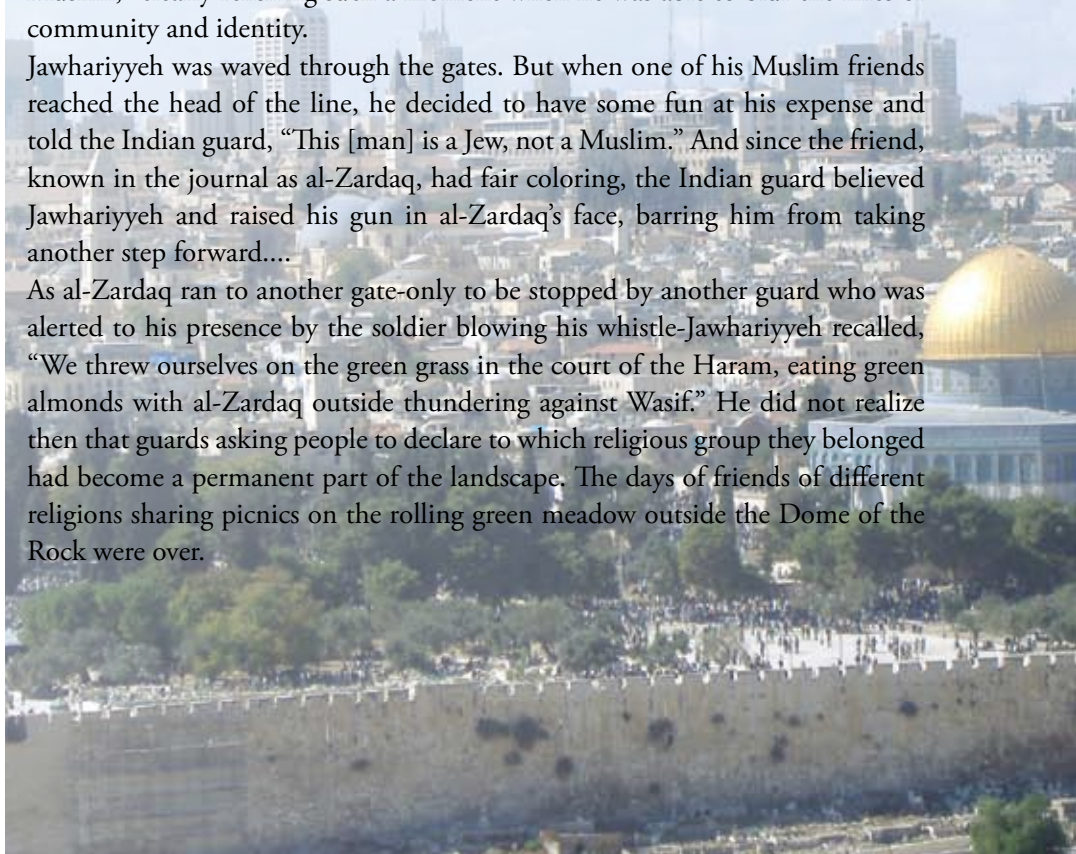
by Amy Dockser Marcus pp. 194-195

In his journal Wasif Jawhariyyeh, [Orthodox Christian], recorded that on a Sunday morning in April, probably around 1919 or 1920, he went with a group of Muslim friends to a bar in the Old City to have a drink. It was a warm sunny day, and the friends wanted to enjoy Jerusalem. They bought sacks of green almonds from one of the vendors in the market and decided to walk together to the Dome of the Rock to sit outside in its courtyard, have a picnic, and watch the flow of people, the colors and sounds that made the city such a special place. But when they arrived at the compound, they saw troops posted outside each of the main gates.

The soldiers on duty that day were part of a Muslim Indian army contingent employed by the British to help patrol Jerusalem. The British did not want anyone who was not Muslim to enter the area where the Mosque was located, as there was growing ethnic conflict in the city, and they feared a problem erupting at a holy site. As people waited in line to enter, the guards would ask, "Musliman?" If the response was "no" they were sent away. When Jawhariyyeh's turn came and the soldier asked if he was a Muslim, he answered, "Thank God, Musliman," even though he was not. Behind him, one of his friends shouted out, vouching for him, "I swear to God, Musliman." He later recorded in his journal, "Imagine, dear reader, the idea of Wasif ben Girgis Jawhariyyeh being a Muslim," clearly relishing such a moment when he was able to blur the lines of community and identity.

Jawhariyyeh was waved through the gates. But when one of his Muslim friends reached the head of the line, he decided to have some fun at his expense and told the Indian guard, "This [man] is a Jew, not a Muslim." And since the friend, known in the journal as al-Zardaq, had fair coloring, the Indian guard believed Jawhariyyeh and raised his gun in al-Zardaq's face, barring him from taking another step forward....

As al-Zardaq ran to another gate-only to be stopped by another guard who was alerted to his presence by the soldier blowing his whistle-Jawhariyyeh recalled, "We threw ourselves on the green grass in the court of the Haram, eating green almonds with al-Zardaq outside thundering against Wasif." He did not realize then that guards asking people to declare to which religious group they belonged had become a permanent part of the landscape. The days of friends of different religions sharing picnics on the rolling green meadow outside the Dome of the Rock were over.





Iconog

by: Ian Knowles



Icon of St George, Patron of Palestine. Here the dragon grasps an olive tree in its talons, tearing it up by the roots, while it is slain by St George and falls against a section of the segregation wall, smashing it into pieces.

Sacred icons are often presumed to be 'Greek' or 'Russian', and decidedly not Arabic. This is a pity, because not only do Byzantine icons produced in Palestine in the first Christian centuries blend many Oriental elements at the expense of classical Greek influences, but in the late 18th century the Melkite Christians of Syria developed their own Aleppo school which produced Arabic icons, complete with Arabic inscriptions, Islamic patterning, Arabic calligraphy and Arabic artefacts in the compositions. Icons, as incarnational instruments of God's grace, root themselves into the very fabric of their cultural context, be that Byzantium, Syria or indeed present occupied Palestine and simply copying icons from one culture for use in another is to fundamentally misunderstand their nature and role.

Palestine played a central role in iconography from the very beginning. Even before Constantinople was fully established as a Christian city, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and the other sites associated with Jesus' earthly life had become popular pilgrimage centres, and under Imperial patronage great Byzantine basilicas and *martyrium* had been erected, lavishly embellished with mosaic icons.

Each of these needed vast numbers of craftsmen and it was they who gradually

graphy

evolved the Greco-Roman pagan artistic inheritance into Byzantine iconography. Some of these artists would have come from across the empire, but others would have been locals, Arab Christians from Palestine and Syria, and indeed their assistants whom they trained would have all been drawn from the local Palestinian population. These would have become permanent workshops, constantly at work in the many churches and monasteries which dominated the landscape long before the Islamic invasion in the 7th century but drawing in the artistic influences of the near East.

The greatest surviving repository of early iconography is in the Sinai desert, on the fringes of the Jerusalem patriarchate. Here there is evidence that Palestinian iconographers thrived in the early period, not only surviving the Islamic invasions but responsible for the mosaic decoration of the third holiest place in Islam, the Dome on the Rock, and were producing a new form of iconography under the Crusaders, known as 'Crusader icons'. And throughout the ages of pilgrimages, from the 3rd century until the Middle Ages, pilgrims would have brought back to their homes across Europe the images and souvenirs of the holy sites they had visited, thus distributing the work of Palestinian artists across Christendom

and beyond. Nor should we pass over St John Damascene, an Arab Christian from Syria who settled in the Palestinian monastery of St Sabba, and who was the great theologian defending the use of images in Christian life. Palestinian iconic art was of world significance.

However, with the gradual weakening of Christian Palestinian society in the later Middle Ages, with the destruction of churches and the end of pilgrims in any number, these workshops faded away and the Arabic contribution to iconography ceased to be of any significance. However, in the 18th century in Aleppo in Syria, Melkite Christians began to experiment with their iconography, not just copying the Greek and Russian models, but reflecting the artistic styles around them in their own culture. The use of these spread to other Arab Christian communities around the Levant, and went through different stages, sometimes very elaborate but always with these round faces with strong Arabic features. Jerusalem became the centre of Melkite icons in the mid 19th century and the workshops produced some wonderful work before it began to decline in both design and competence in the early 20th century.

A workshop was still in existence in Bethlehem until the 1940's, but after the upheavals of the nakhba all practice of this school ceased. Nor did the contribution of Arabs in general and Palestinians in particular receive any recognition on a world stage. Too many minds, even within the local churches

in Palestine, seem to think that iconography is a Greek or Russian thing, and that Arabic always means Islamic. Yet the Palestinian contribution to the development of Byzantine practice and theology of iconography is of universal significance. Furthermore iconography in Palestinian communities is not some aspect of Greek ecclesiastical 'colonialisation' but something intrinsic to the very life and history of Palestine, and an area where Palestinians have made a primary contribution of world significance.

I hope that perhaps we can begin to take back this history from those who have 'stolen' it or neglected it, and develop a new stage in the iconography of Palestine, combining the inheritance of the earliest period of iconography with Melkite icons, illuminated with the insights into the development and practice of iconography in general that have been discovered over the past 70 years. I even dream of establishing a new Palestinian icon school that brings together this precious inheritance and lets it speak in terms of the reality that Palestine is now living through, most notably the Israeli Occupation. For God is not indifferent to the pleas of his people, and the icon must reflect that because the icon is an extension of the reality of the incarnation by which God has come and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

In my next article, I hope to explore some possible ways that we can begin the revival of Arab iconography within the living faith.

Ian Knowles is an accomplished Byzantine iconographer in both the Latin and Eastern Rite tradition. His recent work includes iconographic murals on Saint Nicholas in Beit Jala, and an exhibition of Palestinian-themed icons entitled "Beauty and the Beast" at Dar Annadwa in Bethlehem.



ONE MORE TENT

This story, one of scores of similar ones, illustrates the policy of restriction on building and house demolitions for Arabs. (see stage 4 on p5)

by Nora Carmi

From Jabal al Mukabber and Silwan to Sheikh Jarrah, the Mt. of Olives and Beit Hanina in Jerusalem, there is visible presence of white-tent 'spots' in the panoramic view of the city. Is this a new phenomenon or is it by architectural design?

Every time a house is demolished - under the pretext of being built without a permit - or a Palestinian family is evicted from its ancestral home that settlers occupy with the

force and support of Israeli police and soldiers, a new tent appears. Either the International Red Cross or the Civil Society rushes in with a tent to compensate for the loss of the families by offering a temporary roof that will at least physically protect the tens of children and parents otherwise thrown into the streets.

However, the white temporary refuge sometimes becomes "home" for many months until it is forcibly brought

down by the municipality officers and the soldiers because it "offends" the settlers! There engages a battle of powers between oppressive domination measures and violated rights. Every time a tent is re-pitched (six or seven times), it increases the anger and arrogance level of the settlers who claim divine rights. Most recently, a television channel screened the harassment of the Al-Ghawi and Al-Kurd families by settlers, and viewers around the globe heard one settler shout "God gave us this land. You must leave".

The following story is one of many in Jerusalem!

The rain beats hard against the fabric of the tent and daring winds try to sneak into the frail refuge of the young man who is sadly recounting the tragic

details of October 12 to a group of Danish visitors. On that day, Amjad Tiriaki, his wife Asma and their three children Malek, Muna and Tasneem became, like hundreds of Palestinian families, homeless when their small house was demolished because he had built it without obtaining a permit. Amjad speaks in English as he passes around pictures of the Tiriaki humble dwelling that is now a heap of rubble. The expression on the bewildered faces of the Danish visitors huddled close in the narrow space of the white tent provided by the Red Cross reflects disbelief and pain as they tearfully watch the children trying to warm themselves over a pot of hot water!

On that unforgettable morning, Amjad Tiriaki was still in bed when soldiers and dogs stormed into his house, ordered him out and in a few moments the bulldozer had razed down the five-year old home in which the Tiriaki family had lived turned into dust and dreams were shattered! Amjad's father-in-law had provided the land on which he kept a few horses. Amjad had patiently transformed one of those stables/barracks into a small but cozy home for his loved ones. In a split second the stones were turned into dust and the dreams were shattered. Asma was



Prayer for Jerusalem

O Eternal Lord God,
 Source of all truth,
 Lover of all people,
 we thank you for the experience of living in this city.
 Grant that we may be humble, grateful people,
 worshipping people,
 holy people.
 Help us to be peace-loving people,
 Who know the things that belong to peace,
 Who pray and work for peace,
 Who try to understand the experiences,
 the hurts,
 the hopes of people from whom we differ.
 Let this city be a center of unity for the Churches.
 Let it be a place of friendship and understanding for men and
 women of different faiths.
 Let it be truly the City of Peace, a joy of the
 whole earth and a place of blessing to all nations.
 For the sake of him who wept in love over this
 city and died in love outside its walls.
 Now the Everliving One, ever present with you to heal and bless,
 Jesus Christ our blessed Lord and Savior.

Jerusalem prayers for the world today, by George Appleton

not home when the soldiers arrived because she had walked the two older children to the school bus stop. The soldiers who had cordoned the area did not allow her to go back home and she knew that the demolition order that the family had received earlier in the year was now being implemented. The children returned from school and found no home. Three weeks later, Muna, the elder daughter witnessed another home demolition next to her school in Al-Thori on the other side of town!

The whole neighborhood of al-Marwaha (the windmill) has been built without permits because it is almost impossible to obtain building permits and the few who can afford to pay extravagant fees have to wait for years. In a recent trial in Jerusalem, an Israeli Judge exclaimed: Most of the houses in Jerusalem are built without permits, are we going to demolish them all?

The added trauma of the Tiriaki family is that Amjad is sick. At 29, he has already undergone several heart surgeries; he cannot have a steady job nor can he provide for the children without assistance from his family and in-laws! Since the home demolition, Amjad has been hospitalized several times and who knows what the future holds!

Amjad and Asma do not give up hope. They trust in God and are confident that they will be able to rebuild their home.

As one more tent is pitched, one wonders if Jerusalem will become a city of tents until the Palestinians can live in dignity.

Nora Carmi, coordinator of community and women's programs-Sabeel.

The Best Years of My Life

This story, one of thousands, illustrates the effect of the law that restricts family reunification (see stage 5 on p5)

Interview by Salwa Duaibis

My name is Rimaz Kasabreh, I am 33 years old. I am from the village of Zababdeh in the north of the West Bank near Jenin. I am a holder of a Palestinian identity card. In 1996 I married my husband Ghassan who is a resident of Jerusalem and holds a Jerusalem identity card. We now have three children: Salim who is 12 years old, Sari who is 10 years old and Serina who is 6 years old.

After we got married we lived in a house owned by my husband's family in the neighborhood of Beit Hanina in East Jerusalem. My husband and I were aware of the fact that the process of obtaining a Jerusalem identity card for me through a family unification application was not going to be easy; we knew that the Israeli authorities were not processing such applications. That is why we did not submit an application until a few years later. I cannot remember the exact year when we submitted the application. But when we did it took years for the Israeli authorities to process our application.

At the time when I got married, I was still a student at Al-Najah University and wished to continue my studies. It was possible for me to commute back and forth between our house in Beit Hanina and Nablus where the university was; our house was located before the checkpoint, on the side of the West Bank town of Ramallah, so I

had no problem making the commute every day and I did not feel a need for a Jerusalem identity card.

After I graduated from university I found a job at one of the private schools in East Jerusalem, the Schmidt School. I was very happy to find a job very quickly. The problem was that I now needed to travel in the opposite direction and cross an Israeli checkpoint in order to get to my work. Over the years this became more difficult for me with my West Bank identity card which, according to Israeli law, doesn't allow me access to Jerusalem. This was in 2001.

It happened many times that the Israeli soldiers at the checkpoint would ask me to go back home because I did not have a Jerusalem identity card. The school then issued me a card saying I was employed by them. That did not help much. In order to avoid passing through the checkpoint I used to walk through dirt roads and climb over the hills. I rarely made it to school in time. In the winter I would arrive completely wet and cold. In the summer I would be hot and sweaty. I always carried extra clothes and an extra pair of shoes with me. It was difficult to carry all those things without a car.

In 2003 more rules were enforced by the Israeli authorities to prevent West Bankers from being in Jerusalem. For



Check point inside the West Bank.

example, it became illegal for taxi and bus drivers from Jerusalem to take passengers from the West Bank. Taxi drivers would ask each and every passenger about their identity card to make sure it was a Jerusalem identity card. If they didn't have a Jerusalem identity card they would not allow them on the taxi.

It became more and more difficult for me to go to my work or to get anywhere in Jerusalem. I couldn't do my shopping. I couldn't visit my friends; I couldn't take my children to school or to a doctor or a hospital. During the summer holidays my children and I could not go anywhere together. I couldn't take them to summer camps where other children their age went. I was completely dependent on my husband who was very busy. This

affected my children too. They couldn't understand why their friends' mothers took them places, drove them around and did things in the city with them while I couldn't. They were too young to understand. I sometimes felt they resented me. It was very difficult for all of us.

Very often I took risks, I had no other choice. One day I was going to school. It was 7:30 in the morning and I was 9 months pregnant with my daughter Serina. I don't remember the exact date. I took a taxi to Jerusalem and didn't tell the driver I didn't have a Jerusalem identity card. Suddenly an Israeli police stopped the taxi and asked for our identity cards. When the police found out I did not have the right identity card he asked the driver

to pull over, took his name and license number and told him next time he is caught with West Bankers in his taxi the police would confiscate the taxi. The policeman then pulled me from my arm and wanted to push me into the jeep. I refused and told him I was pregnant and didn't want to sit in a jeep. The policeman then asked the taxi driver to take me to the police station in the settlement of Neve Yacov. I was released two hours later after they checked my records and realized I was married to a person from Jerusalem. They made me sign a piece of paper pledging I will not move within the state of Israel, which of course according to their definition also includes East Jerusalem where I live.

In October 2003 I was caught again in a taxi. This time it was really horrible

because the police punished the taxi driver by confiscating his taxi for three months and taking his driving license. This meant that the taxi driver could not work for three months. The taxi driver blamed me for this and asked me to pay him a large amount of money as compensation. He used to wait for me outside the school gate until it was time for me to go home and would verbally harass me saying if I didn't pay him the money I would be in trouble. I was afraid he would cause me harm. In the end and after the interference of some people from the community my husband paid him some money and he stopped harassing me.

After this incident I decided to quit my job. It was not possible for me to continue to go to work this way. I was very sad because I enjoyed my work. I also lost the income which I needed at that time.

Most taxi drivers in Jerusalem now recognize me and know where I live and refuse to take me in their taxis. I am not allowed to drive my husband's car without a Jerusalem identity card. I am confined to the house. I hardly ever leave except to go to walk to neighbors' house. It is very hard for me. I am not used to staying at home. My family cannot come to visit me because they carry West Bank identity cards and are not allowed to cross the checkpoint into Jerusalem.

Nearly three-and-a-half years ago the Israeli Ministry of Interior finally told me they accepted my application for family unification. They gave me a piece of paper which was valid for one year on the basis of which I could apply for a permit to enter Jerusalem. Although



After this incident I decided to quit my job. It was not possible for me to continue to go to work this way. I was very sad because I enjoyed my work. I also lost the income which I needed at that time.

this did not mean I was a resident of Jerusalem yet, still I was very happy. At least it meant I could take a taxi and go places.

I have repeated the process of renewing this piece of paper for three times now. Each time my husband and I had to provide evidence that we were living together in Jerusalem. We had to show that we paid water and electricity bills, that we paid municipal taxes and that our children went to schools in Jerusalem. It takes weeks, sometimes months, to just get through to the Ministry of Interior for an appointment. They don't pick up the phone.

The third such paper expired in December 2008. Although I requested an appointment in time and submitted all the evidence they requested, it took them months to get back to me. This meant that during this time I was once again confined to the house. They told me they were checking my security record and that of my family, including my parents, my brothers and sisters and their families and the family of my husband.

This has been very difficult for me. Without a permit I am unable to visit my parents in the West Bank because

I won't be allowed back home into Jerusalem at the checkpoint. They cannot visit me either. My sister lives in Ramallah, just half an hour away from me and I cannot visit her for the same reason. My husband and I appointed a lawyer to try to speed up the process of getting a Jerusalem identity card. After we paid him a large amount of money he told us the Ministry of Interior is not approving any applications.

I have no idea how long this situation will go on. My husband and I have been married for 13 years now and I am still unable to live a normal life with him and our children. Many of my friends have the same problem. I still cannot apply for a job. Nobody will employ me knowing that I am in Jerusalem on short-term permits which I have to renew every year. Everybody knows that renewing the permit is not guaranteed. It might happen again that I will spend months without a permit before the authorities process my request. I feel I am losing the best years of my life sitting at home.

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PURPOSE STATEMENT *of* SABEEL

Sabeel is an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians. Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, this liberation theology seeks to deepen the faith of Palestinian Christians, promote unity among them, and lead them to act for justice and love. Sabeel strives to develop a spirituality based on justice, peace, non-violence, liberation, and reconciliation for the different national and faith communities. The word 'Sabeel' is Arabic for 'the way' and also a 'channel' or 'spring' of life-giving water.

Sabeel also works to promote a more accurate international awareness regarding the identity, presence, and witness of Palestinian Christians as well as their contemporary concerns. It encourages individuals and groups from around the world to work for a just, comprehensive, and enduring peace informed by truth and empowered by prayer and action.

For more information on Friends of Sabeel groups in your area please contact our international representatives or the Sabeel Center in Jerusalem.