

Jerusalem and Its Role in Islamic Solidarity

Yitzhak Reiter



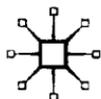
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It has been said that in order to write one book one must have read a thousand other books. But who can remember everything that was written in all of the books that one has read? It is a rare individual who can recall even the titles of all of the books that they have perused and by which they have been influenced. I have not been blessed with such a memory, and thus I owe my first debt of thanks to all of those anonymous authors who are not cited in this monograph—their books, texts, and other works, written or oral, to which I have been exposed and that have influenced me whether consciously or unconsciously, and whose bibliographic details I am unable to recollect in a manner that would enable me to do justice to their originality. I assume that these uncited authors will forgive me, in as much as their own works must have undergone a similar process of continual and unconscious absorption of material from earlier sources.

The initial readers of the first (Hebrew) version of this work, whose perceptive comments improved the text and prevented me from making a variety of errors, deserve special thanks: Professor Yaakov Bar-Siman-Tov, Dr. Nimrod Luz, and Dr. Eldad Pardo. Any remaining errors or shortcomings of this book are, of course, my sole responsibility.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In one of the most highly charged moments of the second Camp David negotiations (July 2000), when U.S. president Bill Clinton suggested an ethnic division of Jerusalem and a vertical division of the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif, according to which the upper level of the Muslim buildings being under Palestinian sovereignty and Israeli sovereignty being beneath the surface,¹ Yasser Arafat astonished President Clinton and the Israeli delegation with his statement that “the [Jewish] Temple never existed in Jerusalem, but rather in Nablus (in Hebrew: Shechem).”² He added that the Jews have no real connection to the Temple Mount and that al-Aqsa and Jerusalem belong to the entire Muslim nation. Due to this, Arafat claimed, he was not authorized to reach an agreement (and a compromise) regarding them. Both Arafat himself (as he maintained) and Bill Clinton conducted, trans-Atlantic calls with the heads of Muslim states, in order to obtain an Islamic endorsement of the U.S. president’s proposals, but without any success. The summit failed, perhaps due to the dilemma of the Temple Mount and al-Aqsa.³

The Clinton proposals for dividing Jerusalem drew on what most analysts, members of the parties in conflict, international organizations, and government negotiators have consistently argued. In the end, the solution to the conflicting claims to Jerusalem is some form of division of the city. This would include what the Jews and Israelis refer to as the Temple Mount and what the Muslims and Palestinians refer to as *al-Haram al-Sharif* or the Noble Sanctuary. This study addresses the issue of Jerusalem and the problematic character of such a division, given the adversary ethos of Jerusalem and its sacred compound in the eyes of both Jews and Muslims, Israelis and Palestinians.

The study goes further and asks whether the issue of Jerusalem and the holy places is irresolvable. To what extent do religious symbols and religion in general pose an obstacle to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? The present monograph attempts to answer these questions through an investigation of contemporary Islamic and Arab perspectives.

This study begins with a discussion of changing status of holy sites in a particular religion that is engaged in a political dispute with the people of another religious conviction. The most conspicuous point in this regard is the elevation of al-Haram al-Sharif/al-Aqsa compound from being regarded as the third holy mosque in Islam to a higher status. A major method being used by the Muslims in this process is the linking of the Jerusalem and Mecca shrines.

One of the recent manifestations of linking Jerusalem and Mecca appears in the chapter "Mecca and Jerusalem" of *The Rock*, Kanan Makiya's⁴ historical novel.⁵ Makiya chose to highlight an erotic connection between the two sacred rocks in Mecca and Jerusalem—a connection that is rooted in an Islamic apocalyptic tradition—as a literary device to describe the relationship between these two holy cities:

The Black Stone will then rise in the air, uprooting the Ka`ba from its foundation, and carrying with it all those who have over the generations made the pilgrimage to Mecca. It will come to Jerusalem to be received by the Rock. The Rock will open like a woman opens herself to receive a man. The stones will mate in a final cataclysmic embrace, an implosion of passion and desire such as has been witnessed during creation, the wildest rutting season of all. So powerful will be the urge, it will fuse back together again that which He once separated.

Makiya places the story of the erotic encounter between the two rocks—white and black—into the mouth of Isaac, the fictional son of Ka`b al-Ahbar—a Jew who converted to Islam during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and who was the source of numerous Judaically inspired traditions. Isaac relates the story to Caliph `Abd al-Malik, who built the Dome of the Rock at the end of the seventh century. The story is one explanation proposed by Makiya regarding the dilemma that has long engaged scholars of ancient Islam: Why did `Abd al-Malik build the Dome of the Rock?

Makiya presents the relationship between Mecca and Jerusalem as an unbreakable bond, operating at two different levels that this volume

seeks to address: first, as an affinity within Islam of ever-growing intensity and, second, as a representation of Islamic-Judaic relations.

The sudden enforced separation between Mecca and Jerusalem (particularly the Old City) in June 1967 was a traumatic event for the Islamic world. The yearning to return al-Aqsa and East Jerusalem to a state of indivisible union with Mecca—that is, Jerusalem’s restoration to Muslim sovereignty—lies at heart of an awareness-raising campaign that is currently being waged in various parts of the Muslim world. Palestinians and Jordanians initiated this campaign in Jerusalem, with the addition, over time, of many other Islamic constituencies. Echoes of this campaign resound in Mecca—the ancient center of the Muslim world—and from there return to Jerusalem, reflecting the nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at whose core Jerusalem lies. This study analyzes the various facets of this campaign, in an effort to assess the strength of the religious obstacle, from an Islamic perspective, to a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and to evaluate the prospects for an Israeli-Palestinian agreement regarding Jerusalem’s future.

Returning to the structure of the book, chapter 2 discusses the meanings of sacred places, analyzing if they are static and fixed or dynamic and changeable. The study takes on the existing theoretical literature and develops a new concept of “Dynamic Sanctity” of holy places, elaborating on the inherent connection between politics and holiness and vice versa. Our discussion will focus on the dynamic process by which Jerusalem’s status as a holy city with its most important sacred shrine—the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif—has been elevated over the last generation.

While elevating the sacredness of the Jerusalem is one way of solidifying a religious-national identity, the parties to the conflict over the holy city went further to develop the tool of denial of the other party’s history. Chapter 3 deals with the challenges that the two adversaries pose to each other: Israeli Jews believe that to the Muslims the holy status of the city and the al-Aqsa compound is a late development aimed at strengthening their argument in the political arena. Jewish scholars also denigrate the authenticity and importance of the city to Arabs and Muslims. On the other hand the study provides a detailed account of how most post-1967 Muslim writers seek to refute the claims regarding Jerusalem’s centrality to Judaism and to back the process of denial of the Jewish Temple’s existence there, combined with the assertion that the Western Wall is not an authentic remnant of the Temple’s external supporting wall, but rather al-Aqsa compound’s western wall—the place identified today with al-Buraq, the amazing steed upon which

Muhammad was borne to Jerusalem and which the angel Gabriel is said to have tethered to the wall in question.

Chapter 4 examines the current Islamic ethos toward Jerusalem and the affinity between this religious ethos and the political aspirations of the Palestinians and other Arab and Islamic groups. It compares current Jewish and Muslim narratives of Jerusalem that are at the core of the new historical-political ethos of the city and discusses the relationship between the two narratives. It goes further to unfold the changing concepts of Jerusalem's antiquity and its association with monotheism in its primordial sense and with the development of a Muslim and Palestinian narrative of historical "seniority" of the Arabs and Muslims, who are identified with the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem some 5,000 years, that is, before the Israelites.

Reacting to the Israeli-Jewish claim of what one could view as employing biblical "historical assets" for national identity building, the Muslim narrative developed an identity that is Palestinian from a national territorial point of view, Arab from an ethnic point of view, and Islamic from a cultural-religious point of view. Across these three layers of identity, the rewriting of the history manifests in an effort to trace Palestinian and Arab national identity back to one of the ancient peoples of the disputed land. The chapter also draws on the art of reconstructing history and beliefs by using early Islamic traditions. I would argue that the most significant innovation that characterizes the current Islamic campaign for Jerusalem is the introduction of these traditions into the forefront of public discourse, and the extent and intensity of their use.

Chapter 5 deals with how radical Palestinians and other Arab and Muslim thinkers and groups via a post-1967 campaign entitled "Al-Aqsa Is in Danger" employ the identity symbols of Jerusalem and the al-Aqsa Mosque as a tool of Islamizing the conflict with Israel, hence giving it the shape of a clash between religions. This strategy, which aims at mobilizing the broader Arab and Muslim world, was constructed to cope with the challenges put by the Israeli-Jewish party to the conflict, creating many confrontational incidents in and around the Temple Mount/al-Aqsa compound.

The Islamization of Jerusalem in response to the extension of Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem demonstrates that religion in general and religious meanings in particular cannot be overlooked in political analysis and must be factored into political solutions. Symbolic meanings have strategic importance. Chapter 6 addresses the agents of this change and their aims, the techniques by which the change in the status of Jerusalem and the holy places has been effected, the dissemination and

mobilization methods employed in the Muslim world, and the mutual interactions between the political arena and the agents and originators of the religious discourse on Jerusalem, and their possible implications for the future of negotiations regarding the city. It reveals that there are many different actors in this arena, with each individual or group fulfilling a particular function in accordance with his conceptual world and motivating factors. In addition an evaluation of the success of the conflict's Islamization campaign is provided based on the political positions taken by Arab politicians and state policies.

Another question dealt with in this volume is what has led Muslims to seek the above mentioned radical justifications for the Islamization of the conflict by using Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque? The study's findings indicate the importance of the new situation created after Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem in June 1967. Prior to 1967, the ultraorthodox Jews (*haredim*) were able to view the distinction between the religious or theological issues posed by Jerusalem and those expressed by the Israeli state because Jerusalem and its holy places for Jews (the Western Wall, the Mount of Olives, and the Tomb of Rachel) were under Jordanian sovereignty. All of that changed with the Six-Day War that, it could be argued, radicalized orthodox Jews. On the one hand, some *haredim* became non-Zionist and others were pushed to the extremes of anti-Zionism. On the other hand, Jewish religious nationalists have sought to reclaim the Temple Mount as exclusive Jewish ritual property. The study unfolds a parallel process that took place among the Palestinian Muslims.

Finally, the question of what are the barriers preventing a solution to the Temple Mount/al-Haram problem is addressed in the concluding chapter. I present four components to the religious obstacle as perceived by Muslims with regard to al-Haram al-Sharif. These are (1) Muslims' rejection of shared sovereignty, or giving any legitimacy to Jews over any part of al-Haram al-Sharif or the area underneath it or even acknowledging the historical Jewish attachment to or connection with what Jews see as the Temple Mount; (2) the new concept of viewing the site as a matter of concern to the entire Muslim nation; (3) influence of religious thinkers on Palestinian negotiators; and (4) the flawed perception of the site's religious status in the eyes of the opposing party.



This book examines contemporary Islamic discourses of Jerusalem (written after 1967) as reflected in published books, religious legal

decisions (*fatwas*), Internet sites of Islamic movements, and in the Arabic media. The study is also based on a sampling of 62 scholarly and research works in Arabic published across the Muslim world (17 in Jordan, 16 in Egypt, 10 in the Palestinian territories and Israel, 5 in Lebanon, 2 in Great Britain (London), 2 in Syria, 2 in Saudi Arabia, 1 in Morocco, 1 in Malaysia, 4 on the Internet, and 1 with no indicated location), and on several books that were published prior to 1967 or whose main subject is not Jerusalem. The books I examined were chosen based on two considerations: first, content, that is, the books' focus on various aspects of the way in which Muslims perceive the issue of Jerusalem and, second, accessibility, that is, their availability in the bookstores or libraries to which I had access. I have also used for this study many articles appearing on Islamic Web sites, and articles and news reports in the Arabic press. Based on my review of a greater number of publications than those included in the selection used for this monograph, it appears that Muslim positions on most of the issues discussed here (upgrading Jerusalem's sacred status and creating a new Islamic ethos of Jerusalem, the denial of Judaism's connection to the holy places, the Islamization of the struggle) are not a random sampling of opinions but rather a representation of the central discourse taking place in the contemporary Muslim world, particularly when many of these positions appear in publications by the Organization of the Islamic Conference representing 57 Muslim countries. However, it should be emphasized that the militant positions found in these works with regard to jihad and anti-Semitic messages do not necessarily represent the general view, but rather that of radical fundamentalist and nationalist factions. The world Muslim population's exposure to these extremist messages is widespread, but it is difficult to assess what the impact of such exposure will be in the long term.

On the Jewish side, one may discern a similar process in which religious symbols are employed in order to achieve goals connected with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and not merely with the national religious camp. The State of Israel's Jewish-Zionist identity necessarily includes a clear religious component. The term "Zion," referring to Mount Zion, which overlooks the Temple/al-Aqsa site, incorporates the broader concept of Jerusalem, whilst the belief in the return to Zion is based on justifications from the Torah. The settlement movement, which since the Six-Day War has sought to return to the Jewish "patrimony" in the Palestinian-populated territories and to the holy sites mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, has earned state and governmental legitimacy.⁶ The revival or "discovery" of new holy places, some

of which had been known as the burial sites of sheikhs (some at the initiative or with the recognition of the Ministry of Religious Affairs) and their transformation into Jewish *kivrei tzadikim* (burial sites of righteous individuals)—Jewish control over the Cave of the Patriarchs, the activities of the various Temple movements⁷ (some of which are funded by evangelical Christian organizations), IDF induction ceremonies at the Western Wall and other formal events that take place at this site, and, finally, the fact that most of Israel's Jewish population views the Western Wall and the Temple Mount as symbols of national identity—all of these manifestations symbolize the Israeli claim for sovereignty over the site. Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount on September 28, 2000, its well-known ramifications with the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada, and the Revava movement's attempt to bring 10,000 Jews to the Temple Mount in June 2005 within the context of the protests against Israel's disengagement from the Gaza Strip, all of these also support this perspective. Moreover, Israeli initiatives connected with the Temple Mount, or security breaches at the site, the most notorious of which was the provoked arson in the al-Aqsa Mosque in August 1969 by an Australian tourist, have been motivating factors in Muslim activity. The political reality in Jerusalem actually creates innumerable situations in which Israeli actions serve to challenge the Muslims (and vice versa).

The primary focus of this study is on issues relating to Jerusalem from the Islamic perspective, although it also addresses, to some extent (within the study's limitations), the actions taken by Israeli officials and Jewish religious or political entities—actions to which, naturally, the Muslim side does not remain indifferent but rather tends to react forcefully. From this point of view, some of the processes that this study describes are mirror images between the Israeli-Jewish and the Arab-Muslim sides. Nevertheless, the employment of religious symbols by the Israeli-Jewish side relies less strongly on religious symbols compared with the Arab-Muslim approach, both in terms of the number of parties initiating this approach and in terms of the size of the audience that is exposed to the religious messages. I shall examine the reasons for this in the concluding chapter.

The main methodological challenge posed by this study is the difficulty of estimating the scope of dissemination of the publications that I used in preparing it—in other words, how can one determine the number of Muslims who have been exposed to the messages emerging from the texts that I have analyzed? Does the combined readership of these materials represent only an esoteric minority? Is the exposure

limited to Palestinians only, or does it extend to Muslims across all Middle Eastern Arab countries, or to the entire Muslim world? My assessment is that a relatively large Muslim audience the world over is exposed to the texts and the messages presented in this volume. This assessment is based on the following facts: the wide range of media used in the al-Aqsa/al-Quds campaign: a wide exposure via the Arab satellite TV channels; sermons in mosques all over the Muslim world and in the Islamic Western diaspora (including audio and video cassettes and DVDs); hundreds of books that have been published in Arabic in various parts of the Arab world about the religious and political history of Jerusalem (as well as books in other languages such as Persian, Urdu, and English, in countries where the Muslim communities speak these languages); the high prevalence of the Jerusalem issue in Muslim legal rulings, the fatwas of popular muftis and those appearing on Internet fatwa sites; the high frequency and salience of Jerusalem-related items on a large number of Islamic Web sites; activities initiated by various political and, at times, opposing entities, such as al-Quds Day, al-Quds Week, al-Isra' Day, and the anniversary of the al-Aqsa Mosque fire. This public campaign is also expressed in speeches, parades, and in religious, academic, and political conferences within the various Muslim communities, and even in children's games that deal with the issue and that are sold in bookstores in various Muslim communities. My visits to the annual Cairo Book Fair, to Jordanian bookstores, and to bookstores serving Muslim communities in East Asia and in the West (Hong Kong, Thailand, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia) have confirmed for me that these publications are distributed and sold in many places across the Muslim world. Finally, I have not come across public expressions of Muslim Arabs who manifested a different position to what I convey in this volume or who criticize the phenomenon of denial of the Jewish connection with Jerusalem.

I have not conducted a quantitative study of the phenomenon, but years of monitoring what is published on this subject in the Muslim world form the basis of this assessment. In a world with a Muslim population of over 1.3 billion, one may, in my opinion, assume that hundreds of millions of people are being exposed to messages disseminated by the "Campaign for al-Aqsa and al-Quds." The dissemination is not uniform across the world. In certain countries—in the circle closest to Israel, such as the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli-Arab sector, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the Persian Gulf countries—the distribution and prevalence of publications on Jerusalem are greater than they are in other Muslim countries or communities. However, the

Islamic movements (fundamentalist, political, and radical Islam) that serve as these messages' main disseminating agents are interconnected and work, each in its own country, to raise awareness of Jerusalem and the al-Aqsa Mosque and the danger to which, in their opinion, these places are exposed to.

Evaluating the influence that the current Islamic texts and discourses regarding Jerusalem have on the consciousness of the public that is exposed to them represents an additional methodological challenge. I believe that their influence is not insignificant, for three reasons, the first one is grounded in fact and the other two are circumstantial. First, there is the fact presented in this work that politicians and journalists across the Arab world make substantial use of the messages and integrate them into their political activity and their writing, thereby effectively broadening their impact. The second factor is a cultural one: Many Muslim societies (particularly in the Arab Middle East and Iran) are characterized by a strong religious consciousness that enables rapid absorption of religious symbols, myths, and messages. The third factor is a combination of the political, cultural, and ideological conflict that is currently being waged between the Muslim world and the West, and the Muslim world's sense of weakness and vulnerability vis-à-vis the West and Israel that psychologically makes them feel humiliated. These factors create wide latitude for the dissemination of stories, beliefs, and myths that strengthen internal solidarity within Muslim societies in the face of external challenges of a highly sensitive nature. They give Muslims a sense of metaphysical support and hope for future victory.

The present study shows that after 1967 a new Islamic ethos of Jerusalem emerged, a multilayered one that is bound up with a number of myths. A new politicohistorical ethos was developed also among Jewish-Israelis—one that I mention very briefly. What do I mean by using the terms “ethos” and “myth”? An ethos is a system of beliefs, standards, values, and guiding principles that characterizes a group, nation, or ideological movement. It draws its power from, among other things, myths. A myth is a kind of political allegory that is transmitted from generation to generation in writing and orally. It is characterized by a dramatic narrative structure. It usually addresses a past event, such as an important battle or a particular national group's foundation. It may look toward the future and evoke an anticipated event (such as the annihilation of a national group, the hope of revolution, or the coming of the Messiah). Myths are frequently based on real historical events, but their original factual core is processed, expanded upon, and reinterpreted. The story and its interpretation achieve larger dimensions

than those of the actual event. Myths have two main aims: to interpret reality (mainly to place the present within a historical continuum) and to influence the behavior of the target group. Myths appeal to the emotional stratum of human experience. Emanuel Sivan has made an important point about Arab historians that, instead of elucidating the kernels of truth and criticizing the myths, they actually have contributed to the myths' development and to their formulation in writing.⁸

As will be seen in this volume, in the case of post-1967 Jerusalem, myths are assimilated and internalized by societies with such intensity that they become part of reality and, indeed, even create a new reality.

CHAPTER 2

The Elevation in Sanctity of al-Aqsa and al-Quds

The existing research literature in the field of religion and in related disciplines points to a historical and contemporary process of sanctification of places, but in almost no instance does the literature address the conditions in which a holy site's status is elevated to a higher position on the scale of sanctity, as has occurred with Jerusalem. Emile Durkheim made a dichotomous distinction between "sacred" and "profane" in religious life in general. He maintained that "if religious life is to develop, a sacred place must be prepared for it, one from which profane life is excluded. . . [the] institution of temples and sanctuaries arise from this."¹ Perhaps, Durkheim's contribution to the question of what is a sacred place is based on his approach to the sacred as something that comes from the human and from society and is superimposed on specific geographical properties.² However, a study by Dawn Mari Hayes of medieval churches in Europe found that mundane and profane life was an integral reality of Christian sacred places.³

Mircea Eliade has discussed the role of man (as opposed to divine revelation) in determining the sanctity and status of a particular site. In his book *The Sacred and the Profane* (1959), Eliade explores how profane space can be converted into sacred space and suggests that this symbolic process reflects the spiritual characteristics associated with both the physical features and the deeper, abstract implications of delineating a particular site as sacred. Designation of a site as sacred is generally a response to two types of events. Some events (hierophanic) involve a direct manifestation on earth of a deity, whereas in other (theophanic) events somebody receives a message from the deity and interprets it for

others.⁴ However, Eliade was referring mainly to the heavenly significance of the sanctification of places, rather than to the earthly aspects of the phenomenon.⁵

Harold Turner (1979) developed the phenomenological approach to holy places, particularly those sites that serve as places of worship. He stressed their function as “the center of the world” and as peoples’ meeting places in addition to their function as “houses of God.” In addition, he highlighted their role as representing a microcosm of the heavenly realm and as an immanent-transcendent presence of God everywhere.⁶

The phenomenological approach was criticized by subsequent scholars who called for an empirical approach. In his study of holy cities, Gerard Weigers (2004) distinguishes between “profane” urban spaces containing one or more important holy places (such as Jerusalem) and “holy” urban spaces in which holy places or sanctuaries may be found (such as Mecca, al-Madina for Muslims and Varanasi for Hindus).⁷ In the latter, the entire city is holy—not simply specific sites within that city.

Chidester and Linenthal, in their book *American Sacred Space*, develop ideas that were earlier raised by Dutch theologian Gerardus Van der Leeuw in his 1933 work⁸ in which he addresses the politics of sacred space. Van der Leeuw states that the very definition of a place as sacred is a political act whose meaning is the “conquest of the space.” Sacred places are, indeed, characterized by a politics of ownership and possession. From the time that a site is defined as sacred it undergoes expropriation and a change of ownership. The sacred space is also a religious symbol that is mobilized for purposes of political authority. Another political aspect of the holy site is its exclusivity. That is, whoever is outside of its boundaries is excluded from it. And finally, the sacred space is also connected to the politics of exile—that is, the loss of the sacred space or the nostalgia for it on the part of those who were connected to it in the distant past and are now, in the modern era, severed from it.⁹

In contrast to Eliade, Chidester and Linenthal emphasize the secular forces that are active and that come into play at the holy site. A sacred space exists not merely in the heavenly dimension but also on the planes of reality, hierarchical power relations between ruler and ruled, exclusion and inclusion, ownership and the loss of ownership. Chidester and Linenthal adopt Michel Foucault’s theory of power in order to explain the various functions that are exerted upon a holy site. A sacred space is, first and foremost, a venue for ritual activity. It is a place that radiates

meaning to man. It is the focus of an unavoidable competition or struggle over ownership, legitimacy and sacred symbols. Because the sacred space is also a place over which ownership or possession may be claimed and that may be used by human beings seeking to further specific ends, it is also an arena in which various players engage in a power struggle. The authors also write that a holy place is usually considered most sacred by those who perceive it as a site in danger of secularization by economic, social, and political forces on the part of those who had originally sanctified it, or as a site in danger of being taken over by some other entity that is liable to defile it. It takes on greater sanctity when people are willing to fight and die for it. People are willing to die in struggles over holy places, because the holy place is an inexhaustible source of meaning.¹⁰

The meanings that Chidester and Linenthal attach to the sacred place based on research conducted in Hawaii and on the American mainland are all the more true of Jerusalem. Jerusalem's status in the eyes of the followers of the three Abrahamic faiths is elevated due to the very fact of its being at the center of a political conflict. Jerusalem, and particularly al-Aqsa site, is a striking example of the dramatic change that may occur in a site's sacred status when that change is driven by political motives.

2.1 Dynamic Sanctity

Emmanuel Sivan devotes a major portion of his book *Arab Political Myths* to the Arab-Muslim myth of Jerusalem as both a religious and a national myth. Sivan points out the relatively late development of the idea of Jerusalem's holiness within Islam after the Prophet Muhammad changed the direction of prayer (*qibla*) from Jerusalem to Mecca.¹¹ Two other Israeli scholars challenged this claim. Amikam Elad argued in his book devoted to al-Haram al-Sharif that Jerusalem had been sanctified during the seventh century CE under the Umayyad Caliphate against the background of another political challenge, and the magnificent Dome of the Rock is a unique testament to this.¹² Recently, Uri Rubin (who produced a Hebrew translation of the Qur'an) argued that since its early days Islam had two foci of sanctification—Jerusalem and Mecca, with both being on an equal footing of sacredness with a priority to Mecca as the place where the Qur'an was revealed and the Ka'ba as being built before al-Aqsa.¹³ Rubin based his argument on

analyses of Qur'an verses and early Islamic traditions. In chapter 3, I will come back to the debate between Israeli scholars regarding the authenticity of Jerusalem's importance in Islam. At this point, I would like to stress that Rubin's argument regarding early beliefs does not contradict Sivan's manifestations on the political reality since the seventh century. Sivan mentions two challenges that led to a change in Jerusalem's status over the course of history: one was the Crusader conquest and the second was the Zionist challenge to Hajj Amin al-Husseini, the most prominent leader of the Arab population in Palestine during the 1920s and the 1930s. Sivan adds that the century-long holy war against the Crusaders "led to a qualitative change in the status of the Jerusalem idea."¹⁴ Al-Husseini's attempt to upgrade Jerusalem's status in order to "spread Arab nationalism to the conservative classes which were suspicious of the modern nationalist idea"¹⁵ is presented by him as a myth. One could conclude from Sivan's book that Jerusalem was neglected in Islam over three centuries from the seventh to the early twelfth century and again for seven centuries from the post-Crusader era until the 1920s. Where the hierarchy of sacred places in Islam remains stable, Jerusalem, according to Sivan, was and remains third in line after Mecca and al-Madina, and this was the situation for a generation following 1967. I will discuss this argument in chapter 3. Sivan refers to the difference in status between *hajj* (the required pilgrimage to Mecca, which customarily ends with a visit to al-Madina, as a religious obligation) and *ziyara* (a visit that, unlike the *hajj*, is not a basic duty but rather a recommendation attributed to the Prophet Muhammad) as an indication of Jerusalem's inferior status.

In the following section, I seek to show how the sanctification of al-Quds has recently changed it from a forgotten or at least noncentral sacred city into a central element of Arab-Muslim reality, and that Jerusalem's status, both religious and political, has undergone a process of elevation. The ritual hierarchy existing between the three holy cities has not changed, but new religious-political rituals have appeared in the Muslim world alongside the traditional system of ritual and worship of God: conferences, parades, and public events of various kinds (speeches, sermons, quizzes, competitions, and a public discourse) in which al-Quds occupies center stage. Mecca, al-Madina and other cities in the Muslim world also play a role in the modern system of ritual observance in which faith and politics are intertwined, but these cities are not currently at the forefront of the public consciousness and discourse as Jerusalem is. It is true that a visit to Jerusalem does not have

the status of *haji* and that, indeed, important contemporary Islamic religious adjudicators have forbidden Muslims from outside Israel from making religiously motivated visits to Jerusalem, due to its being under Jewish control. However, my claim is that Jerusalem's status in the eyes of the Arab and Muslim communities has undergone a gradual change over the forty years since June 1967. The efforts that Muslim political and religious entities have invested in upgrading the city's status have borne fruit, and in the Muslim consciousness al-Aqsa and al-Quds now hold a place of honor alongside Mecca and al-Madina and they are no longer ranked below it. The al-Aqsa Mosque, as will be seen, is often mentioned today (as was in the very early days of Islam) in the context of its connection to the Sacred Mosque in Mecca, via frequent emphasis on, and reference to, the Qur'anic verse (17:1) that tells of the Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey "from the Sacred Sanctuary to the Farthest Sanctuary"—al-Aqsa.

A site's holiness is not static, and the hierarchy of sanctity as defined during Islam's formative period need not be regarded as the final word. Political and social challenges are capable of altering perceptions of a site's degree of holiness. The Umayyads were first Muslim rulers who upgraded Jerusalem in the second half of the seventh century at the expense of Mecca, which was already "taken" by their political rivals. Three hundred years later the Ayubids strengthened awareness of Jerusalem's importance while mobilizing Muslims for the holy war against the Crusaders. Following the British conquest of Jerusalem and Palestine in World War I, Hajj Amin al-Husseini elevated the importance of the al-Aqsa Mosque and of Jerusalem during the Mandate period, against the background of the struggle against the Jewish entity in Palestine; since 1967, a similar process has been taking place, for the fourth time in the region's history, due to the challenge posed by Israeli occupation followed by its annexation of East Jerusalem—particularly of the Old City with its sacred shrines.¹⁶

A sacred space that is caught in the crossfire of a conflict between two religious communities will tend to be upgraded and elevated in the eyes of the opposing parties. The main mechanism for Jerusalem's Islamic religious elevation during this period has been the al-Aqsa Mosque, located on what Jews call *Har Habayit*—the Temple Mount site. The Palestinians have developed new myths regarding al-Aqsa that have added additional layers to the Islamic Jerusalem construct. These myths have been generated through the retrieval from oblivion of long-forgotten Islamic traditions and by the development and mass dissemination of these traditions. Many traditions, interpretations,

and beliefs concerning al-Aqsa have undergone a process of development and reformulation aimed at strengthening their status within the Muslim world, at inflaming the Muslim religious imagination and at underscoring the importance of restoring Islamic-Arabic sovereignty to East Jerusalem and to the holy places.

An interesting phenomenon is that both sides of the conflict have sought to place more emphasis on the importance of Jerusalem. Following the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, Mount Zion in Jerusalem came to represent all of the land of Israel in Jewish tradition and liturgy known as “love of Zion.” More recently after the Balfour declaration of 1917, the Western Wall as an Herodian-built remnant of the outer wall of the Second Temple became a central national symbol for Jews. Similarly, in many cases al-Aqsa also serves Arabs and Muslims as a national symbol for all of Palestine and an Arab-Muslim (historical and religious) patrimony.

As for the religious importance of Jerusalem in general and al-Haram al-Sharif in particular for Muslims, the term “al-Aqsa” mosque is a Qur’anic term, mentioned in the *sura* (chapter) of the Qur’an called *al-Isra’*—“the Night Journey.” According to Islamic tradition, Muhammad, at an early stage of his prophecy, was taken on a miraculous Night Journey from Mecca to the a place called al-Masjid al-Aqsa (literally, the farthest mosque) (Qur’an, 17:1): “Glory to Allah Who did take His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque, whose precincts We did bless, in order that We might show him some of Our Signs: for He is the One Who heareth and seeth all things.” A later tradition (*hadith*) attributed to Muhammad that he mentioned al-Aqsa Mosque as the third holiest place to Islam (*thalith al-haramayn*) after Mecca and al-Madina: “The saddles should be tied only to three mosques: the sacred mosque (of Mecca) this mosque of mine (al-Madina), and al-Aqsa Mosque.”¹⁷ Jerusalem is also *ula al-qiblatayn* (first direction of prayer) since, as noted above, during the first year of Muhammad’s activity in al-Madina, the Muslims prayed toward Jerusalem. Another tradition continues the *Isra’* verse by telling that the Prophet who was riding on the winged steed al-Buraq to the Farthest Mosque ascended to heaven (*mi’raj*) from Jerusalem. Thus, since the late seventh century, al-Aqsa is identified with Jerusalem. Use is also made of other traditions from the Muslim literature in praise of Jerusalem (*fada’il Bayt-al-Maqdis*). According to these traditions, a single prayer at al-Aqsa is regarded as the equivalent of 500 prayers (in another tradition, 1,000 prayers) at other mosques and inferior in value only to prayer at the Sacred Mosque in Mecca and at the Mosque of the

Prophet in al-Madina. Another tradition tells that if one sets out on *hajj* from al-Aqsa then he will go to paradise and Allah will forgive all of his sins. One tradition relates that on Judgment Day the Angel Israfil will stand on the Rock of the Sanctuary and call all beings together.

The *hadith* literature—the traditions connected with the Prophet Muhammad in particular and historical traditions in general—constitutes a huge reservoir of texts in which one may find multiple and conflicting versions of the same matter. The *hadiths* were composed for varying purposes and frequently reflect beliefs that had popular credibility at the time in which they were written. The Muslim ulema of classical period did not attach the same degree of importance to all of the traditions. *Hadiths* whose chain of transmission could be authenticated via biographical literature (*isnad*—the names of those by whom the tradition was transmitted orally, the first of whom has to be the Prophet or one of his Companions) and whose transmission from generation to generation could also be deemed plausible were considered to be more reliable than other *hadiths* and were included in “canonic” collections.¹⁸ However, other *hadiths*, even if they were not included in these collections, still enjoy a status of authenticity in cases where no “canonical” *hadiths* exist to contradict them. The multiplicity of versions in the description of historical events—versions that usually contradict each other in their details and in the historical claims that they embody—reflect Muslim culture that chooses to accept differing narratives without adjudicating between them. This is one reason why it is relatively easy to invent a myth of early Islamic history in Muslim society. All that is needed is to find a tradition that supports the political or religious aim in question and to place it at the forefront of public discourse.

The dispute within Islam over Jerusalem’s sanctity ended with the victory of those who identified al-Quds as sacred and third in importance after the holy places of Mecca and al-Madina, although there were long periods in which Jerusalem was relatively neglected or at least noncentral both in religious and political aspects (compared to the cities that various Muslim dynasties chose as their political capitals: Baghdad, Cairo, and Istanbul, to mention a few). The Fada’il al-Quds literature (literature in praise of Jerusalem) and the traditions that were developed and disseminated by the Umayyads were preserved within the stock of obscure Islamic texts. Those currently seeking to resurrect Jerusalem’s importance in Islam and to elevate its level of sanctity are scouring this huge sea of texts and delving into forgotten traditions from it, redeeming them from oblivion and placing them at the center

of the public consciousness and discourse, in order to restore al-Quds within Muslim tradition to its former glory.

Those involved in upgrading Jerusalem's sanctity within Islam have to contend with, among other things, the writings of the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Hanbali legal scholar Taqi al-Din ibn-Taymiyya. He ruled that the rock in Jerusalem upon which the Dome of the Rock was built is a *qibla mansukha*, that is, a direction of prayer that was cancelled (in order to distinguish Muslims from Jews) and whose sanctity was thus revoked.¹⁹ The attempt to sanctify the rock, according to Ibn-Taymiyya, stemmed from the fact that Caliph Abd al-Malik wished to divert the *hajj* from Mecca to Jerusalem. He argued that if Jerusalem was to be sanctified, then the more important spot would be that in which the Second Caliph, `Umar ibn al-Khattab (`Umar I), prayed [according to various traditions, the Mosque of `Umar next to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Y.R.]. Ibn-Taymiyya condemned the traditions claiming that `Umar Ibn al-Khattab, or members of the Prophet's generation, visited Jerusalem because, according to him, al-Quds was not considered to be holy.²⁰

Nearly all of the Muslim publications that I have seen on the subject of Jerusalem avoid mentioning Ibn-Taymiyya, despite the fact that this Muslim legal authority is an important source of inspiration for fundamentalist Muslim thinkers and that Islamist movements make use of other texts of his. The reason, as was described by one author of a book on al-Aqsa, is that "there is a debate regarding the status of al-Aqsa whether it is a *haram* or not... I do not think that I should discuss the legal controversy at a time when al-Aqsa is endangered."²¹ However, Muhammad Shurab, a Saudi historian (and most probably also a Hanbali like Ibn-Taymiyya) whose book on the history of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque is sold in Jerusalem in stores near the al-Aqsa site (Maktabat al-Sadaqat, for example), is one of the only authors who dares to cite Ibn-Taymiyya's opinion and to dispute his assertions. In his opinion, the Rock was not the first direction of prayer in Islam, but rather al-Aqsa Mosque, and he maintains that there is no proof that the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven from the Rock or that the Jews prayed in its direction. Shurab derives support for his point of view from the fact that the Jews currently pray at the Western Wall (the *Kotel*—south of the Rock) and not in the direction of the Dome of the Rock.²²

In the current Islamic discourse, a lone, dissenting voice is that of Abdul Hadi Palazzi, who draws on Ibn-Taymiyya's opinion and believes that Jerusalem's Temple Mount compound does not have the status of

haram (a special sacred status—see below), that the city of al-Madina is ten times holier than Jerusalem, and Mecca one hundred times holier (based on one of the traditions in praise of the cities).²³ Despite the fact that Palazzi is one of the leaders of the Italian Muslim community and a figure of high religious and academic standing, I have found no other Muslim figures who have publicly agreed with his opinions.

In the past, al-Quds was considered sacred to Islam mainly due to its having been the first direction of prayer (*qibla*) and to its identification with the site to which the Prophet Muhammad was transported, as described in Qur'an 17:1. Leading figures in contemporary Islam point to a number of other important factors in the city's holiness. For example, in a lecture that former Palestinian Authority (PA) mufti Sheikh Ikrima Sabri delivered in Jordan in April 1998 at the Zarqa Private University conference on Jerusalem, he mentioned 12 foundations for al-Quds' sanctity in Islam: (1) the Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey and ascent to heaven from al-Aqsa (*al-Isra'* and *al-Mi'raj*); (2) The Muslim worship that actually takes place in the city; (3) The status of al-Quds as the first direction of prayer in Islam before the Ka'ba in Mecca; (4) The tradition that prayer at al-Aqsa is valued five-hundred-fold over prayer at any other mosque; (5) The tradition according to which the Prophet Muhammad encouraged Muslims to visit al-Aqsa (the *shadd al-rihal* tradition, see below); (6) The tradition whereby one who resides in Jerusalem bears the status of *murabit*—protector of the territorial boundaries of Islam; (7) The cultural connection—the magnificent Islamic buildings that exist in the city; (8) The Islamic endowments (*waqf*) that were established throughout the city during the years in which it was under Islamic sovereignty; (9) The existence of dozens of mosques and hundreds of seminaries (*madaris*) and other buildings used for religious purposes in the city; (10) The political connection—the tradition regarding the “pact” that was enacted between the Caliph `Umar ibn al-Khattab and the Christian Patriarch of Jerusalem; (11) The continuous Muslim sovereignty over the city from the time of its conquest during the days of `Umar ibn al-Khattab; (12) The historical connection—the fact that, according to Muslim tradition, the city had been inhabited by the Jebusites, “an ancient Arab tribe which adopted the belief in one God and later converted to Islam.”²⁴ In these dozen justifications cited by Sabri, one finds political-historical claims alongside well-known religious traditions that are currently enjoying renewed popularity. We will start by discussing Jerusalem's elevation in religious sanctity as expressed in contemporary Islamic discourse.

2.2 From al-Haram al-Sharif back to al-Aqsa

In 1984, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia was surprised to read in interviews granted by Sheikh Sa'd al-Din al-'Almi, the West Bank's leading Palestinian-Muslim religious figure, that the Israeli flag was being flown within the al-Aqsa Mosque. Al-'Almi called upon King Fahd to act to have the Israeli flag removed. King Fahd, who knew that the Muslim Waqf was in charge of the mosque, asked al-'Almi for clarification; the latter explained that the flag in question was situated at the police station in al-Haram al-Sharif's northern plaza and that the entire al-Haram al-Sharif courtyard is considered to be al-Aqsa Mosque.²⁵ Al-'Almi appears to have taken this line in response to claims made by Jewish extremist groups seeking to resume Jewish worship on the Haram/Temple Mount. According to them, the Temple Mount site itself is not holy to Muslims, but rather only the "mosques" (the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque), inasmuch as the site had also been used in the past for secular activities such as family picnics and soccer games (by the pupils of the al-Aqsa School for Boys located at the site). Calling the entire Temple Mount complex by the name of "al-Aqsa" or the "Aqsa Mosque" turned the entire area (including the Western Wall as being regarded as al-Aqsa's western wall) into a mosque possessing a high degree of sanctity, even if the removal of shoes as an expression of respect for sacredness takes place only at the entrance to the two main prayer monuments. Government sources said that Ehud Barak's decision in September 2000 to permit Ariel Sharon and other Likud Knesset members to visit the Temple Mount was based on, among other things, the assessments of Jibril Rajoub and Tawfiq Tirawi, Palestinian security and intelligence officials, that "no disturbances would take place if the visit were conducted during the early morning hours and if the entourage refrained from *entering the mosques*" [italics not in the original]. Rajoub later refuted that he gave such an assurance. Whether this evaluation was a Palestinian or an Israeli one, it is now clear that it reflected an incorrect understanding of the entire site's status.

It was an Israeli challenge to the 1967 conquest that led to the declaration of the entire Haram/Temple Mount compound as al-Aqsa Mosque, according to 'Abd al-Hamid al-Sa'ih, a senior West Bank Muslim religious leader in June 1967 who was expelled by Israel to Jordan and later appointed the Jordanian minister for Islamic endowments (Ministry of Waqf) (he also served as chair of the Palestinian National Council). In his book *The Importance of Jerusalem in Islam*,

al-Sa'ih relates that, a week after the halakhic ruling issued by Israel's Chief Military Rabbi Shlomo Goren (who with his entourage conducted a Jewish public prayer service on the Haram/Temple Mount on August 15, 1967), he signed in Cairo, along with 38 West Bank religious leaders, a *fatwa* according to which the entire Haram compound is regarded as al-Aqsa Mosque, and any attempt to harm this site must be regarded as a violation of the Mosque's sanctity. According to al-Sa'ih, this *fatwa* influenced the Israeli government to prevent Rabbi Goren from realizing his intentions.²⁶

The placing of al-Aqsa at the center of the political-religious debate of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is reflected in the historical and the religious interpretive literature that deals with some basic questions: Who built the Mosque? What was the nature and status of al-Aqsa during Islam's formative period? As a Muslim site, al-Aqsa is currently dated from the pre-Islamic period as part of an attempt to "Islamize" the era that preceded the Prophet Muhammad's Islamic message and to Arabize Jerusalem and Palestine. The Islamization and Arabization process (to be discussed in chapter 4.1) is motivated by the need to claim historical Arab and Islamic rights over the sacred ground in question, prior to the appearance upon it of the Israelites—the ancient Jews—and Christians.

The issue of al-Aqsa Mosque's location has been subject to much debate within Islam, and even today there are those who believe that it is not in Jerusalem at all (as I shall discuss in chapter 3), according to one claim, the text was meant to refer to the Mosque of the Prophet in al-Madina²⁷ or in a place close to al-Madina.²⁸ Another perception is that of the Ja'fari Shiites, who interpret that al-Aqsa is a mosque in heaven.²⁹ This interpretation reflect the Shiite anti-Umayyad emotions in an attempted to play down the sacredness of Umayyad Jerusalem and to minimize the sanctity of Jerusalem by detaching the Qur'anic al-Masjid al-Aqsa from the Temple Mount, thus asserting that the Prophet never came to that city, but rather ascended to the heavenly al-Aqsa Mosque without ever stopping in Bayt al-Maqdis. Apart from depriving Jerusalem of its major attraction for pilgrims, the Shiite traditions offer alternative pilgrimage attractions such as the Shiite holy city of Kufa, as well as Mecca.³⁰ However, the traditions about Muhammad's Night Journey to Jerusalem were never suppressed. They were exploited by the Umayyads and continued to be quoted in the *tafsir* (Qur'an interpretation) collections.³¹ The interpretation dating from the Umayyad and Crusader eras, according to which al-Aqsa is in Jerusalem, is the one that prevailed. During the Middle Ages, when the

issue of Jerusalem's status was a point of controversy,³² the supporters of Jerusalem's importance (apparently after its liberation from Crusader control³³) succeeded in attributing to al-Quds or to Bayt-al-Maqdis (the Arabic names for Jerusalem) the status of *haram* that had been accorded to the sacred compound.³⁴ The site was thus called al-Haram al-Sharif, or al-Haram al-Qudsi al-Sharif. *Haram*, from an Arabic root meaning "prohibition," is a place characterized by a particularly high level of sanctity—a protected place in which blood may not be shed, trees may not be felled, and animals may not be hunted.³⁵ The status of *haram* was given in the past to the Sacred Mosque in Mecca and to the Mosque of the Prophet in al-Madina (and some also accorded this status to the Valley of Wajj in Ta'if on the Arabian Peninsula³⁶). Thus, *al-Masjid al-Aqsa* became *al-Haram al-Sharif* (the Noble Sanctuary) in order to emphasize its exalted status alongside the two other Muslim sanctuaries. Although, as noted before, Ibn-Taymiyya refuted the *haram* status of the Jerusalem mosque, al-Aqsa's upgrading to *haram* status was successful and has prevailed. It became a commonly accepted idea and one referred to in international forums and documents. It was, therefore, surprising that during the 1980s the Palestinians gradually abandoned the name that had been given to the Haram/Temple Mount compound in apparent honor of Jerusalem's status as third in sanctity—*al-Haram al-Sharif*—in favor of its more traditional name—*al-Aqsa*. An examination of relevant religious texts clarifies the situation: since the name al-Aqsa appears in the Qur'an, all Muslims around the world should be familiar with it; thus it is easier to market the *al-Aqsa* brand-name. An additional factor leading to a return to the Qur'anic name is an Israeli demand to establish a Jewish prayer space inside the open court of the compound.

The increased use of the name al-Aqsa is particularly striking against the background of what is written on the Web site of the Jerusalem Waqf, under the leadership of (former) Palestinian mufti Sheikh Ikrima Sabri. There it is asserted that "al Masjid al-Aqsa was erroneously called by the name al-Haram al-Qudsi al-Sharif," and that the site's correct name is al-Aqsa.³⁷ This statement was written in the context of a fatwa in response to a question addressed to the Web site's scholars regarding the correct interpretation of the *Isra'* verse in the Qur'an (17:1), which tells of the Prophet Muhammad's miraculous Night Journey from the "Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque"—al-Aqsa. In proof of this, Sabri quotes Ibn-Taymiyya, who denied the existence of *haram* in Jerusalem, a claim that actually serves those seeking to undermine the city's sacred status. Sabri also states that Arab historians such as

Mujir al-Din al-Hanbali, author of the famed fifteenth-century work on Jerusalem, do not make use of the term “haram” in connection with the al-Aqsa site.³⁸ Both Ibn-Taymiyya and Mujir al-Din were affiliated with the Hanbali School of law—the relatively more puritan stream in Islam that prevailed in Saudi Arabia. The Hanbalies rejected innovations, such as the idea of a third haram. One cannot exclude the possibility that the Saudis, who during the 1980s and 1990s donated significant funds to Islamic institutions in Jerusalem, exerted pressure on Palestinian-Muslim figures to abandon the term “haram” in favor of “al-Aqsa.”

The “al-Aqsa” brand-name has thus become popular and prevalent. Al-Haram al-Sharif is still used by official bodies (the Organization of the Islamic Conference [OIC], the Arab League), in contrast to religious entities. The public currently uses the two names interchangeably. During the last generation, increasing use has been made of the term “al-Aqsa” as a symbol and as the name of various institutions and organizations. Thus, for example, the Jordanian military periodical that has been published since the early 1970s is called al-Aqsa; the Palestinian police unit established by the PA in Jericho is called the Al-Aqsa Division; the Fatah’s armed organization is called the Al-Aqsa Brigades; the Palestinian Police camp in Jericho is called the Al-Aqsa Camp; the Web sites of the southern and northern branches of the Islamic movement in Israel and the associations that they have established are called al-Aqsa; the Intifada that broke out in September 2000 is called the al-Aqsa Intifada and the Arab summit that was held in the wake of the Intifada’s outbreak was called the al-Aqsa Summit. These are only a few examples of a growing phenomenon.³⁹

2.3 Al-Aqsa’s Antiquity

Modern scholarship regards the Dome of the Rock’s construction as the work of the Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (685–705) and attributes the building of the first structure within the al-Aqsa Mosque complex to Mu`awiyya ibn Abu Sufyan while Jerusalem was under his governorship in 640.⁴⁰ However, according to various versions, the Islamic narrative that prevailed in Muslim historiography attributed the building of al-Aqsa Mosque to Caliph `Umar I, in whose time Jerusalem was captured in 636.⁴¹ Attribution of the Mosque’s construction to the person perceived as having been Jerusalem’s Muslim

conqueror is intended to emphasize its importance. This narrative does not appear to satisfy those Muslims who currently seek Jerusalem's liberation. Islamic traditions that attribute the construction of al-Aqsa—as well as of the Ka'ba Mosque in Mecca—to the Creator of the Universe (to Adam) and to Abraham had already been composed during Islam's formative period, in the seventh century, but they remained a dead letter in the *hadith* collections. Now they are returning to center stage and are finding their place in the contemporary historical literature dealing with Jerusalem, in Muslim religious rulings and in the official discourse on Jerusalem. The widespread use of these traditions is turning the phenomenon into a myth that has prevailed over another myth, one that attributes the building of al-Aqsa to `Umar I.

Here are several examples of the current use that is being made of these old traditions: A well-known tradition from early Islam says that, of Islam's three important mosques, al-Aqsa Mosque was built by Adam 40 years after the construction of the Sacred Mosque in Mecca.⁴² This tradition accords greater importance to Jerusalem than to the Mosque of the Prophet in al-Madina, since it is referred to as *thani an-masjidayn* (the second of the mosques [in sanctity]). In 1995 the then Jordanian waqf minister, `Abd al-Salam al-`Abadi, used this tradition in a work composed in expression of his concern over Hashemite control over the Jerusalem holy sites.⁴³

A tendency to attribute greater sanctity to al-Aqsa than to al-Madina mosque also appears in statements made by one of the leaders of the Islamic Movement in Israel.⁴⁴ The former PA mufti Sheikh `Ikrima Sabri also made use of this tradition in a religious legal ruling that he issued in 2002, in which he attributes the building of the Sacred Mosque in Mecca and of the al-Aqsa compound to Adam, while Abraham is credited with renewing the construction of the Ka'ba and Solomon with renewing the construction of the al-Aqsa Mosque. Abraham and Solomon appear in his commentary as early Islamic figures, exemplars of the ancient monotheistic faith from which, according to Islam, the Jews and Christians deviated and which the Muslims alone carried on. Sabri relies on this tradition in order to make the additional claim that Solomon did not build the Jewish Temple, but rather the al-Aqsa compound that is a Muslim mosque.⁴⁵ Saudi historian Mohammad Shurab has also written that al-Aqsa was built by Adam, adding that the holiness of the site upon which the al-Aqsa Mosque was built is not connected with a particular prophet or people, but rather stems from God Himself who chose the site as a place of worship for believers in the One God.⁴⁶ Another Saudi historian, `Abd al-Fattah Abu-`Aliya, wrote that the

al-Aqsa Mosque existed before Moses and Jesus [who represent in this context Judaism and Christianity]. He claims that there is a Muslim religious opinion according to which it was Adam who built al-Aqsa, as well as a tradition originating with 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (the Prophet Muhammad's cousin) that the angels built both the Sacred Mosque and the al-Aqsa Mosque, before Adam. Adam and the prophets (including Abraham) later conducted an encircling ritual (*tawaf*) around it.⁴⁷ The author adds that what was built at the time was not the mosque structure that exists today, but rather an open courtyard that was at the level of the Rock and surrounded by a sustaining wall.⁴⁸ Ahmad al-Qasim, a Palestinian who compiled a kind of encyclopedia of questions and answers about Jerusalem, wrote that the al-Aqsa Mosque at the time of the *Isra'* (the era of the Prophet Muhammad) was not a mosque but rather a series of courtyards surrounded by a wall and several gates. The name "al-Aqsa Mosque" was given to the entire area (ground-level) of al-Haram al-Sharif, which was surrounded by a wall.⁴⁹

According to another tradition, one cited by some contemporary Muslim authors, al-Aqsa was built by Abraham. The tradition⁵⁰ relates that Abraham (Ibrahim) built al-Aqsa 40 years after he built the Ka'ba together with his son Ishmael. This narrative is, for example, the preferred one for the southern branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel, which writes in its Web site that "the Prophet Sulayman"—Solomon—enlarged the area of the mosque that was built by Abraham 4,000 years ago.⁵¹ Al-Aqsa's antiquity is also alluded to in an article written by the head of the northern branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel, Sheikh Ra'id Salah.⁵²

It should be noted that traditions regarding the antiquity of sacred cities appear in the *hadith* literature as a motif intended to glorify them. Thus, for example, one tradition is attributed to Aisha, wife of the Prophet, according to which the three holy cities—Mecca, al-Madina, and Jerusalem—were built by Allah 1,000 years before the creation of the world. Interestingly, I found no contemporary writings that have made use of this tradition.⁵³

The modern attempt to balance and reconcile the various traditions regarding Islam's antiquity and the narratives of Islam's beginnings with the Prophet Muhammad thus presents the following picture: Adam built the Ka'ba and al-Aqsa as demarcated areas containing no actual structures, or as primitive structures. Abraham, the founder of monotheism (and the "pre-Muhammad Islam"), also renewed or renovated the Ka'ba and al-Aqsa, and Solomon, another representative of monotheism, renewed or renovated the al-Aqsa compound, that is, the

walls that surround the grounds of the site and not the buildings that were constructed on it. Later, the Caliph `Umar I built the al-Aqsa Mosque structure (as noted above, the first written evidence of the existence of a mosque dates from a later period—around 670), while Caliph `Abd al-Malik built the Dome of the Rock and began building the al-Aqsa Mosque structure (which was completed during the reign of his son, al-Walid).

The connection made by Muslim scholars between the ancient al-Aqsa complex, the level demarcated by supporting walls on all four sides, and the al-Aqsa Mosque, which was built after Jerusalem's conquest by the Muslims, is intended to reconcile Islamic traditions regarding the site's antiquity prior to the appearance of Muhammedan Islam—traditions that associate the site with Jewish figures and with traditions rooted in Judaism and early Christianity—and Muslim history subsequent to the Islamic conquest of Jerusalem. In these efforts at reconciling the conflicting traditions, contemporary Muslim authors are turning a collection of ancient traditions into a myth, one intended to accord Jerusalem and the sacred Islamic site within its special historical and Islamic primordial depth.

The myth of al-Aqsa's pre-Israelite antiquity merges with a broader myth that is connected with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (discussed in greater detail in chapter 4)—the Arab claim regarding the Arabs' primacy in Palestine and their historical right to the land, which preceded the arrival of the ancient Hebrews.

2.4 The First Direction of Prayer

Jerusalem's sanctity within Islam is based first and foremost on its having been the first direction of prayer (*qibla*) before Muhammad adopted the Ka'ba as *qibla*. Thus, it is referred to as "the first of the two directions of prayer" (*ula al-qiblatayn*). The accepted Islamic position, which is also the official approach taken by the Jerusalem Waqf, is that Jerusalem was the first direction of prayer for only 17 months.⁵⁴ However, those seeking to elevate Jerusalem in importance include in their calculation the time that they claim had passed since the Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey—the *Isra'*. One interpretation intended to enhance Jerusalem's status claims that Jerusalem served as the *qibla* for about four years and four months. Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, one of Islam's leading contemporary religious figures,⁵⁵ in a television interview conducted jointly with `Ikrima Sabri, stated, in response to the

question “Why is Jerusalem important to Islam,” that the first *qibla* served Prophet Muhammad and his followers for three years before the Prophet Muhammad’s emigration (*hijra*) from Mecca to al-Madina (the *hijra* marks the beginning of Islam and of the Muslim calendar) and that a testament to this exists in al-Madina, namely the Masjid al-Qiblatayn (the Mosque of the Two Directions of Prayer) from which prayers were offered up in the direction of al-Aqsa.⁵⁶ A similar version is related by Shaqaldi—another author who writes that Jerusalem was the first *qibla* for a period of three years, from 27 Rajab one and a half years before the *hijra*.⁵⁷ The Palestinian-Jordanian historian Kamil Jamil al-‘Asali went even further by claiming that Jerusalem served as Islam’s first direction of prayer for 13.5 years—from the beginning of the Prophet Muhammad’s prophetic activity in 610. The motivation to formulate interpretations that advance the dating of the *Isra’* and that lengthen the period of the first *qibla* stems from the assumption that the longer Jerusalem may be shown to have served as the first direction of prayer, the more important its status will be. This is what may be inferred from al-Asali’s text, where he goes on to state that “Islam honored Jerusalem in a way that no other religion had before it.”⁵⁸

2.5 The Prophet Muhammad’s Night Journey and Ascension to Heaven

The Qur’anic verse that describes the Prophet Muhammad’s Night Journey (the *Isra’*)⁵⁹ on the winged steed Buraq from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque is connected to the tradition regarding his miraculous ascension (the *Mi’raj*)⁶⁰ from al-Aqsa to the heavens (according to tradition, the Prophet tied al-Buraq to al-Aqsa’s entrance; varying opinions exist regarding the exact location: was it on the western side or on a different side?). This event’s importance in Islam stems from the tradition connecting the Prophet with this place, both in the Night Journey to al-Aqsa and in the ascension from al-Aqsa (according to various traditions, from the Rock that lies under al-Aqsa) heavenward. The *Isra’* verse and the *Mi’raj* tradition are important as the basis of the story according to which Muhammad visited al-Aqsa in Jerusalem and from there ascended to heaven even before Islam had conquered the al-Sham region (which includes Palestine).⁶¹ In this context, contemporary Islamic glorifiers of Jerusalem also mention the fact that a verse of the Qur’an—44:43—“descended” (revealed to the Prophet) in Jerusalem.

Among those who identify the Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey to al-Aqsa with Jerusalem, there are differences of opinion regarding the time of the Journey and of the ascension to heaven—in as much as Jerusalem was conquered after the Prophet's death. One author, Baydun, believes that the event took place about a year before the Prophet's *hijra*, that is, in 621 CE.⁶² Another author, Shurab, believes that it occurred in the fifth year of Muhammad's prophetic activity, around the year 615 CE, when the city was under Persian control. He bases his interpretation on the fact that Hadija, Muhammad's wife, who died in 620 CE, is mentioned in the tradition connected with the *Isra'*.⁶³

The contemporary interpretation stresses the fact that the *Isra'* connected the two sacred mosques in Mecca and Jerusalem, in order to underscore Jerusalem's high status. Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi has stated that the Qur'an connected the two mosques in order to indicate al-Aqsa's importance, that is to say that "whoever belittles the al-Aqsa Mosque also belittles al-Masjid al-Harām (the Ka'ba) in Mecca."⁶⁴ On October 20, 2005, when the Islamist Web forums marked the third Al-Quds [Jerusalem] International Day on the Internet, Qaradawi said: "Allah created this inseparable connection between the two mosques...it is amazing that Allah described the holy mosque [of Mecca] as *al-haram* (the sacred) only whereas on the al-Aqsa Mosque he added 'which We blessed its precincts.' By this he aimed to show to the Muslim Umma the high importance of this mosque, in order that it would not be neglected in the future. This link between the two mosques conveys the message that whoever abandons the al-Aqsa Mosque will soon also abandon the sacred mosque of Mecca."⁶⁵ It is especially interesting that King Abdallah, at the time the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, has been known to say repeatedly that for him "Jerusalem is just like the holy city of Mecca."⁶⁶

One writer of a book on al-Aqsa enumerated no less than 30 matters connecting the two shrines of Mecca and Jerusalem: he claimed that they were the first and second mosques to be built; Adam built the two of them; Ibrahim hightened the walls of both; Ibrahim called upon God at both; both Ibrahim and Muhammad are connected to the two shrines; Arabs were the first inhabitants of both Mecca and Jerusalem; both shrines were chosen as a direction of prayer; the shrine of Mecca is the beginning of a number of events ending in al-Aqsa, such as the Prophet's Night Journey; the Prophet led other prophets in a prayer at both sites; both shrines are mentioned in one verse of the Qur'an; both were blessed by God; both hosted the angels; the Prophet called upon God in both places; a single prayer at both is equivalent to many prayers

in other mosques; any harm to one of them is much more injurious than a malaction in any other mosque; sins are to be forgiven at both shrines; a pilgrimage to Mecca beginning at al-Aqsa is favored; both are pilgrimage destinations (the *shadd al-rihal* tradition); both are destinations of encouraged emigration as conquered by Islam and serve to defend its territory; both are protected from the antichrist (*Dajjal*); both were favored by the prophet; both are located in a noncultivated topographic area; both are neighboring fertile agricultural areas; both have holy springs (Zamzam and Silwan); both have a rock that was blessed by God; both were conquered by *jihad* (holy war); the Prophet's muezzine called to pray at both mosques; both have to be respected by attendees' manners; both have many names.⁶⁷

This message is also given currency by the former PA waqf minister Sheikh Yusuf Salama, who has written, "Allah connected the Sacred Mosque [in Mecca] with al-Aqsa so that Muslims would not make a distinction between the two mosques or belittle either of them, since if one is belittled then the other is belittled as well."⁶⁸ This statement bears a political message: Saudi Arabia and the Muslim world will also be hurt if aid is not extended to the Palestinians in their struggle for Jerusalem. Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro, Syria's former grand mufti, has also stated that "the Qur'an connected al-Aqsa with the Sacred Mosque in Mecca, and this is proof that both mosques existed prior to Islam."⁶⁹ A similar political context appears in the work of another Palestinian commentator (one who, based on his writing style, belongs to an Islamist stream) who claims in his 1993 book on Jerusalem that the *Isra'* was intended to connect all of Palestine with *Dar al-Islam* (the territory under Islamic control) even before it was conquered by the Muslims.⁷⁰

One visual expression of the elevation of al-Aqsa's and Jerusalem's importance in the contemporary Muslim consciousness is an illustration that appears on Islamic Web sites, one that presents the two holy sites next to the *Isra'* verse, with the Dome of the Rock building, representing al-Aqsa, standing taller than the Ka'ba Mosque in Mecca.⁷¹ This illustration accompanied Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi's sermon marking al-Isra' and al-Mi'raj Day in September 2004, in which he stated, among other things, that this event symbolizes the duty to recognize "the greatest problem faced by Muslims today—the problem of Jerusalem and the problem of the al-Aqsa Mosque and the problem of Palestine as a whole."⁷² This contrasts with other Muslim illustrations since the Middle Ages in which the *Isra'* is depicted with the Prophet, riding on al-Buraq, hovering over the Ka'ba, with no visual reference to the al-Aqsa Mosque.⁷³ Another pictorial expression from the realm

of folk art are the murals in the homes of Muslims who make the pilgrimage to Mecca—a popular custom dictates that the neighbors and friends of one who has earned the title “*Hajj*” draw over the entrance to his house, on the external wall, the Ka’ba in Mecca, accompanied by verses related to the duty of *hajj* and the reward given to the *hajj* (the pilgrim). Since 1967, murals of this kind in Palestine frequently include the Dome of the Rock alongside the Ka’ba Mosque.⁷⁴

The *Isra’* and the *Mi’raj* were quite “dormant” concepts in the Islamic consciousness up until the 1920s, but al-*Isra’* and al-*Mi’raj* Day, which traditionally takes place on 27 Rajab according to the Muslim calendar, became a central festival of Palestinian nationalism after the 1929 Arab Riots (or “Revolt,” in Palestinian terminology), when the religious and national elements were incorporated into it. Prominent religious and political figures take part in the main ceremony conducted each year, delivering sermons on the necessity of preserving the city’s Islamic and Arab character.⁷⁵ After 1948, it was the Jordanians who imparted an official character to this holiday as a special day of prayer.⁷⁶ During its period of control over the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the Jordanian government turned the day into an official holiday and enabled Palestinians to organize special sermons and parades in commemoration of the event.⁷⁷ The Palestinians upgraded these festivities even further during the first Intifada and after it. Thus, for example, the East Jerusalem newspaper *Al-Quds* reported in November 1997 on the preaching that takes place in the mosques on al-*Isra’* and al-*Mi’raj* Day, in which the Islamic and Arab character of Jerusalem is stressed.⁷⁸ After 1967 the Palestinians began holding special festive prayer services on the night of 27 Rajab in the al-Aqsa compound, at the end of which the worshippers bless each other.⁷⁹ During this period, the *Isra’* became a popular concept and a popular name for the publications of Palestinian Islamic movements. Two examples of this are the journal published by the Islamic Movement’s northern branch’s research center in Umm al-Fahm, entitled *al-Isra’*, and the journal published by the *Ifta’* (issuing of legal opinions) department—the body presided over by the former Palestinian mufti Sheikh ‘Ikrima Sabri. Nevertheless, Sabri himself appears to have been responsible for an October 2002 fatwa that forbade the celebration of al-*Isra’* Day as a holiday, since there was no such holiday during the Prophet Muhammad’s time and thus such celebrations constitute an undesirable innovation (*bid’a*); the fatwa calls for limiting the marking of the occasion to prayers on the night of 27 Rajab, when the event took place according to tradition.⁸⁰ Sabri thereby makes a distinction between the Palestinians and the Jordanians, who turned al-*Isra’* Day into an official holiday.

Al-Isra' and al-Mi'raj Day ceremonies were adopted by Muslim Brotherhood groups in Egypt and Jordan and, through them, from the 1980s on, the consciousness of these events and their connection to Jerusalem began to permeate the surrounding Muslim world. The *Isra'* is also commemorated by special prayers conducted by Muslim communities in Arab and Western countries. Thus, one finds that the Berlin Muslim community's choir made a recording of songs devoted to the event in a special *Isra'* and *Mi'raj* evening gala.⁸¹

Al-Isra' Day prayer services and ceremonies began to enter the general Islamic consciousness as part of the campaign to mobilize Muslim support for the Palestinian struggle against Israel. For example, Dr. Johnny Mansour, an Israeli-Arab, wrote in a book on holidays in Arab culture that "in our time the holiday takes on political significance due to the problem of Jerusalem and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."⁸² The author, an Israeli Christian Arab, points to the holiday's national/religious connotation. One may form an impression of the psychological and political influence of *Isra'* and *Mi'raj* awareness from an article written by Jordanian publicist Muhammad Naji 'Amaira, entitled "Commemorating the *Isra'* and the *Mi'raj*." In this article, 'Amaira makes a connection between the *Isra'* and the *Mi'raj* and the need for *jihād* in order to restore the land and to liberate Jerusalem from Israeli occupation.⁸³

2.6 The Obligation to Visit al-Aqsa

After the *Isra'* verse in the Qur'an, most Muslims seeking to elevate Jerusalem's holy status also refer to the *shadd al-rihal* tradition mentioned above, according to which the Prophet recommended the visit to three mosques of which the third after Mecca and al-Madina is al-Aqsa.⁸⁴ This tradition developed against the background of the competition between Mecca and al-Madina, as well as in the attempt to deny the sanctity of other cities that were competing for precedence in Islam;⁸⁵ in modern times, however, it plays a different role—that of glorifying Jerusalem's status. Al-Aqsa is, nevertheless, *thalith al-haramayn*: the third most important holy site after the Sacred Mosque in Mecca and the Mosque of the Prophet in al-Madina. This tradition is mentioned frequently in publications dealing with Jerusalem and has a prominent place in contemporary Islamic discourse.⁸⁶

Use is also made of other traditions from the Muslim literature in praise of Jerusalem (*fada'il Bayt-al-Maqdis*). According to these traditions,

a single prayer at al-Aqsa is regarded as the equivalent of 500 prayers (in another tradition, 1,000 prayers)⁸⁷ at other mosques and inferior in value only to prayer at the Sacred Mosque in Mecca and at the Mosque of the Prophet in al-Madina. Nevertheless, since the 1980s, the Palestinians have been waging a vigorous media campaign aimed at halting Muslim religious tourism to al-Aqsa. This campaign is in response to the activity of a company named Ziyara owned by Yaacov Nimrodi (an ex Mosad officer and then a senior businessman) that brought tourists from Islamic countries to al-Aqsa and to Israel in general. As a result, leading muftis published rulings prohibiting visits to al-Aqsa as long as it remains under Israeli occupation. Their assertion was that Israel uses this kind of tourism to strengthen its hold on Jerusalem, to promote normalization, and to claim that the Jerusalem question is not a political issue but rather one of only providing Muslims with access to their holy places.⁸⁸ One leading mufti, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, has stated that the religious prohibition on tourism and pilgrimage to al-Aqsa by Muslims from outside Palestine is intended, among other things, to mobilize the Muslim world for the struggle to liberate al-Aqsa.⁸⁹

2.7 Jerusalem—Cradle of the Prophets

Another explanation given by contemporary commentators for Jerusalem's importance to Islam is its having been the arena of activity of many prophets whom Muslims venerate and appropriate to "early Islam"⁹⁰—beginning with Abraham and his progeny, through to the kings, judges, and prophets of Israel, Jesus and other Christian figures, and ending with the Prophet Muhammad himself, who reached al-Aqsa in his Journey. This interpretation is associated with various other traditions regarding *al-Isra'* and *al-Mi'raj*, according to which Muhammad brought with him in his ascent to heaven the prophets who preceded him and in which they prayed together with him on the Rock at the al-Aqsa site prior to the Ascension.⁹¹ This tradition is mentioned in, for instance, a fatwa published on the Jerusalem Waqf's Web site.⁹²

2.8 Jerusalem—Islam's Defensive Stronghold

Jerusalem's importance, according to those seeking to elevate its status, is also rooted in significant historical Islamic events that took place in or near it. From the point of view of the religious figures

who make use of them, the question of whether these narratives have a factual historical basis is a meaningless one. The current prevailing narrative is that Jerusalem was the scene of battle for a holy war in which Muslims defended the city against the Jews, a war in which many martyrs gave their lives for this exalted purpose. Here we have another myth connected with Jerusalem (and with Palestine as well), that of its being "Islam's Defensive Stronghold" (*ard al-ribat*).⁹³ The term "ribat" was used to designate frontier cities, such as coastal cities in Palestine that were considered to be strongholds against invasion from the sea. However, during the Middle Ages, a tradition developed that connected sacred cities with the original *ribat* cities—the coastal cities—and the tradition of Jerusalem as a city of *ribat* and *jihad* is one of them.⁹⁴ The modern use of the term in relation to Jerusalem seeks to connect the medieval Islamic wars and the conquest of Palestine during the seventh century with the Arab and Palestinian struggle of the last century. Two main wars are mentioned in this context: the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem attributed to the Caliph `Umar I in 636,⁹⁵ and the city's liberation from the Crusaders by Saladin in 1187.

Jerusalem as "Islam's Defensive Stronghold" appears in various contexts intended to accentuate its importance to Islam. Thus, for example, the claim is made that the Prophet Muhammad's Companions (*sahaba*) fought in Jerusalem or served and were buried there or in its environs, and that Jerusalem is, therefore, sanctified as the repository of the bones of such personages as Abu `Ubayda ibn al-Jarrah, `Ubada ibn al-Samit, Shaddad ibn Aws, and Tamim al-Dari.⁹⁶ Another Muslim scholar, Dr. Mustafa Rushwan from Egypt, writes that the land of Palestine is saturated with the blood of the Prophet's Companions, and of the following generation (*tabi`in*), who have developed a level of saintly status in Islam, and with the blood of many Muslim martyrs, and that every drop of blood attests to Palestine's Islamic character.⁹⁷ Rushwan repeats the claim that appeared in Amin al-Husseini's 1935 fatwa.⁹⁸ Still, the historical-emotional claim is not the only reason given for Jerusalem's status as Islam's defensive stronghold. An official document of the OIC—comprising 57 Muslim countries—gives this defensive mission an (apparently) firm foundation with its declaration that "Jerusalem is the key to the Ka'ba [in Mecca] and to the Tomb of the Prophet [in al-Madina], inasmuch as its topographic structure makes it imperative that it be under [Muslim] control, in order to ensure that Mecca and al-Madina will be protected."⁹⁹

2.9 Eschatological and Apocalyptic Traditions of Jerusalem

The leader of the Israeli Islamic Movement's northern branch, Sheikh Ra'id Salah, presents eschatological doctrines as motivating factors behind the campaign that he is waging under the banner of "al-Aqsa is in danger." In an article that Salah published in his movement's journal, entitled "Because It Is al-Aqsa the Blessed," Sheikh Ra'id lists Jerusalem's merits. Among them is the fact that it was the place in which Jesus prophesied; that if one prays in al-Aqsa then one's prayer is worth a thousand regular prayers; and that if one sets out on *hajj* from al-Aqsa then he will go to paradise and Allah will forgive all of his sins. Sheikh Ra'id goes on to say that Jerusalem is the place in which the dead will be resurrected and to which the Messiah—the Mahdi—will soon come; the Mahdi will turn Jerusalem into the capital of the world and the seat of the future Supreme Islamic Caliphate. Al-Aqsa, according to this doctrine, is the "eternal liberation plan in the life of the Islamic nation, the Arab world and the Palestinian people."¹⁰⁰

Eschatological traditions regarding Jerusalem are cited in many other sources as well; their current tendency is to drive home for the believing Muslim the importance of Muslim control of Jerusalem. One tradition relates that on Judgment Day the Angel Israfil will stand on the Rock of the Sanctuary and call all beings together. This will be the last blowing of the ram's horn.¹⁰¹ According to another tradition (mentioned in the introduction), on that day the Ka'ba will be transported to Jerusalem as a bride, along with all of the pilgrims who have visited it. The entire human race will then rise up on the Mount of Olives and from there a bridge will extend to the Temple Mount—the place of judgment.¹⁰² Some of the apocalyptic traditions also bear anti-Semitic messages.¹⁰³ Thus, for example, Islamists frequently mention the story of the Antichrist—al-Dajjal. According to one version of this tradition, at the end of days, the Messiah will lay siege to Jerusalem and from there he will pursue the non-Muslims to the city of Lod and kill the Jews at the gates of the place called Bir al-Yazbak, between Lod and Ramla.¹⁰⁴ A Malaysian sheikh by the name of Muhammad Yassin Owadally even identifies the precise spot on which they will be struck: "the airport of the Zionist state."¹⁰⁵ Stories of al-Dajjal in a contemporary political context appeared in Arab writings even prior to 1948.¹⁰⁶ There are also those who describe Jerusalem as the capital of the Muslim caliphate destined to arise in anticipation of the Day of Judgment.¹⁰⁷

To conclude, a review of the abundant Arabic and Islamic literature on Jerusalem reveals an increasing general Islamic awareness of al-Aqsa's and al-Quds's sacred status. Although it has not become a religious obligation at the level of *hajj* to visit Jerusalem, and although current political circumstances have actually led to the ruling that Muslims from other countries may not visit the city, nevertheless, a new discourse has developed within the Islamic and Arab world that bestows a higher religious and political status upon Jerusalem within the public consciousness. The ethos of Jerusalem that has emerged since 1967 stresses various elements that have elevated the importance of al-Aqsa and al-Quds: its antiquity and its association with monotheism in its primordial sense; the historical "seniority" of the Arabs and Muslims, who are identified with the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem before the Israelites; the strong connection to Islamic history and to important figures and events in Islam, such as the Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey, which linked al-Aqsa with the Ka'ba Mosque in Mecca; the `Umar ibn al-Khattab's conquest of the city and its later liberation from the Crusaders by Saladin; other prophets and personages in Islamic history; the city's function as the scene of battle and defense of *Dar al-Islam*; traditions that emphasize Jerusalem's religious function: its status as the first direction of prayer, the greater value placed on prayer at al-Aqsa over prayer at other mosques, the duty to visit al-Aqsa in which the site is included in the holy triangle of the Mecca and al-Madina sites, and, finally, Jerusalem's association with eschatological and apocalyptic traditions.

The various elements involved in the process of Jerusalem's elevation in sanctity are not new. The traditions in question developed during the Middle Ages and appear in the extant *fada'il al-Quds* literature and in the *hadith* literature. Four main innovations in content can, however, be identified: the abandonment of the term "al-Haram al-Sharif" in favor of the Qur'anic name "al-Aqsa"; the emphasis on the site's antiquity; the designation of Jerusalem as the defensive stronghold of Islamic territory; and the call to jihad to liberate Jerusalem. The remaining items mentioned in this chapter are expressions of the activities aimed at renewing, emphasizing, and marketing to the masses the various traditions that existed in medieval Islamic literature. The most significant innovation that characterizes the current Islamic campaign for Jerusalem is the introduction of these traditions into the forefront of public discourse, and the extent and intensity of their use.

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CHAPTER 3

Denial of an Authentic Jewish Connection to Jerusalem and Its Holy Places

On September 25, 2003, a delegation of Arab leaders from northern Israel visited Yasser Arafat at his Muqata'a compound of Ramallah in a show of solidarity with the Palestinians in the al-Aqsa Intifada; the guests were surprised when Arafat lectured to them for about a quarter of an hour on al-Aqsa, making the central claim that the Jewish Temple had not existed in Jerusalem but rather in Yemen.¹ Arafat also told those present that he himself had visited Yemen and been shown the site upon which Solomon's Temple had stood. The Jewish (and the Christian) reader will undoubtedly attribute this story to Arafat's detachment from reality. A Palestinian academic and political figure told me that Arafat was impressed by the theory of the historian Kamal Salibi, professor emeritus at the American University of Beirut, who was appointed director of the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies in Jordan despite the fact that his book, which claims that the Children of Israel originated from the western Arabian Peninsula, represents his own singular viewpoint, unsupported by any other scholar. Salibi claimed that biblical Jerusalem was located at the Arabian Nimas highlands, halfway from Mecca to Yemen.² This is an instructive example of how far a book's influence may reach, however esoteric its subject matter may be.

A similar claim to that made by Arafat has been expounded by another Palestinian public figure, Hajj Zaki al-Ghawl—who, from Amman, served as Jerusalem's "shadow" mayor. In a lecture that he delivered in 2002 at the annual al-Quds conference in Jordan, al-Ghawl stated that King Solomon ruled over the Arabian Peninsula and that it

was there, not in Jerusalem, that he built his Temple.³ Another theory proffered by Arafat with regard to the ancient Temple's location, one that he raised during the Camp David peace talks in 2000 and that was quoted by a senior member of the American negotiation team, was that "the Temple never existed in Jerusalem, but rather in Nablus."⁴ Arafat's appointed mufti `Ikrima Sabri expressed this view in an interview to an Israeli newspaper already in 1998 by saying: "I heard that your Temple was in Nablus or perhaps Bethlehem."⁵

3.1 The Jewish Challenge and Denial of the Importance of Jerusalem for Muslims

Within the context of the current conflict, the political-religious-historical controversy over Jerusalem demands of the Arab-Muslim side that it contend with a number of factual challenges. The first of these is the long-established sacredness of Jerusalem with the Temple Mount as central to the Jews (and Christians).⁶ The Jewish holiness of the Temple Mount derives from the biblical narrative. According to the Book of Samuel, David purchased the threshing floor of Arauna the Jebusite, located on an elevation north of the city of David in order to build an altar to worship God (II Samuel 24:18–25). In c. 960 BCE, his son Solomon built the First Temple there in order to house the Ark of the Covenant and offer sacrifices to God (I Kings 6–7). The Bible emphasizes that the Temple is the place chosen by God where his presence dwelt. It became the only place where sacrifices were permitted. Since the destruction of the Second Temple, Jews pray facing the Temple Mount and the ark of the Torah; the holiest section of the synagogue is placed along the wall facing Jerusalem. Part of the daily prayer service and the liturgy for Sabbath and festivals include recitations of the types of offerings and the expressed wish for the rebuilding of the Temple, the restoration of sacrifices and the return of the divine presence to the Holy City. The destruction of the Temple is commemorated by rituals practiced both at home and in the synagogue, as well as annual fast days, the most important of which is the full day of mourning, Tisha B'Av (Ninth of Av), when the book of Lamentations is read. Other customs of remembrance of the loss include reciting Psalm 137 before the Grace after meals on weekdays, leaving the corner of a room unpainted and breaking a glass at the end of a wedding ceremony. Thus, the destruction of the Temple looms large in Jewish consciousness. The question whether the Bible is historic or ahistoric, as some

scholars argue, is irrelevant because most Jews and Christians see it as revealing the events of the past.

The second challenge is the fact that Jerusalem, one of whose Hebrew names is Zion, lies at the heart of the Zionist idea that also includes within it the religious aspect of Jewish-Zionist national identity.⁷ The third challenge is the international recognition enjoyed by the Jews and the State of Israel within the Western (Christian) world, due to the historical-religious connection with Jerusalem in particular and with Palestine (Eretz Israel) in general. This recognition represents a major obstacle to the Arabs and Muslims in their struggle for Palestine and for Jerusalem. An example of this is President Bill Clinton's reaction to Palestinian negotiator Saeb `Arekat's assertion at the second Camp David summit that the Jerusalem Temple is a Jewish invention: "Not only do all of the world's Jews believe that the Temple is located on the Temple Mount, but most Christians believe it, too."⁸ The fourth challenge in the battle for world opinion is the need to refute the claim made by Jewish scholars and statesmen that Jerusalem lies at the center of Jewish experience, while for Muslims Jerusalem was a prayer-direction that the Prophet Muhammad dissuaded his followers from in order to avoid resembling the Jews: Jerusalem was originally instituted as the *qibla* (direction of prayer) when the Prophet Muhammad was seeking to attract the Jews of al-Madina to his faith, but the honor was revoked after it became clear that the Jews were not going to join his camp.⁹ In the context of the Israeli-Arab dispute, Israelis tend also to deny the importance of Jerusalem and the al-Aqsa compound for the Muslims and Arabs.¹⁰ Some Israeli scholars emphasize that Jerusalem is not mentioned by name in the Qur'an or the early *hadith* literature—*Bayt-al-Maqdis* is a translation of the Hebrew *Beit ha-Mikdash* (the Holy House/Temple). The city has been called al-Quds—the Holy City—only since the tenth century; the name al-Aqsa, that which is mentioned in the Qur'an, refers, according to some Muslim interpretations, to a heavenly mosque and not to the one in Jerusalem;¹¹ Jerusalem is only the third city in importance to Islam after Mecca and al-Madina and has never been an Islamic political capital. The Jordanians also failed to make Jerusalem their capital city when they annexed the West Bank after 1948.

They add that the only period when Jerusalem was important to Muslim-Arabs was the relatively short Ummayyad rule between 661 to 750 CE, and particularly under Caliph `Abd al-Malik who built the Dome of the Rock on the site where Solomon's Temple is believed to have stood and the al-Aqsa Mosque on a Byzantine church toward the end of the seventh century CE.¹²

Israeli writers also tend to ignore the numerous Islamic monuments and artifacts—madrasas, pilgrim hostels, sufi centers, and public kitchens established by the various Muslim rulers throughout their rule in Palestine. They argue that since the Abbasids, who moved the political center from Damascus to Baghdad, Jerusalem has never been a political center for any Muslim dynasty. They also argue that al-Aqsa, which is mentioned in the Qur'an, could not refer to Jerusalem because, during the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime, it was still in Christian Byzantine hands.¹³ They add in this regard that even some early Muslim sources refer to the al-Aqsa Mosque (the farthest mosque) as opposed to the al-Masjid al-Adna (the closest mosque) near al-Madina in al-Ji`rana Valley.¹⁴ Many Israelis believe that terming the Temple Mount compound "al-Aqsa" is a modern Muslim invention. In addition, they claim that whereas Jerusalem is mentioned hundreds of times in the Bible, it is not mentioned by its name even once in the Qur'an. Even after Saladin's "liberation" of Jerusalem from the Crusaders, the Ayyubid al-Malik al-Kamil ceded Jerusalem in 1229 to the German Emperor Friedrich II—an event used by Israelis and Jews as proof that Jerusalem was not important for Muslims.¹⁵ However, it should be stressed that Al-Kamil, acted out of fear of the Mongols invading from the northern border of Syria and a Frankish attack from the sea against his capital in Cairo, and that the treaty he signed with Friedrich II was strongly criticized in his own camp. After Saladin's conquest, Israeli scholars argue that the city lapsed into obscurity and economic backwardness. Although high-ranking governors and rulers donated money and properties in order to establish monuments and Islamic learning institutions in Jerusalem, these were neglected and deteriorated in conjunction with the city's economic decline.¹⁶

One example of an Israeli polemical denial of the importance of Jerusalem for Muslims is an article published in January 1997 by Menashe Harel, a Tel-Aviv University professor emeritus in historical geography, who was awarded the Israel Prize in 2002. In this article, Harel refutes the Islamic and Christian claims to Jerusalem. Based on academic works of three Israeli historians of Islam and the Middle East, he wrote, among many other claims, that throughout the 1065 (!) years of Muslim rule in Jerusalem the Muslims never developed the city as their capital, adding that most Muslim rulers of Jerusalem from the ninth century on were not Arabs but of Turkish or Berber ethnic origin.¹⁷ Reading into the academic works of Israeli scholars, Dr. Hasan Silwadi of al-Quds University argued that "Jewish experts in Middle Eastern affairs try to detract from al-Aqsa's sanctity."¹⁸

A recent example for a denial of the Muslim affinity to Jerusalem by an Israeli official religious figure could be found in an interview given by Israel's Chief Rabbi Yonah Metzger to the Jewish News Media Group on January 18, 2008:

Yerushalayim belongs to Am Israel [The People of Israel] and she will be the capital city forever to the Jewish nation... this Wailing Wall is the place that every Jew, all over the world, is praying to this place... But, behind the Kotel, we have the mosque... But when they pray, even [though] they are in the holiest place for us, they pray to face Mecca... and their back is to Jerusalem. So we can see from only one sign that this does not belong to them and *they have no connection*... We welcome every Palestinian who wants to come pray in his mosque... But... you have another place: Mecca and Medina... you don't need a third place... but give us this small piece, only one, in all over the world, that belongs to us... You don't need three. We have only one.

In sum, Israeli Jews, scholars of Islam, and ordinary people do not deny that the Muslims consider Jerusalem and al-Haram al-Sharif as their third holy city and shrine, but they stress that the city was never a political center for Islam. In addition, they believe that the holy status of the city and the al-Aqsa compound is a late development aimed at strengthening Muslims' argument in the political arena.



In response to these challenges, be they factual or polemic, Islamists seek to refute the claims regarding Jerusalem's centrality to Judaism; they deny the Jewish Temple's existence in Jerusalem and assert that the Western Wall is not an authentic remnant of the Temple's external supporting wall, but rather al-Aqsa compound's western wall—the place identified today with al-Buraq, the amazing steed upon which Muhammad was borne to Jerusalem and that the angel Gabriel is said to have tethered to the wall in question. Yet on this issue, Muslim scholars actually contradict themselves: on the one hand, they present claims raised by the Muslim leadership in Palestine before the commission of inquiry set up to investigate the Western Wall incidents of 1929; according to them, Zionism's encyclopedic definitions call for the ingathering of Jewish exiles to Jerusalem and the building of the Third Temple; thus Zionism constitutes a threat to

Jerusalem's holy sites. On the other hand, they maintain that the Temple never existed at all and that Judaism can do with substitutes for the Temple and for Jerusalem.

Islamic texts that deny the Jewish connection to Jerusalem and its holy sites are sold in bookstores in nearly every place where Muslim communities exist.¹⁹ At the annual Arab book fair in Cairo, I have found many volumes dealing with the Islamic-Jewish conflict, including the controversy over Jerusalem (some of these were used for the present study). These publications may also be found in bookstores serving Islamic communities that I have visited in Europe, America, and Asia. Many of these texts are also accessible to readers of Arabic via the Internet. The theories that they expound are gradually gaining currency and are accepted as received truths by a significant proportion of the world Muslim population.

The new Islamic writing that disputes Jewish assertions regarding Jerusalem raises three basic claims: The first of these is that the Jewish presence in Jerusalem was short-lived and does not justify Jewish sovereignty over the Holy City. In contrast, it is argued that Jerusalem was an important Islamic focal point for Muslim Arab rulers, even if it never served as their capital. Thus, for example, while the Organization of the Islamic Conference's (OIC) Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) admits in one of its publications that Jerusalem, unlike other large Middle Eastern cities, was never a political capital under any Islamic regime, it nevertheless claims that since the Mamluk period the city served as an administrative center.²⁰ The second claim is that the Temple never existed and that Solomon's Temple, if there ever was such a thing, was at most the king's personal prayer-room; in any case, Solomon is regarded as an early Islamic figure. The third claim is that the Western Wall, the Jewish Kotel, is a Muslim holy site, the Jews' connection to which is inauthentic, having been invented during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for political purposes only.

3.2 Brief Jewish Presence

The basic claim of the new Arab and Muslim historians—those who have been publishing books and articles since 1967—is that the Jews' sovereign existence in Jerusalem existed for only 60 or 70 years, and that this brief presence does not justify a recognition of Jewish territorial rights after an absence of 2,000 years.²¹

Another feature of the debate over the Jews' historical right to Jerusalem is the presentation of demographic data according to which the Jews were a very small minority in Jerusalem during the Islamic period, from the seventh century on. Thus, Ahmad al-Qasim (the Palestinian author of a kind of encyclopedia of questions and answers on Jerusalem) writes that, when `Umar I conquered Jerusalem, there was not one Jew in it. In 1170, Binyamin of Tudela wrote that there were 200 Jews in Jerusalem. Al-Qasim maintains that there were no more than 150 Jews in the city by the end of the seventeenth century.²² Today, the al-Quds University Web site underlines in the chronology of the city that the Jews ruled Jerusalem for only 73 out of 5,000 years.²³

The narrative of the Jews' absence from Jerusalem first appeared before 1967. Palestinian historian `Arif al-`Arif wrote in 1961 that, in contrast to the Muslims, who have many hundreds of holy sites in Jerusalem (which he goes on to enumerate), and to the Christians, who have dozens of holy sites, sacred Jewish Jerusalem is limited to the Wailing Wall and to a handful of old synagogues and tombs of saints. Al-`Arif attributes the numerical deficiency of the Jews' holy places to their absence from the city: "After the Jews were defeated by the Romans they were dispersed around the globe. There is thus no mention of the Jews in connection with Jerusalem for hundreds of years. Only during the nineteenth century did their interest in the city reawaken, due to the hope of obtaining British assistance; they began trying to purchase property in Jerusalem, but the Ottoman Provincial Council's decision of 1837 thwarted these efforts.²⁴ In 1572, there were only 115 Jews in Jerusalem," writes al-`Arif.²⁵ Another example of this line of argument appears in a 1978 book written by Muhammad al-Aamiri, entitled, *Jerusalem—Its Arab Origin and Heritage*. Al-Aamiri writes that the Davidic and Solomonic monarchies were established after a long period of Jebusite-Arab rule; that David and Solomon ruled for only 70 years, followed by the Kingdom of Judah, which lasted for another 350 years. According to al-Aamiri, even during the glorious period of Solomon's reign the number of Jews in Jerusalem was small. Afterward the Jews dispersed, with only a negligible minority continuing to live in, or return to, the city. The Arabs, by contrast, resided in Jerusalem before the Jews and continued to live there after the Islamic conquest. They are the Canaanites who remained and merged with the new waves of immigration from the Arabian Peninsula.²⁶ Al-Aamiri stresses the political motive behind his demographic-ecological discussion. According to him, no state representing an ancient kingdom that

controlled the territory of Palestine for a few hundred years has ever claimed a historical right to it. "Not the Greeks who controlled it for 300 years, not the Romans who ruled it for 700 years... The Arabs stake no claim to sovereignty over Spain, which they ruled for 800 years." He asserts that the Arabs, in contrast to the Jews, had been living in Jerusalem and its environs for 8,000 [!] years, and he concludes with a familiar anti-Semitic motif: "The Jews' hunger for Palestine in particular, rather than for Uganda, does not stem from the region's rich mineral resources but rather from the fact that Palestine is a strategic center in their plan to rule the world."²⁷ Another article, published by an organization whose goal is to liberate Jerusalem, claims that even during the Jews' brief presence in Jerusalem (during the period of David and Solomon), there was no Jewish hegemony in the city, since the Jews shared Jerusalem with others.²⁸

There are authors who add an ideological explanation to the claim regarding the Jews' absence from Jerusalem: the Jews freely chose to emigrate from Palestine since the Temple and Jerusalem are not a crucial element of their faith. Thus, `Abd al-Tawab Mustafa writes that the Jews, both religious and secular, do not attach any special sanctity to the Temple and that they are always willing to accept a material replacement elsewhere. According to him, the Jews emigrated from Jerusalem and did not seek to return to it even when they had the opportunity to do so; they were satisfied with substitutes in other locations around the world.²⁹

3.3 The "Alleged" Temple

The story of the Jewish Temple and its construction, traditions about the divine worship that took place within it, and even details about the First Temple's destruction by Nebuchadnezzar are well-established motifs in Arab-Muslim literature in all of its forms. The Qur'an (17:7) itself mentions the Temple by calling it *masjid*, meaning a house of worship. Moreover, classical Arab sources identify the site upon which the al-Aqsa Mosque was built with the place where Solomon's Temple stood. The eleventh-century Jerusalem geographer and historian al-Maqdisi and the fourteenth-century Iranian religious legal sage al-Mustawfi identify the al-Aqsa Mosque with Solomon's Temple. Thirteenth-century poet Jalal al-Din al-Rumi defines the construction of the Solomonic house of worship as the building of the al-Aqsa Mosque. The Rock that lies within the site is usually identified by the

Arabs as Solomon's Temple and the heart of the al-Aqsa compound.³⁰ Abu Bakr al-Wasiti, who preached at the al-Aqsa Mosque in the early eleventh century, also includes various traditions related to the Temple's Jewish past in his work in praise of Jerusalem.³¹ An example from the twentieth century is a guide to al-Haram al-Sharif published in 1929 by the Supreme Muslim Council that maintains the following with reference to the Haram: "Its identity with the site of Solomon's Temple is beyond dispute. This, too, is the spot, according to the universal belief, on which David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings (2 Samuel XXIV, 25)."³²

Isaac Hasson, basing himself on Islamic traditions, writes that Caliph `Abd al-Malik construction of the Dome of the Rock contrasted with the Christian custom of pillaging the site of the Jewish Temple, and that he did it under the influence of stories about the place's connection to Abraham and to the Binding of Isaac. During `Abd al-Malik's time, Jerusalem's name was changed from the Christian Aelia Capitolina (Arabic: Iliya) to Bayt-al-Maqdis (which is a translation of the Hebrew *Beit ha-Mikdash*, that is, "the House of the Temple").³³ It has also been pointed out by one of the leaders of the Italian Muslim community, Sheikh Abdul Hadi Palazzi, that the rock at the al-Haram al-Sharif site is the *Even HaShtiya* (Foundation Stone) mentioned in Jewish sources, and that ancient Islam recognized the Rock as the Jews' direction of prayer.³⁴

Solomon's Temple and its historical location at the site identified as the al-Aqsa compound are thus ancient and recognized Islamic motifs; nevertheless, contemporary Islamic literature dealing with Jerusalem chooses to deny and to distort this fact. It is interesting to note an important finding of Nimrod Luz in his research on al-Haram al-Sharif in the Israeli-Arab discourse: not only does the head of the Islamic Movement's northern branch, Sheikh Ra'id Salah, deny the Jewish connection to the Temple Mount, but high-ranking Muslim members of the Communist *Hadash* Party—Shawqi Khatib, chairman of the Israeli-Arab Follow-Up Committee, and Knesset member Muhammad Barakeh—too express similar opinions.³⁵ The reason for this lies in the reality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in which the al-Aqsa compound has turned into a national symbol of identification in the eyes of Arab citizens of Israel, both religious and secular, and even for the Christians among them.

What motivates those who deny the Jewish connection to Jerusalem? Jewish beliefs regarding the Temple represent one of the most vexing issues with which Muslims writing about Jerusalem has to contend.

Muslim scholars and historians devote great effort to invalidating Jewish belief in the Temple, to denying its existence as a Jewish house of worship or its location in the place identified by the Jews as the Temple Mount site. They maintain that the Temple was never Jewish to begin with, or that it existed for only a short time, and that traditional Judaism sees no need for a temple in Jerusalem since alternate sites around the world are acceptable to it. These efforts are necessary due to the many Islamic traditions describing the place of the Rock as the site of the Temple, as well as the connection between the site and the figures of David and Solomon.³⁶ Thus, for example, Palestinian-Jordanian historian Kamil al-`Asali is concerned by the fact that Muslim travelers who visited al-Haram al-Sharif report the presence of structures and artifacts associated with Jewish figures. He writes that “All of the elements on the Temple Mount which Muslim travelers attribute to David and Solomon, such as Mihrab Da`ud (David’s prayer niche),³⁷ Kursi Sulayman (Solomon’s Chair),³⁸ and the Dome of the Chain which is said to mark the place where King David sat in judgment—are all folklore, lacking any basis. . . . David and Solomon and all of the figures and patriarchs from Abraham on were raised by Islam to the status of prophets, and thus it is not surprising that structures and sites are associated with them.” Al-`Asali adds that “modern archeology has not succeeded in proving that the site on which the Temple stood is located in this place, since no remnants of the Temple have survived.”³⁹

Historian `Arif al-`Arif’s pre-1967 writings are glaringly solitary in contrast to the later wave of publications denying the Jewish connection to Jerusalem. At that time, Al-`Arif wrote that al-Haram al-Sharif is located on the Mount Moriah mentioned in the Book of Genesis, the site of Arauna the Jebusite’s threshing-floor, which David purchased in order to build the Temple, and that Solomon built the Temple in 1007 BCE; he added that “[a]mong the remnants of the era of Solomon is the structure that lies under al-Aqsa Mosque.”⁴⁰ The place was owned by the Jews for a certain period and was afterward returned to Muslim proprietorship; the Muslims called it *al-Haram al-Qudsi* because it was sacred to all Muslims.⁴¹ Al-`Arif also wrote that the quarry to the right (to the west) of the Damascus Gate is called Solomon’s Mine because it was from there that David and Solomon brought stones to be used in building the Temple.⁴² These statements, written at a time in which Jerusalem’s Old City was a part of the Kingdom of Jordan, go almost entirely unmentioned in the Arab history books written since 1967 and, generally, in contemporary Arab discourse.

What is most conspicuous about the way in which Muslims refer to the Jewish Temple (*Haykal*, or *Haykal Sulayman*—Solomon's Temple) is their frequent addition to the word *al-haykal* (the Temple) of the term "*al-maz`um*," whose literal meaning is "alleged," which serves automatically to negate the "claim," that is, the very existence of the Temple, or to express nonrecognition or delegitimization of the Temple. For instance, during the first decade of the State of Israel's existence, the world Arab media added the word "*maz`uma*" to Israel's name, in order to emphasize Arab nonrecognition of the country and a belief that its existence was fragile and temporary. With regard to the Jewish Temple, in most cases the word "*maz`um*" may be translated in context as "alleged," or even as "the false" since the speaker or writer generally means to refer to a Jewish invention lacking any factual basis. Thus, `Abd al-Tawab Mustafa writes in his book, in a subchapter entitled "*al-Haykal al-Maz`um*," that the word "*haykal*" denotes Solomon's Temple, while the word "*maz`um*" refers to the Jewish claim that remnants of the Temple lie underneath the al-Aqsa Mosque or within al-Haram al-Sharif. When expressing his belief that the Jewish claims are completely unsubstantiated, he makes use of three Arabic words: *maza`im*, from the same root as *maz`um*, usually meaning pretentious or false claims, *akadhib* (fabrications), and *iftira`at* (lies). In his book, Mustafa seeks to "provide scientific and rational proofs that will invalidate the ideological basis of the Zionist Jewish *maza`im*," and he concentrates on denying what he refers to as "the central ideological focus of the Zionist movement, its religious basis: the obligation of gathering all of the Jews together in one temple in Jerusalem." In Mustafa's preface to his book, the following sentence appears: "We came to realize that the Jews' belief in the Temple is no more than a false allegation that does not hold up in the face of scientific criticism, since the Jews' supposed scholarship on the topic is not true scientific research, but rather [a collection of] speculations and hypotheses."⁴³ He defines the book's primary objective as being that of "refuting the belief in the Temple based on the Jewish sources themselves, out of the hope that such a refutation will cause the Jews' remaining historical, political and settlement claims to fall one after the other like so many dominos."⁴⁴

In seeking to refute the "Jewish lie about the Temple," Mustafa makes several assertions: the first claim is that, based on the size of the Temple as described in the Jewish sources, the structure was four times smaller than King Solomon's palace. The author concludes from this that Solomon's Temple was not the Jews' Temple, but rather Solomon's private house of worship that was connected to his palace (another article analyzes

the Temple's dimensions according to the Bible and determines that the Temple was "only the size of a spacious apartment"⁴⁵). The second claim is that the religion practiced by the Hebrews was actually Canaanite in origin, and that, consequently, a Jewish temple never existed.⁴⁶ The third claim is based on the first one: since the Temple was a private structure, the author assumes that many other houses of worship existed that were called *miqdash*; according to Mustafa, after Solomon's kingdom was divided, there must have been many temples. Thus, for example, "Jeroboam, ruler of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, erected two golden calves—one at Beit El and one at Dan—so that the tribes would turn to them rather than to Jerusalem, which was located in the Kingdom of Judea—and he built a temple for this purpose to compete with the one in Jerusalem." After the Jews divided into separate sects, says Mustafa, the Samaritans sanctified Mount Gerizim as an additional temple to rival the Jerusalem Temple, at around 328 BCE; in Egypt Onias the Priest also built an alternative temple, which according to him is alluded to in Isaiah 19.⁴⁷ The fourth claim is that the Jewish prophets themselves denied the necessity of building a temple after the Children of Israel had turned Solomon's Temple into a den of thieves (*magharat lussus*) and thus had become unworthy of structures that were pure. In support of his claim, the author quotes from 2 Samuel 7 regarding Nathan the prophet's injunction to David not to build the Temple.⁴⁸ He likewise quotes from the New Testament⁴⁹ and asserts that the Second Temple's fate was the same as that of the First—that it was a den of thieves and a money-changers' stall. The fifth claim is that the Jews have never found any archeological proof of the Temple's existence, despite the excavations that have been carried out since 1967.⁵⁰ This claim is being repeatedly used today. For example, in March 2007, the PA governor of the Palestinian Jerusalem District—Adv. Jamil `Uthman Nasser—stated at a convention in Ramallah that "no historian nor archaeologist, even Israelis, ever succeeded in proving an historical attachment of the Jews to Jerusalem from a religious and political aspects."⁵¹ The sixth claim is that the British-appointed Commission of Inquiry to investigate the 1929 Western Wall riots found that Jewish claims that the Western Wall was one of the walls of Solomon's Temple were incorrect [the commission's report actually stated the opposite!⁵²]. The seventh claim is that there is no correlation between the site of the Jewish Temple and the Haram, since the Haram was built from north to south, in the direction of Mecca, while the Temple was built from west to east, in the direction of the sun, as was usual for ancient houses of worship. The eighth and final claim is based on a study by archeologist Kathleen Kenyon⁵³ that determined that the city of Jebus was situated

east of the walls of al-Haram al-Sharif, in the direction of the Kidron Valley,⁵⁴ that is, if a Temple had been there it would not have stood upon the current site of the al-Aqsa Mosque.⁵⁵ Mustafa distorts the words of Kenyon, who has never doubted the Temple's location. After noting that the Second Temple was built on the site where the First Temple had stood, she writes:

The site of the Temple is not in doubt . . . the retaining walls of the platform of Herod's Temple are still visible today, now crowned by that supreme example of Moslem architecture, the Dome of the Rock.⁵⁶

Mustafa appears willing to grasp at any scrap of information (even if it is completely baseless) in order to deny the Temple's existence in Jerusalem.

Another author, al-Qasim, writes that the biblical story of the Queen of Sheba's visit to King Solomon indicates the existence of a palace rather than a temple.⁵⁷ To the question "Is it true that Solomon's Temple lies under al-Aqsa?" al-Qasim replies that this is a lie as excavations have revealed no remnants of such a temple.⁵⁸ According to him, all of the Jews' efforts to unearth remains of the Temple have failed, despite the assistance extended to them by experts from various fields, due to the fact that the Temple never existed (*li'ana al-haykal lam yakun maujudan fi al-asl*) but was rather an imaginary invention.⁵⁹

In the struggle over Palestine, modern archeology has historically been used as a tool by each side to substantiate its narrative while refuting that of the other in order to promote its political claims.⁶⁰ Although this strategy has not been the exclusive province of one party to the conflict, the focus of the present study is nevertheless the Islamic discourse regarding Jerusalem. Many Muslim writers use archeology as a basis for denying the historical existence of the Temple on the site of the Temple Mount and al-Aqsa. The following are a few striking examples: in an article written by a Palestinian named Arafat Hijazi, published in 2002 on the Web site of the Islamic Movement in Israel's southern branch, just prior to the Arab summit in Beirut, the author denies the existence of a Jewish temple on the Temple Mount. "Why did they let 500 years go by without building it, from the time of its second destruction by Titus until 'Abd al-Malik built the al-Aqsa Mosque?" he asks, adding: "42 archeological teams excavated at al-Aqsa between 1891-1925 and hundreds [yes!] have excavated since 1967, but not one archeologist has found a remnant of the Temple or any indication of the existence of Jews

in Palestine.”⁶¹ A similar claim appears elsewhere on the same Web site, in an article by Muhammad Khalaiqa in which he uses Israeli archeological findings in order to confirm that no remnants of the Jewish Temple exist. According to him, since 1967, the Jews have conducted 65 archeological excavations on the Temple Mount (4 of them, he claims, in the tunnels under the Mount), most of them by archeologist Dan Bahat, and he quotes archeologist Eilat Mazar’s statement that “[w]e have not reached the Temple and we have no idea where it is.”⁶² In her book, Mazar actually presents findings that support the biblical sources regarding the Temple.⁶³ She states that the reason why there have been no initial findings from the Temple structure itself is that it has not been possible to excavate under the Temple Mount compound—the place where archeologists believe that the Temple stood.⁶⁴

ʿAbd al-Hamid al-Sa’ih, who is mentioned earlier in this work, wrote in his book that the Egyptian engineer who restored the Dome of the Rock during the 1960s (Husayn al-Shafi’i) told him that he had dug several meters under the Rock and found no evidence of a more ancient structure.⁶⁵

In another article that appeared on the Web site of the Islamic Movement’s northern branch, Egyptian archeologist ʿAbd al-Rahim Rihan Barakat, director of antiquities for the Dahab, Sinai region, writes that “the legend of the alleged Temple is the greatest crime of fabricating history.” According to him, David and Solomon had small houses of worship and no connection to a temple, while the Israelites did not in any case adhere to the religion of Solomon, who preached faith in Allah, the One God. He thus asks the rhetorical question “Is it possible that he built them a temple to the God Y---H?”⁶⁶

Those who assert that Solomon built a private house of worship and nothing more are obliged to contend with Islamic traditions according to which it was Solomon who built the al-Aqsa Mosque (as in the poetry of the aforementioned Jalal al-Din al-Rumi). Muhammad Shurab, a Saudi historian, claims that these traditions are incorrect. Basing himself on a tenth-century Arab historian’s claim, he writes that Solomon’s Temple was built in the place where the Tower of David stands, that is, outside of the al-Aqsa Mosque compound. To be on the safe side, he adds that, even if one assumes for the sake of argument that Solomon built the Temple on the al-Aqsa site, the Jews still have no right to the place since it had been completely destroyed by the time the Muslims arrived there, and since in any case the Temple was built and destroyed several times and there is no proof that the Second Temple was constructed precisely on the same spot where Solomon’s

Temple stood.⁶⁷ A Palestinian author by the name of Ibrahim `Anani also adopts the theory that Solomon's Temple was located in what he calls "David's ancient citadel," which he identifies with Mount Zion, which according to him was physically unconnected to Holy Jerusalem. Jewish Jerusalem, according to `Anani, is Mount Zion and nothing more.⁶⁸ Another example: a *fatwa* on the Jerusalem Waqf's Web site cites the Jewish version of the Temple's sanctity and determines that David, Solomon, and Herod did not build the Temple but rather renovated a preexisting (originally Muslim) structure dating from the time of Adam.⁶⁹ Another even more innovative claim appears on the Jerusalem Waqf's Web site in the mufti's response to a question posed by Zayn al-Din al-'Alawi: the Temple has already been built three times, the third time by Herod. Thus, according to the mufti, the Third Temple has already been destroyed, and the Jewish traditions regarding the reestablishment of the Third Temple are baseless.⁷⁰

A significant number of the Muslim writings seek to elucidate, based on Islamic and Arab sources, what the exact nature of the Temple was, and who built it. Thus, for example, Dr. `Abd al-Fatah Abu `Aliya, a lecturer in modern history at Saudi Arabia's al-Imam Muhammad ibn Sa'ud Islamic University, wrote in 2000 in his book that Solomon built a mosque and not a temple. Abu `Aliya bases this assertion on the Arabic term that appears in Qur'an 17:1, 7: *masjid*, despite the fact that this term originally denoted a "house of worship," rather than a Muslim mosque. Abu `Aliya goes on to claim that Solomon and all of the "prophets" who preceded and followed him were Muslims, or at least monotheists who prayed in mosques. This is the place to note that Islam regards the Jewish and Christian figures who appeared before it as Muslims, in the sense that they devoted themselves to one God, in contrast to the Muslims who followed in Muhammad's footsteps and were called *mu'minun*, believers. Abu `Aliya also casts doubt on the location of the Temple that the Jews associate with Solomon: Is it in Jerusalem or next to the city of Nablus?⁷¹ The author adds that the dimensions of the house of worship built by Solomon were smaller than those of the al-Aqsa Mosque and that, therefore, they could not have occupied the same site. Basing himself on secondary sources that cite the Talmud and the Mishna,⁷² the author writes that according to the Talmud the "Holy of Holies upon which Solomon built his house of worship is not the Rock from which the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven. The Holy of Holies is a different rock." According to him, the Talmud says that Solomon's structure rose to the height of three fingers' above the ground, while the Rock from which the Prophet

Muhammad ascended stood about a meter above the ground. Thus, the structure erected by Solomon was built elsewhere and not at al-Aqsa.⁷³ Moreover, Solomon's house of worship existed for only a short period of time—that is, during Solomon's reign—as after his death the Jewish kingdom divided into two, each with its own temple: one at Batin (that is, at Beit El) near Jerusalem, and the other at Tel al-Qadi (at Tel Dan). The author also states that the Samaritans, a Jewish sect, claim that the Temple is on Mount Gerizim.⁷⁴

Dr. Nasim Shihda Yasin, who is dean of the School of Islamic Studies of the Islamic University in Gaza affiliated with Hamas, is another example. In July 2006, he delivered a lecture on “the Jewish belief in the Temple and its threat to al-Aqsa Mosque,” in which he said that the al-Aqsa Mosque is the axis of the sacredness of the divinely blessed Holy Land, adding that “the Jews, as they usually do, forged the historical facts and broadcast the faked ones via the international media. By so doing they managed to convince the world that the land was given to them as a divine gift and that the al-Aqsa Mosque was built on the ruins of their Temple. They convinced the leaders of the Christian West who assisted them in conquering East Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque in 1967... and the Jews intend to build their Third Temple instead of al-Aqsa.” He added that *King Solomon (Sulayman b. Da'ud) was not Jewish at all* (he was born to a non-Jewish mother) and that al-Aqsa Mosque was built long before his reign. He added that the *destruction of al-Aqsa is a renewal on an ongoing old Zionist plan in which the protestant (and “Zionist”) Christians join.*⁷⁵

There are also exceptions. For example, Palestinian archeologist Dr. Marwan Abu Khallaf of al-Quds University has noted that a Christian pilgrim called Arculf, who spent nine months in Jerusalem around the year 670, wrote that “[o]n the site where the Temple once stood,” a mosque had been erected by the Muslims.⁷⁶ An official historical document of the OIC states that “[t]he rock is the place where Abraham offered his son for a sacrifice [Ishmael, according to Muslim tradition], and the place from which the Prophet Muhammad ascended, and it is also the site upon which Solomon and Herod built the First and Second Temples.”⁷⁷ The document also indicates that the al-Aqsa Mosque refers to the site where Solomon's Temple stood in Jerusalem, on Mount Moriah, “a place that was sacred to both Jews and Christians (who prevailed over the Jews). The Temple was built by Solomon around the year 1000 B.C.E.” It seems that this organization, which seeks to present a conciliatory face to the international community, is unable to participate in the denial campaign, out of fear of criticism by

the Christian West.⁷⁸ The organization contents itself with disputing the Jewish historic right to the site, claiming that the Jews' presence in Jerusalem was brief compared with that of the Arabs, concluding that "their argument should be rejected on a scientific basis."⁷⁹

The picture painted by the many publications seeking to refute the Jewish belief in the Temple and its location is one of multiple claims and internal contradictions. The most striking motif that can be identified in the statements of Palestinian officials and other parties is that no archeological evidence has been found of the Temple's existence and that the Temple is, therefore, *maz`um*—until proven otherwise. If a Temple did exist, they assert, it was located elsewhere and not on the site currently occupied by the al-Aqsa compound.

The broad reception that the literature denying the Jewish connection to the Temple Mount enjoys in the Muslim world and its incorporation into Muslim public awareness are evident also in the use that publicists and politicians make of it. I will mention a few examples of this from recent years: in an interview, Palestinian mufti Sheikh Ikrima Sabri said that there are no artifacts that support the Jews' claim that a temple was located on this site, and that they themselves are not sure where their Temple was, despite the many excavations that have been carried out since 1967. Sabri added, "It cannot be that Allah gave us a house of worship and asked us to preserve it, when it belongs to another group."⁸⁰ On many other occasions Sabri has referred to the Temple as "the alleged⁸¹ Temple of Solomon." In a 1998 interview with him in an Israeli newspaper the following was cited:

Q: In your opinion, is there room for coexistence between Arabs and Jews on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem?

Sabri: Moslems have no knowledge or awareness that the Temple Mount has *any sanctity for Jews*. Why should we allow the Jews to share in places which are holy to us and to Islam for 600[0?] years. The Moslems ruled the land, since the Caliph Omar, and *only now* have the Jews remembered to demand a right to the Temple Mount. The Moslems will never permit anyone to enter the Temple Mount. If the Jews really want peace, they must absolutely forget about having any rights over the Temple Mount or Al-Aksa Mosque. *The Western Wall also belongs to Moslems, and was given to the Jews as a place of prayer only because the British asked and the Moslems agreed out of the goodness of their hearts. The Western Wall is just a fence belonging to a Moslem holy site.*⁸² [emphasis added]

Another example: Dr. Ahmad Khalil, former Jordanian Waqf minister, who served as the head of the royal commission charged with restoring the al-Aqsa Mosque, stated in a January 2003 press conference, against the background of the controversy surrounding the repair of a protrusion in the southern wall, that Israel consistently tries to interfere in al-Aqsa affairs and to excavate underneath the Mosque “in order to establish the alleged Temple.”⁸³

In July 2000, after the second Camp David summit, Palestinian Authority (PA) cabinet member Nabil Sha'ath told the *al-Ayam* newspaper that “Israel claims that its *alleged* Temple existed there.”⁸⁴ Shlomo Ben-Ami quotes Saeb Arekat—one of the highest-ranking Palestinian negotiators at Camp David and formerly the PA’s minister of negotiations—as having said, during the July 2000 negotiations over Jerusalem, that “this whole issue of the Temple... is a Jewish invention lacking any basis.”⁸⁵ Ben-Ami believes that Arafat came to Camp David with religious commitments that dictated his positions.⁸⁶ The last three examples demonstrate how senior political figures responsible for conducting diplomatic negotiations with Israel internalized the messages disseminated by those seeking to deny the Jewish connection to Jerusalem.

Given the many Arab publications rejecting the existence of the Jewish Temple on the Temple Mount, Arafat’s denial of the Jewish connection to the site at the July 2000 Camp David talks should not have come as such a surprise to the Jewish and American public, as reported by those involved in the negotiations.⁸⁷ The argument that the Jews have no authentic connection to Jerusalem and its holy sites had already undergone a process of dissemination and internalization by Islamic and Arab communities and had long been a prominent feature of Arab public discourse. An official publication on Jerusalem issued by the PLO in 1981, one actually written by a Christian scholar (Samir Jiryis), states that there is no foundation for Jerusalem’s sacredness to Judaism,⁸⁸ and an official PA book on the history of the al-Aqsa site, published in 2002, makes no mention of the site’s sacred status in Judaism.⁸⁹

3.4 Islamization of the Western Wall and the Denial of a Jewish Connection to the Site

While the denial of the Temple’s existence or its location according to Jewish sources is meant to weaken Jewish historical legitimacy with regard to the site and to strengthen Muslims’ historical right to al-Aqsa

and the Temple Mount, the denial of authentic Jewish connection to the Western Wall seeks to weaken the Jewish right to an active place of worship—a right that was recognized by the Ottomans and that is also referred to in international documents. From the Muslim point of view, the Western Wall is a part of the al-Aqsa complex, and the Western Wall plaza—the site where the Jews pray—was a part of the Mughrabi Quarter that is an Islamic endowment. These claims were presented by the Arabs in 1930 to the commission of Inquiry appointed by the British to investigate the Western Wall incidents and the Jewish and Muslim claims regarding the Wall. In its report, the commission determined not only that the Western Wall and its adjacent plaza were owned by the Muslims, but also that the Wall is nevertheless a site holy to Jews due to its being a remnant of the Temple's external wall; it was further noted that the Jews had a proprietary right to pray at the site according to arrangements dating from the Ottoman era.⁹⁰ This fact was admitted, among others, by `Arif al-`Arif in 1951, when he wrote that the prevailing opinion was that the Western Wall was a remnant of the external wall of the Temple rebuilt by Herod in 11 BCE and destroyed by Titus in 70 CE.⁹¹ Al-`Arif adds, however, that the Western Wall is more sacred to Muslims than to Jews, and that conflicts had, therefore, erupted between Jews and Muslims over the site. The Muslims believe that it was there that the angel Jibril (Gabriel) tethered Muhammad's steed, al-Buraq, on the night of his nocturnal journey to al-Aqsa, and that the site is part of al-Haram al-Sharif.⁹² Writing in 1978, Tibawi also recognizes the Jewish tradition that views the Western Wall as a remnant of the wall that surrounded the Temple, although this recognition extends, in his words, only to the Wall's "six lower strata of stone," and he rejects the Jews' right to visit the site on more than an individual basis. A different view has been expressed by one of the leaders of the Italian Muslim community, who wrote that the Western Wall, despite its identification with al-Buraq, was holy to the Jews long before it became associated with the Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey.⁹³ By contrast, there are those who claim that the Western Wall is not an authentic remnant of the Temple Mount site (that is, of the Temple Mount's outer retaining wall), and that the Jews decided to pray there only in order to gain ownership of it.⁹⁴

The current Islamic debate over the Western Wall has two dimensions. The first of these is the site's Islamization and its identification as a place holy to Muslims, based on three points: the tradition according to which Prophet Muhammad's miraculous steed, al-Buraq, was tethered

there; the Western Wall's status as "part of the al-Aqsa Mosque [wall]"; and its status as Muslim waqf. The second dimension is the claim that the Jews invented the Western Wall as a Jewish holy site and that they have no authentic historical connection to it. In an article published in 2002, just prior to the Arab summit in Beirut, Arafat Hijazi wrote on the Web site of the Islamic Movement's southern branch: "First of all we must redeem from its state of desecration occupied al-Buraq, whose sanctity has been violated by the Jews... They can wail anywhere, while the Muslims have no other place where the Prophet tethered al-Buraq."⁹⁵ Another example: Sheikh Ikrima Sabri, former mufti of the PA, has ruled on numerous occasions that the entire al-Aqsa complex is Islamic *waqf* and that the Jews have no right to it.⁹⁶ Addressing the issue of the displacement of a stone from the top of the Western Wall and reports in the Israeli media regarding the need to deal with the matter, Sabri stated that the Western Wall is part of al-Aqsa and that only the Waqf is permitted to carry out repairs upon it.⁹⁷ On another occasion Sabri said that al-Buraq Wall is Muslim waqf, that the place (the plaza) where the Jews pray lies outside of the Wall, and that it is part of the Mughrabi Quarter that is also Islamic *waqf*.⁹⁸ In an interview broadcast by the al-Jazeera television channel, Sabri stated that the Western Wall was never even for one second a Jewish structure and that the Jews have no connection to it. "Who decided that the Western Wall is a remnant of the Temple?" Sabri asked, answering with a rhetorical question: "Is it scientifically or archeologically conceivable that Herod, who built the temple to Augustus in Caesarea, also built a temple for the Jews?"⁹⁹ According to Sabri, the Jews began to pray at the Western Wall only during the nineteenth century, when they began to develop nationalist aspirations.¹⁰⁰

Nasser Farid Wasel, the former mufti of Egypt, has also published a fatwa that rules that the al-Buraq Wall is Islamic waqf and constitutes a part of al-Aqsa's western wall; he prohibited referring to it as the Wailing Wall. This ruling was issued about a month after Palestinian mufti Ikrima Sabri published a similar ruling, in order to bolster Sabri and support his edict.¹⁰¹ The next example shows how messages formulated by religious leaders have come to permeate the political discourse. About a month after Wasel's fatwa was issued, the Egyptian waqf minister Mahmud Hamdi Zaquq stated that the Jews have no connection to the Western Wall, which according to him "was never a holy site for them." Zaquq added that no historical evidence exists to support the Jewish claims regarding the existence of Solomon's "alleged" Temple anywhere in the city.¹⁰²

Yasser Arafat has also denied any Jewish connection to the Western Wall, as early as 1996.¹⁰³ In August 2000, after the collapse of the second Camp David summit at which Arafat had expressed his agreement to the continuation of Jewish worship at the Western Wall, Ikrima Sabri stated that “[p]ermitting free access to the Western Wall does not mean that the Western Wall will belong to them. The Wall is ours. They think that the Wall is sacred to them and want to pray at it, but we are the ones who oversee and maintain it.”¹⁰⁴

The Arab League’s Internet site identifies the Western Wall as “the South Western part from the wall of al-Haram al-Sharif... it is called al-Buraq Wall because it was the place where the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) tied al-Buraq during the Night Journey and Heavenly Ascent... at the present time the Jews are using it as a Temple as they consider it part of *the alleged temple* [italics added]. This contravenes the facts, the reality and history in an attempt to hold possession of it.”¹⁰⁵ While accounting the chronology of Jerusalem under the Persians and Romans the text narrates the burning down of the city but there is no indication of the destruction of the Jewish Temple or any mention of the Jews. The chronology also omits the Jordanian rule in Jerusalem (1948–1967).¹⁰⁶

The Islamization and de-Judaization of the Western Wall are a recurrent motif in publications and public statements by the heads of the Islamic Movement in Israel. Here are several examples: The head of the Islamic Movement’s northern branch, Sheikh Ra’id Salah, denied any Jewish connection to the Western Wall in an article published as part of a series entitled *ABC on the Road to al-Aqsa the Blessed*.¹⁰⁷ At the “al-Aqsa is in Danger” Festival held in September 2000, Sheikh Salah said the following: “Let us tell the Jewish public frankly: you have no right even to one stone of the blessed al-Aqsa Mosque. You have no right even to one particle of dust of the blessed al-Aqsa Mosque. So let us say frankly: The western wall of al-Aqsa the Blessed is part of al-Aqsa the Blessed... The insistence that al-Aqsa the Blessed be left under Israeli sovereignty is also a declaration of war on the Islamic world.”¹⁰⁸

There are those whose denial of the Jewish connection to the Western Wall takes a quasi-scientific form. For example, Egyptian historian Dr. `Adel Hasan Ghunaym of Ain Shams University in Cairo has written a book entitled *The Buraq Wall or the Wailing Wall?*, in which he claims that the western part of the Temple Mount was originally a commercial area and that until the sixteenth century the Jews had prayed by the eastern wall of al-Haram al-Qudsi al-Sharif, on the Mount of Olives and near the gates, until Bedouin attacks forced them to cease, and

that it was Ottoman Sultan Sulayman the Magnificent who allocated to them for the first time a defined place of worship next to the Western Wall.¹⁰⁹ Ghunaym claims that the Western Wall has been important to the Jews only since the sixteenth century, and he makes use of opinions expressed by various scholars and Jewish figures in order to support his contention. Similarly, in an article published on the Islamic Jihad movement's Web site, the author, Ibrahim 'Abd al-Karim, asserts, among other things, that the Western Wall's sanctity is a Jewish invention and that there are even rabbis who "admit that the Western Wall is not sacred."¹¹⁰ The author bases his statements on an article by Reform Rabbi Yehoram Mazor, which appeared in the journal of the Movement for Progressive Judaism in July 1999. Mazor wrote that the Western Wall is merely "a retaining wall built by Herod when he expanded the Second Temple and the Temple Mount," and that "[i]t has no sanctity at all." He noted that the Jews prayed in different periods in different parts of the area adjacent to the retaining wall, and that the reason that they began praying near the western part of the wall was that the Turkish (Ottoman) authorities allocated this plaza to them for this purpose. Mazor's main argument in the article was that "Reform theology opposes the rebuilding of the Temple" and thus that Reform Jews have no ideological-religious need to enter the Temple Mount area and to pray there, much less to pray near the wall that encircles the Temple Mount like a fence.¹¹¹ 'Abd al-Karim, in using Mazor's article to support his assertions, ignores the fact that Mazor's opinions represent a deviation from the mainstream Reform platform. He also ignores the fact that the same issue of the journal presented Mazor's statements alongside an opposing viewpoint—that of the Center for Jewish Pluralism head, Rabbi Uri Regev, who wrote that the Western Wall is "an inseparable part of pilgrimage to our Land," attaching great religious significance to the centuries-old tradition of the Western Wall as the Jewish nation's Wailing Wall—the most sacred existing site for individual and public prayer and for the expression of solidarity with the Jewish people and with the chain of generations that shaped the Jewish heritage.¹¹²



The classic Islamic view does not deny Jewish tradition, history, and heritage in general, or those aspects of Jewish tradition that are connected with Jerusalem in particular. On the contrary, Jewish biblical figures underwent a process of Islamization and incorporation into the "stories of the Prophets" literature (*Qisas al-Anbiya*) and the "stories

of the Children of Israel” literature (*Isra’iliyyat*). It should be emphasized that in ancient Islam—in the Qur’an, in the *hadith*, and in other literature—there are many expressions of recognition of the Children of Israel, in the story of the Exodus from Egypt and of their conquest of the Land. There are Muslims (few in number due to the existing political circumstances) who make use of texts to express recognition of Israel and of the authentic Jewish connection to Jerusalem (for example, Italian Muslim leader Sheikh Abdul Hadi Palazzi, quoted above¹¹³).

It is interesting to compare Islam’s view of pre-Islamic Judaism to Christianity’s perspective of Judaism. Both, Christianity and Islam adopt some principles from Judaism but view Jews as abrogators of the “true conviction.” Christians view Christianity as the fulfillment and successor of Judaism. Christianity carried forward (and still does albeit in slightly modified form) much of the doctrine and some of the practices from Judaism. The Church adopted the Old Testament while rejecting much of the laws of Moses given in that text. Once the crucifixion of Jesus occurred, then the Law was superseded by the New Covenant brought about by Christ’s spiritual kingdom and his ultimate sacrifice upon the cross. Both, Christianity and Islam adopt Abraham as founding forefather and Jewish biblical figures. Unlike Islam, which adopts all Jewish and Christian “prophets,” Christianity gives very little attention to the pre-Christ figures.

Of late, more Christians have been interested in the Jewish beginnings of Christianity. They see Jesus Christ and themselves as the seed of Abraham. Galatians 3:8 presents Abraham as the first Christian (believer of the same Gospel), being preached to by God Himself. The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century raised messianic expectations. As part of eschatological process, many Protestants aspire to the return of the Jews to the Holy Land and the rebuilding of the (third) Temple. Protestant pre-Millenarians were strongly affected by the results of the Six-Day War of June 1967 and many support Israel. Evangelical pre-Millenarian groups provide funding for Jewish extreme radical groups that strive to rebuild the Temple in place of the al-Aqsa Mosque. It should be mentioned here that Michael Dennis Rohan, the Australian who set fire to the al-Aqsa Mosque in August 1969, was driven by these Christian messianic beliefs.

In the modern era, most Muslim writers make a sharp distinction between ancient Jewish historical narrative and contemporary political reality. This distinction is based on two justifications: one theological and the other political. The Islamic justification contends that the Jews originally followed the true monotheistic faith, which was identified as “ancient Islam,” but they deviated from this true faith, betrayed their

prophets, failed to accept the messages of Jesus and Muhammad and were, therefore, punished. Moreover, according to this view, even if one accepts the divine promise to give the Land to Abraham and his descendents, this promise was conditional on the Children of Israel's unwavering adherence to the original, true faith. Once this deviation occurred, the promise was revoked and transferred to the descendents of Abraham's firstborn son, Ishmael. The political justification contends, in contrast, that most contemporary Jews are not direct descendents of the ancient Hebrew ethnic tribal group and thus have no historical or political right to any form of sovereignty in Jerusalem or in Palestine.

One example is a book published in English, in London, by Jordanian-born Muhammed Abdul Hamed al-Khateeb, approved as a doctoral dissertation in Middle Eastern studies at the University of Manchester, England. The book compares the Jewish and Islamic traditions regarding Jerusalem and, in doing so, gives full legitimacy to the Jewish traditions. The conquest of Jerusalem that is attributed to Caliph `Umar I is referred to by the author as the city's re-Islamization, that is, as its restoration to the original Abrahamic faith—"a faith that was corrupted by both the Jews and the Christians."¹¹⁴ However, the author makes a distinction between the Jewish historical affinity to Jerusalem and the Jews' sovereign rights over the city. In his opinion, only Muslims have such rights, since they are the ones who preserved the city and the true faith over the generations, and particularly since the Jews did not obey God and, therefore, lost their right to the divinely-promised Land. Moreover, the author claims (basing himself on Arthur Koestler's *The Thirteenth Tribe*¹¹⁵) that most contemporary Jews are of Khazar origin and are thus not "Jews" descended from the tribe of Judah and are certainly not descendents of the "Children of Israel" capable of claiming that the divine promise applies to them.¹¹⁶

An additional contention of al-Khateeb's is that despite the similarity between Judaism and Islam and the fact that both are religions of redemption—Islam nevertheless accepts other peoples while the Judaism rejects them:

Judaism was once a form of Islam with a powerful sense and vision of universal justice. However in becoming Judaism and in rejecting both 'Isa [Jesus] who was sent to them by Allah from among themselves speaking in their own language, and the Messenger of Allah the Jews have locked themselves into a concentration camp mentality. It is clear that when the Jews have the upper hand life becomes intolerable for other peoples, since others are not invited

or welcomed into Judaism and yet they are not seen as having any real existence outside of it. Islam alone contains a universal vision for mankind regardless of race.¹¹⁷

Another approach, which does not appear in other sources authored by Muslims, is that of Dr. Sari Nusseibeh, currently president of al-Quds University, who wrote that Islam sanctified the Rock as a kind of resurrection of the ancient Jewish temple, as an expression of unity with the Abrahamic mission. He regards Islam as the religion that continues Abraham's mission and not as a new faith.¹¹⁸

The writings of al-Khateeb and Nusseibeh, which recognize Jewish traditions, differ from those of most Muslim academics, clerics, and leaders of our generation, who have chosen a strategy of near-total denial of an historical Jewish connection to Jerusalem and to the Temple Mount site. It appears that the intensifying political struggle for Palestine since 1967 has led the Muslims to seek more radical justifications, due to the traumatic loss of Muslim sovereignty over Jerusalem and over al-Haram al-Sharif. Based on dozens of books, articles, and other publications in the Muslim world that deal with Jerusalem, it appears that over the last generation Muslims have been intensifying their efforts to justify claims that cast doubt upon the Jewish connection to Jerusalem and the holy sites. These efforts are reflected in a sharp rise in the number of publications that focus on denying Jewish affinity to the city, and in the number of more general publications that mention the subject. Based on the statements of Palestinians, Jordanians, Egyptians, and others, this denial has already been internalized by a large Muslim population.

Moreover, the attempt to challenge and refute the Jewish narrative is currently being expressed at institutional and governmental levels in Jordan. One of the heads of the Aal al-Bayt Institute (established by the ruling regime, it necessarily disseminates narratives that conform to the regime's policy), Dr. Nasser al-Din al-Asad has initiated a comprehensive research project on Jerusalem during the pre-Muslim period, with the participation of tens of Jordanian and foreign scholars, whose articles are meant to be published in a three-volume collection. The project director, Dr. Zaydan Kafafi, Dean of Research and Postgraduate Studies at Yarmuk University in northern Jordan, has told the media that two German researchers have already submitted studies, intended for the first volume, that show that the kingdom of David and Solomon never existed.¹¹⁹ It should be noted that these scholars, like many other Muslims who reject various elements of ancient Jewish history, base their contentions on the opinions of a small

group of Israeli scholars who cast doubt on the Bible as an authentic historical narrative. For example, Professor Israel Finkelstein of Tel Aviv University believes that the foundation for the biblical stories lies in the prevailing ideologies and theologies of the seventh century BCE, when, in his opinion, the Bible was composed. According to him, the stories of the conquest of the Land, the existence of a broadly united kingdom during the period of David and Solomon, the origins and settlement of the Israelites, and the overemphasis of the Kingdom of Judah at the expense of the Northern Kingdom (Israel), all are merely a religious-political manifesto and do not reflect the historical reality.¹²⁰ Finkelstein represents a minority opinion within the community of archeologists and historians of ancient Israel. However, Finkelstein does not claim that the Temple never existed or challenge the authenticity of the Herodian Western Wall.

In conclusion, the Arab-Muslim party to the political dispute over the future of Jerusalem faces the acceptance of the Western Christian world of the biblical narrative, which assists the Jewish party's position in the debate over the right to the land. Moreover, the internal Islamic debate regarding the status of Jerusalem, as seen in the position of the Hanbalis who rejected the status of *haram* in Jerusalem, weakens the arguments of the Muslim party. The Israeli-Jewish side of the conflict utilizes this last fact by belittling and even denying the importance of Jerusalem in Islam. However, the Jewish narrative does not deny the holiness of the al-Aqsa compound and the Islamic affiliation to Old Jerusalem. It only claims that the city was never politically important to the Muslim Arabs, that it was never a capital city for the Muslims, and that its current political status is a twentieth-century invention.

On the other hand, the post-1967 political dispute over the fate of the Palestinian territories including the eastern Arab part of Jerusalem has driven Arab and Muslim writers, be they historians, journalists, politicians, or academics, to construct a new narrative of Jerusalem (which will be analyzed in the next chapter). The present chapter discussed a phenomenon of Arab-Muslim denial of the Jewish connection to Jerusalem and its major sacred place—the Temple Mount and its remnant of its outer western wall. This denial appears in a significant number of publications dealing with the topic in the Muslim World. Their narrative argues that the Jewish presence in Jerusalem in antiquity was short-lived and not continuous as the Jews claim. It denies the very existence of a Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, and that the Western Wall's holiness was a twentieth-century Jewish forgery. It is my belief that there are Muslim academic experts who do not accept this denial. However, their opinion is rarely published or publicized.

CHAPTER 4

Creating a New Islamic Ethos of Jerusalem

The texts, books, and articles used in this study of the issue of Jerusalem deal with the shaping of an Arab-Islamic identity of Jerusalem by rewriting the history in an effort to trace Palestinian and Arab-Muslim national identity back to one of the ancient peoples.

Scholars concerned with the ways in which national identities are forged agree that this process of “tracing-back” is a modern one. They differ, however, over the issue of whether the process of nation-building is one of imagination or of invention. While Ernest Gellner contends that nations are an invention born of the modernization process,¹ Benedict Anderson writes that the question of whether a nation is an invention or an existing fact is not important. What is important is the way in which the nation is imagined.² An imagined community creates a joint linguistic and historical past of “subjective antiquity” that justifies national patriotism in the present through the shaping of a belief in shared values.³ Anthony Smith distinguishes between two types of conceptualization of national identity in accordance with the cultural and historical rootedness of the community in question: there are nations that have a shared history at their core, which he refers to as *ethnie*, and a culture that serves as a source for “imaginings,” and there are nations that lack such a core history and are, therefore, obliged to reinvent everything.⁴ Even in cases of invention, there is still a need for an “imagining” process to ensure that the new collective identity will be accepted by the members of the new community. History is thus a key tool in the formation of group identities.⁵ The story that a nation tells itself about its distant past need not be precise and in extreme cases it may certainly be an invention.⁶ Bernard Lewis describes three techniques of historical writing, one of which is invention, which enable

nations and rulers to base their identity in history in order to justify their present actions.⁷

While theorists of nationalism have described the masses as followers of elites who imagine or invent identities for them, Hedva Ben-Israel believes that the creators of nations have had to act within the framework of popular culture and consciousness. They must be acquainted from the outset with religious, linguistic, and cultural traditions and have to contend with them before they can begin to shape them according to their aims.⁸ Religion is thus an effective cultural element, one that nation-builders employed during the premodern era as well. Religious symbols, declarations of the homeland as sacred territory and processes of sanctification of the nation, the nation's founding fathers, national heroes, and areas of the military front, have all been effective tools via which nationalist elites have, consciously or unconsciously, imagined and composed narratives and activated and mobilized their nations.⁹ As will be shown below, Jerusalem has seen more than its share of use as a religious symbol in the advancement of political ends.

The accumulative research on nationalism reveals that rewriting the history in order to shape a national identity is a universal phenomenon and questions whether there is any national collective that was not shaping and reshaping its history according to its aspired national identity. However, when we study the process of rewriting history, it is interesting to ask the following questions: what was the historical trigger for the rewriting process; what are the political interests of the "history producers"; and how far does the new "product" stand from solid historical sources. I will address these questions in the following analysis of the formation of the post-1967 Muslim-Arab ethos of Jerusalem.

Let me begin with a remarkable note concerning history writing by the Arabs. In the preface to the Hebrew version of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, Azmi Bishara, an Israeli-Arab intellectual (who was also heading an Arab-nationalist party—Balad—in the Israeli Parliament), wrote:

Modern Arab nationalism behaves as though the fact that it developed during the nineteenth century, like all of the other nationalisms, detracts from its worth or its validity. It feels obliged to nationalize the history of the Arabic-speaking community and to turn it into a national history that began before the Islamic era and continues into our day... The Palestinian national movement, particularly during periods of crisis in its relations with the

Arab world, and in competition with Zionism over the past, has anchored its early history in the Canaanite era. By doing so it simultaneously attains two objectives: a source of geographic particularity for the Palestinians—a particularity which distinguishes them from the other Arabs—and a source of historical particularity, one which reflects greater seniority in “the Land” than that of the Hebrew tribes, to which Zionism claims to be the natural successor. Arab nationalism has responded to these attempts to seek legitimacy outside of the Arab context by claiming that all of the peoples mentioned—the Phoenicians, the Babylonians, the Canaanites, and the ancient Egyptians—are really Arabs, just like the Arab tribes that inhabited the Arabian Peninsula.¹⁰

Within the context of the struggle for Jerusalem, the picture becomes more interesting, as we shall see below: a claim to antiquity with a strong Jerusalem emphasis will be found. As the Arab-Islamic narrative of Jerusalem was newly reconstructed with the aim of responding to the current Israeli historical outlook, I shall begin by outlining the Israeli-Jewish narrative.

4.1 The Israeli-Jewish Narrative of Jerusalem

The Israeli metanarrative of Jerusalem underlines 3,000 years of continuous Jewish connection to the city of Jerusalem from its establishment as the holy city during the time of the biblical figure of King David, to the present day. In 1995, Israel announced plans to celebrate these 3,000 years.¹¹ A special series of three postal-stamps indicating Jerusalem as a Jewish city was issued showing David, the Temple, and the Knesset, indicating the historical continuity of these events over the 3,000 years.¹²

The Israeli-Jewish narrative of Jerusalem is based on both the biblical and rabbinic texts (the traditions of the Mishna and Talmud, and the broader corpus of the writings of Chazal), as well as on other historical writings about the ancient world, including works of the historian Josephus Flavius. In addition to referring to these traditional texts, Jewish scholars draw on recent archaeological findings. Particularly in the rabbinic texts, Jerusalem is often known by the name “Zion,” which is the mountain where King David’s fortress was said to be built and where, according to legend, David was buried. Although there are different Jewish historical interpretations and narratives,¹³ one

can highlight a metanarrative stressing the centrality of Jerusalem to Judaism and the Jewish people that is accepted by the majority of the Jewish people and by most Israelis at both the official and the grassroots strata of society.

The first dimension of this narrative is Jerusalem's antiquity. The official Web site of the current Jerusalem Municipality states: "Archaeological findings show that Jerusalem has been inhabited since 4,000 BCE. The city of Shalem is mentioned in ancient scrolls as early as 2,500 BCE."¹⁴ Indeed, archaeological excavations reveal the antiquity of the human urban presence in what is today called Jerusalem since the middle-bronze age, between 3,300 and 2,200 BC. The existence of the city was mentioned in ancient Egyptian scripts and in the Tel al-Amarna correspondence.¹⁵ The Israeli narrative, thus, admits that there was an urban presence in the ancient space of today's Jerusalem, which existed before the emergence of Judaism and before the ancient Hebrews crystallized as a given people or nation. It was called Shalem and Yevus before the Hebrew era. However, the Israeli story stresses on the event that turned the ancient pagan urban space into a central city, a political capital—on a founding event that is purely Jewish: King David's conquest of Yerushalayim or the City of David (Ir David), which in ca. 1000 BCE became the focal center of the Jewish nation.¹⁶

According to the biblical narrative, accepted by most Jews, David was not permitted to build a temple to God because he was a man of war, but one of his sons, Solomon was directed to build the First Temple. In the Book of Kings, the building of this structure is described in some detail. The First Temple was built around 960 BC by David's son, Solomon, and the united Israeli kingdom lasted until ca. 928 BC, when the Hebrews divided into two kingdoms: the southern kingdom of Judea and the northern kingdom of Israel.¹⁷ The First Temple existed for 374 years until it was destroyed in 586 BC and the Hebrew elite were expelled to Babylon. It was there that the psalm "By the Waters of Babylon" was believed to have been composed—"If I forget thee, Oh Jerusalem, may my right hand lose its cunning." Following the defeat of the Babylonian Empire by Cyrus the Great of Persia, the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem 48 years after their expulsion, in 538 BC. 22 years later, in 519 BCE, the building of the Second Temple was completed by Governor Zerubavel and the Hebrew returnees from Babylon.¹⁸ The Second Temple survived some 589 years, and the two temples' combined lifetime was 963 years. The presence of the Hebrews in the Holy Land from the thirteenth century BCE until their expulsion by

the Roman general Titus in 70 CE lasted about 1,400 years. Judea survived as a Hebrew province under the Persian, Ptolymaic, and Seleucid Empires. For about one century between 152 and 63 BCE, Judea enjoyed self-rule under the Hashmoneans. After Herod's death in 4 BCE, the Romans took over direct rule of the colony of Judea, with the Jews undertaking two great revolts against their oppressive rule, in 67–73 CE and 132–135 CE. The second revolt of Bar Kochba against the Romans ended in a disastrous defeat in 135 AD. The Jews who were estimated as a people of 1.3 million people in Palestine lost half of its population during the revolt. Hadrian changed the name of the province of Judea to Syria-Palestina—a place that was later on known as Palestine and as the Arabic Filastin. In addition, Hadrian rebuilt Jerusalem as a pagan city, renaming it Aelia Capitolina and forbidding Jews to enter except on Tisha B'Av, the Ninth of Av, the date commemorating the destruction of the two Temples.¹⁹

The Jewish narrative goes on to claim that even after the Bar Kochba Revolt, the Jews were in majority on the Holy Land, but their center of gravity moved to the Galilee—first to Usha, then Tzippori, and later Tiberias. The Jews were recognized as a people and a cult under the Roman Empire and they enjoyed autonomous political institutions (HaNesi'ut—patriarchy of the community), theological institutions (Sanhedrin), local municipal authorities, and intracommunity tax collection both in the land of Israel and across the Diaspora. However, when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, the position of the Jews deteriorated as they became subject to anti-Jewish legislation. In the early fifth century, they lost their autonomy and institutions of nationhood as the patriarchy and the Sanhedrin ended. Because of Christian persecution, the center of Jewish life moved to Babylon by the middle of the fifth century and Jews were no longer the majority in the land.

When the Muslim Arabs conquered Palestine in 636 CE, Jerusalem was populated by Christians, who had continued the Roman policy of excluding Jews. The Israeli narrative claims that throughout the entire period from David's conquest in 1,000 BCE until 636 CE, Jerusalem was Judaism's spiritual center—even after Jews were excluded from entering it (after 70 CE), and central parts of Palestine, such as Judea, Samaria, and the Galilee, were mostly populated by Hebrew Jews. It admits that during the Byzantine period, Jerusalem lost its Jewish gravity in favor of the Christians, but it argues that Jews were still substantially present in the Holy Land.²⁰ This seems to be exaggerated, because Jews were a weak minority from the fifth century CE.

Under the Muslim dynasties from the Ummayyads to the Ottomans, the Jews were considered an inferior community; they enjoyed the protection of the Muslim state (*dhimma*) and were also granted internal autonomy. Their situation varied, depending on the political leadership, vacillating between toleration and discrimination. Only under the Crusaders were Jews excluded from Jerusalem. Indeed, during the first crusade, all the Jews living in Jerusalem were gathered together in the main synagogue that was then set alight, destroying the whole Jewish community in Jerusalem at the end of the twelfth century. Thus, Jews supported the Muslims in their battle against the Christian Crusaders.

The Jewish narrative tells of their continuous presence under Islam in Palestine in general and in Jerusalem in particular throughout the centuries to present time.²¹ Whereas research accounts for the Jewish group as a minority in Jerusalem until the second half of the nineteenth century, Jews' popular narrative maintains that they consisted a significant proportion of the population from the period of Saladin to the present, whilst recognizing that centers in the Galilee, particularly Tiberias and Safed, were more important in the latter medieval period. However, the Israeli narrative usually refrains from mentioning that during the Muslim period the Jews in Palestine were a tiny minority.

The current Jerusalem municipality Web site states that after English-Jewish leader and parliamentarian, Sir Moses Montefiore, purchased land in 1855 and established the first neighborhood outside the Jerusalem walls called *Mishkenot Shaananim*, "By 1900 there were 60 Jewish neighborhoods outside the walls" of Jerusalem.²²

The Israeli ethos maintains that Jerusalem was the only capital of the Jewish people in their history²³ and is considered as the holy city in Judaism. The Jewish metanarrative tells of the yearning and longing of Jews in exile for 2,000 years to return to Zion, to rebuild Jewish Jerusalem, and to resurrect the Jewish Temple. Jerusalem assumes an important place in Jewish spirituality, in Jewish liturgy, as seen in Psalm 137:6–7, "If I forget thee oh Jerusalem," in daily prayers, in the central feasts and worship, and in the writings.²⁴ The narrative highlights that the Jewish connection to Palestine remained consistently steadfast throughout the ages, with ongoing efforts to return, even if it was only to die and be buried on the Mount of Olives. All Jews, both in the Holy Land and in Diaspora, pray in the direction of Jerusalem, they mention its name constantly in their prayers and end the Passover service with the words: "Next Year in Re-built Jerusalem." The return and rebuilding of Jerusalem is mentioned at least four times in the blessings recited at the end of each meal. The destruction of the Temple looms large in

Jewish consciousness: remembrance takes such forms as a special day of mourning; Tisha B'Av, which next to the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) is the only 25-hour fast day in the Jewish calendar; a corner of a house left partially unfinished; a woman's makeup or jewelry remaining incomplete; and a glass smashed during the wedding ceremony. As well, when a person is buried, they are buried with some soil from the Holy Land to strengthen their connection to Zion.²⁵

The national political strife between Palestinian-Arabs and Zionist Jews erupted at the beginning of the twentieth century and exacerbated after the British conquest of Palestine and the Balfour Declaration. During the Mandate, Jews did not claim rights to the Temple Mount but only to its outer remnant of the Second Temple—the Western Wall. The Jewish claims and actions to establish their rights to public-prayer (including a divider between the sections for male and female worship at the Wall) in this particular site was the trigger for the 1929 riots, in which 113 Jews were massacred by Arabs in Hebron and elsewhere.²⁶ The Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif was exclusively ruled by the Supreme Muslim Council headed by Hajj Amin al-Husseini. The British Mandate government respected the Ottoman status quo and the immunity of this shrine. The investigation committee of the Western Wall incident concluded that although the Western Wall plaza is Muslim-owned, the Jews had over the past established rights of access and prayer at the site. However, the Jews were ordered to refrain from expanding their ritual facilities.²⁷

East Jerusalem and the Old City were restored to Muslim rule following the 1948 War and the Rhodes Ceasefire Agreement of 1949. However, the Jordanians failed to make any arrangements to safeguard Jewish access to the Western Wall and the Mount of Olives Jewish cemetery.²⁸ Jordan decided not to elevate Jerusalem as the Hashemite Kingdom's capital and actually favored Amman over Jerusalem in almost every aspect. Israel declared Jerusalem as its capital. One should also remember that King Abdallah I was assassinated in July 1951 by a pro-Husseini group while entering the al-Aqsa Mosque.

After Israel took over Jerusalem in June 1967, the situation of the city and of the Temple Mount compound was profoundly changed. The Western Wall was appropriated by the state, in addition to its piazza and the Jewish Quarter; the Temple Mount was left for Waqf clerics administration, but the Israeli Police Force guards its interior and its surroundings. Israelis keep two strategic assets of the compound: they have the keys to the Western Gate and the Mahkama building is occupied by police forces overlooking and controlling the order inside

the site.²⁹ Jerusalem's municipal boundaries were expanded to include Jordanian Jerusalem and its rural periphery (28 villages). Since then, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has focused more on issues related to the future of the city and its holy places. Israel in its peace accords with Jordan committed itself to give priority to the Jordanian role in future peace negotiations with the Palestinians regarding the holy shrines of Islam.

4.2 The Islamic Narrative of Jerusalem—Islamization and Arabization of the City's Pre-Islamic History

The political challenge that the Six-Day War posed to the Muslim world can be seen in the abundance of scholarly and semiacademic books produced, and in the many texts composed by leading Muslim clerics that deal with the history of Jerusalem. Various details and nuances may distinguish the writers, one from the other, but they all belong to the new, revised ethos of Jerusalem that has emerged against the background of the present political challenge. Palestinians are also disturbed by the archaeological excavations and public education exhibitions conducted by Israel, that narrate the Jewish outlook. Thus, a press release dated December 13, 2005 of the Palestinian Authority (PA) refers to the new Visitors' Center inaugurated by Israel close to the Western Wall Archaeological Park by stating that "[it] shows a fabricated heritage that might help them to deceive foreign visitors into believing that it is a historical place of the Jews."

New political myths of Jerusalem—some imaginary and some based on fact—that have wide currency today in the Arab world and in Muslim communities engage the religious myths of al-Aqsa and turn the al-Aqsa stories into a spirited, active, living struggle. Muslims at the opposite end of the Middle East and elsewhere hear or see on their television screens the stories of the Palestinian struggle for their holy place, and they easily internalize, via the political story, the revived religious traditions.

Religious myths develop to serve political ends. The enterprise devoted to elevate Jerusalem's religious status in the Arab and Muslim world has a clear political agenda and, as will be elucidated below, this agenda is not covert but is rather openly declared. Several techniques are used in the efforts to introduce al-Aqsa and Jerusalem into the political sphere and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: the dissemination of the belief that Jerusalem and Palestine are one and the same and the claim

that both Jerusalem and the rest of Palestine are Muslim *waqf*, no part of which may be subject to compromise, and that Jerusalem thus belongs to the entire Arab and Muslim world, making it the responsibility of all Arabs (including the Christians among them) and all Muslims to seek to liberate the city and to aid and strengthen the Palestinians.

Most books dealing with the history of Jerusalem have placed the beginnings of its Arab history at the start of the Muslim period.³⁰ After 1967, a significant change is discernible in historical writing on Jerusalem. In many books published during the last generation, Jerusalem's prehistory undergoes a process of Islamization, Arabization, and de-Judaization. History is rewritten in an Arab-Islamic attempt to refute Jewish-Zionist claims to a Jewish historical right to Jerusalem and Palestine.³¹ The new writing is characterized by three elements. The first of these is the invention of a new myth according to which the Jebusites were the precursors of the Arabs. This represents an expansion of the myth of the Palestinians' Canaanite origins within a concrete Jerusalem context. The second element is the transformation of biblical figures into Islamic ones while ignoring their Israelite origin. The third element is the contention that the al-Aqsa Mosque was built during the Creation of the world, or that it existed from ancient times.

Islamic public discourse and Arab writing dispute the official public Israeli version of Jerusalem's history, according to which it was established as a central city by King David over 3,000 years ago. It should be noted that this dating of Jerusalem as a seat of power (in contrast to Jebus, which was a noncentral locality) is the accepted one in modern scholarship.³² Most contemporary Arab authors contest the accepted history (including the relevant biblical story) according to which Jerusalem and most parts of Palestine were under continuous Jewish control for about 1,000 years, from the time that David conquered Jerusalem until the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE (except for several decades between the Babylonian exile and Cyrus' decree allowing the exiles to return³³), and that there was a significant Jewish community in Palestine up until the fifth century CE when, among other things, the Jerusalem Talmud was compiled during the fourth century CE. The Muslim authors claim that Jerusalem existed long before King David and that it was actually under the rule of ancient Arab (in this context, Jebusite) tribes. Thus, for example, as early as 1961, 'Arif al-'Arif wrote that "[t]he Islamic conquest of the city was preceded by Arab conquest and settlement 44 generations before the Babylonian invasion," that is, long before the Hebrews arrived in Palestine, and that "[t]he Canaanites and the Jebusites and the Amalekites came to Palestine from

the Arabian Peninsula.”³⁴ Modern scholarship supports the opinion that the Jebusites appeared in Jerusalem only between the fourteenth and the twelfth centuries BCE, that is, a relatively short time before the Hebrews and not thousands of years before them.³⁵

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Web site admits that Jerusalem was holy before Islam to both Judaism and Christianity, adding that the Christians had the upper hand in the city. By citing archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon’s finding that Jericho was not destroyed as described in the book of Joshua, the OIC narratives aims at undermining the Bible as an historical source.³⁶ Another example is what appears in this regard on the Arab League Web site that states that “The Arab Canaanites migrated from the Arab Peninsula to al-Quds 5000 years ago.” It claims that the many names of the city reflect its history long before the Jews arrived in Canaan and King David’s subsequent conquest and establishment of his capital in the city. The Jebusites and Canaanites are identified as Arab tribes who roamed the region 5,000 years ago (alternatively put, 45 generations ago), and that the Arab Jebusites were those who built the city some 2,500 years BC. The Arab founding myth of Jerusalem aims at emphasizing that Arabs preceded the ancient Hebrews in the city in particular and in Palestine in general.³⁷ The same chronology appears on the OIC Web site.³⁸

Another example from a non-Palestinian is that of the writings of Dr. Ahmad Abu Zayd, a sociologist from Alexandria University in Egypt, who published in May 5, 2007, an article saying that “there is a [Jewish] campaign to distort the history of Jerusalem by claiming that it was built as a Jewish city but the truth is that it was built thousands of years—twenty generations before the Jews who arrived the city after it was already civilized by the Arab Jebusites who were raised in the Arab Peninsula.” He added that “the Canaanite Arabs built the city in 3,000 years BCE and it remained Arab until the invasion of King David... then the Romans invaded the city and remained there until the Islamic conquest by `Umar b. al-Khattab in 637CE returning to be an Arab-Islamic city as it originally was... the Hebrew Jewish invasion of the city lasted only a number of years.”³⁹

The myth of Jebusite origin, like the myth of the Palestinians’ Canaanite origin, highlights the national-territorial identity of the Palestinian-born Arabs⁴⁰ and it corresponds to the Lebanese and Syrian myth of Phoenician origin, to the Iraqi myth of Babylonian origin, to the contemporary Egyptian myth of Pharaonic origin, and to the myth of the Nabatean origin of certain Jordanian tribes. Historical writing in the contemporary Arab world cultivates local history by

placing an emphasis on inter-Arab or inter-Islamic events that, whether coincidentally or noncoincidentally, happen to have taken place in a particular geographic location. Thus, for example, Mu'tah and Yarmuk in Jordan hold a prominent place in the new historical writing due to the important battles that took place there during the early Islamic period. It may be asked, how do Muslims resolve the tension between their Arab ethnic-national identity and their Islamic identity in a historical context while acting to strengthen the Islamic dimension of Jerusalem? The answer is that the Jebusite myth does not end with the ethnic, national, or geographic context. It is also employed in an Islamic religious context: quite a few authors inform us that both the Jebusites and the Canaanites had a well-developed culture, and that in contrast to the Hebrews they preserved the faith in the Supreme God (Malkizedek, for example), and accepted Muhammad's message.

The Palestinians' Canaanite origin is a myth that has already achieved the status of well-known fact. The Palestinians' affiliation with the Canaanites who lived in Palestine before the ancient Arabs is meant to undermine the Jews' claim to seniority in the land and historical rights to it. By making the Canaanites an ancient Arab tribe from whom the Palestinians descended, those who disseminate this myth seek to persuade their audience that the Palestinians were there before the Jews and that they maintained a continuous presence in Palestine over thousands of years (3,000 years before the Israelites).⁴¹

There are also some who associate the Palestinians with the ancient Philistines, pointing out the similarity between their names.⁴² Now Muslim historians are adding an additional element to the issue of who should have sovereignty over Jerusalem. Their main contention is that the Jebusites, who were in Jerusalem before King David and from whom David purchased the plot of land upon which to place the Ark of the Covenant, were actually an ancient Arab tribe with whom the Palestinians also associate themselves.⁴³ By quoting verses from the Torah that mention the ancient Jebusites, the authors feel that they are substantiating their claim.

An Egyptian scholar of Palestinian origin, Dr. Ahmad Sidqi al-Dajani asserted in an article published by the Arab Information Center in Cairo in December 1998 entitled "Matlub Qira'a Sahiha li-Ta'tikh al-Quds" (A Correct Reading of the History of al-Quds is Needed), that Jerusalem was built by the Canaanites in the fourth millennium BCE and thus it was under Arab control 20 generations before King David. Jerusalem's inhabitants were always "the people of Palestine" and thus the historical right to sovereignty over the city belongs to the

Palestinians, the Arabs, and the Muslims.⁴⁴ He added that the Zionist narrative of Jerusalem needs to be challenged in light of the Israeli government's Jerusalem 3000 festivities.⁴⁵

In contrast, Dr. Kamil `Amran, a Damascus University sociologist, writes that Jerusalem was founded by the Emorites before the Jebusites appeared, in the third millennium BCE, as evidenced by the name given to one of city's hills: Mount "Moriah" (that is, the mountain of the Emorites). In `Amran's opinion, the Jebusites were a Canaanite tribe who arrived in Jerusalem after the Emorites. The author does not leave the reader in suspense and immediately goes on to discuss the origin of the Israelites. The Hebrews, according to him, were uncivilized nomadic tribes who lived by thievery and came to Canaan in the thirteenth century BCE. They assimilated into the peoples who inhabited the land, primarily the Canaanites. They practiced a religion that was Canaanite in form, while the region's original inhabitants, who had never disappeared, accepted Islam and the Arabic language and were the true natives of Palestine.⁴⁶

The new Muslim historians manage to find even "Islamic" roots among the ancient Jebusites. Basing themselves on the Tel el-Amarna tablets, these Muslim authors assert that it was the Jebusite king Malkizedek who built Jerusalem⁴⁷ and attribute to him both Palestinian ethnicity and Muslim religious faith. Thus, for example, Egyptian historian and archeologist Ibrahim `Anani (whose name would seem to indicate Palestinian origin) wrote a book in 2002 that, in his words, was intended to refute Israel's alleged historical and religious rights to Jerusalem.⁴⁸ `Anani wrote that Malkizedek was "a king and religious leader, one of the native sons of Palestine who built Jerusalem for Allah the Supreme." The words *Allah al-a`la*, which `Anani uses in order to identify the biblical (Genesis 14:18) concept of "El-Elyon" (Most High God) with "Allah," indicate the author's intention of Islamizing the ancient pagan concept. According to him Malkizedek was "the first Palestinian king in history." Those who invented the Jebusite myth associate Malkizedek with monotheism via Abraham, whom, as is known, Islam regards as the father of faith in one God (*hanif*). `Anani relates that when Abraham entered the city of Shalem (ancient Jerusalem), he prayed together with Malkizedek and that all this happened long before the Jews emerged as a people. The author adds that when the "Israelites infiltrated Palestine" they found there Jebusites, Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, Canaanites, and other peoples who were all Arabs, that is, members of the same Semitic, geographically Arab race who converted to Christianity during the Roman and Byzantine periods but retained

their Semitic ethnicity and afterward returned to Islam and remained Semitic Arabs.⁴⁹

Abu `Aliya Islamizes both Abraham and Malkizedek and writes that “[i]t is likely that Malkizedek received Islam from Ibrahim [Abraham] and that he practiced a Muslim form of worship on the site where the al-Aqsa Mosque now stands.” He further writes that one must not rule out the possibility that the Temple built by Malkizedek was actually the al-Aqsa Mosque.⁵⁰ Shurab repeats this version when he writes that Jerusalem was home to monotheism before Abraham arrived there, since Allah had commanded that al-Aqsa be built as a house of worship of Him and since Malkizedek had worshiped Him there. Malkizedek was Abraham’s friend and, therefore, a monotheist.⁵¹

The following are a few of the many instances in which the myth of ancient Jerusalem’s Arab character is disseminated via historical literature: during the opening session of a scholarly symposium on Jerusalem held in London in December 1979, Saudi minister of state Sheikh Muhammad Ibrahim Ma`ud read aloud the words of King Fahd: “The Arabs were in Jerusalem about two thousand years before the time of Moses.” Palestinian archeologist Dr. Dimitri Baramki made the claim in his lecture at the same conference that there is no truth to the assertion that the Jewish people have had a 3,000-year connection to Jerusalem.⁵² Dr. Bassam `Aliq, another author, writes that “[t]he Arab-Jebusite presence in Jerusalem has lasted for 10,000 years, according to reliable scholars. It was sacred to the Arabs (the Jebusites) before it was sacred to the Hebrews.”⁵³ Other articles on the same Web site claim 5,000 years of Arab presence in Jerusalem.⁵⁴

One of the most striking examples of the new Islamic narrative appears in Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi’s book *Jerusalem—Every Muslim’s Problem*.⁵⁵ This book is actually an anthology of sermons that he has delivered in recent years on the topic of Jerusalem, in which he summarizes various narratives taken from popular Islamic polemical works of an anti-Jewish tone to which Qaradawi attributes scientific validity.⁵⁶ Qaradawi writes that the earliest inhabitants of Jerusalem were the Jebusites, who were “an ancient Arab tribe” that migrated from the Arabian Peninsula along with the Canaanites, about 3,000 years BCE. According to him Abraham [the Patriarch], who came from Iraq, was a landless foreigner in “Palestine” and when his wife Sarah died he asked the “Palestinians” for permission to bury her on their land. The three Patriarchs and their progeny lived in Egypt for less than 200 years, according to his calculation, with no landed property of their own, and Jacob’s descendents lived in Egypt for 430 years. The period of Saul, David, and Solomon’s

reigns and of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel lasted 434 years, according to his sources, and even at its most flourishing point the Davidic monarchy had dominion over only a small portion of "Palestine."⁵⁷ Despite the short duration of the Israelite presence in Palestine, writes Qaradawi, they seek to gain control over the entire globe and not just over Palestine, based on the Book of Joshua in which the divine promise appears: "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses."⁵⁸ This is taken as proof that the Jews also want Egypt, where Jacob and his descendents had lived. Qaradawi also writes: "The Babylonians and, later, the Romans destroyed their temple, annihilated them, dispersed the survivors and forbade them from residing in Jerusalem. When Caliph `Umar ibn al-Khattab captured Jerusalem he received the keys of the city from the Patriarch Sophronius on condition that he would maintain the tradition of preventing the Jews from living there; nevertheless the Jews managed to steal into the city without the knowledge of the Muslim rulers, ultimately receiving protected status within Islam but constituting a negligible minority in the city."⁵⁹ Qaradawi devotes an entire discussion to the issue of the divine promise that appears in the Torah. He emphasizes the importance of refuting the Jews' claim in light of the Christian acceptance of and belief in the Old Testament. He does not dispute what is written in the biblical text but rather asserts that the divine promise of the Land was given to Abraham and his descendents on the condition that they adhere to the true faith; however, according to Qaradawi, the Jews breached their commitment, abandoned their faith in God, and, therefore, lost their right to the Land. In contrast, Ishmael the Muslim was also a son of Abraham and thus only those descendents of Abraham who preserved the original faith have rights to the Land, since they are the ones who have fulfilled the promise and maintained a presence in the Land for 1,400 years.⁶⁰

The idea of the Palestinian Arabs' ancient origin and of the Jebusites as an early Arab people is not a new one. As early as 1951, it appears in the writings of Palestinian historian and public figure `Arif al-`Arif, who added that the ancient Hebrews had assimilated into the Canaanite and Jebusite culture, hinting that the Israelites had no unique civilization of their own that could have been preserved to the present day.⁶¹ In a more comprehensive history of Jerusalem that al-`Arif published a decade later (1961), he goes on to state that "[t]he Jews' claim that they had a civilization of their own in Palestine is incorrect. . . They learned civilization from the Canaanites." "They came there with weapons and fire and wrought destruction (see Joshua 6:21). They destroyed,

plundered, killed and raped, and during the course of their conquests they revealed their iniquity in all of its forms. This was a fertile land and the Hebrews added nothing to it.”⁶² At this point al-ʿArif’s tone degenerates into one of blatant anti-Semitism.⁶³ A similar approach characterized Egyptian military indoctrination prior to 1967.⁶⁴

After al-ʿArif, Muhammad Adib al-Aamiry wrote the following in his 1978 book on Jerusalem’s Arab character:

Many foreign writers, and indeed some Arabs too, commit a common error by suggesting that the Arabs inhabited Palestine only from the year AD 638, the beginning of Muslim rule. They ignore the fact that the Arabs, under various ancient tribal names, were the dominant inhabitants of the country from the beginning of its human inhabitation... The native inhabitants, Christians and pagan, were descendents from the original Carmel Man of Palestine, and from the Semitic Arab tribes of Amorites, Canaanites, and others who had entered the land from Arabia in migratory waves. The Jebusites, who built Jerusalem, were a subgroup of the Canaanites... Modern historical investigation, based on the findings of archaeology, shows that the Hebrews of the Old Testament were a limited group, that their rule in Jerusalem as a city-state was of short duration... The invasions by Hittites, Hyksos, Hurrians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans were generally more extensive and lasted longer.⁶⁵

Al-Aamiry also writes that “all the historical names of Jerusalem are of Arabic origin” and that the prevalent culture and language in ancient Jerusalem were Arab-Canaanite and that the Jews assimilated into them.⁶⁶

Another example is Muhammad al-Halayqa’s book, in which the author bases himself on the writings of Holocaust denier Roger Garaudy, and on other popular works. Halayqa emphasizes the Arabs’ and Palestinians’ Canaanite origin, writing that the Canaanites were an Arab-Semitic tribe from the Arabian Peninsula that was the first to settle in Palestine, prior to the arrival of the Hebrews. He adds that “[h]istorians have determined” that the Jews were an inferior culture to that of the Canaanites and that the Jews of today are not genetically related to the ancient Israelites—thereby refuting any historical claim of theirs to the land.⁶⁷

The myth of the Palestinian Arabs’ ancient origin appears to have penetrated the historical consciousness of large portions of the world

Arab population. Thus, Ahmad Kuftaro, Syria's former grand mufti, stated in a lecture delivered at al-Azhar University in Cairo that it is not the Jews who had a historical right to Palestine, but rather the Jebusite and Canaanite Arabs.⁶⁸ Mahmud Masalha, an Israeli-Arab academic who served as principal of a high school in the village of Daburiyya and has close ties with the Islamic Movement, claims in a book he wrote that the Torah itself testifies to Palestine's Arab character, based on their presence in the land of the seven ancient peoples.⁶⁹

The claim regarding Jerusalem's ancient Arab character is not restricted to scholarly and polemical works. It features in an official context on the Internet site of the OIC to which 57 Muslim countries belong. Thus, one document states that "Jebus was already a magnificent city when the Israelites arrived there."⁷⁰ The document's author deplores the Jewish tradition of dating Jerusalem's history from the time of David and the consequent disregard of the city's pre-Davidic period; he asserts that "[t]he land of Palestine has always been inhabited by the Palestinian people."⁷¹

From Arabizing and Islamizing ancient Jerusalem, the new Muslim historians move on to denying Jewish history and to contending that the Jews have falsified history; they assert that Jerusalem is Islamic-Arab and that the Jews have no connection to it.⁷² The above-mentioned Ibrahim 'Anani wrote that the Jews have claimed their history to be rooted in divine revelation [the Torah], while in actuality they cite folk traditions of other ancient peoples such as the Canaanites, with the Code of Hammurabi being evidence of this.⁷³ Dr. Faruq al-Shunaq of the Jordanian Royal Committee for Jerusalem Affairs has written that there is no genetic relationship between the Israelites mentioned in the Torah and the Jews of today, who, according to him, are of Khazar origin.⁷⁴

The delegitimization of the Jewish connection to Jerusalem is also based on religious belief, as described by Shurab. He writes that Jerusalem was first given in trust (*waqf*, literally meaning religious endowment) to the Israelites, but that "when they violated the laws of God they were cursed and God decided to withdraw prophecy from them forever . . . until it passed to the Prophet Muhammad and from the Children of Israel (Jacob) to the children of Ishmael (the Arabs) and the Arab Prophet inherited the commands given to Abraham, to Ishmael, to Isaac and to Jacob, and he fought to disseminate them and he was the one who linked the past with the present and brought them all to believe in one truth." According to Shurab, the al-Aqsa Mosque was also transferred to Islam and this interpretation is supported by the fact

that, according to tradition, the Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey followed the same route by which Abraham, the father of the prophets, had arrived in Palestine—from Mecca to the Blessed Land. He placed Hagar and Ishmael in Mecca whilst he placed Isaac in Palestine. The argument is further supported by the tradition that describes how the Prophet Muhammad assembled all of the prophets together in his journey. Ever since then Jerusalem has been a Muslim trust (*amanah*), writes Shurab, and this is proved by the fact that the Muslims liberated it from the Crusaders, while the Jews did not raise a finger in this regard.⁷⁵

The issue of continuity of inhabitation and presence in Jerusalem as one of the bases for claiming historical rights to the city also preoccupies the new Muslim historians. Two main facets of this topic are exhaustively addressed: first, the historical evidence of Arab and Islamic presence, and second, the claim that the Jews ruled the land during the reigns of David and Solomon only, for a period that according to them lasted only about 70 years.⁷⁶ The Muslim conquest of Jerusalem is presented by certain authors as a second Arab conquest, preceded by the original Canaanite-Arab one. Abu 'Aliya writes: "The Arab presence in Palestine and Jerusalem has never ceased, and indications of Arab civilization and of an Arab population have remained in the city even from the periods during which it was controlled by the Hebrews, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans."⁷⁷ It is obvious that the Muslim authors are duplicating the Zionist claim regarding presence as the basis for territorial rights, but as a mirror image.

Another claim found in Muslim writings that cite the Book of Genesis on Jerusalem is that Abraham, the Israelites' ancient patriarch, was alien to Palestine and arrived there for only a short time and only as an immigrant. This claim leads 'Abd al-Tawab Mustafa to the conclusion that the Jews have no sovereign right whatsoever over any part of Palestine, but only rights of political asylum and religious pilgrimage, which are temporary rights granted by those who have sovereignty over the land (that is, the Muslim Arabs).⁷⁸

One may form an impression of the degree to which the myth of ancient Palestinian presence in Jerusalem has gained currency in the Arab world from statements appearing in an Egyptian eleventh-grade textbook that deal with the Arab wars. In the book it is written that "Jerusalem was first founded and inhabited by Arab tribes who migrated there from the Arabian Peninsula about 4,000 years BCE. The Israelites attempted to gain control of Jerusalem, but the Romans defeated them and they remained there until they were expelled by the Muslims."⁷⁹

In the publications of radical groups one finds even the claim that, for the Jews, Palestine is merely a springboard for the conquest of the entire Arab and Muslim world (something that is hinted at in the aforementioned book by Qaradawi). Behind the dissemination of this idea lies, apparently, the desire to make the Palestinian issue a matter of urgency for Muslims in other parts of the globe. This, for example, is the claim set forth in the popular Egyptian pamphlet (that I purchased at the Cairo Book Fair) entitled *Jerusalem Is Muslim*, published in 1994 by a radical group opposed to the current regime as part of the series *Historical Mistakes that Must Be Corrected*. The pamphlet's rhetorical structure is that of a dialogue between two sons of a father who denies that Abraham is regarded as a patriarch in Judaism, as well as the time-honored Muslim belief that Ibrahim was the first monotheist (*hanif*); the father contends that Abraham was a Muslim, along with Isaac and Jacob, David and Solomon. According to him, Muslims inhabited Palestine and Jerusalem from the time of Adam, from the day of Creation, and thus Jerusalem is a Muslim capital. As evidence of the Jews' use of Palestine as a springboard for conquest of the Arab world, the authors note the fact that in 1903 the Zionist movement gave consideration to a program for settling in the Sinai. This claim is aimed at the Egyptian reading public, since the Sinai is under Egyptian sovereignty. The authors also assert that at the Zionist Congress in Basel the Zionists set themselves the goal—to be realized in 100 years' time, that is, in 1997 (3 years after this pamphlet was published)—of establishing a state from the Nile to the Euphrates.⁸⁰ This pamphlet's publication, as with all other books in Egypt, took place with the approval of the Egyptian National Printing Authority, despite the fact that it also indirectly attacks the country's current regime ("the Arab rulers betrayed Islam"). The pamphlet was published shortly after the signing of the peace agreements between Israel and the PLO and Jordan.

4.3 The 'Umar Conquest

The new historical ethos' second component employs, as a lead narrative, Jerusalem's conquest during the early Islamic period by Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khattab. The story of Jerusalem's conquest begins with traditions claiming that the Prophet Muhammad fore-saw the city's capture after his death. The story goes on to describe how the Prophet sent armies on three occasions to conquer Jerusalem

(and the entire al-Sham region).⁸¹ The aim of these traditions is to show that Jerusalem was not neglected by the Prophet Muhammad, but rather that the opposite is true. It is further described how during the caliphates of Abu Bakr and `Umar I, large, special armies and celebrated military leaders were selected for the mission of conquering Palestine and Jerusalem. The story of Jerusalem's conquest—by agreement with the Christian patriarch and not by battle—is also meant to emphasize the event's importance. The military commander Abu `Ubayda ibn al-Jarrah laid siege to the city, surrounding it with seven battalions and calling upon the Christian leaders to surrender, convert to Islam, or pay a poll tax. The Christians refused to surrender and the siege continued over four months of battles, until the Patriarch Sophronius sought an agreement in which the terms of surrender would be set together with Caliph `Umar I in person. When `Umar received Abu `Ubayda's letter informing him of this, he assembled his advisors and after hearing their various opinions decided to accept `Ali b. Abu Talib's proposal that he himself go to Jerusalem. Upon reaching the outskirts of the city, `Umar met with the military commanders and reprimanded them for not having ended the affair with a treaty (*sulhan*) as had been done with other cities. The military commanders explained to `Umar that the Christians of Jerusalem feared that if they should surrender, the Muslims would not keep their promises (as had occurred elsewhere) due to Jerusalem's sacredness to Islam that was liable to lead them to destroy the Church of the Holy Sepulcher; the Christians also feared that the Muslims would avenge themselves for the loss of life that had resulted from the lengthy siege. The Christian patriarch, accompanied by his priests, rode out of the city to welcome the caliph, and `Umar ultimately recorded the terms of surrender in the document known as "the Pact of `Umar" (*al-`Uhda al-`Umariyya, or `Ahd `Umar*)⁸²—a document whose content, which establishes the status of protected non-Muslims (unrelated to the Jerusalem issue), is attributed by scholars to Abbasid Caliph `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz (`Umar II). Part of the myth of conquest lies in the very multiplicity of traditions related to the city, assembled in such a way as to call attention to the large number of Companions of the Prophet (the *sahaba*, who hold a high and important status within Islam) who participated in Jerusalem's conquest. `Arif al-`Arif presents a list of 19 names of Muhammad's Companions, along with several dozen other important figures of the period.⁸³

The story of the Islamic conquest of Jerusalem seeks to emphasize the city's importance to Muslims, based on the fact that the conquest

is connected with `Umar, the most important figure in Islam after the Prophet Muhammad (Hava Lazarus-Yaffe has defined him as “Islam’s Saint Paul”⁸⁴). The takeover of Jerusalem by treaty of surrender and not by force is presented as additional proof of the city’s high degree of sanctity in Islam. The negotiations with the Christian patriarch Sophronius over the terms of surrender, the traditions describing `Umar’s visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Sophronius’s proposal that `Umar pray in the church and the latter’s refusal, and his later discovery of the Rock and instructions to build a mosque upon it—all of these details are interwoven within the fabric of a story in which Jerusalem figures as a place of importance in Islam from the religion’s formative period, even before Caliph `Abd al-Malik built the Dome of the Rock.

In his book on Jerusalem, for example, Dr. Ahmad Fahim Jabr of al-Quds University highlights the traditions describing Jerusalem’s conquest during the period of Caliph `Umar I. About the tradition relating to the treaty of surrender with the Christian patriarch Sophronius, he writes that the agreement (which states, among other things, that Jews will not be permitted to return and settle in Jerusalem) “emphasizes the city’s sanctity.”⁸⁵

4.4 The City’s Continuous Islamic Character

A third element of this ethos is the argument regarding Jerusalem’s ongoing Islamic character. Those making this claim cite the names of the important Islamic figures associated with Jerusalem since the Islamic conquest and up to the present day.⁸⁶ Thus for instance, Ahmad Fahim Jabr mentions such Companions of the Prophet Muhammad as `Ubada ibn al-Samit, appointed by Caliph `Umar I to serve as the qadi (shari`a judge) of Palestine and a teacher of Qur’an, who died in 34h. (655 CE). The very existence of a Muslim qadi in Jerusalem indicates, according to Jabr, the distinctly Islamic status of a city functioning in accordance with shari`a law. Moreover, Jabr states, Jerusalem was a pilgrimage destination for caliphs, ulema, Sufi sheikhs, and simple folk, who left their traces and whose descendents gave their lives in the city’s defense.⁸⁷ One article mentions, for example, the existence of 400 madrasas in Jerusalem as evidence of Muslim continuity in the city.⁸⁸ There is no factual support for such a number.⁸⁹

The Arab-Muslim narrative underlines the Abbasid Caliphate’s connection to the city by maintaining that the Caliph al-Ma`mun visited the city and ordered that coins be struck with the Arabic name of the

city “al-Quds” instead of former “Iliya” (Aelia Capitolina). In order to counter the Jewish claim that the city was never a political capital under Muslim rule, it claims that Jerusalem was an administrative center since the Mamluk period.⁹⁰ The numerous Islamic monuments in Jerusalem are living symbols of the importance of the city to all rulers. This last argument is evident in the city’s architectural fabric, but Israeli scholars tend to ignore it.

4.5 Saladin’s Liberation

A fourth component is the emphasis placed on Jerusalem’s liberation from Crusader control by Saladin, and the expression of the hope that a second Saladin will arise to return Jerusalem to Islamic sovereignty (see further discussion of this topic in chapter 5.5).

ʿArif al-ʿArif relates the story of Saladin and Jerusalem according to sources that he specifically selected and that underscore emotional and image-related aspects of the conquest: After the Battle of Hittin in July 1187, Saladin’s army took the remaining Crusader cities and made its way to Jerusalem under his golden flag. One tradition relates that when Saladin was warned that if he captured Jerusalem he would lose an eye, the great warrior replied that for the sake of Jerusalem he was willing to lose the use of his eyes altogether. However, before he could take Jerusalem he first had to capture the coastal cities and prevent the arrival of Crusader reserve forces, as well as to secure the eastern flank, from the direction of Transjordan. After he proposed that the besieged Crusaders surrender Jerusalem without bloodshed and was refused, Saladin undertook to capture Jerusalem by force in order to exact vengeance upon the Crusaders who had sown death and fear during their own conquest of the city. However, when the besieged Crusaders threatened to kill 5,000 Muslim hostages inside the city, he accepted their surrender on condition that the Christians pay a poll tax and leave Jerusalem within 40 days. Jerusalem fell to Saladin’s forces on October 2, 1187—the date associated with the Prophet Muhammad’s Night Journey—27 Rajab. The Islamic narrative extols Saladin’s merciful treatment of the Christians after the conquest. The first thing that, according to this account, Saladin did in Jerusalem was to remove the Christian elements from al-Aqsa and to wash the Rock with rose-water in order to purify it from the Crusader defilement. He also saw to the restoration of the original pulpit used by Caliph ʿUmar I and had the *minbar* constructed under the orders of

Nur al-Din Zangi (the one that was burned in August 1969) brought from Aleppo. Saladin also built a Sufi (Muslim mystics) center known as al-Khanqah al-Salahiyya (near the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, a location in which the monks' dwellings were also located), along with an additional Sufi *zawiya* (lodge), a *bimaristan* (hospital), a *madrasa* (religious school), and other structures.⁹¹

4.6 The Link Between al-Quds and Palestine

The fifth element of the new Islamic ethos of Jerusalem is the emphasis placed on the connection between Jerusalem and the entire territory of Palestine, through the development of the following myths:

The Entire Land of Palestine Is Islamic Waqf

The claim that Jerusalem in particular and Palestine in general are Islamic endowment—*waqf*—was first invented in 1988 by the Hamas but was later adopted by senior PA officials (before Hamas rose to power in the PA).⁹² *Waqf*, according to Islamic law, is property that may not be sold or changed in any way; it follows, say those who promote this view of Palestine's status as *waqf*, that such property may not be relinquished.⁹³ The Hamas movement introduced this idea into public discourse when it included in its charter the claim that all of Palestine is Muslim *waqf* that may not be given up.⁹⁴ Article 11 of the charter provides the historical and legal-Islamic justification for this claim:

The Islamic Resistance Movement believes that the land of Palestine is an Islamic *waqf* land [endowed] for the benefit of Muslims throughout the generations and until the Day of Resurrection. It is forbidden to abandon it or part of it or to renounce it or part of it. No Arab State nor the aggregate of all Arab countries, and no Arab King or President nor all of them in the aggregate, have the right to do so; nor does any organization or the aggregate of all organizations, be they Palestinian or Arab, because Palestine is an Islamic *waqf* for the benefit of the Muslim generations to the Day of Resurrection. This is its [Palestine land's] rule in the Islamic *shari'a*. This rule applies like any other land conquered forcefully by the Muslims, since the Muslims endowed it at the time of conquest as *waqf* for the benefit of Muslims throughout the generations and until the Day of Resurrection. This [rule also]

took place when the commanders of the Muslim armies, upon completing the conquest of al-Sham [Greater Syria] and Iraq, sent [a message] to the Caliph of the Muslims, `Umar ibn al-Khattab, consulting him as to what to do with the conquered land, whether it should be partitioned between the troops or left in the possession of its population, or otherwise. Following discussions and consultations between the Caliph of Islam, `Umar ibn al-Khattab, and the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, peace and prayer be upon him, they decided that the land should remain in the hands of its holders to benefit from it and from its wealth; but the abstract ownership (*raqaba*) of the land ought to be endowed as a *waqf* for all generations of Muslims until the Day of Resurrection, while the [original] owners would have usufruct rights (*manfa`a*) only, and this *waqf* will endure as long as heaven and earth last. Any action regarding Palestine [lands] that contradicts this rule of Islamic law is void and those who conducted it will bear the responsibility.⁹⁵

On July 23, 2000, the day on which Yasser Arafat decisively rejected President Clinton's proposals at the second Camp David peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, the then mufti of Jerusalem and the PA Sheikh Ikrima Sabri issued a *fatwa* according to which Muslims in Palestine are strictly prohibited from accepting compensation for land taken from them by the Zionists in 1948, as an alternative to exercising their right of return. Sabri's justification for this position is that "Palestine in its entirety is a holy waqf (endowment), and thus the land may not be sold" and that it is, therefore, forbidden to receive compensation for it.⁹⁶ Sabri's *fatwa* in effect reiterated the statement issued a day earlier by the Hamas during a demonstration in the Gaza Strip. The PA mufti seems to have adopted the Hamas line in order to distance Arafat and the PA from any appearance of being willing to give up the Holy Land within the framework of a peace treaty with Israel.⁹⁷ He was able to do this because, apparently, he already knew that Arafat had rejected Clinton's proposals for a compromise on Jerusalem and the refugees.

Despite the fact that there is no basis for the idea that Palestine is holy waqf in Islamic law and that the Hamas was simply manipulating a tradition taken from another context, the message was received and internalized by various groups in the Muslim world. Thus, for example, in a popular Egyptian work on the al-Aqsa Mosque written by Dr. Mustafá Rushwan, a lecturer at al-Azhar University (mentioned

in chapter 2.8), one finds the assertion that all of Palestine is Muslim waqf that the Muslims inherited from the Canaanites and from the “Philistine” (Palestinian) Arabs. An examination of the author’s sources reveals that he is basing himself on the views of Palestinian Mufti Ikrima Sabri and on al-Aqsa Mosque preachers.⁹⁸ Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi has also adopted the claim that Palestine in its entirety is waqf.⁹⁹ The fact that many Islamic endowments have been established in Jerusalem is mentioned by various authors as additional evidence of the city’s sanctity.¹⁰⁰

The myth of Palestine as waqf has been employed for one purpose only—to establish Muslim sovereignty over the territory in question. Thus, ‘Abd al-Tawab Mustafa writes that over a billion Muslims make the pilgrimage to Mecca and not one of them claims that he, rather than the Saudis, has sovereignty over the Hijaz, and that the billions of Christian pilgrims who visit Jerusalem do not claim sovereignty over it as do the Jews who view it as their holy city, even though Jerusalem was to them merely a direction of prayer and a spiritual center, making their claim to ownership of it unjustified. In the three monotheistic religions, adds Mustafa, the holy places belong to God and it is forbidden to claim ownership over them according to the waqf principle that exists in all of the religions. It is, therefore, permissible for the Jews to visit Jerusalem and their holy sites, but they must not claim ownership of the city.¹⁰¹

*Palestinian Territory in Its Entirety Has Been Blessed by
Allah According to the Qur’an*

With regard to the Qur’anic verse (17:1) that tells of the Prophet Muhammad’s Night Journey from the Sacred Mosque to the al-Aqsa Mosque, about which it is written, “whose precincts We did bless,” contemporary commentators tend to identify the blessed territory in question as Palestine, while in the past it was identified as the entire al-Sham region (greater Syria, including Palestine as well) because under Islam Palestine was never identified as a political or administrative territory carrying the name Filastin.¹⁰² Thus, Qaradawi calls Palestine *ard al-baraka* (the blessed land).¹⁰³ The Palestinian mufti Sheikh Ikrima Sabri has also, in an interview with the weekly *al-Ahram al-Arabi*, referred to Palestine as “the remainder of the blessed land.” Another example of this may be found in the statement made by Palestinian minister of waqf and religious affairs, Yusuf Salama, that “[t]he blessed land mentioned

in the Qur'an is Jerusalem, since most of the prophets were sent by Allah to this land and since it was also the place where the Prophet Muhammad prayed."¹⁰⁴ The Hamas movement, in contrast, refers to Palestine as *aknaf al-Quds*, based on the belief that Palestine as a whole constitutes the "wings" of Jerusalem. According to the Jerusalem Waqf administration, most Qur'anic commentators interpret the "precincts" of al-Aqsa as referring to al-Sham, with the divine blessing's force intensifying the closer one gets to the al-Aqsa Mosque.¹⁰⁵ According to this interpretation, the al-Aqsa Mosque refers in the Qur'an to the entire area in whose center stood the exalted Rock, and not to the structures, since these had not existed during the Prophet's lifetime. Another religious ruling published by the Jerusalem Waqf on its Web site states that the *al-Isra'* verse in the Qur'an does not refer to any particular structure but rather to land—"to the land of the al-Aqsa Mosque which is blessed in its entirety," and that the problem at hand is one of "occupation and desecration of blessed and holy land."¹⁰⁶ An additional example from Iran: the Teheran representative to the Iranian parliament—Ali Akbar Muhtashemi—has stated in one of his speeches that "Jerusalem is the only blessed land in the Qur'an. All of the prophets appeared there . . . and it is the most exalted and favored land on the earth."¹⁰⁷

In conclusion, viewing Jerusalem as part of the blessed territory mentioned in the Qur'an is a grounded interpretation of the Qur'an. Israeli scholar (and Qur'an translator into Hebrew) Uri Rubin holds that the Qur'anic term "blessed territory" is the Holy Land (without identifying the particular boundaries of that "holy land."¹⁰⁸ Thus, the current Arab-Muslim identification of the blessed land as "Palestine" is ahistorical, but not baseless or unreasonable.

*The Struggle for Jerusalem and the Struggle for
Palestine Are One and the Same*

Muftis, writers, and public figures seeking to promote the Palestinian or anti-Israeli cause use the issue of Jerusalem as a means of dramatizing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, by drawing a parallel between the Jerusalem issue and that of Palestine. Thus, the former Palestinian mufti Sheikh Ikrima Sabri said in a lecture in Abu Dhabi that "Jerusalem and Palestine are one and the same matter, and relinquishing one of them constitutes a relinquishment of the other." He argued that Palestine contains most of the holy sites, first and foremost of which is Jerusalem,

the crown jewel of them all.¹⁰⁹ Another example is that of a book by `Abd al-Hamid Shaqaldi entitled *The History of the al-Aqsa Mosque* that also addresses the conflict over Palestine. Explaining why he gave his book this limiting title, the author replied:

Why, in fact, when we say al-Aqsa do we really mean all of Palestine? Because when we say ‘the history of the al-Aqsa Mosque’ we are also referring to the history of the holy land, the blessed land. I make specific mention of the al-Aqsa Mosque because it is the most important thing in that land... The story of Palestine is a story of mosques over which we are fighting in order to call in them upon the name of Allah. We are not struggling for land or for houses, but for the right to speak the name of Allah there.¹¹⁰

On August 7, 1979, soon after Ayatollah Khomeini rose to power in Iran, he called to Muslims all over the globe to consecrate the last Friday of the Holy month of Ramadan as al-Quds Day and to proclaim the international solidarity of Muslims “in support of the legitimate rights of the Muslims of Palestine.” Since then, every last Friday of Ramadan is celebrated with demonstrations by Muslims in many Muslim constituencies. The Jerusalem Day is used to express solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for Palestine.¹¹¹

4.7 Comparing the Jewish-Israeli and the Palestinian-Muslim Narratives

The Jewish and Muslim narratives of the Holy Land involve three concentric circles, with each side having their own names for each circle. These are: Palestine/Eretz Israel (Land of Israel); Jerusalem/al-Quds, and finally the Temple Mount/al-Aqsa compound. The innermost circle—the sacred compound in Jerusalem—is the paramount issue. It is a central symbol of national and religious identity for both sides and, therefore, the source of greatest conflict. The battle over the myths and narratives surrounding this compound as well as those surrounding the middle circle of Jerusalem as a whole serve as a vehicle to support the metanarrative of both Israelis and Palestinians over the outer circle—the right to the Holy Land, to Palestine/Eretz Israel.

The current Jewish and Muslim historical narratives of Jerusalem are a mirror image of each other. In the premodern time they were

developed independent of each other and reflecting the ultimate religious and collective identity and outlook of each of the two peoples. Since the nineteenth century, they were crystallized to respond to national challenges. The historical debate was intensified after 1967, when the eastern section of Jerusalem, including the holy shrines, were taken over by Jewish Israel. The major conflicting elements of the two current narratives are the following:

- The Jewish narrative recognizes the pre-Hebrew antiquity of the city but describes Jerusalem during the period before 1000 BCE as a pagan marginal and peripheral place. Jerusalem became monotheistic (Jewish) and a central “national” capital only under King David, some 3,000 years ago.

The Arab-Muslim version of antiquity claims Arab presence in Jerusalem some 5,000 years ago by arguing that the Jebusites were Arabs. It claims that the al-Aqsa Mosque was built first by Adam and thus was a primordial Islamic site.

- The Jews stress the Temple of Jerusalem as the focal point of religion and sacredness. Its destruction in 70 CE is a Jewish religious trauma and an Israeli official day of mourning.

The Arab and Muslim writings of today deny the existence of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem and claim that its site was actually a mosque, and that the Western Wall is the place where the Prophet Muhammad tied his steed in his nocturnal journey from Mecca to al-Aqsa. They stress the importance of Jerusalem in Islam and for the Arab people by this event as well as by the fact that it served as the initial direction of prayer for Muslims.

- The Jewish narrative claims a continuous Hebrew hegemonic presence in Jerusalem of 1,400 years from King David until the Byzantine era. Then from the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem until the nineteenth century (another 1,300 years) they were a significant part of the city’s population, and the majority since the mid-nineteenth century until 1948.

The Muslim historical perception maintains 1,400 years of a continuous Muslim rule in Jerusalem and Muslims as the majority of its inhabitants, with the exception of one century of Christian Crusader rule. They consider the population of Jerusalem from antiquity to the seventh century and thereafter as being ethnically Arab.

- The Jews underline the fact that Jerusalem was their only political capital ever since, and their holiest city.

The Muslims argue that Jerusalem was a central city in Islam since the Ummayyads and continuously during all Muslim dynasties who established Islamic institutions in the city, which can be witnessed to this very day.

- Jews also stress their 2,000 years of yearning and longing for Jerusalem from exile, dreaming of the regathering in Zion and rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple as expressed in many traditions, prayers, liturgy, and popular and religious rituals and services.

Muslims do emphasize the monuments and artifacts that the successive rulers built in the city, as well as the cemeteries that bear witness to the senior Islamic figures who visited the city or lived there and were buried there since the time of Muhammad.

- Jews claim that during the Muslim rule in Jerusalem they were prevented from accessing the Temple Mount. They were allowed to pray only privately in front of the Western Wall. They also accuse the Muslims for neglecting the city's upkeep and for the miserable physical condition of the Dome of the Rock. They also claim that while Jerusalem was under Jordanian rule from 1948 to 1967, Jewish synagogues in the Old City and grave stones on the Mount of Olives were attacked and destroyed.

Israeli Jews argue also that in June 1967 Israel decided to leave the administration of the Temple Mount/al-Aqsa compound to the Muslim Waqf clergy, and in the Israeli peace accord with Jordan the interests of Jordan in Jerusalem's Islamic holy places were enumerated.

Muslims however, accuse the Israelis of appropriation of the Western Wall piazza and the Jewish Quarter of the Old City after 1967, and of controlling their holy al-Aqsa compound and using security concerns as an excuse to prevent Muslims from accessing the site.

In conclusion, the new historical outlook of the Muslim Arabs since 1967 addresses the challenges that are being put forward by the Jewish and Israeli narratives, that is, issues of antiquity, religious and political aspects, continuous presence and control, sentimental connection and religious practice, and restriction of access to the sacred compound.

The new Islamic ethos of Jerusalem that has developed since 1967 centers on a rewriting of Jerusalem's history. The main features in this rewriting are an Arab-Islamic past that significantly pre-dates the ancient Hebrews' arrival in Palestine and the Davidic and Solomonic monarchies; an emphasis on the city's Islamic character; and, primarily, the attempt to attribute to the city a status of political importance in Muslim history and to claim that Jerusalem and Palestine are one and

the same and that Jerusalem's sanctity is a reflection of the sanctity of Palestine as a whole.

The next chapter moves from discussing the issues of identity and religious and national ideology into analyzing Palestinian and broader Arab action in two dimensions—strategy and its manifestation in the political arena.

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CHAPTER 5

Islamizing the Conflict

The conflict over the Jerusalem holy sites is a useful tool in the struggle for Palestinian national awareness. The first to make relatively successful use of this issue was the leader of the Palestinian national movement during the Mandate period—Hajj Amin al-Husseini, the “Grand Mufti” and president of the Supreme Muslim Council from 1922 to 1937. The Palestinian Arabs’ political weakness after the British Mandate’s establishment in Palestine caused them to look to the greater Arab and Muslim world as a natural source of support. In their efforts to enlist the support of Muslim countries and populations, the Palestinian leadership employed religious symbols, primarily in the call to save Islamic holy sites from foreign control (Jewish and British/Christian). The Jewish activity during this period played into the Arabs’ hands. During the 1920s, efforts were made to broaden Jewish rights at the Western Wall, the site that in the consciousness of many Jews represented an authentic remnant of the Temple compound, at a time when the Temple Mount/Haram site was under exclusive Muslim control. The Muslims acted to prevent such an expansion of rights, out of fear that by bringing articles of furniture to the site the Jews would be seeking to establish their sovereignty over it. At the same time, the Muslims worked to enhance the importance of al-Haram al-Sharif. In 1928, the Supreme Muslim Council, headed by Hajj Amin al-Husseini, completed a restoration project at the al-Aqsa compound, financed by donations from the Muslim world. The Zionist challenge, or “Zionist provocations,” as Husseini called them, served as his impetus for the enlistment of political support and for the raising of funds from Muslim communities outside of Palestine. What the Jews refer to as the “1929 Riots,” in which more than 113 Jews were massacred in Hebron, Safed,

and other places, are called by the Arabs “the 1929 Revolt,” a first expression of opposition to British occupation and to Zionist immigration.

A commission of inquiry was appointed by the British government in May 1930 to investigate what became known as “the Western Wall incidents” and the conflicting Jewish and Muslim claims regarding the Wall. This commission submitted its report in December of the same year. The report stated not only that the Western Wall is a remnant of the ancient Herodian Jewish Temple but also that the Muslims see its southern part (not the then praying pavement or the present-day plaza) as associated with the Prophet Muhammad’s Night Journey. The Jewish side claimed that al-Haram al-Sharif’s guide of 1914 does not mention the Western Wall as a holy place for Muslims. It concluded that the Western Wall itself is under full Muslim ownership and the praying pavement is a Muslim Waqf. However, it decided that the Jews had a proprietary right to pray at the site according to arrangements dating from the Ottoman era¹ (*ab antique* practice), but they were not permitted to bring chairs or benches, to build a *mechitza* (dividing wall between men and women) or to blow the Shofar. Thus, the British ruled that the status quo should prevail.

The fact that the struggle for rights at the Western Wall formed the background to these events aided the Palestinian leadership in depicting its political struggle as a religious one and in playing on Muslim religious feeling. Husseini did not, perhaps, manage to persuade all Palestinian Arabs by means of his religious campaign, as there was significant opposition to his efforts, but his main success appears to have been among Muslim communities outside of Palestine. Husseini’s activity generated a certain degree of pressure upon the British, who feared the effects of religious agitation on Muslim populations in India and in Middle Eastern areas under their control and influence.² Hajj Amin al-Husseini proceeded to turn al-Haram al-Sharif into a burial pantheon of important Muslim figures. He succeeded in convening the Islamic Congress in Jerusalem in 1931 and in bringing about the decision to establish a university in Jerusalem, to be called the al-Aqsa University (a decision that was never implemented).³

Amin al-Husseini also made use of the sacred status of Jerusalem and Palestine, with al-Aqsa at its center. In 1935, he issued a religious ruling (*fatwa*) according to which all of Palestine is holy to Islam: Having been Islam’s first direction of prayer (*qibla*), al-Aqsa is the third-holiest site in Islam, the place to which the Prophet traveled in his Journey (*al-isra’*) and from which he ascended to heaven (*mi’raj*). Moreover, he argued, the land of Palestine is saturated with the blood of Muslim

warriors from the period of the Islamic conquests and is the burial site of many prophets, saints, and fallen warriors; every inch of the land is thus considered as the repository of their remains and of their religious faith.⁴ Descriptions of the Holy Land are taken from the *fada'il* literature in praise of Jerusalem and al-Sham.⁵ Along with this ruling the Mufti issued an additional fatwa that called upon Palestine's Muslim landowners to dedicate their property as waqf due to the land's special status, and thereby to prevent its sale or at least to enable the Supreme Muslim Council to supervise real estate transactions of those properties that had received waqf status.⁶ This campaign was unsuccessful.⁷

Yasser Arafat, the foremost Palestinian leader of the second half of the twentieth century, also employed religious symbols for political purposes. In his speeches Arafat would incorporate Qur'anic verses, usually ones in which the Children of Israel are depicted as having betrayed God and been, consequently, punished.⁸ Arafat's hinted interpretation was that the ancient Jews' punishment was that of being prohibited from entering the Holy Land. In some of his speeches, Arafat likened the Muslim recapture of Jerusalem to its seventh-century Muslim conquest.⁹

One of the most popular clerics in the Muslim world today, who writes prolifically on the Jerusalem issue and the need for jihad in order to liberate Palestine, is the previously mentioned Sheikh (Dr.) Yusuf al-Qaradawi.¹⁰ Qaradawi is very much upfront about the fact that his entire textual oeuvre, from legal rulings to sermons, statements to the press and lectures, constitutes an ongoing battle in a religious propaganda war whose motives are political in nature. In his book *Jerusalem Is the Problem of Every Muslim*, he defines the Palestine situation as one of religious war in which each Muslim is bound by the duty of jihad in its highest form, adding: "If those who have stolen our land use religious justifications to fight us, then we must return fire using the same methods. If they fight us with the Torah, then we must fight them with the Qur'an; if [they use] the Talmud, then [we must use] the *hadith* collections of Bukhari and Muslim; if Shabbat, then Friday; if they say the Temple, then we must say al-Aqsa." Qaradawi also adds recommendations for political activity: renewal of the Intifada (this section of the book was written, apparently, prior to September 2000), opposition to normalization with Israel, renewal of the Arab boycott of those who engage in commerce with Israel, declaration of the conflict as an Islamic war; the establishment of a world Islamic body to be charged with liberating Jerusalem, and the establishment of an al-Quds fund to which all Muslims would contribute for Jerusalem's liberation.¹¹

The influence of Qaradawi's sermons is readily discernible in Arab academic and journalistic writing. The following will serve as an example: a Jordanian lecturer in the Applied Science Private University's Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences (Amman), Dr. Muhammad 'Awad Salih al-Hazayma also contends that the conflict is, in essence, a religious one, and that Islam has a clear goal: "Removing the Jerusalem issue from the narrow national context and placing it in a broad Islamic context will enable support to be garnered from the Islamic countries and minorities around the world, just as the Jewish state has used the connection between the Torah and the New Testament in order to sway Western Christian opinion." Al-Hazayma, who apparently belongs to the Islamist stream in Jordan, bases himself on the views of Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi in his call for a strategy of employing Islam in the polemical battle. He cites a tradition according to which Abu Bakr, the First Caliph, told military leader Khalid ibn al-Walid to "[f]ight your enemy using the same means with which he fights you—fight sword with sword and spear with spear." Al-Hazayma writes:

And we add, faith with faith. If our enemy uses religion to fight us, and if they enlist Y—W—the Jewish God—we will enlist and employ the name of Allah, and if he sends us his soldiers in the name of Judaism, then we will send them our soldiers in the name of Islam, as did Qutuz in the Battle of Ain Jalut [in which the Mongols were defeated by the Mamluks in 1260], and if they come to us with the Torah, then we will counter them with the Qur'an, and if they go forth under the banner of Moses, then we will go forth under the banner of Moses and Jesus and Muhammad together, and if they mention the prophesy of Isaiah, then we will mention the *hadith* of Muslim and Bukhari, and if they wage war upon us in the name of the Temple, then we will wage war on behalf of al-Aqsa, and if our enemies tell their soldiers "You are the chosen people," then we will tell our soldiers "You are the best people."¹²

The following are three additional examples illustrating radical Muslims' political objective in the conflict over Jerusalem. The first of these is taken from the words of Egyptian political author Dr. Ra'fat Sayed Ahmad. Ahmad says that Jerusalem was chosen to symbolize the struggle over Palestine because the religious context "requires its liberation from its long captivity."¹³ The second example appears in a 1999 book entitled *Our Cultural Presence in Jerusalem* by Dr. Ahmad Fahim Jabr,

a Palestinian lecturer at al-Quds University. The author defines the book's aim thus: "[t]o raise awareness of the blessed city and its religious status among Muslims... to arouse the reader's interest in Jerusalem and lead him to participate in this arena, and to accentuate the importance of control over Palestine in general and Jerusalem in particular and to view it as part of defending the way of Allah."¹⁴ The last example is the book by 'Abd al-Tawab Mustafa, written in order to counter the Zionists' claims to a historical right to Palestine and Jerusalem, anchored (in his words, "supposedly") in the Torah, and in order to promote the idea of Islamizing the conflict. The Islamic dimension, he writes, is not meant to replace Arab nationalism or Palestinian territorial nationalism with an exclusively religious ideology, but rather to complement the former. According to him, by imparting an Islamic dimension to the conflict every Arab and every Palestinian gains the right to world Muslim assistance.¹⁵ Another prominent Islamic intellectual, Dr. Muhammad 'Amara of Egypt has written that the conflict is religious in nature, despite the fact that Muslim opposition is directed toward Zionism as a national movement, rather than at Judaism as a faith.¹⁶

It is clearly in the Palestinians' and the Arabs' interest to highlight the conflict's religious dimension. From this point of view, the well-publicized visit by Ariel Sharon (and several Likud Knesset members) to the Temple Mount on September 28, 2000 provided the Palestinians with the most effective ammunition that they could have wished for in their campaign for world Muslim public opinion. In a November 2002 interview, the Palestinian minister of waqf and religious affairs Sheikh Yusuf Salama explained why the uprising had been named the *al-Aqsa Intifada*: "Because it symbolizes the national faith regarding Palestine, to which the Prophet traveled in his Journey." In other words, it is worthwhile to attach religious symbols to the political struggle. In this interview, Salama enumerated the successes that this approach had attained, attributing to the Intifada such achievements as defending the holy places, unifying the Palestinian people, and making the Palestinian problem the foremost issue in the Arab world and on the all-Muslim agenda. According to him, it had also served to mobilize the Arab leadership and the Arab street, "as we saw in the Beirut summit, where a consensus was reached on the founding of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital"¹⁷ (meaning the March 2002 Arab Peace Initiative). Even if Salama exaggerated the existing level of pan-Islamic solidarity, it is nevertheless true that al-Aqsa as a religious symbol added ideological and emotional fuel to the Palestinian struggle. In the preface to a book on the history of al-Aqsa that was published on his initiative,

Salama writes that “[t]he book aims to familiarize Muslims with the al-Aqsa Mosque, so that we may pray together in al-Aqsa after its liberation from the occupiers and after the founding of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital and under the leadership of Yasser Arafat.”¹⁸

The scope of the political-religious indoctrination that is taking place via print publications can also be seen in a book on Jerusalem that was issued in 1995 by the Organization of the Islamic Conference’s (OIC) Islamic Scientific, Educational and Cultural Organization (ISESCO). The following appears in the book’s preface: “This publication is undertaken for the sake of both keeping alive the issue of Al-Quds in the sphere of world concerns and keeping up the attachment of Muslims worldwide to this city. This initiative should help to disprove the false claims of both the Zionist movement and the State of Israel; on the other hand, it should cancel the effect of the fallacious propaganda that seeks to deny Muslims their natural rights to this holy city.” It is also stated that “Muslims throughout the world . . . wish to make any sacrifice that will free this holy city from the yoke of the conquering occupant.”¹⁹

5.1 The Role of the Jewish Party to the Conflict, and the “Mirror Syndrome”

Does Jerusalem’s elevation represent an Arab-Muslim initiative, or is it a reaction to parallel activity on the Jewish-Israeli side of the conflict? Is the phenomenon in question a reflection of the “mirror syndrome”?²⁰ Muslim writers do, in fact, present their activity as a response to Israeli policy, rather than as steps taken on their own initiative.²¹ There can be no doubt that Muslims are not the only players in the field of religiously inspired political activity, and that the Jewish party to the conflict is active in this area on several planes: the first plane is that of ideology. As was mentioned above, Zionism as a national movement bears an inherent religious message that poses a challenge to Arabs and Muslims. The idea that Zion is Jerusalem and that Jews must return to Zion—and that exiles must ingather in the Holy Land—is based on historical justifications taken from sacred writings (God’s promise to Abraham) and has been granted legitimacy by the Christian world that accepts the Old Testament—to widespread Muslim displeasure. The second plane is that of the struggle for the Holy Land and for the holy sites. Despite the Israeli government’s

secular nature, Muslims regard the post-1967 nationalist-messianic wave and the Jewish settler movement in the Palestinian territories as religiously motivated phenomena that reflect Israeli mainstream positions. They object to the aggressive Jewish control exerted over places that, they claim, are holy to Muslims as well, such as Rachel's Tomb, the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, the Western Wall plaza, and other sites, and to the activities of radical Jewish Temple movements. At the third plane we see that since the Oslo process there has been a significant rise in Israeli-Jewish awareness (even among Jews who are not religiously observant) of the Temple Mount as a vital symbol of national and cultural identity. According to a poll conducted in February 2005, only 9 percent of the Jewish public is willing to allow sovereignty over the Temple Mount to pass entirely into Palestinian hands, while 51 percent insist on exclusive Israeli control of the site, and 36 percent are prepared for joint-Palestinian-Israeli control.²² Ariel Sharon's demonstrative Temple Mount visit in September 2000 as well as the attempts of right-wing Knesset members to visit the site just prior to the implementation of the Disengagement Plan from the Gaza Strip are two examples that illustrate the Temple Mount's upgrading as a national Jewish site. Jewish Temple Mount-related activity sends a message to the Arab-Muslim religious and political echelons that they are being confronted with a religious challenge no less potent than the political rivalry, and they react within the twilight zone that lies between religion and politics.

Major milestones are identifiable in the process by which the Jerusalem issue came to penetrate world Arab and Muslim awareness as a unifying symbol in the struggle against Israel. The process evolved along with the Arab-Muslim experience of Jewish "challenge" with regard to the Temple Mount.²³ The match struck by Michael Dennis Rohan, a mentally unstable Australian Christian who set fire to the al-Aqsa Mosque in August 1969 (including the Nur al-Din *minbar*—preacher's pulpit—associated with Saladin) served to reignite the idea of employing al-Aqsa for the purpose of liberating Palestine from Israeli occupation. The setting on fire to the al-Aqsa Mosque while the site was under Israeli control constituted the first sign of danger from an Arab-Muslim perspective. This act of arson incited the Muslim world and was a motivating event for those seeking to make al-Aqsa a bone of contention in their struggle against Israel. Two days after the incident, the UN Security Council convened at the urging of Arab countries and issued a resolution that expressed deep concern over the profanation of al-Haram al-Sharif.²⁴ The Muslim claim was that the fire was

set deliberately and Israel was held responsible.²⁵ An official publication of the Palestinian Authority (PA), published in 2002 and written by the head of the Ministry of Waqf and Religious Affairs' history department, Muhammad Ghawsha (pronounced Ghoshe), alleges that the Mosque fire was set by an "Israeli criminal named Michael William Rohan" (the name of the Australian Christian who committed the act was Michael Dennis Rohan). Ghawsha accuses Israel of attempting to prevent efforts to extinguish the fire, contending that "[t]he fire was finally put out by Palestinian volunteers from Jerusalem and the surrounding villages," but not before first having to battle Israelis in order to do so:

When they arrived they found that the Mosque's gates had been locked by the occupation soldiers while the Mosque was being consumed by flames, but the enraged mob succeeded in breaking through. But at this point they found that the fire hoses were not working and only then, after much delay, did the Jerusalem Municipality fire trucks arrive. The Muslims called for fire trucks from Hebron, Bethlehem, Jenin, Ramallah, al-Bira and Tul-Karem. The Jerusalem fire chief tried to keep them from entering, but the Hebron fire chief prevented this and 30,000 Palestinians volunteered and helped to extinguish the fire.²⁶

Even today, the Arab League Web site states that "Israel burned Al-Aqsa Mosque."²⁷

According to Israeli columnist Uzi Benziman, the East Jerusalem (Palestinian operated) fire station's commander and staff were the first to reach the site and, upon discovering the extent of the blaze, called the main fire station in West Jerusalem; within a short time 16 fire trucks arrived at the site. The Muslims who gathered at the site accused the Israeli firefighters of bringing gasoline instead of water to fuel the fire.²⁸ The Israeli government was deeply concerned by the incident—an incident that damaged Israel's image and cast doubt upon the legitimacy of its sovereignty over Jerusalem.

Thus, the fire started by an Australian tourist is perceived in the Arab world as a fully intentional Israeli act. One publication states that Rohan was aided by an Israeli terrorist group. It is also claimed that the Israeli Jewish public widely supports the idea that the al-Aqsa Mosque should be demolished.²⁹

After the 1969 arson incident, Egyptian president Gamal `Abd al-Nasser called for a war of purification against Israel, while King Faisal

of Saudi Arabia and other Arab political leaders called upon all Muslims to mobilize for jihad to liberate Jerusalem.³⁰ The event also served as an impetus to King Faisal's founding of the OIC (*Munazhhamat al-Mu'tamar al-Islami*), an intergovernmental grouping of 57 Muslim states.³¹ In the wake of the Mosque fire, King Hussein appointed the Royal Jordanian Commission for Jerusalem Affairs, headed by his brother, former Crown Prince Hasan.

The Muslim and Palestinian message that has been disseminated since the arson incident is that so long as Israel controls the Haram/Temple Mount, al-Aqsa is in danger. The date of the fire (August 21) is commemorated via various events—some held by Arab states and some initiated by Islamic or nationalist political organizations. Thus, on the thirty-third anniversary of the arson, the Jordanian professional associations organized, in cooperation with the Islamic Action Front (a political party opposed to the government), a parade under the auspices of Amman governor 'Abd al-Karim Malahmah (a member of the ruling regime). During this event, performances were staged of battles to conquer Jerusalem from the Byzantines and the Crusaders, and Palestinian folk dances were presented to a background Palestinian folk music.³² The (state-run) Jordan News Agency issued a press release in honor of the event, in which it enumerated the Jews' "hostile" acts in Jerusalem and the "massacres" carried out by Israel "at the Mosque," while mentioning King Hussein's contribution to al-Aqsa's restoration and the fact that King Abdallah II had ordered the installation of a *minbar* resembling the Saladin *minbar* that was burned in the fire.³³ A year later, on August 20, 2003, the Islamic institute that runs the Jordan-based www.elquds.net Web site held a press conference at the Beirut Press Club, to commemorate the thirty-fourth anniversary of the al-Aqsa Mosque fire and to announce a campaign to get 100 million Muslims to sign an "affirmation of our right to Jerusalem." The head of the institute professed the belief that Israel and the Jews were behind the arson incident. He connected Jerusalem with the Palestinian question and urged assistance to the Palestinians in their struggle, as well as opposition to normalization with Israel, opposition to the United States (because of its support for Israel), and promotion of an economic boycott of the United States aimed at damaging its economy.³⁴

Other major incidents involving Israel have also served to reinforce the message that "al-Aqsa is in danger." The shooting attack staged on the Temple Mount in 1982 by Allan Goodman, a recent American immigrant to Israel who had been conscripted into the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and used his weapon to shoot at Muslims, provided an

additional opportunity for this message to be disseminated.³⁵ A visit to the Temple Mount by the Knesset Internal Affairs Committee in January 1986 also triggered Muslim demonstrations and violent encounters between Muslims and the security forces, resulting in harsh reactions from the Arab world. In the wake of the Internal Affairs Committee visit, the Israeli qadis warned against any attempt to deviate from the status quo, and a delegation of Arab Knesset members visited the site in order to show solidarity with the Muslim Council. During this period Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, Israel's chief rabbi, issued a ruling in favor of building a synagogue on the Temple Mount. The Muslims viewed this with alarm as an official Israeli initiative, and their reactions intensified accordingly.³⁶

The Palestinian uprising (the first Intifada), which erupted in December 1987, placed the sacred compound at a central locus of the national conflict. The Palestinian Muslims used the relative immunity of the site where large crowds gathered after the Friday service and the large open esplanade that Israeli forces usually do not enter as a venue of political demonstrations and unrest. The mufti of Jerusalem's deputy, Sheikh Muhammad-Sa'id al-Jamal stated in reaction to the demonstration that al-Haram al-Sharif is an inseparable part of the land of Palestine and that it, therefore, was only natural that the Intifada should take place in the mosques as well.³⁷

Further challenges were instigated by Israeli elements, such as the digging of the Western Wall Tunnel. In July 1988, when the tunnel was prepared to absorb tourists and in order to extend its capacity the Israeli government decided to open an exit in the northern part into the Arab Christian quarter, a large-scale violent Muslim reaction prevented the government from executing its plan at that time. It was opened only in 1996 (see below).

The first Intifada heightened world Muslim awareness of Jerusalem and of Palestine in general. The Temple Mount was used during the first Intifada as one of the symbols of the struggle, and Israeli Arabs also began to become involved in what was going on around them. Various clerics and factions competed for control of the Temple Mount and increased their propaganda efforts. Leaflet 21 of the Unified National Command, entitled "The Blessed al-Aqsa Mosque," called for preventing the desecration of Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem. The leaflet declared an al-Aqsa Day (August 7), on which, according to its authors, "[o]ur strike forces will deal heavy blows to the enemy forces and to the settler herds." The Intifada's United National Command representing Palestinian armed factions called upon the OIC, the Arab countries,

the Vatican, and the UN for assistance, requesting their urgent intervention in order to put an end to the desecration of the Muslim and Christian holy places.³⁸

The stormiest event in the history of Palestinian–Israeli violence at the compound took place in October 1990, which the Muslims refer to as the “al-Aqsa Massacre”. This occurred when the radical Jewish Temple Mount Faithful movement publicized some provocative plans, including a cornerstone-laying ceremony for the Third Temple near the Dung Gate and the erection of a *Sukkah* (a hut commemorating the Jew’s wandering in the desert after the Exodus from Egypt) next to the Mughrabi Gate. In the Muslim version of the events, the Temple Mount Faithful’s cornerstone-laying ceremony for the Third Temple was taken seriously by many Muslims, who, therefore, organized for preemptive action. A month prior to the incident, the al-Aqsa preacher Sheikh Fathalla Silwadi called upon Muslims to come and defend the Mosque with their bodies.³⁹

The police prohibited the planned ceremony from taking place near the sacred compound but permitted it to take place at the nearby Silwan area. In reaction, Muslims showered rocks from al-Haram al-Sharif courtyard onto worshippers at the Western Wall. The police forces that were summoned to the Haram in order to disperse the demonstrators and stop the rock-throwing opened fire and killed 17 Muslims. Another 53 Muslims and 30 Jews (police and worshipers) were injured.⁴⁰ In the event’s aftermath the Waqf presented an exhibition of photos and other artifacts of the affair at the Islamic Museum next to the al-Aqsa Mosque. Following the events, the UN Security Council unanimously passed a resolution condemning the acts of violence committed by the Israeli security forces resulting in loss of human life and injury to many Muslims on the Temple Mount and decided to send a mission of the UN secretary general to the region to investigate the incident. The United States also supported this decision,⁴¹ but Israel did not consent to receive the delegation. One of the outcomes of the October 1990 events was the beginning of a campaign launched by the Head of the Islamic Movement in Israel—Sheikh Ra’id Salah, claiming that Israel intends to bring about the destruction of the al-Aqsa Mosque.

The Palestinians documented the 1990 affair in two books, both entitled *The al-Aqsa Massacre*.⁴² One of these, an initiative of a PLO-affiliated entity, includes on its title page a letter from PLO chairman Yasser Arafat to “the steadfast inhabitants of Palestine.” Quoting Qur’anic verse 17:7 about the destruction of the Second Temple (by the Romans), he promises that the Palestinian flag will fly over the mosques and churches of Jerusalem.⁴³

Baruch Goldstein's 1994 shooting attack and massacre of 29 Muslim worshippers in the Cave of the Patriarchs/The Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron also contributed to tensions surrounding the issue of the holy sites and constituted an additional phase in the process described above. Two years later, in September 1996, the opening of the Western Wall Tunnel generated a mini-Intifada in the Palestinian territories and represented another important stage in the dissemination of the "al-Aqsa is in danger" message. In the clashes between protesters and the police three Muslims were killed and 31 people were injured, including 11 policemen.⁴⁴ The riots quickly spread to East Jerusalem and the territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The events took on the character of a popular uprising, which was supported by members of the PA's police who even opened fire on Israelis. Scores of Palestinians and 15 Israelis were killed in the riots. Incidentally, radical Islamic factions called the Palestinian activities in reaction to the opening of the Western Wall Tunnel the "al-Aqsa Intifada"⁴⁵—the name that four years later was to be given to the second Intifada.

At the time it was claimed that the Israeli excavations constituted a physical threat to al-Aqsa.⁴⁶ In the wake of this incident the Islamic Movement in Israel organized the first convention (*mahrajan*) under the banner "al-Aqsa is in Danger." Finally, the demonstrative visit by Ariel Sharon and Likud Knesset members to the Temple Mount in September 2000 led to the second Intifada's appellation of "al-Aqsa."

Israel's post-1967 archeological excavations and the digging of the Western Wall Tunnel were perceived and portrayed by Muslims as acts intended to undermine the al-Aqsa compound's foundations, so that, when the earthquake prophesied in Jewish apocalyptic and eschatological tradition occurred, the Mosque would collapse and the Jews would be able to rebuild their Temple. This contention is set forth in an unsigned ruling published on the Web site of former Saudi grand mufti 'Abd al-'Aziz Ibn Baz in response to a question referred to him by one Dr. Muhammad Ahmad al-Kurdi. In his reply, the mufti quotes the Israeli minister of religious affairs in 1967 as allegedly having told Knesset members interested in building the Temple that the time for that was yet to come, since it was necessary to wait for the earthquake that would cause the Mosque to collapse and enable the Temple to be constructed in its place.⁴⁷

Official Israeli policy on this subject, embodied in two important decisions by state entities—first, the Chief Rabbinate's decision according to which Jews are forbidden by Jewish law to enter the Temple Mount, and second, the government's decision to leave the

Temple Mount's administration in the hands of the Muslim Waqf—has received almost no recognition in the contemporary Muslim world. In contrast, the activities of often marginal Jewish extremist groups, some of them tiny, aimed at renewing Temple worship have been publicized by the Palestinians as though they reflect the official Israeli position. However, some of the Israeli official and nonofficial policy in the Old City leads me to conclude that the Muslims' fear, although greatly exaggerated, is not completely without foundation. I will mention here two recent developments. The first is the Israeli government's authorization given to the extreme right association El-Ad (acronym of "to the city of David") to conduct archaeological excavations (supervised by the government's Antiquities Authority) in the Old City. The El-Ad activity is aimed to bolster the Jewish character of the Old City via modern tourist development that emphasizes the Jewish history and almost ignores the Arab and pre-Hebrew periods. The second, is the Israeli unilateral construction work during 2007 to replace the ramp leading from the Western Wall plaza to the Mughrabi Gate with a modern metal bridge while intending to conduct a year-long excavations in the old ramp (which includes Muslim artifacts) and underneath in the Western Wall plaza. Israel's unilateral action was based, apparently, on two assumptions: first, the ramp is outside al-Haram al-Sharif in the Western Wall area that has been completely under Israeli control since 1967; and second, that Muslims would reject any plan connected to the Mughrabi Gate because they oppose Israel's control of this gate as the access of Jews and other visitors (particularly tourists) to the compound. Although there may be some justification in the Israeli position, one should not be surprised if work in such a sensitive place (which is also inside a UNESCO-declared world heritage venue) conducted in such a unilateral form would not result in strong protest from the Muslim side. Nevertheless the above-mentioned Israeli actions in no way relate to the Muslim campaign that centers on the claim that Israel strives to destroy al-Aqsa and to build the Third Temple in its place. The claim that Israeli officialdom is persistently working toward al-Aqsa's destruction is utterly baseless and is merely used by Islamist activists for political mobilization.

In order to prove their theory, Palestinian officials claim that the many excavations conducted by Israel, both archeological digs outside of the Temple Mount and excavations carried out for tourism or religious-national purposes were intended for the sole purpose of undermining al-Aqsa's foundations so that it would collapse, reveal the Temple's deeply buried remains, and enable renewed Jewish worship

at the site. These accusations included the Western Wall Tunnel that was dug along the Temple Mount's western wall and other excavations conducted in the past (some of them branching out from the Western Wall Tunnel). Thus, in August 2002, Palestinian mufti Sheikh Ikrima Sabri claimed that Israel was preventing the al-Aqsa renovations committee from visiting the external excavations site in order to determine whether digging was taking place underneath the Mosque; he mentioned on this occasion that he had already warned that such excavations were impairing the ancient structures' foundations.⁴⁸ The collapse of the retaining wall supporting the walkway to the Mughrabi Gate in February 2004 was also portrayed by Muslims as having resulted from Israeli underground excavations aimed, according to them, at causing the Mosque to collapse so that the Temple could be built in its stead.

Those involved in disseminating the claim that al-Aqsa is in danger do not actually need to present concrete evidence of their contention. The mere fact that al-Aqsa is under Israeli control constitutes a danger in and of itself, as the head of the Islamic Movement in Israel testified before the Or Commission that was appointed to investigate the October 2000 events in the Arab sector.⁴⁹ Al-Aqsa has been declared by Islamic, Palestinian, and other entities to be in Israeli captivity and thus, according to the radical factions, every Muslim is enjoined to sacrifice his life for its liberation. Moreover, any act, whether performed by a Jewish nationalist group or on behalf of the Israeli state authorities, that the Palestinian leadership interprets as an attempt to erode Palestinian authority and status on the Temple Mount is presented as additional proof of the danger to which al-Aqsa is exposed.

The examples of Arab-Muslim reactions to Israeli activities are innumerable. Thus, when asked in a television interview about the danger to al-Aqsa, Sheikh Ikrima Sabri characterized it as highly imminent, making mention of a January 2001 attempt to set fire to one of the Temple Mount gates (Bab al-Ghawanima), and additionally referring to the danger posed by the excavations beneath al-Aqsa and to Jewish extremists' demand for permission to pray on the Temple Mount. Sabri stated that no precedent of Jewish worship at al-Aqsa should be allowed, since enabling even one Jew to pray there would create a new reality at the site.⁵⁰ Another example is connected with the Western Wall Tunnel excavations. In an article published by Muhammad al-Halayqa on the Web site of the Islamic Movement in Israel's southern branch, the author (baselessly) claims that, in addition to the Western Wall Tunnel whose opening was publicized, three additional secret tunnels have been dug beneath the site, one in the direction of the Mosque, one

in the direction of the Dome of the Rock, and the third from west to east. "The danger posed by the tunnels is not merely that of al-Aqsa's potential collapse, but also the fact that the Jews are continuing to excavate in order to find their temple."⁵¹ The list of examples of this nature includes the police-mandated halt to renovations on the Temple Mount during the last few years, the existence of a police point on the Temple Mount, the presence of Israeli police at the entrances to the Temple Mount, the periodic restrictions (due to reasons of security and public order) regarding worshipper age at the Temple Mount and the prevention of worshippers from outside Jerusalem from entering the site, the parades organized by Jewish Temple Mount faithful followers, visits by Israeli politicians to the Temple Mount, the activity of the (Israeli) Committee for the Prevention of the Destruction of Antiquities on the Temple Mount, and in 2003 also the Israeli authorities' efforts to renew tourism at the Temple Mount (and the exercising of Jews' right of access to the site) after nearly three years' cessation.

In short, actions and statements of the Israeli-Jewish party to the conflict unquestionably fuels Islamic activity regarding Jerusalem. Israeli actions perceived as injurious to Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem and its environs are used by the Palestinians and others to strengthen world Muslim awareness of the need to "liberate" Jerusalem. However, it would be a mistake to interpret this phenomenon of the last generation as one of reaction only. The Israeli challenges do indeed draw responses, but the campaign to upgrade Jerusalem was initiated as a means of enlisting support within the strategic depth of the Arab world and the greater Muslim world; there is no symmetry or equivalence between the Israeli challenges and Islamic activity. Arab-Muslim entities are conducting a political campaign in which religion serves as a highly efficient medium for public education and for mobilizing political support, while the Israeli challenges that arise during the course of this campaign simply keep the torch of al-Quds burning in Islamic awareness. There are two reasons why the Muslim party to the conflict makes immeasurably greater use of religion as a weapon than the other party: because Muslim society by nature is less secular and because the Arab and Muslim world is the weaker, defeated party, it makes maximal use of all resources available to it.

However, despite the above mentioned official discourse of conflict, ongoing unofficial meetings have been held regularly since 1967 between the Waqf's leaders and representatives of the Israeli police and the Jerusalem municipality. These gradually created a *modus vivendi* between the Israeli government and the Waqf officials, as well as the

Jordanian government.⁵² In practice, the Israeli government essentially abandoned the enforcement of its law wherever the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif was concerned. The site's administrators were moderate Palestinian figures appointed by Jordan, and they generally adhered to all the tacit understandings that were reached with Israel's representatives.

The post-1967 *modus vivendi* was based on the following points: The Waqf administers the site, controls the gates, dictates the rules of behavior, employs Muslim guards (today there are 210 guards, 70 in each of the three shifts) responsible for the ongoing maintenance and physical upkeep, charges entrance fees from non-Muslim visitors to the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque structure. However, the Waqf is not allowed to raise flags within the compound. Significant renovations and constructions were, until September 1996, unofficially coordinated with the Israeli Antiquities Authority.

Israel, on the other hand, controls the Mahkama building (al-Madrasa al-Tankiziyya), which serves to house a border-police unit to overlook the compound and to intervene in cases of violation of public order. It also holds the keys to the Mughrabi Gate and controls the entrance of visitors via this gate. Israeli police guard the site from the outer circle and entrances and maintain public order inside the compound. However, some of the powers Israel claims to hold according to its post-1967 law are restricted by the fear of large-scale Muslim violence. The major unresolved issues are the active prayer of Jews within the compound and the supervision of diggings and construction. Some regulations are being coordinated between Waqf and Israeli authorities, such as the opening hours for visitors and the visit of high-ranking foreign state officials.

The *modus vivendi* according to the above regulations prevailed until September 1996, when Muslim riots erupted following Israel's action of opening the northern exit of the Western Wall Tunnel. Previous incidents of the 1980s had ended peacefully. One such case happened in August 1981, when the Western Wall Rabbi—Yehuda Getz—discovered, during the digging works of the Wall's Tunnel, a burrow (known by archaeologists as Cistern 31) leading east toward the underneath of the Dome of the Rock, where it is believed that the Jewish Temple stood. Waqf employees detected the workers and quick police action blocked the burrow with permanent concrete. This prevented widespread clashes. In January 1986, the extreme Jewish Ateret Cohanim group unearthed a new part of the Western Wall, which was used by the group for prayer.

5.2 “Al-Aqsa Is in Danger”—A Strategy of Political Empowerment

In reaction to the opening of the Western Wall Tunnel’s northern exit and the violent incidents that took place between Palestinians and Israelis against this background in September 1996, the Islamic Movement in Israel’s northern branch, headed by Sheikh Ra’id Salah, began to organize mass rallies under the slogan “al-Aqsa is in Danger.” This slogan transmitted to the Muslim public the message that Israel is seeking, in a deliberate and systematic way, to destroy the al-Aqsa Mosque in order to build the Third Temple in its place. The Islamic Movement in Israel’s campaign was already underway before 1996. As noted above, in the early 1990s, Sheikh Ra’id Salah began interpreting Israeli statements and actions as being intended to bring about Muslim al-Aqsa’s destruction. Jewish Temple Mount movement activity and statements made by Israeli officials regarding the Temple Mount fueled accusations, whilst various incidents that occurred were blown out of proportion in order to prove the theory that the al-Aqsa site is in imminent danger. Nimrod Luz’s research on the shaping of Israeli-Arab discourse on al-Haram al-Sharif indicates how extensively these messages influence even nonobservant Muslims and Christians. Secular Knesset member Ahmad Tibi, for example, believes that al-Aqsa is in danger “as long as it is under foreign occupation.”⁵³ The construction activities at the site’s underground level orchestrated by Sheikh Ra’id Salah during the 1990s—the building of the Marwani prayer hall in the area known as Solomon’s Stables, and the creation of an additional prayer hall in the lower section of the al-Aqsa Mosque structure—were portrayed as having thwarted Jewish intentions to build a synagogue in the site’s lower area.

Palestinian officials frequently cite the precedents of the Cave of the Patriarchs and Rachel’s Tomb as proof that Jews must not be permitted to set foot upon the Haram/Temple Mount. In their view, the consent extended after 1967 to Moshe Dayan by Sheikh Muhammad `Ali al-Ja`bari, then mayor of Hebron,⁵⁴ regarding Jewish entry to the Cave of the Patriarchs served to whet the Jews’ appetite, so that in the end they did not content themselves with this limited authorization but rather took over a significant portion of the site and the prayer times. Rachel’s Tomb, which according to them is the tomb of a Muslim saint (Bilal ibn Rabah—the *muezzin* of the Prophet Muhammad), was expropriated by the Jews after they had received the keys to it from the Muslims. These issues were raised

in August 2000 by Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), then a senior PA official and now PA president.⁵⁵ The Palestinian minister of waqf and religious affairs wrote the following in 2002: “The Palestinians, the Arabs and the Muslims will not permit a repetition of what happened at the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, and they will defend al-Aqsa using every means at their disposal.”⁵⁶ He added that “al-Aqsa is currently being subjected to excavations beneath its foundations and to plotting by the Israeli authorities, so that they may build what is referred to as the *alleged* Temple in its place.”⁵⁷

The position of the Islamic Movement in Israel’s northern branch is set forth in a book on Jerusalem containing a signed preface by Sheikh Ra’id Salah who since 2005 is titled in the Arab media “The Sheikh of al-Aqsa”; Salah writes that all of the sites holy to Islam are in danger (Jerusalem, in particular) and thus al-Aqsa as well. Yusuf al-Husayni, the book’s author, wrote that his study was intended to “expose the true face of the inhuman policy of destroying Islamic holy sites.” In the publisher’s preface, written by Dr. ‘Abd al-Rahman ‘Abbad of Jerusalem, he defines Ariel Sharon’s demonstrative Haram/Temple Mount visit in September 2000 as a Judaizing act since, according to ‘Abbad, Sharon had declared that he was “making a pilgrimage to the Temple,” thereby seeking to nullify the Islamic connection to al-Aqsa and to convert it into an awareness of Jewish connection to the site “by means of guns and terrorism.”⁵⁸ The 57-member OIC claims in an official document that the efforts to undermine Muslim activity at al-Aqsa are still going on. The document portrays Jerusalem as a city stolen and constantly endangered by Israel. It is stated there that “[t]he excavations underneath the al-Aqsa Mosque are being conducted under the pretext of searching for Solomon’s Temple.” “It was Israel that orchestrated the al-Aqsa Mosque fire in 1969 [according to the document’s authors, the arsonist—Rohan—was Jewish] and it is trying to replace the mosques with the Third Temple.”⁵⁹ It is also stated that “Muslims believe that the attempt to lay the cornerstone of the Third Temple [a Temple Mount Faithful demonstration of October 1990] is an official act of the State of Israel.”⁶⁰ In order to drive home the danger’s imminence, the authors cite a May 2001 news item from *al-Sharq al-Awsat*—a London-based, Saudi Arabian-funded newspaper—according to which “Ariel Sharon is studying a plan drawn up by the radical right and the religious parties, and . . . Israel is seeking to build a synagogue on the Temple Mount that will serve as a foothold in anticipation of the establishment of ‘Solomon’s Temple’ . . . which means the destruction of the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock.”⁶¹

The claim that al-Aqsa is in danger is also fueled (whether unintentionally or intentionally) by Muslim interpretations of Zionism as a religious ideology aimed at building the Third Temple, for which al-Aqsa's demolition would be necessary. I have already discussed Zionism's religious basis and Israel's political reality in the introduction. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that initiatives aimed at building the Third Temple and destroying the mosques are associated with Israeli fringe groups only. The idea that an intention exists of replacing the mosques with a Jewish temple was presented by the Palestinian leadership to the Mandate-era commission of inquiry charged with investigating Jewish and Muslim rights at the Western Wall.⁶² During the last generation this claim has increasingly gained broad currency. Thus, for example, 'Abd al-'Aziz Mustafa peruses the 1920s-era *Encyclopedia Britannica* and *Jewish Encyclopedia* entries for Zionism and determines that the Return to Zion and the founding of the Jewish state in Palestine are based on an ideology centered around building Solomon's Temple and restoring the Davidic monarchy to power in Jerusalem.⁶³ From here the author goes on to discuss the tangible danger to which, in his opinion, al-Aqsa is exposed, and he presents information on the various Jewish organizations that are involved in promoting the rebuilding of the Temple, as though they reflect mainstream Israeli views.⁶⁴ According to the author, the intentions of demolishing al-Aqsa and building the Temple in its stead are quite serious, since the Jews are currently engaged "more in doing than in talking." In his opinion, the Temple Mount groups enjoy great power and success both in Israel and abroad, and thus the danger that they represent must be taken with the utmost seriousness.⁶⁵

Another author, 'Abd al-Tawab Mustafa, notes that the Jews mention the destruction of the Temple on all ceremonial occasions, and that this reflects the seriousness of their intention of rebuilding it; moreover, he writes, the Jews regard the State of Israel itself as the "Third Temple" [meaning the third kingdom].⁶⁶ Another example may be found in the encyclopedia of questions and answers on Jerusalem compiled by al-Qasim. According to al-Qasim, the Jews believe "that the Messiah will appear in this land, and from this stems their need to gather together in Palestine" and "to build the alleged temple as quickly as possible; the Jews are thus using all despicable means to realize their intentions in this regard." Al-Qasim states that the Zionist Christians are of the same mind and work to advance the process by encouraging Jews to immigrate to Palestine.⁶⁷ Israel, according to him, "is seeking to implement their plan to expel all of the Palestinian and Muslim inhabitants,

to destroy the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, to rebuild the 'alleged' temple in its place, and to [re]-establish the Davidic and Solomonic kingdom in anticipation of the coming of the Messiah."⁶⁸

The current fear campaign under the banner "al-Aqsa is in Danger" is enjoying greater success than did Hajj Amin al-Husseini's activity during the British Mandate period. It must be emphasized that the religious symbols of al-Aqsa and Jerusalem and the concomitant propaganda do not stand alone. They are part of a broader political agenda in whose service myths are formulated and the media mobilized. Muslim audiences absorb the "al-Aqsa is in Danger" message along with the abundance of other images and information that exist regarding Israel and its activity vis-à-vis the Palestinians in the territories, and the campaign has made significant inroads into Muslim public awareness. Here are several examples: Dr. Ma'an Abu Nuwar, an Oxford-based Jordanian historian and former senior police officer (known for his Arab-nationalist views), has written in an op-ed stating that the Jews are seeking to destroy the blessed al-Aqsa Mosque and to build Solomon's Temple on its ruins.⁶⁹ Jordanian journalist Yasir al-Za'atara wrote that, despite the fact that there was no televised broadcast of the Islamic Movement's "al-Aqsa is in Danger" festival (in 2002), it nevertheless echoed across the entire Arab and Islamic world. According to him, "Sheikh Ra'id Salah is the foremost Palestinian symbol of the inhabitants of the territories occupied since 1948, despite the lack of media coverage" (the article was written prior to Salah's trial). The same *al-Dustour* newspaper issue included an article by publicist 'Ali al-Safadi.⁷⁰ In another opinion piece that appeared in a Jordanian newspaper, a regular columnist for the state-run *al-Dustour* newspaper asks, "Is Israel's intention of building the Third Temple a mere empty threat, and are Interior Minister Tsachi Hanegbi's pronouncements regarding the possibility of opening the Temple Mount to Jewish worship only intended to provoke the Arab world, or do they represent serious intentions?" Basing himself on an article on the Temple Institute (which works to advance this goal) that appeared in the local Israeli paper *Kol Ha'ir*, the author states that these threats should be taken seriously.⁷¹ Another writer, 'Abd al-'Aziz Mustafa, explains in his book that the problem of Jerusalem is the Muslim world's highest priority. Mustafa defines the al-Aqsa Mosque's centrality to the conflict as being "due to the plot that is being woven against it and this lends the issue its Islamic dimension." The author is concerned about young Muslims' ignorance regarding al-Aqsa and his book is, therefore, aimed at motivating Muslims "to act to save the holy Mosque before the Jews

and the Christians destroy it.”⁷² Against the background of the opening of the Western Wall Tunnel’s northern exit, Syria’s grand mufti at the time, Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro, issued a statement of identification with the Palestinians’ violent displays of opposition to Israel, adding that Israel was using the search for Solomon’s Temple as an excuse to harm the foundations on which the al-Aqsa Mosque stands.⁷³ Kuftaro added that Israel wants to swallow up Arab and Muslim land and is not interested in peace. Moreover, according to Kuftaro, Israel was violating all of the agreements and he, therefore, called upon Arabs and Muslims “to unite and perform the religious duty of defending land and life and the holy places against the enemy, including making use of the trade embargo weapon against countries that provide assistance to Israel.”⁷⁴

One may form an idea of the prevalence and influence of the “al-Aqsa is in Danger” messages from the fact that the Islamic Movement in Israel sponsored an annual pan-Islamic competition for essays to be published on its Web site, under the slogan “*Bayt-al-Maqdis fi Khatar*” (Jerusalem is in Danger). In 2001, for example, the competition drew 20,000 essays written by Muslims in twenty different countries.⁷⁵ The Movement also mobilizes children and youth in an educational awareness-raising campaign to collect donations for the defense of al-Aqsa. Thus, on August 25, 2002, the Islamic Movement organized an “al-Aqsa Children’s Fund” convention at the al-Aqsa site. According to the event’s organizers, 12,000 children were bused to the site together with their parents in vehicles provided for free by Arab transportation companies. In an announcement on behalf of the movement the organizers thanked the media organs that had covered the event and condemned the Arab satellite stations that had failed to do so. The movement expected to collect 3 million shekels (\$660,000) via this campaign, to be used for renovations at the al-Aqsa compound.⁷⁶

The development of Jewish myths is also a source of concern to Islamic officialdom. Thus, engineer Ra’if Nijm, a former Jordanian minister who currently serves as deputy chairman of the Royal Jordanian Committee on Restoration of the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, stated, in a May 2003 lecture at Amman’s Shouman Club entitled “The Siege of Jerusalem,” that Israel had dug an underground house of worship next to the Western Wall Tunnel that provided a venue for the screening of a film presenting what he referred to as “a falsified history of Jerusalem.”⁷⁷ Nijm was apparently referring to the short film shown to visitors to the Davidson Center next to the southern Temple Mount excavations. According to publications of the center, which is located

near the Dung Gate, the film “depicts a Jew’s journey during the three Pilgrimage Festivals, as he ascends to Jerusalem in order to perform the commandment of pilgrimage to the Temple Mount. The film includes portions of the computerized virtual model of the Temple Mount, in which the paths leading to it are also presented. This simulation enables viewers to travel 2,000 years back in time and to become immersed in the city’s day-to-day activities of that period.”

5.3 Jerusalem Belongs to the Entire Muslim Nation

Yasser Arafat’s consent to the Oslo process, with its postponement of deliberations over the most contentious issues, including that of Jerusalem, was accompanied by a firm commitment on his part to ensuring that the eastern, Palestinian-inhabited part of the city, including the Old City and the al-Aqsa compound, would ultimately be under Palestinian sovereignty. In my estimation, control over Jerusalem’s Islamic holy sites will be a significant political and economic asset to the future Palestinian state. It will garner for the Palestinians a place of importance in pan-Arab and pan-Islamic forums, and it will also be able to serve as a valuable impetus for development investment (centered on the tourism and the Muslim and Christian pilgrimage industries). By contrast, an arrangement that may be interpreted as a relinquishment of the Islamic shrines will damage the image of the PA, and its leadership, in the eyes of Arab and Muslim world.

Arafat’s speech at a Johannesburg mosque on May 17, 1994, provides an opportunity to analyze his position. In this speech Arafat attempted to defend his willingness to sign the Oslo Accords while also continuing to fan the sparks of the struggle and to maintain his freedom fighter image in case the agreement should collapse and he should be forced to return to the arena of armed struggle. During that speech, Arafat stated:

The Jihad will continue and Jerusalem is not for the Palestinian People. It is for all the Muslim Umma [nation], all the Muslim Umma. You are responsible for Palestine and for Jerusalem before me...

[...] you have to understand, our main battle is not to get how much we can achieve from them here or there. Our main battle is Jerusalem...

[...] I can’t, and I have to speak frankly, I can’t do it [the struggle for Jerusalem] alone, without the support of the Islamic Umma, I

can't do it alone. And not to say like the Jews, "Go thou, and thy Lord, and fight ye two" [Qur'an 5:27]. "Go and your God to fight alone." No, you have to come and to fight and to start a Jihad to liberate Jerusalem, your first shrine . . .

[...] They will try to demolish and to change the demographic[s] of Jerusalem. It is very important, unless we have to be (inaudible) cautious and to put it in our priorities and nothing were to be priority than Jerusalem. To put it in our first priority, not only as Palestinians, not only as Arabs, but as Muslims and as Christians too.⁷⁸

The speech expresses the importance to the Palestinians of the struggle, presented here as jihad, for East Jerusalem. From the time of the Oslo Accords, Arafat conducted a propaganda campaign in which he portrayed the al-Aqsa and Jerusalem issue not as an exclusively Palestinian affair, but rather as one that belongs to the entire Muslim world. Transferring responsibility to the Muslim world means that the political leaderships of the Arab countries and the Muslim communities as such have to take moral responsibility for the "dangers" of a Judaicized Jerusalem and for harm to al-Aqsa. After the failure of the second Camp David summit Arafat said: "Before the conflict ends, the most important thing is to solve the problem of Jerusalem. This is not a task for the Palestinian people only, but rather for all Arabs: Muslims and Christians."⁷⁹ This message has been reiterated by other religious and political figures.

Several months after the al-Aqsa Intifada broke out, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the most popular mufti in the Muslim world today, said in a television interview that "Now the danger to al-Aqsa is greater than it was previously, now the danger exists of losing Jerusalem altogether. All Muslims around the world must therefore rise up and defend it, because it is not the exclusive property of the Palestinians but rather of the Islamic nation, just as Mecca does not belong to Saudi Arabia but rather to the entire Muslim world."⁸⁰ The message's practical significance was expressed by Yusuf Salama, Palestinian minister of waqf and religious affairs, in a November 2002 interview. Salama said that Yasser Arafat made no decision at the second Camp David summit regarding Jerusalem prior to consulting with Sheikh Za'id Aal Nahiyani (Abu Dhabi), Crown Prince Abdallah of Saudi Arabia, and President Husni Mubarak of Egypt, because he is convinced that the Palestinian problem is not that of the Palestinians alone but rather of all Arabs and Muslims.⁸¹ In 2002, Salama's ministry published a book on the history of the al-Aqsa Mosque, dedicated to "those who have vowed not

to rest until their eyes shall see liberated Jerusalem; to those who have sacrificed their lives for Palestine, Jerusalem and al-Aqsa; to the leader of the Palestinian people who loved Jerusalem; and to those who never cease to assert that '[t]here shall be no compromise on even one centimeter of holy Jerusalem'; and to the originator of the saying 'There is not one among us who belittles the importance of even one centimeter of honored Jerusalem.'"⁸²

A vivid illustration of the relationship between Jerusalem and the Muslim world may be seen in a poster that was distributed by the PA at the beginning of the al-Aqsa Intifada, in which a Palestinian child mocks an armed Israeli soldier against the background of the al-Aqsa Mosque. The poster's slogan: "Defending the al-Aqsa Mosque—the duty of 1,300,000,000 Muslims."⁸³ The poster was distributed at the pan-Arab book fair in Cairo that year; a large Muslim population in Egypt and other Arab and Muslim countries was exposed to it.⁸⁴

Based on the statements of Arab and Muslim leaders, clerics, intellectuals, and publicists, Arafat's message has been readily received by the Arab and Islamic world. The political significance of this lies in a concomitant constraint on Palestinian flexibility: Palestinian leaders will have to obtain the consent of the leaders of key Muslim states such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Morocco to any agreement that may be conceived relating to the sovereignty over Jerusalem and the holy sites.

5.4 Jihad

The conflict's Islamization actually began during the pan-Arab-nationalist era, and Gamal Abd al-Nasser also made use of it in his day, although his ideology was secular. In the wake of the August 1969 al-Aqsa Mosque fire, Egyptian president Nasser composed a letter to soldiers in the Egyptian army, in which he expressed himself thus:

I have thought a great deal about the despicable crime against our faith's most sacred site, against our history and against our culture . . . and I have reached the conclusion that Arab force is the only way . . . In the next battle you will no longer be the army of your nation only, but rather the army of Allah . . . the defenders of faiths and homes and God's holy books. This will not be a war of liberation only, but rather a war of purification (*ma'rakat tathir*) . . . We cast our eyes now upon the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, which

is currently beset by the forces of evil... Our armies shall return to the al-Aqsa Mosque plaza, and Jerusalem shall be restored to its pre-colonialist state.

From Hassan Ma'mun—the head of al-Azhar—Nasser received in response a telegram that stated that “the enemy of Allah will not depart from the land of peace except through jihad, so that Jerusalem may once again be Islamic as God has willed.”

Nasser and Ma'mun viewed jihad as the duty of Muslim rulers to send their armies to fight a holy war. However, the al-Azhar Institute's Research Committee, which published Nasser's and Ma'mun's statements, has interpreted jihad differently in this context: It is not only a public duty, but also the personal duty (*farḍ `ayn*) of every Muslim to fight for Jerusalem's liberation: “Now jihad has become the personal duty of anyone who is able to fulfill it. Every part of the world [all Muslim communities] must send a group to participate in jihad, and whoever cannot take part physically should send money or weapons. The current situation is a stain on the brow of all Muslims,” the pamphlet states.⁸⁵

This message also appeared in a song by Umm Kulthum of Egypt, the Arab world's most popular singer. The song is entitled *The Three Holy Cities*, and its third verse is as follows:

From the place from which Muhammad ascended to the heavens during the night, from Jerusalem the pure and unsullied, I hear... a cry for help. I know that the enemies have burned the holiest place and trampled upon it in their arrogance. I hear the sad stones lamenting in the dark of night: Woe unto Jerusalem, caught in the aggressor's grasp, oh no! The sun shall not rise upon the hateful occupier. The land shall return to its praiseworthy and powerful owner. The al-Aqsa Mosque shall be restored to its Masters and shall fill His believers with pride. The sun shall rise again over our homeland, more loyal than ever to Allah.⁸⁶

In contrast to the other messages mentioned above, the duty of jihad to liberate Jerusalem as a personal religious obligation (*farḍ `ayn*) is endorsed primarily by Islamic religious or nationalist extremists, and there is no way of determining its influence on the public at large.

Before the first Intifada broke out, a pan-Islamic body that deals with Muslim legal rulings (*al-Majma' al-Fiqhi al-Islami*) convened in Mecca and ruled that Jerusalem's liberation is every Muslim's personal duty.

The convention honored the Palestinian people for its participation in jihad, citing religious rulings that underscore the obligation of jihad and reject the possibility of a peace treaty with Israel and noting that the Qur'an is mightier than international law.⁸⁷ The view of jihad as a personal obligation began to gain currency among Muslim clerics from the time of the first Intifada's outbreak in December 1987. Thus, Sheikh 'Abd al-Latif Mushtahri, former director of homiletics at al-Azhar, enumerated, in a book that he published in 1988, what he described as "the series of Zionist crimes that began in ancient times and have continued throughout history, including the al-Aqsa fire,"—crimes to which, according to Mushtahri, the time has come to put an end via jihad. "This is a life or death issue for which all Muslims must mobilize," he wrote.⁸⁸

Beginning with the first Intifada, and with increased urgency since the second, the state of Jerusalem under Israeli occupation has been presented as the problem of all Muslims and as a stain upon the brow of all Muslims until such time as the city shall be liberated. The most prominent of the Islamic ideologues who propound this view is Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi. The title of his book, *Jerusalem Is the Problem of Every Muslim*, illustrates this approach. Here clerics differ over the issue of whether the entire Muslim nation's duty regarding Jerusalem also gives it the right to sovereignty over the city; of particular interest is the question of whether the negotiators have the religious authority to reach an agreement with Israel regarding Jerusalem's permanent status. There are those who feel that no compromise over Jerusalem may be authorized and thus that the Muslim nation has the sovereign authority to torpedo any such compromise, and there are those who distinguish between the duty of jihad and the city's sovereignty after its liberation. Abu 'Aliya of Saudi Arabia writes, for example, that, due to Jerusalem's special sanctity, it is every Muslim's personal duty to defend and fortify it, thus making it the task of the entire Muslim world. The Zionist danger, according to him, is a danger to all Muslims, since it is a form of colonialism that poses a general threat. "The entire Muslim world is therefore now urgently enjoined to liberate Jerusalem and Palestine from the Zionist Jews who aggressively seek to suppress the rights of the Arab and Muslim world." Jerusalem is waiting for the Arabs and the Muslims to liberate her from occupation, writes Abu 'Aliya, adding a rhetorical question: "And who will hasten to her aid after Saladin?" He concludes that the Muslim world's duty vis-à-vis Jerusalem is that of preparing itself for a prolonged jihad in order to restore Jerusalem and Palestine to its inhabitants [the Muslim Palestinians]. The entire

Islamic world resolutely affirms its right to the sacred places upon which Muslim blood has been spilled and is adamant about the Holy Land's Islamic character. Nevertheless, the burden must be borne first and foremost by the Arab and Muslim Palestinian people, who, because the Mosque is located on their territory, are charged with leading the struggle.⁸⁹

Jihad in the context of the call to liberate East Jerusalem from Israeli control has also become a central motif employed by radical Islamists who define the struggle against the Jews as a religious war. Thus, 'Abd al-'Aziz Mustafa writes that the jihad against the Jews is a Shari'a obligation and that the next war against them will be a religious war. Mustafa quotes a well-known *hadith* (cited in the canonical collections) according to which a time will come when the Jews will be hiding behind every tree and rock and the Muslims will be called upon to kill them.⁹⁰ Another author, 'Abd al-Tawab Mustafa, writes that, from the day on which Palestine's Arab inhabitants welcomed their conquering Muslim brothers, Palestine became Arab and Muslim, and that since then its defense has been the duty of all Muslims. He adds that the fact that thousands of *shahids* (martyrs) have died in the city's defense and conquest testifies to the special place that Jerusalem holds in Muslim hearts and minds, and to the consequent duty of Muslims to ensure its safety. Mustafa points to differing approaches between independent clerics and the heads of al-Azhar. According to him, while a defeatist attitude in relation to Israel was displayed by the governments of Egypt and other Arab countries (and by the heads of the al-Azhar Institute, who are subordinate to Egypt's president), those clerics who do not occupy formal positions at al-Azhar rule correctly regarding the duty of jihad to liberate Jerusalem.⁹¹

Jerusalem, like all of Palestine, is frequently defined as "the Land of the Holy Jihad." Shaqaldi, for example, writes that this is the holiest land on the face of the earth. Due to its status as the cradle of the prophets, it is the center of the world to which everyone has come and touched his head, and all of the important events have taken place in this land. It is, therefore, the Land of Jihad and the field of battle for the *shuhada* (who sacrifice themselves for it) and a graveyard for the enemies who coveted and occupied it. Moreover, Jerusalem's destiny is that of Palestine as well—the enemy's "land of defeat" (*ard al-hasm*), the place where the Romans, the Tatars, and the Crusaders were ultimately subdued.⁹²

Shaqaldi writes that the Haram (al-Sharif) in Jerusalem differs from the two sacred mosques in Mecca and al-Madina (*haramayn*), in that it

has traditionally been defined as the third mosque after the two that preceded it (*thalith al-haramayn*), that is, it is not a permanent *haram* (highest sanctuary) until Judgment Day, but rather a *haram* that has been exalted by means of holy jihad. It is not protected like the *haramayn* against which no hand may be raised, but it is rather a *haram* that the Muslims have always defended via jihad.⁹³

Dr. `Adnan `Ali Rida al-Nahawi, an author identified with the Palestinian-Islamist stream, published a book in 1993 in which he wrote that the land of Palestine is a land of *ribat* (defense) and jihad and that the very issuing of religious rulings on the subject—the efforts to seek fatwas forbidding *sulh* (peace) with the Jews and enjoining jihad against them in order to liberate Palestine—is itself proof of the Muslim world's weakness, since a fatwa is an interpretation and not the sacred text itself; whereas, according to al-Nahawi, the problem of Palestine actually appears in the Qur'an and the *sunna*, and these texts should be disseminated.⁹⁴ On the back cover of al-Nahawi's book is a list of the Islamic heroes of *ribat* and *jihad*, starting with Abu `Ubayda ibn al-Jarrah, one of the *sahaba* or companions of the Prophet Muhammad, through Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab and ending with Saladin.

The call to jihad also appears in the texts and speeches of Islamic movements in various locations. Thus, the Muslim Brotherhood organized a demonstration in Zarqa, Jordan, in November 2002, in which the movement's secretary general in Zarqa, Dhib Anis, called for jihad to liberate Jerusalem from the Jewish enemy.⁹⁵ Another recent example is the "al-Quds Culture Fair" that opened on July 5, 2005, adjacent to Saladin's Castle in the Jordanian town of Ajloun, under the sponsorship of Dr. Ishaq al-Farhan of the Islamic Movement and with the participation of thousands. In his welcoming address, the fair's director, Sa`ud Abu Mahfudh, drew parallels between Jerusalem's liberation from the Crusaders by Saladin and current events.⁹⁶

5.5 The Current Saladin Myth

Farhan's words of analogy between the Crusaders and Israeli Jews leads us to highlight another future-oriented myth. It takes a past event and seeks to transport it into the future: when Muslims compare Jerusalem's present with its Crusader past they equate the city's return to Muslim rule to its liberation by Saladin.

Jerusalem's capture by Israel in June 1967 was perceived by many Muslims, and not just by Islamic radicals, as comparable to its capture

by the Crusaders at the end of the eleventh century. They make an analogy between the June 1967 trauma and that of July 1099, as well as between the need to liberate Jerusalem from Israeli occupation and the city's liberation at the hands of Saladin. Moreover, the coincidental timing of Saladin's entry into Jerusalem on 27 Rajab—the date on which the Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey to al-Aqsa (*al-isra'*) is traditionally commemorated—is interpreted by Muslims as a sign from heaven. Ziad Abu-`Amr, a scholar at Birzeit University (and recently a Palestinian politician), also claims that the Israeli occupation reminds Arabs and Muslims of their weakness and of the need to rise up and liberate Jerusalem from Jewish hegemony.⁹⁷ The sense of inferiority and weakness appears to serve as a motivating factor in the development of the contemporary Saladin myth.

The call to Muslims' jihad, including Jerusalem's liberation, currently emanates from the Islamist circles and from Islamic groups that oppose the prevailing regimes in various Arab countries—regimes that have engaged in peace talks with Israel (Egypt, Jordan, and the Arab-Saudi peace initiative). It is clear to the Arab regimes that jihad is an empty slogan. The Arab countries concentrate their efforts on promoting their own particular interests at the expense of pan-Arab cooperation and, besides, the present balance of power, both in the Middle East region and globally, does not favor the Arabs. The Islamist and anti-Israel elements in the Muslim world tend to cope with the sense of Arab and Muslim inferiority vis-à-vis Israel and the West by cultivating the Saladin myth. Saladin has thus become a contemporary Islamic hero, one employed by political-Islamic revival movements to further their ends, with Arab state officialdom getting caught up in the rhetoric.⁹⁸ Jerusalem's envisioned reconquest by Saladin fuels their belief that the wheel of history is turning and that Islam will ultimately emerge victorious and liberate Jerusalem. For this reason the current Muslim campaign for Jerusalem includes an element of yearning for a second Saladin, a new Muslim hero who will liberate the Holy City from its non-Muslim occupiers. As Sheikh Yusuf Salama, former Palestinian minister for waqf and religious affairs, put it in 2002: "Jerusalem was the unifying factor for Muslims during the Crusader period, and it is what will unify Arabs and Muslims today, with Allah's help."⁹⁹ Barzaq, who wrote a book on al-Aqsa, expresses this hope in the following words: "It is difficult to write in the time that we miss al-Quds and we are aspiring for [a new] `Umar or Saladin who would return to us our al-Quds and our dignity."¹⁰⁰

At the end of the twentieth century, the Muslim world commemorated the eight-hundredth anniversary of Saladin's capture of Jerusalem. A conference in honor of Jerusalem was held in 1987 by the Association of Arab Historians in Baghdad to mark the event. The conference ended with a joint statement regarding "the need to liberate Jerusalem from the Zionist defilement, as Saladin liberated it from the Crusader defilement."¹⁰¹ Within this context, the Palestinians and the Jordanians make use of the burning of the *minbar*, associated with Saladin, during the 1969 al-Aqsa Mosque fire. The Jerusalem Waqf preserved remnants of the *minbar* for restoration,¹⁰² Hashemite Jordan, under King Abdallah II, funded the restoration and after the completion of the work it was placed back in the mosque in 2007.

In 1990, the OIC's Jerusalem Committee declared the first al-Quds Day on October 2—the day in 1187 on which Saladin defeated the Crusaders in the Battle of the Horns of Hittin, thereby paving the way to his victory in Jerusalem. On the second such al-Quds Day, held in November 1991, three spokesmen mentioned Saladin. Khalid al-Karaki, the then Jordanian minister of culture and higher education, who sponsored the event, referred to the Zionists as "the new Franks who came from the West flying the banner of religion, and Jerusalem fell to them." Palestine, according to him, is "Arab Islamic land that cannot be relinquished, and even if a particular leader gives up parts of it for tactical or strategic reasons, this is not binding for the Arab-Muslim nation whose duty it is to liberate all of the Palestinian national territory." Al-Karaki connected Palestine's liberation with Saladin, whose situation was, according to him, no better than that of the Arabs today when he set out on his mission to liberate Jerusalem. Al-Karaki raises this belief to the level of ideology, which he refers to as *Salahdiniyya* (Saladinism), a model to be studied and emulated. According to the Jordanian conference participants' narrative, Saladin was a Muslim jihadist for Jerusalem's liberation, one in the chain that began with Caliph `Umar I and continued via Saladin and on to `Abd Al-Qadir Al-Husseini, one of the leaders of the irregular fighting force against the Jewish Yishuv during the Mandate period, Hashemite Sharif al-Husayn ibn `Ali (the leader of the 1916 Arab revolt), and his son King Abdullah I of Jordan who captured (East) Jerusalem in 1948.¹⁰³

Evidence of the degree to which the myth has been internalized may be found in the words of an East Jerusalem resident, Jamila Natur, quoted in a children's activity-book. Jamila Natur, a Jerusalemite who

was born before 1948 and lived as a girl in the San Simone neighborhood, says,

The Crusaders, as we know, came from Europe, conquered the land and tried to establish the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem here. The end is common knowledge: they did not succeed in adapting to the regional conditions, their kingdom fell apart and disappeared and the remaining occupiers returned to Europe. For us there can be no doubt that history is repeating itself with amazing accuracy. The Jews have also come mainly from Europe, they are also unable to adapt to the region and the climate, and the fate of the Zionist state will be similar to that of the Crusader kingdom. What we are still lacking is a contemporary Saladin, a great Arab leader capable of uniting the ranks and expelling the invader.¹⁰⁴

The Saladin myth thus signifies a kind of historical cyclicity that is expected to restore Jerusalem to Islamic sovereignty. The figure of Saladin has come to feature prominently in contemporary Islamic discourse, particularly in publications about Jerusalem, including books dedicated to Saladin's conquest of the city.¹⁰⁵

5.6 The Attempt to Forge a Muslim-Christian Alliance

The Arab and Muslim world's Jerusalem discourse is an overwhelmingly Islamic one, in which Christian Arabs are excluded from the Palestinian and Arab-nationalist objectives in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Moreover, some of the al-Aqsa campaign's messages (the apocalyptic traditions, for example) also include anti-Christian elements. The Palestinian leadership is, therefore, seeking ways to bring about a rapprochement with the Christian community. Another reason behind these overtures is, of course, Jerusalem's sanctity and the importance of its holy sites to the Christian world, which make the Western powers and Western religious and international institutions important factors in the issue of Jerusalem's future. The PA and official clerics have been making efforts to create a myth of joint Christian-Muslim interest in Jerusalem. For this reason the Palestinian political and general Islamic discourse features many expressions of Christian-Muslim partnership or fraternity regarding the question of the Jerusalem holy sites.¹⁰⁶ The Palestinians usually put forth the claim that maintenance of the status quo at Jerusalem's Christian sites

and church institutions is also their responsibility. In order to balance the Islamic discourse that alienates Christians, the Palestinians and the Islamists themselves employ two different lexicons—a religious-Islamic one and an Arab-nationalist one—depending on the audience in question. Thus, for example, Palestinian mufti Sheikh Ikrima Sabri has referred to the Christian factor as contributing to the Palestinians’ strategic depth, stating in an interview with the Egyptian *al-Musawwar* shortly before the second Camp David talks that Jerusalem provides the Arabs—Muslims and Christians—with strategic depth.¹⁰⁷ Yasser Arafat also said on many occasions that he represents the Christians too. In many of his statements, he mentioned that he represents the Arabs, including both Muslims and Christians.

The central message is thus that the Jerusalem and Palestine issue is also the Christian Arab community’s affair, as illustrated by the following examples: Ahmad Kufaro, Syria’s former grand mufti, said in a lecture at al-Azhar University on “Christian-Muslim solidarity in Jerusalem” that the Christians have supported their Arab-Muslim brothers in the defense of the holy places and of Arab national interests in general. Muslims, for their part, have historically treated Christians with respect, according them special “protected” (*dhimi*) status, defending them and exempting them from military service. In his lecture, Kufaro presented various historical examples of Christian-Muslim cooperation, some over holy site issues, and, citing a relevant Qur’anic verse, added that the Christians are closer to Islam than to the Jews whom he characterized as closer to paganism; Muslims, according to Kufaro, are thus enjoined to display more hostility toward Jews than toward Christians.¹⁰⁸ This verse is widely cited in Arabic anti-Semitic publications.

In regard to Clinton’s proposals regarding the Temple Mount, Arafat is quoted by Palestinian cabinet member Saeb Arekat as having said: “What do the Jews want underneath the Temple Mount? And the Armenians who took refuge in Palestine are dearer to me than any other group. I negotiate in the name of the Arabs, the Muslims and the Christians.”¹⁰⁹ Arafat is additionally quoted by one of his advisors, Akram Haniyya, as having told Clinton, “I serve as the permanent Deputy Chairman of the Islamic Summit, and I protect the rights of Christians.”¹¹⁰ Rejecting Israel’s demand for sovereignty over the holy sites, Arafat stated in an interview with the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) that both Christian and Muslim Arabs found the demand unacceptable. “However, I offered them [the Jews] freedom of prayer at the Western Wall. They are praying there, and I offered that they would be able to continue with their prayers, because I respect

Judaism ... they will have an open corridor to reach the Western Wall and they have to respect our worship as Muslims and as Christians.”¹¹¹

The IDF siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem in April 2002, in which about 40 Palestinian armed men took over the church, one of the most important in Christianity, with approximately 80 church staff and civilians trapped for the duration, gave the Palestinians and Islamists a golden opportunity to add a Christian dimension to the jihadist approach by presenting the event as a war to defend the Christian holy site. It is interesting to reflect on how the desecration of one of Christianity’s holiest sites by Palestinian terrorists was transformed into the more respectable act of “Muslim defense of the Christian holy site from desecration at the hands of the Jewish military forces.” A ruling was published on the al-Azhar Web site, issued jointly by several al-Azhar muftis, according to which one who dies in the defense of the Church of the Nativity is a *shahid*; the opportunity was also taken to rule that charity (the Islamic obligation of *zakat*, in which charity is collected during the month of Ramadan and distributed to needy Muslims) on behalf of the Christians of Palestine is permissible according to Muslim law. Sheikh Muhammad al-Jazzar, a member of al-Azhar’s Fatwa Committee, explained the ruling thus:

The residents of Palestine today are warriors in a holy war, and because the suffering endured by the Palestinian people is shared jointly by Muslims and Christians, *zakat* funds (of the entire world Muslim population) must therefore be donated to both Muslims and Christians, since they are defending Muslim land. The Church of the Nativity is a holy place that must be defended and a Muslim state in which this Church operates has an obligation to protect it, and thus anyone who has fallen in the defense of the Church of the Nativity becomes *shahid* in the highest degree, he will be resurrected together with all of the prophets and righteous ones.¹¹²

This ruling received the support of al-Azhar secretary general Mahmud `Ashur, who added that Islam commands Muslims to respect “the People of the Book” and their holy places, as Muslim history tells of the respect accorded to the Najran Christians by the Prophet Muhammad, who allowed them to pray in the mosque where Muslims prayed.¹¹³ Joining him in support of this fatwa was Sheikh al-Sayyid Wafa’, secretary general of al-Azhar’s research institute, adding that the ulema conference that had recently been held at al-Azhar had authorized this legal-religious approach and had gone even further by calling upon all Muslims to donate their

zakat money that year to the inhabitants of Palestine—both Muslims and Christians. The fatwa thus reflects, according to al-Sayyid Wafa', the position of al-Azhar's Islamic scholars. Another mufti, Sheikh `Abd al-`Azim al-Hamayli, a former member of al-Azhar's Fatwa Committee, even ruled that in this instance the *zakat* donation may be made earlier than usual (that is, rather than waiting for the month of Ramadan), such as the Palestinians' suffering. The mufti based his ruling on the tradition that Caliph `Umar ibn al-Khattab had ordered that *zakat* money be given to an old Jew whom he had encountered in al-Madina, saying: "It would not be right to abandon him in his old age." Hamayli added that the Church of the Nativity incident amounted to an attack [by the Jews] and to the imprisonment of all those present in the church, including monks and priests. A slightly different opinion was expressed by Dr. Muhammad Ri'fat `Uthman, formerly dean of al-Azhar's faculty of Shari`a, who stated that those who were in the Church of the Nativity were exposed to criminal gunfire, and that the Palestinians had returned fire and suffered casualties. This act was considered to be one of defense of human life, whether the lives defended were those of Muslims who had sought refuge in the church or those of the Christian priests who were serving there. It is a Muslim's duty to protect a Christian if his life is in danger or his property or honor threatened, even if the aggressor is a Muslim. `Uthman's ruling differs from the above ruling in that the slain Muslim in this case is not a *shahid* of the first degree (one considered to be a *shahid* in this world as well, so that it is not necessary to wash his corpse, wrap him in a burial shroud, or pray for his soul), but rather a *shahid* only in the world to come.¹¹⁴

These conciliatory efforts, interesting though they may be, have apparently failed to impress the Christians living in the Palestinian territories; since the rise of radical Islam, they have come to feel increasingly threatened.¹¹⁵ The rise of Islamist groups such as Hamas in the West bank spurred Christian emigration.¹¹⁶ Moreover, Bethlehem Christians became a minority in the city.¹¹⁷ It was reported that Christians of Ramallah, Bethlehem, Beit Jala, and Beit Sahour felt threatened during the first Intifada and more so since the outbreak of the second Intifada that was inspired by the Islamic brand of al-Aqsa.

The Muslim students' struggle to establish a mosque on the Catholic Church-affiliated Bethlehem University campus and the Islamic Movement in Israel's campaign to build the Shihab al-Din Mosque in close proximity to the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth are two examples that serve to illustrate Christian fears. Moreover, in the Church of the Nativity incident described above, the Christian clergy

present a different narrative of the church takeover, one that implies (without stating it openly) harsh criticism of the Palestinian gunmen who sowed chaos in the church and placed it in the eye of the storm. Following the agreement between Israel and the PA for the expulsion from the West Bank of the Palestinian gunmen who had taken shelter in the church, the Bethlehem Christians expressed their relief: “Finally the Christians can breathe freely,” said Helen, 50, a Christian mother of four. “We are so delighted that these criminals who have intimidated us for such a long time are now going away.”¹¹⁸

In conclusion, Jerusalem and the al-Aqsa Mosque are two religious identity symbols employed by the Arab-Muslim party in the conflict over Palestine within a strategy of Islamizing the conflict and giving it a shape of a “clash of civilizations” (in the Huntingtonian term) or, more precisely, a clash between religions. The Islamic strategy was constructed to cope with the challenges put by the Israeli-Jewish party to the conflict, which creates many confrontational incidents in and around the Temple Mount/al-Aqsa compound. Indeed, the campaign entitled “al-Aqsa is in Danger” was first employed publicly by Islamist groups following the events of October 1990 mentioned above. The 17 Palestinians who died as a result of these events led to the term “The al-Aqsa Massacre.” A video cassette entitled *Bayan min Ma’azin al-Quds* (A Call from the Minarets of Jerusalem)—prepared by “The World Forum for Muslim Youth—The Committee for Palestine Youth” and disseminated by a Saudi Arabian company (Mu’assasat Qurtuba lil-Intaj al-Fanni)—which I purchased in Sydney, Australia, documented what it called “the movie that tells the ongoing attempts to destroy the blessed al-Aqsa Mosque and to erect on its ruins the alleged Temple.”

This chapter shows that the campaign of Islamizing the conflict via the issue of Jerusalem has proved effective, judging by the many examples of media coverage, opinion articles, and other manifestations published in the Arab/Muslim world. The messages are that Jerusalem belongs to the entire Muslim nation. The fact that it is controlled by the Jews is seen as a mark of guilt on every individual Muslim as well as on every Arab and Muslim state, each called upon to launch jihad to liberate Jerusalem. The aspiration for a second Saladin to emerge to rescue the holy city has been widely disseminated and inculcated in the Muslim world. Islamist groups have propagated these messages, but they have also been welcomed by masses across the Muslim world.

The next chapter identifies the many religious-political actors who were involved in the operations and actions to implement the Islamization strategy, and their achievements.

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CHAPTER 6

Actors, Disseminators, and Achievements

A significant number of Islamic personages and entities place Jerusalem at the forefront of the national struggle against Israel. Jerusalem is for them an asset to be employed in their efforts to mobilize the Arab and Muslim world. Who are the actors who have been driving the process of elevating the status of Jerusalem for Muslims during the last generation? What are their goals and their methods? At the very outset, it should be pointed out that there is no one single directing hand or an orderly inter-Arab or pan-Islamic strategic plan. There are many different actors in this arena, with each individual or group fulfilling a particular function in accordance with his conceptual world and motivating factors. Nevertheless, a few central players may be identified:

6.1 Jordanian, Palestinian, and Israeli Muslim Functionaries

Jordan and Jordanian clerics, including many Jordanian Palestinians, were the ones who launched the campaign to elevate Jerusalem immediately after 1967. Both Jordanian government and opposition representatives still play a role in disseminating such messages.

Two entities were centrally involved in stirring up unrest in the aftermath of the 1969 al-Aqsa fire: the religious and political leadership of the Palestinians in the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, and the Jordanian government. At the time, these two entities were competing with each other for future control of the West Bank, and it was in the political interest of both to seek broad Arab and Islamic support.

Somewhat paradoxically, it was the Jordanian efforts that highlighted the struggle's Palestinian character by opposing its long-term interests. King Hussein, for whom the Jerusalem shrines served as an important symbol in his efforts to legitimize the Hashemite regime, fostered the East Jerusalem and West Bank waqf institution, subsuming it within the Jordanian Waqf Ministry. However, the waqf officials and the heads of West Bank religious institutions were Palestinians, and they were able to pressure the authorities on the issue of the holy sites—a sensitive issue for the highly vulnerable Hashemite regime. The East Jerusalem waqf administration was thus able to influence Jordan to market to the Muslim world the existence of a conflict between a Jewish religious-political front and a Muslim one regarding Jerusalem, and the importance of broad worldwide Muslim support. The Palestinians in general and Palestinian religious entities in particular—the East Jerusalem and West Bank waqf (among them, former Palestinian mufti Sheikh Ikrima Sabri)—are prime movers in the al-Aqsa-Jerusalem-Palestine campaign.

The third factor, which enjoys perhaps the greatest organizational and disseminating ability, is the Islamic Movement in Israel—both the northern and the southern branches—but Sheikh Ra'ïd Salah, the head of the northern faction, is the leading force behind the campaign. It must be emphasized that the Arab-Muslim citizens of Israel (about 350,000 in 1967 and 880,000 in 2008) have vested interest in both, a permanent solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and in a Palestinian-Muslim sovereignty over al-Haram al-Sharif. In June 1967, Israel's Muslim citizens were able to access al-Haram al-Sharif after a 19-year period of exclusion during Jordanian rule in East Jerusalem. Shortly after taking over East Jerusalem in June 7, the Israeli government was interested in showing that Muslim worship at the al-Aqsa Mosque would be unhindered. The first prayer at al-Aqsa Mosque was broadcast in Arabic over the Voice of Israel (the Israeli national radio station) by religious programming editor Nur al-Din Darini (Abu Jarir), a Muslim citizen of Israel. They also provided transportation for Israeli Muslims to attend the first Friday prayers after the war.

There are two interesting examples of how Israeli Arabs have identified with the Palestinian side regarding the battle over the sacred compound. After a demonstrative tour of the Temple Mount/Haram by members of the Knesset's Internal Affairs Committee in 1986 and the publication of rabbinic decisions permitting Jews to enter the site, Ibrahim Nimr Hussein, the chairman of the National Committee of Arab Mayors, issued the following declaration: "We shall not rest nor

shall we remain silent until the status quo is preserved in the place we hold dear.”¹ Another example is the declaration issued by *qadis* (judges) and employees of Israel’s Shari`a Courts in February 1986 that stated that any attempt to violate the accepted agreements on the Temple Mount is liable to end in a clash between religions.

Another dimension of the involvement of Israeli Arabs is that of the Islamic Movement. Sheikh Ra’id Salah, the head of the northern branch, was largely responsible for the construction and restoration activities that took place on the Temple Mount during the second half of the 1990s (the construction of huge prayer halls on the lower level—Solomon’s Stables and al-Aqsa al-Qadima). The successful dissemination of the “al-Aqsa is in Danger” message may be attributed to his activity and to the mass rallies that his movement has been holding annually since 1996 in Umm al-Fahm. Sheikh Ra’id has succeeded in cultivating connections with the Muslim world, in particular with institutions and individuals in the Gulf countries’ Islamic-religious echelons, and in raising funds on behalf of al-Aqsa and Jerusalem. His movement runs the al-Aqsa Association, which collects information on Islamic holy sites in demolished pre-1948 villages in Israel and works to restore them. Had the minister of the interior not prohibited him from leaving the country in 2002, Sheikh Ra’id would be bringing water from the holy Zamzam Spring in Mecca to the al-Aqsa compound and upgrading the al-Aqsa site’s sanctity to an even greater degree. The Islamic Movement’s southern branch is also active regarding the issue of the shrines, and both branches of the movement run Internet sites on which numerous articles promote the myths and messages discussed above.²

6.2 Islamic Groups in the Arab World

Among the agents significantly involved in disseminating the new and revived religious myths, the Islamist movements around the Muslim world figure prominently. The most important of these was the Hamas, which operates in the Palestinian territories and which in February 2006 rose to power; the Islamic Action Front in Jordan; and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Religious symbols play a highly significant role in promoting these opposition organizations’ antiregime activity among the masses. They disseminate their messages via mosques and movement publications, and they are exceedingly vocal.³

Various distinguished muftis and Islamic establishments in the Arab countries also play an important role in this campaign. Religious rulings, sermons, and announcements that draw attention to the importance of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa, while supporting terrorist acts against Israel as instances of Islamic martyrdom, reiterate the messages that emanate from the Palestinian Authority (PA) and give them broad popular religious legitimacy. Among the prominent actors in this field are Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi in Qatar, various personages connected with the al-Azhar institution in Egypt, and the official muftis of Egypt, Syria, the PA, and Saudi Arabia.

One method used in the dissemination of religious and political messages regarding Jerusalem is that of song. The Jerusalem Waqf's Web site features recordings of over 20 songs about Jerusalem, most of them composed by Palestinians and Jordanians.⁴ Another medium employed is that of the image of al-Aqsa or the Dome of the Rock, which appears in the background of Palestinian and Jordanian news broadcasts and on the front page of a significant number of newspapers and other publications. In recent years books on al-Aqsa and Jerusalem are featured prominently at the annual pan-Arab book fair in Cairo.

The Arab media are another important factor in the dissemination of messages regarding Jerusalem. Nationalist entities make use of media outlets in the Arab world in order to disseminate ideas related to the upgrading of al-Aqsa, Jerusalem, and the Palestinian issue in general, and they are joined by the official and nonsectarian media establishments. Mention must also be made of the significant role played by the many Islamist Web sites, mainly those in Arabic but also those in English and other languages, as well as by publications intended for a general audience written by academics, clerics, and journalists. These books and articles are generally polemical in nature, but their authors enjoy scholarly and religious authority in the eyes of the general public, particularly among uneducated people.

The al-Quds Institute (*Mu'assasat al-Quds*)—an organization founded in November 2000 shortly after the al-Aqsa Intifada began and headed by Dr. Muhammad Akram al-'Adlouni—integrates a variety of communications media in the dissemination of its messages. This institute, situated in Beirut, runs two Web sites, one in Jordan and one in Lebanon. The Institute defines itself as an all-Arab and all-Islamic NGO whose aim is to rescue al-Quds from Israel and to preserve its Arab character and its Muslim and Christian holy sites. The Institute counts among its partners a small number of Christian organizations, mainly in Lebanon, but its main focus is

clearly Islamic. The organization's 180-member senior administration is headed by Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi. His deputies are the chairman of Yemen's parliament, Iranian parliament member 'Ali Akbar Muhtashemi, and Michel Edde, a Lebanese Maronite leader. One of the organization's projects is that of establishing an umbrella organization to include over 100 different groups for which the al-Quds issue is a top priority. The success enjoyed by this Institute in disseminating its messages may be seen from reports according to which al-'Adlouni met in 2003 with the al-Jazeera television network's CEO and reached an agreement with him on the broadcasting of documentaries on Jerusalem. Al-'Adlouni has also met with the editor of Jordan's *al-Sabil* newspaper and with the head of the Middle East Studies Center in Jordan, with whom he reached an agreement to publish studies that serve his organization's purposes. Al-'Adlouni also claims to have met with Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi and with Dr. Hamid al-Ansari, the director of the www.islam-online.net. The organization also reported that in December 2003 it launched (in cooperation with www.ikhwan.net, the Muslim Brotherhood Web site) a six-week online course on the al-Aqsa Mosque, including a refutation of Jewish and Christian claims regarding al-Aqsa site's sanctity.⁵

Al-'Adlouni's organization is one of many in the Arab world (over 100 according to the Institute's publications) for which the Islamic struggle for Jerusalem is the highest priority. Since January 2001, the organization has been holding annual conferences in Beirut, to which senior political figures in the Muslim world have been invited.⁶ The organization has a branch in Yemen and is planning to establish additional branches in all of the Arab and Islamic countries. In 2004, the organization spent about 6 million dollars on various projects, and a similar sum was earmarked for 24 projects in 2005–2006. Some of the initiatives that have received funding are projects of the Islamic Movement in Israel, such as the one to map Islamic holy sites, an Islamic youth march to al-Aqsa (*masirat al-bayariq wal-masatib*), and a weekly *hadith* program on Tuesdays. Among the organization's plans are various objectives: to draw up a comprehensive Islamic strategy for Jerusalem's liberation, to establish a satellite television station to be devoted to the al-Quds issue, to establish a waqf museum, to fund additional guards at the al-Aqsa compound, to organize a mobile al-Quds exhibition, to map holy sites in all of Palestine, to compile an encyclopedia of Islamic clerics, and to establish Islamic endowments in Jerusalem on behalf of various Arab and Muslim countries. The organization has called for the last Friday of

Ramadan to be observed as a worldwide (pan-Islamic) day of support for al-Quds. In mid-November 2007, al-Adlouni organized in Istanbul a large convention entitled “The International al-Quds Forum.” Thirty Muslim organizations contributed to this convention in cooperation with Turkey’s waqf for volunteering organizations (TGTV) and the Union of NGOs of the Islamic World. Their mission statement was “to adapt a project of an international humanitarian movement to protect al-Quds and the legal rights of the Palestinian people” as well as “to embrace the authentic identity of the city, its culture and holiness, its structure and people, and its lands.”⁷

Another association involved in the pan-Islamic awareness campaign regarding Jerusalem is the online *Muntada al-Quds lil-I’lam wa-lil-Thaqafa* (the al-Quds Center for Media and Culture). The organization’s listed objective number six calls for the dissemination of Islamic messages regarding Jerusalem, to Africa and to such East Asian countries as Indonesia and Malaysia in which large numbers of Muslims reside, and for the publication of material in these countries’ languages.⁸

The Arab and Islamic regimes make a contribution of their own to this campaign by sponsoring numerous pan-Arab and pan-Islamic conferences devoted to Islamic issues including the question of Jerusalem and the holy sites. Among these entities are the Saudi-sponsored Muslim World League (*Rabital al-’Alam al-Islami*) and the Jordanian-sponsored Aal al-Bayt Islamic organization. The regimes’ contribution is also reflected in the many school textbooks that convey the aforementioned messages.⁹

6.3 Arab States and Pan-Arab/Pan-Islamic Organizations

The issue of Jerusalem appeared on the political agenda of Arab states in the wake of the al-Aqsa Mosque arson incident in August 1969. There appears to be an almost complete uniformity in the positions of Arab and Muslim states, as indicated by the decisions of pan-Arab and pan-Islamic bodies: Arab Jerusalem, including the al-Aqsa compound, must return to Arab-Muslim sovereignty, that is, to Palestinian control, and it must become the capital of the future independent Palestinian state. Four Arab-Muslim countries have special status in deliberations on the Jerusalem issue: Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Egypt.

Jordan

During the period of Jordanian rule over the West Bank (1948–1967), the Hashemite regime was ambivalent about the Holy City. On the one hand, Jerusalem, with al-Haram al-Sharif at its heart, was the political stronghold of the Hashemite dynasty's enemies—the Husseinis and their allies. On the other hand, Jordan's association with the Holy City enhanced her status in the Muslim world and provided legitimacy to the Hashemites. As the instigators of the Arab revolt against Ottoman rule, the Hashemites saw themselves as the liberators of Jerusalem in 1948 and as the legitimate custodians of Islam's holy sites.¹⁰ Additionally, the Jordanians realized that Jerusalem was of considerable tourist and economic value.

Thus, the Jordanian regime pursued a middle ground for their Jerusalem policy. They developed the city economically and provided their political supporters (many of them of Hebronite descent and long-time supporters of Abdullah I) with important posts in the municipality and in al-Haram al-Sharif's Waqf (the religious trust that administers the site). Simultaneously, the regime developed Amman into the monarchy's most significant political center at the expense of Jerusalem.¹¹

King Abdullah I often attended Friday prayers at the al-Aqsa Mosque and liked to have the Jordanian army's military band play when he entered al-Haram al-Sharif.¹² This offended the religious sensibilities of the Palestinian clergy, who considered a British-style military band a violation of the site's sanctity. The annexation of the West Bank to Jordan in 1950 did not remove the tensions between the Palestinians and the Hashemite regime. King Abdullah I was assassinated at the entrance of the al-Aqsa Mosque in July 1951. According to one version, the assassin's trail led to Hajj Amin al-Husseini.¹³ Several years after his coronation, the young King Hussein also attended public prayers at the al-Aqsa Mosque.

To a great extent, the Jordanians continued the Ottoman tradition of the site's administration, which had been preserved by the British.¹⁴

Some of the Muslim officials in Jerusalem who had been involved in the administration of al-Haram al-Sharif during the Mandatory period continued in their posts even after 1948. They became officials of the Waqf administration, subordinate at first to the prime minister's office and later to an independent ministry—the Religious Endowments Ministry (Awaqf).

In 1954, King Hussein initiated a further phase of al-Haram al-Sharif's restorations and passed a special law for this purpose.¹⁵ Reconstruction

began in 1956 but proceeded slowly because of Jordan's lack of economic resources and the reservations of the Arab states, whose donations were small and slow in coming. With the completion of the repairs on the Dome of the Rock in 1964,¹⁶ Jordan celebrated the event with the attendance of heads of Arab and Muslim countries and the issuing of a special commemorative post stamp showing the Dome of the Rock and a portrait of King Hussein.¹⁷ Subsequently, the Jordanians were able to attract many more Muslim pilgrims and tourists to al-Haram al-Sharif and the Old City. They did not, however, enjoy the fruits of their labors for very long. In June 1967, the Six-Day War broke out and Israel conquered East Jerusalem.

The Jordanian position as expressed by King Hussein (r. 1953–1999) is the exception. This position was presented in detail in an article by Hussein's political advisor Adnan Abu Odeh, who proposed dividing Jerusalem into an Arab section to be called al-Quds, a Jewish section to be called Yerushalayim, and the Old City within the walls, to be called Jerusalem and to be under no one's sovereignty, or under joint sovereignty ("under God's sovereignty," in the words of Hussein).¹⁸ For King Hussein of Jordan the administration of al-Haram al-Sharif was a vital tool for the Hashemite monarchy's legitimization. Hussein thus took care even after 1967 to fund the entire West Bank and East Jerusalem religious system. The first book published by Crown Prince Hasan bin Talal—Jordan's King Hussein's brother—was an academic work that he wrote himself in 1979 on the political controversy surrounding Jerusalem.¹⁹ In 1982, after the PLO's weakening and expulsion from Lebanon, King Hussein appointed a royal Jordanian committee to prevent a change in Jerusalem's character (that is, to prevent its Judaization). One of the functions defined for this body's religious subcommittee was "to draw up a permanent religious plan of action, to affirm Jerusalem's significance and to urge the Arab and Islamic world to liberate the city."²⁰ According to Jordanian government sources, Jordan has spent about a billion dollars since 1954 on al-Aqsa renovations and maintenance. Jordan is still (in 2008) paying the salaries of about 700 Waqf employees in the PA's Jerusalem district, at an annual cost of about 4.5 million dollars.²¹

An incident reflecting the inter-Arab competition over involvement at the compound took place in 1992 when money was needed to conduct urgent renovations of the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque. Both King Hussein of Jordan and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia competed over who would donate the required funding. Finally, King Hussein decided to contribute 8.249 million dollars of his private and family

fortune (from the sale of a house in London) to al-Haram al-Sharif's renovation. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia's request to contribute to the renovations through UNESCO (so as to circumvent the need for Jordanian approval) was rejected by King Hussein.

In the peace agreement signed between Israel and the PA in September 1993, it was agreed that the issue of Jerusalem would be deferred to the negotiations over the permanent status agreements. Jerusalem was not among the jurisdictions granted to the PA, which was established to rule the territories of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank as part of the Oslo agreement. However, on October 11, 1993, Israeli minister of foreign affairs Shimon Peres sent a letter to Foreign Minister Johan Jorgen Holst of Norway assuring him of the following:

I wish to confirm that the Palestinian institutions of East Jerusalem and the interest and well-being of the Palestinians of East Jerusalem are of great importance and will be preserved. Therefore, all the Palestinian institutions of East Jerusalem, including the economic, social, educational and cultural, and the holy Christian and Moslem places, are performing an essential task for the Palestinian population. Needless to say, we will not hamper their activity; on the contrary, the fulfillment of this important mission is to be encouraged.

This letter was used as a trade-off to persuade the PLO chairman to establish the PA's center outside Jerusalem, namely in Ramallah.²² The formation of the PA in 1994 immediately created tensions between the Palestinians and Jordan, and between the two of them and Israel.

In the peace talks with Israel, King Hussein insisted on the inclusion of Article 9 (b)—a special article ensuring that, when conducting permanent-status negotiations with the Palestinians, Israel would give “high priority” to the historic and present role of the Hashemite Kingdom “in Muslim holy shrines in Jerusalem.”²³ However, Israel and Jordan failed to take into account the PA, which, along with other Arab countries, viewed this article as confirming Jordanian recognition of Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem. The subject was discussed at the OIC summit that took place in December 1994 in Casablanca; Jordan's position (which was supported by Yemen, Qatar, and Oman) was categorically rejected, while that of the PLO (supported by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Morocco) prevailed. However, the summit's concluding declaration

referred to the Jerusalem and Palestine issue as a pan-Islamic one whose practical significance lay in the possibility of intervention on the part of Arab-Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Morocco.

Tensions between Jordan and the PA had already come to the fore in July 1994, when Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kollek invited King Hussein to pray at the al-Aqsa Mosque.²⁴ PA head Yasser Arafat responded by declaring that Jerusalem lies within Palestinian jurisdiction and that Israel thus had no right to invite King Hussein there, although Arafat was prepared to extend his own invitation to the king to come and pray together with him.²⁵ Because of these threats, the intended visit did not take place. Another significant achievement for the PLO was the change in composition of the OIC's Jerusalem Committee, headed by King Hassan II of Morocco. King Hussein ultimately abandoned the Casablanca summit, due to the refusal of its participants to express appreciation of Jordan and its King's restoration activities in Jerusalem and at al-Haram al-Sharif, and due to their failure to recognize Jordan's longtime involvement there.²⁶ Jordan, because of this, was obliged to reach an agreement with the PA in which Jordanian authority at al-Haram al-Sharif and the other sites was defined as only temporary, until such time as the PA could receive it via a treaty with Israel.²⁷ This understanding received additional public expression in May 1996, at a meeting in Cairo in which King Hussein, the Egyptian president, and the head of the PA participated. At the end of the meeting King Hussein announced his recognition of the PA's right to sovereignty over East Jerusalem in the context of a permanent arrangement,²⁸ but this consent appears to have been tactical on King Hussein's part. There are various indications that Jordan still seeks to maintain its involvement at the al-Aqsa compound in particular and in Jerusalem in general. Thus, in late 1994, shortly after the signing of the peace treaty between Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom, King Hussein appointed a new Royal Committee for Jerusalem Affairs that included representatives from the Muslim world, in an attempt to gain broader legitimacy for Jordan's claims regarding al-Haram al-Sharif.²⁹

King Abdallah II, early in his reign, referred openly to Jordan's surrender of its claims to authority at the Jerusalem shrines, in favor of the Palestinians. Abdallah did not view such authority as an advantage for Jordan over the other Muslim and Arab countries and stated that Jordan was prepared to transfer guardianship of the holy places to the Palestinians whenever they should request it, even before a permanent agreement was signed.³⁰ However, Abdallah appears to have changed

his mind over the course of time. Since 2002, the dialogue between Jordan and Israel regarding the Temple Mount compound has intensified. A Jordanian delegation is involved in restoration activities at the site (repairing the southern wall bulge in 2002). In recent years, Abdallah II has sponsored a project to restore, at a cost of three million Jordanian dinars (4.5 million dollars), the Nur al-Din Zangi pulpit said to have been brought to Jerusalem by Saladin, a few remnants of which survived the mosque fire in August 1969 and which was finally placed back in the mosque in 2007. In 2004, Jordan formally requested Israel that it be permitted to build a minaret at the Temple Mount's eastern wall, adjacent to the Mercy Gate—another monument (at the al-Aqsa compound that would bear the Hashemite label and serve to strengthen the Islamic character of the site's eastern side) that associated in Islamic apocalyptic tradition with the coming of the Messiah and the resurrection of the dead. Should this tower be built, it would add great legitimacy to the Hashemite Kingdom's claims. This initiative indicates that King Abdallah II of Jordan is interested in maintaining the Hashemite status with regard to al-Aqsa and Jerusalem in the event of a permanent agreement. Recently, King Abdallah decided to grant 1.113 million dinars to the Hashemite Fund for the Renovation of the al-Aqsa Mosque and to increase the salaries of Waqf employees in Jerusalem.³¹

Morocco

King Hassan II of Morocco (r. 1961–1999) had a strong interest in Jerusalem—a factor that strengthened his legitimacy as another Muslim ruler (in addition to the King of Jordan) descended from the Prophet Muhammad. Muhammad VI, Hassan II's son and successor to the throne, has continued this policy. Among Morocco's most prominent activities with regard to Jerusalem was the decision of the Fourth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in July 1975 to establish the al-Quds Committee as a standing committee of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). The committee is headed by the king of Morocco and meets in Rabat, the Moroccan capital. In 1995, the committee established an Islamic fund for Jerusalem, called Bayt Mal al-Quds, one of whose objectives is that of funding activities aimed at preserving the Islamic character of al-Aqsa and al-Quds.³² The fund transfers donations from the oil-producing countries for the construction of apartments for Arabs in East Jerusalem and for subsidizing public institutions such as al-Quds University. During the

1980s and 1990s, the king of Morocco donated carpets to the al-Aqsa Mosque.

Saudi Arabia

The Saudis' desire for involvement at the al-Aqsa compound may be seen in the May 1977 Arab League decision to declare Mecca and Jerusalem to be twin cities; this initiative was thwarted, apparently, by Jordan. The Jerusalem Waqf administration was instructed to leave the matter to be handled by Amman, and no action has since been taken on it.³³ In 1979, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia proclaimed that "Saudi Arabia is prepared to fight to liberate Jerusalem... which is a matter of life or death and whose status is not inferior to that of Mecca."³⁴ In order to strengthen their status in Jerusalem, the Saudis have, since the 1970s, been extending financial assistance to radical groups in the city. During the 1980s, a branch of the Saudi-based General Islamic Congress for Jerusalem opened at al-Haram al-Sharif. This branch functioned as the external framework for a fund for assistance from Arab countries, in particular the (Saudi) Muslim World League. This fund financed restorations at the al-Aqsa Mosque and other Waqf properties. For several years it paid a wage supplement to Waqf employees (75 dinars per month per employee) and provided assistance to various welfare and educational institutions in East Jerusalem, on the West Bank, and in Israel. After the outbreak of the Persian Gulf crisis in 1990, donations from the Gulf countries and from Saudi Arabia all but ceased, in reaction to the Palestinians' expressed solidarity with Saddam Hussein. In late June 1994, a few months after the signing of the Oslo Accords, Saudi Arabia told Arafat that the Jerusalem holy sites are not the property of the PLO but rather of the entire Muslim nation, with Saudi Arabia at its center, and warned him not to create facts on the ground.³⁵

After the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada, Crown Prince Abdallah of Saudi Arabia said in a speech at the Arab leaders' emergency summit held in Cairo on October 21, 2000, that "East Jerusalem is an Arab and Islamic cause. It cannot be bargained over or abandoned, under any circumstances. It is an integral part of the Arab occupied territories."³⁶

Egypt

At the time of the peace negotiations between Egypt and Israel, Egyptian president Muhammad Anwar al-Sadat asked, while visiting Jerusalem,

to pray at the al-Aqsa Mosque and declared that “[n]o Arab country will agree to relinquish the al-Aqsa Mosque or the Dome of the Rock.”³⁷ Sadat’s visit to the al-Aqsa Mosque is remembered as a dramatic event. After the visit, Sadat’s deputy, Hassan Tohami, wrote to Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kollek of the Egyptian government’s decision to send engineers to assist with the al-Aqsa Mosque restorations. The Jordanian-affiliated Waqf administration at al-Haram al-Sharif expressed outrage over the fact that the letter had been addressed to an Israeli body rather than directly to the Waqf, as the site’s administrating entity.³⁸

Egypt’s position regarding East Jerusalem’s political future may be inferred from an article by Dr. Ja’far ‘Abd al-Salam, an Egyptian expert on international law who served as vice president of al-Azhar University. According to ‘Abd al-Salam, Egypt’s position is that East Jerusalem (*al-Quds al-Arabiya*, in his words) is an occupied Arab city and part of the West Bank and that it should, therefore, be under Arab sovereignty; the Palestinians in East Jerusalem should exercise their national rights there by virtue of their West Bank Palestinian nationality.³⁹

Pan-Arab and Pan-Islamic Organizations

Pan-Arab or pan-Islamic positions regarding Jerusalem are usually expressed by two main entities—the Arab League and the OIC—as well as at summit conferences of Arab/Muslim heads of state or foreign ministers.⁴⁰ These interstate bodies are characteristically active in three areas: expressing positions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the matter of Jerusalem; issuing statements and diplomatic activity in response to incidents related to Jerusalem and to the al-Aqsa compound; and donating funds to subsidize projects aimed at maintaining Jerusalem’s Arab-Islamic character. As mentioned previously, the Jerusalem Committee, headed by the king of Morocco and one of the OIC’s standing committees, convened in December 1994 to deliberate over the mutual claims of Jordan and the PLO to authority in East Jerusalem and at al-Aqsa.⁴¹

Positions expressed at Arab forums are usually more moderate than the concluding declarations of pan-Islamic forums. The former are political frameworks whose participants have to consider how their statements are received in the international arena, while the latter are mainly cultural frameworks. Thus, at the Third Islamic Summit Conference held in Ta’if, Saudi Arabia, in January 1981, the participating heads of state called for jihad to liberate Jerusalem and Palestine from Israeli occupation.⁴² In contrast, 20 months later, in September 1982, in the wake of the Lebanon War and the PLO’s consequent weakening, the Twelfth Arab

Summit Conference was convened in Fez, Morocco, and adopted King Fahd's peace proposal that called for founding a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders with East (Arab) Jerusalem as its capital.

During the period of the first Intifada, the OIC's Jerusalem Committee decided that al-Quds Day should be marked by public—and highly publicized—events around the Arab world. Iran has celebrated the Jerusalem Day since 1979 when Ayatollah Khomeini decreed the last Friday of Ramadan as al-Quds Day. It celebrates this event with stamps and posters featuring scenes of Jerusalem, roster of speeches, an art exhibition, a folkloric show, and a youth program supported by hundreds of thousand of participants.⁴³ So does Iran's satellite organization Hizbullah in Lebanon, by marking the day with a large military parade during the last week of Ramadan.

Beginning in 1989, Jordan has marked al-Quds Day with an academic conference held at a different university each year. Al-Quds Day was until recently a kind of lip-service paid by Arab countries to show solidarity with the Palestinian cause. This may be seen in a statement made by Dr. Subhi Ghawsha (a Jordanian of Palestinian origin), who organized the al-Quds Day conference in Jordan in 1995. Ghawsha laments that “[t]he problem of Jerusalem, which lies at the heart of the Arab-Zionist conflict, has been marginalized and de-prioritized by the Arab world, when it should be its first priority.” However, according to him, the coming generations will not cease its struggle to liberate Jerusalem and to restore it to Arab-Muslim and Christian sovereignty.⁴⁴ Former Jordanian prime minister Taher al-Masri, who is of West Bank origin, said at the same conference that the study day's goal was to refute the [Israeli] historical falsification according to which al-Quds' status in the Arab and Muslim world is a minor one, and to prevent any attempt to erase Arab and Muslim presence from the city and to present it as Israel's eternal and united capital. He decried the fact that Israel's planned Jerusalem 3000 celebrations had not been opposed by the Arab and Muslim world. Al-Masri added that “[t]here is no historical basis for the Jews' claim of 3,000 year-long sovereignty, and it is important that we make our opinion known to the world and that we formulate a strategy in this regard for the world that lies beyond the Arab homeland.”⁴⁵ Also participating in this conference was Arab League secretary general Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd al-Magid of Egypt, who spoke of the challenge posed to the Muslim world by Israel's planned Jerusalem 3000 festivities.

Al-Quds Day conferences are usually attended by Jordanian figures identified with the Palestinian issue. Thus, participating in the 1998 al-Quds Day conference in Jordan were Dr. 'Abd al-Latif 'Arabiyyat,

former chairman of parliament and a member of the Islamic Movement in Jordan (he also served as chair of the board of trustees of the university that hosted the conference), and Dr. Hazem Nusseibeh, a Jordanian of Palestinian origin who had formerly served as Jordan's foreign minister and ambassador to the UN.⁴⁶

Al-Quds Day is also marked by local initiatives in which leading Muslim clerics participate. For example, on November 11, 2002 (17 Ramadan, the day on which, according to tradition, the Battle of Badr took place between the Prophet and the Quraysh tribe), the Islamic Heritage Committee in Jerusalem organized a virtual world al-Quds Day, on which Islamic groups around the world were invited to participate in an Internet encounter with leading Muslim religious figures.⁴⁷ In recent years, the al-Quds Day has expanded to being a rite held over a few days and has included protest demonstrations of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for independence. Most protest rallies in a number of locations both in the Middle East and across Muslim communities in the West are organized by radical Islamists.

Eleven Islamic summit conferences have been convened since 1969. The last extraordinary summit was held in December 2005 in Mecca. Although the summit was convened to deal with the Danish Muhammad cartoons controversy, a uniting theme was concern for the safety and condition of the historic Islamic sites in Al-Quds, including the al-Aqsa Mosque.⁴⁸

The al-Aqsa Summit of November 2000 expressed support for the Palestinian position regarding Jerusalem, called for the cessation of Israeli actions aimed at Judaizing Jerusalem, and condemned Israel's renewed efforts to enable Jews to visit the Temple Mount. The conference praised Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Morocco for their contribution to restoration activities on the Temple Mount. It also expressed support for Palestinian efforts to gain sovereignty over Jerusalem, including al-Haram al-Sharif and the Christian holy sites. Islamic country leaders called upon the international community to keep Israel from altering Jerusalem's demographic and geographic character and to cause Israel to desist from its policy of preventing Palestinians from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from entering Jerusalem and worshiping there freely. Israel was also called upon to cease its policy of revoking Palestinians' Jerusalem-resident status. The summit condemned the Israeli Supreme Court's 1996 ruling affirming the right of Jews to pray on the Temple Mount ("in the precinct of the blessed al-Aqsa Mosque"), as well as an earlier ruling that declared the site to be part of the territory of the State

of Israel; these rulings were portrayed as encouraging extremist Jewish groups to increase their presence at the al-Aqsa site and to engage in provocative and destructive activities there.⁴⁹

The OIC's Jerusalem Fund took care to draw up a founding document that emphasizes Jerusalem's Arab character and its religious, political, and cultural sacredness to Muslims. The document was formulated by a team of intellectuals from the Muslim world.⁵⁰ The organization also decided, at the meeting known as the Intifada Summit, to invest 200 million dollars in activities aimed at strengthening the status of Jerusalem Arabs. A plan was submitted to the fund that called for investing 41 million dollars in construction projects and services for Jerusalem's Arab population, but only a portion of these decisions and plans appear to have been implemented.⁵¹

Inter-Arab and pan-Islamic bodies also respond vigorously to burning issues connected with Jerusalem and the holy sites. The events of October 1990, for example, drew harsh reactions from the Muslim world. The dispersion of the demonstration on the Temple Mount, during which 17 Muslims were killed, triggered reactions. The Egyptian Waqf Ministry issued a statement in which it referred to Israel as a "true enemy" (although peace was signed between Egypt and Israel in 1979) and called upon Muslims to organize in opposition to it. Saddam Hussein proclaimed that the day of reckoning would arrive, accompanied by the falling of Iraqi missiles on Israel⁵²—a promise that, indeed, was fulfilled during the first Persian Gulf War. After the Western Wall Tunnel events in September 1996, the Arab League issued a special statement regarding the al-Aqsa Tunnel.⁵³ A year later the Arab League declared al-Aqsa Tunnel Day (September 25, 1996) as a day of solidarity with Jerusalem, on which all schools across the Arab and Muslim world were to dedicate their study activities to the subject of Jerusalem's Muslim history, its importance to the Arab nation, and to ways of countering efforts to Judaize the city.⁵⁴ As with the Arab League's other decisions, this one appears not to have been implemented.

One recent example of how the al-Aqsa campaign has become a worldwide phenomenon is the program of the forty-fourth annual convention of ISNA—the Islamic Society of North America—held in September 2007. One of the sessions was entitled "The Struggle of al-Aqsa and the Holy Land." The program said that "the session will discuss the recent threats to the stability of the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, which serves as a microcosm of the ongoing Palestinian struggle."⁵⁵

6.4 Achievements: Raising Awareness in the Muslim World

In previous chapters, we have seen illustrations of the degree to which the use of Islamic symbols has paid off. The historical, religious, and political messages regarding Jerusalem are disseminated widely in the Arab and Muslim world and are readily absorbed by the Arab “street,” that is, the general public that is usually not a part of the ruling elite—the public that, as a rule, opposes its leadership’s moderate and pro-Western policies and expects it to take firmer action against Israel.

My article entitled “Third in Sanctity, First in Politics,”⁵⁶ which addresses the various elements of Jerusalem’s religious elevation in the Muslim world, opens with a story told to me by a friend, an Egyptian intellectual who frequently visits Israel as the guest of Israeli academics and public institutions and as such may be described as a “friend of Israel.” While visiting his parents’ home in Cairo, I had the opportunity to become acquainted with his completely secular family, no member of which engages in prayer. Members of the family had visited the Temple Mount/al-Aqsa compound as tourists, and they had been to Jerusalem several times during the preceding 20 years. They are not particularly fond of the Palestinians. Yet even my Egyptian friend’s story can be seen to illustrate the tremendous influence enjoyed by the “al-Aqsa is in Danger” messages. After his father died, my friend’s mother asked him to accompany her on a pilgrimage to Mecca—a duty that, at her advanced age, she was eager to fulfill. At the end of the formal ceremonies at the Ka’ba (a ritual attended by some two million Muslims annually), my friend and his mother lingered around the colonnades of the sacred mosque, where sermons were being delivered by a succession of preachers. One preacher chose to speak about al-Aqsa and the dangers facing it. According to my friend, at a certain point during the sermon the audience became exceedingly agitated and even he and his mother, who are familiar with the actual situation on the al-Aqsa site, began to shed tears.

I heard about this personal experience of my friend’s while we were attending a conference on Jerusalem in the capital of Jordan, a conference sponsored by former crown prince Hasan bin Talal.⁵⁷ During the lunch break, I asked my interlocutor how it was that the opinions that had been expressed at the conference with regard to Jerusalem by representatives of Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco were more extreme than those of the Palestinians. By telling me his Mecca story, my friend hoped to make the situation more comprehensible to me, adding: “You should

know that in the Arab world we view the issue of the Jerusalem holy sites as one that concerns us first and foremost. It touches us and we are very sensitive to it. We will not let the Palestinians belittle this issue or compromise on it, because it is important to us that the Muslim status of the sites be preserved.” I later heard similar comments from other conference participants, from Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco.

The success of the strategy of Jerusalem’s religious-political elevation lies in the direct and indirect pressure that it exerts on the political leaderships of the Arab countries, primarily on rulers connected with the American sphere of influence (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and the Emirates). The ruling elites are challenged by the “Arab street” and find it difficult to promulgate a moderate foreign policy when opposition groups representing the more general public opinion in their countries employ religious symbols and “al-Aqsa is in Danger” slogans that strike deep emotional and religious chords, especially when images of slain Palestinians in the “Holy Land” are part of the package. The crisis faced by the Jordanian and Egyptian ruling regimes after the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada, when opposition organizations and Islamist movements sought to demonstrate their solidarity with the Intifada, leading to fears that such demonstrations would lead to overt opposition to the regimes in question, illustrates the fact that large populations in Arab-Muslim countries have absorbed and internalized the above-described messages during the last four decades. It also indicates the degree to which Islamist opposition movements are using the Jerusalem issue to pressure Arab regimes and to cause Arab political leaders to identify with the struggle to liberate the Islamic holy places in Jerusalem.

Palestinians are applying direct and indirect pressure on the leaders of Arab countries when they place responsibility for the fate of Jerusalem on “the entire Muslim nation,” and first and foremost on the state leaderships. Thus, in a joint interview held with Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Sheikh Ikrima Sabri in January 2001, Sabri stated that for as long as Jerusalem is under occupation, all Muslims around the world would bear the stain of sin (*ithm*). Qaradawi added that the rulers bear the weightiest responsibility of all: when they suppress their subject populations, their young people are unable to engage in jihad. The masses, for their part, must prepare themselves for the liberation endeavor and donate funds for this purpose.⁵⁸

The following example illustrates how the Palestinian-generated message that Jerusalem belongs to the entire Muslim world has penetrated the Egyptian political echelon: former Egyptian foreign minister `Ismat `Abd-al-Magid said on an al-Jazeera television program, in which he

appeared together with Sheikh Ikrima Sabri and Dr. Hanan Ashrawi (PA's former minister of higher education) about two months after the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada, that "[t]he Jerusalem issue is the heart of the problem and it touches not only Israel and the Palestinians, but also the entire Arab world, both Muslim and Christian." Hanan Ashrawi immediately responded, "If this is true, then it should be translated into practical activity."⁵⁹ She meant that Egypt should be more active in supporting the Palestinian cause.

A third example is taken from Jordan: the leader of the oppositional Muslim Brotherhood 'Abd Al-Majid Dhunaybat, during the inauguration of al-Aqsa Week events in the southern Jordanian city of Ma'an, said that al-Aqsa's occupation by Israel is a "stain upon the brow of the Arabs."⁶⁰ This statement also points an accusing finger toward Jordan's Hashemite regime.

Jordan is an example of the relative success enjoyed by the "al-Aqsa is in Danger" strategy, due to the kingdom's inherent vulnerability. Although the government's foreign policy is generally moderate, due to domestic opposition and public opinion it is obliged to pay lip-service to the Islamic perspective. Jordan permits pro-Palestinian parades and demonstrations to be held and gives freedom of expression to groups representing both the opposition and the government, as well as other dissident groups, with regard to Jerusalem and the holy sites. These entities take advantage of the leeway granted them in order to attack the policy of the regime that continues to exist in peace with Israel and to maintain a degree of normalization with the Jewish state. Thus, the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan organized in late February 1990 (during the first Intifada) an al-Aqsa Week in response to the Hamas movement's Leaflet 52. The time selected was the last week of the month of Rajab, during which, according to tradition, the Prophet Muhammad traveled to al-Aqsa and from there to heaven (*al-isra' wal-mi'raj*). The event was mainly a festival of speeches in which the Islamization of the Palestinian problem was discussed. There was also a parade organized by the Islamic group at the Jordanian University of Amman, immediately after its sweeping victory in the student council elections.⁶¹

It should be noted that the Jerusalem issue is not the only source of pressure on the Jordanian government. The entire Palestinian question constitutes a major challenge for Jordan, due to the kingdom's demographic and ethnic composition (a Palestinian majority of over 50 percent), its pro-American foreign policy, and the Hashemite monarchy's vulnerability. The use made by Palestinians of religious symbols—symbols that the Hashemites employ in order to strengthen

their own legitimacy—embarrasses the ruling elite. The regime's method of dealing with Palestinian and Islamic dissent is to express a certain amount of support for the Palestinian struggle or some hostility to Israel, and to participate in certain activities such as the commemoration of the thirty-third anniversary of the al-Aqsa Mosque fire. Statements made by Israeli officials, such as Tsachi Hanegbi (the minister of internal security during the first half of 2003), Mickey Levy (Jerusalem police chief), and others, regarding the possibility of increased Jewish tourism on the Temple Mount were highly embarrassing for the Jordanian establishment, since the Jerusalem Waqf officials are still considered to be its representatives. For this reason, the head of the Royal Committee for Jerusalem Affairs, Abdallah Kan'an (a Prince Hassan appointee),⁶² makes frequent statements to the press in which he condemns Israel and its actions on the Temple Mount and in Jerusalem. In 2002, Kan'an called upon Jordan's Ministry of Education and its universities to include the Palestinian and Jerusalem problem in its curricula, "due to the current situation in Palestine in general and in Jerusalem in particular, so that it may be internalized by pupils and by future generations." In response, the head of curricula in the Ministry of Education, Mahmud Massad, stated that his ministry was considering the inclusion of a section on Jerusalem in its new curricula.⁶³ Messages calling for Muslim mobilization to liberate Jerusalem have been appearing in school textbooks in Arab countries for some considerable time. Thus, in a Saudi fifth-grade textbook, one finds the following statement: "Jerusalem has become the focus of interest for our ancient enemies. . . . It is now in the hands of the Zionist occupiers, and the Muslims now aspire to reclaim it from the Zionist exploiters who have wrought destruction there, who have burned the al-Aqsa Mosque and humiliated the city's Muslim residents. The Muslims will succeed, through Allah's might, in liberating Jerusalem and in purifying it of its foreign occupiers."⁶⁴ Another Saudi textbook, one intended for sixth graders, states that "Jewish aggression is currently throwing its shadow over the al-Aqsa Mosque. All of the world's Muslims share the duty of defense and jihad that will ensure Muslim victory and honor and the purification of the Islamic holy places."⁶⁵

To conclude, the political and ideological struggle conducted by the Arabs and Muslims serves to complement the struggle that is taking place on the religious plane. The conflict's Islamization and its portrayal as a religious or cultural war have the effect of increasing political support for the Palestinians among world Arab and Muslim communities. The political campaign is based first and foremost on the

challenging situation that prevails with regard to the Temple Mount/al-Aqsa compound and generates tensions and incidents that are then exploited in order to transmit the fear-instilling message “al-Aqsa is in Danger.” The entities involved in this message’s dissemination are mainly Islamist movements claiming that every Muslim nation and each individual Muslim is duty-bound to engage in jihad in order to liberate Jerusalem, with Saladin extolled as the ideal model to be emulated. The campaign’s success with the general public is evident, as is its influence on political positions taken by Arab states. Arab state policies are quite consistent in this area, calling for the transfer of sovereignty over the Arab section of Jerusalem to an Arab-Muslim entity. Denunciations of Arab governments’ inaction in this area leads senior officials in the Arab world to express themselves in an extreme manner with regard to Jerusalem and ensures that opposition groups enjoy relative freedom to vent their fury over the issue of al-Aqsa and Jerusalem.

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CHAPTER 7

Conclusion: The Religious Barrier

Issues relating to the holy city of Jerusalem are at the center of the conflict and the most difficult to resolve (the most intractable) because of their religious connotations. Sacred spaces are protected values in the eyes of the peoples involved in the national and territorial conflict.¹ Three great religions hold Jerusalem in exalted status, yet the political dispute regarding sovereignty over the city and its holy sites is conducted by representatives of Islam and Judaism only. Christianity's political centers are more distant from Jerusalem, and this renders current Christian involvement marginal to the conflict's main focal points: the Temple Mount, al-Aqsa and the Western Wall.

This book deals with the processes by which symbols of faith and sanctity are being employed in a political struggle. These processes characterize both parties to the conflict, but not to an equal degree. The Arab-Muslim side, which suffered defeat in June 1967, is also the conflict's weaker party, which lost control of East Jerusalem at that time. Thus, its efforts to mobilize sacred and religious assets for use in its struggle are more intensive. Beyond this, there are two additional reasons why the Arab-Muslim side makes more extensive use of religious symbols: the existence of a huge strategic depth of more than one and a quarter billion Muslims around the world, and the fact that the processes of modernization, secularization, and separation between religion and state are less common in Muslim society. The Israeli-Jewish party to the conflict also employs religious symbols in order to further its political agenda, but Israel's Jewish majority and the country's (mostly) secular leadership are less active in this area than are more peripheral Jewish religious and messianic groups such as Gush Emunim, the Temple movements, whose ideology and discourse are

not shared by the Israeli-Jewish public at large or by its leadership. This fact was manifested in June 1967 by Moshe Dayan's order to remove the Israeli flag from the Dome of the Rock and by Israel's continuous policy to leave the compound's administration in the hands of the Muslim Waqf authority (followed by the Chief Rabbinate declaration that Jewish *halacha* prevents Jews from entering the Temple Mount compound).

It appears that the strategy of Islamizing the conflict, as conceived by the Palestinian leadership and by the radical Islamic movements—a strategy that has succeeded, in many places, in making inroads into general Arab and Muslim awareness—is actually detrimental to the conflict's Arab-Muslim side. This is because when the conflict focuses on religious messages, the Christian world—represented by the contemporary world's controlling powers, particularly the United States—has a greater tendency to accept the Jewish narrative than the Muslim claims. The biblical texts (especially in the Old Testament) that include the religious messages upon which Zionism is based have a greater influence on Christians than do the Qur'an and the *hadith*.

The advanced process of democratization undergone by the Christian world and the change in attitude among Church institutions toward Judaism and the Jews in recent years are unfavorable to Muslim efforts to move the conflict into the religious arena. The strongest evidence of this is the anti-Muslim awakening that has taken place in the Western world and the global struggle against Islamic terror that have emerged in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York and Washington DC. A few liberal Muslim intellectuals have already identified this process and called for reform within Islam, but the Muslim world appears to be primarily inward looking. Muslim society is currently in a state of deep internal crisis and is seeking ways of strengthening its cohesion and, first and foremost, of ensuring internal mobilization. Basic and primordial symbols of identity, such as ethnic, linguistic, and religious affiliation, are the most efficient means to this end.

Within the struggle over public awareness of Jerusalem's importance, one particular site is at the eye of the storm—the Temple Mount and its Western Wall—the Jewish *Kotel*—or, in Muslim terminology, the al-Aqsa compound (alternatively: al-Haram al-Sharif) and al-Buraq. Despite the fact that the site sacred to Muslims is under the control and administration of Muslim bodies, it is still perceived by the Muslims as “desecrated” and in a state of constant threat from the Jewish-Israeli party to the conflict. From both the Jewish and the Muslim points

of view, the Foundation Stone, the Rock adorned with the golden dome, is the “Rock of our existence”—a symbol of religious-national identity—and thus also (as it were) the “stone” of contention. The site’s status as a sacred space makes it the natural focal point of the power struggle, including claims to sovereignty, efforts to exclude the opposing group and to claim recognition and inclusion, as elucidated by Chidester and Linenthal with regard to holy places generally; this situation is all the more true when the site in question lies at the center of a national conflict between two peoples who also represent, to a great extent, two essentially different religions and cultures. “Al-Aqsa” for the Palestinian-Arab-Muslim side is not merely a mosque mentioned in the Qur’an within the context of the Prophet Muhammad’s miraculous Night Journey to al-Aqsa, which according to tradition concluded with his ascension to heaven (and a prayer with all of the prophets and the Jewish and Christian religious figures who preceded him); rather, it also constitutes a unique symbol of identity, one around which various political objectives may be formulated, plans of action drawn up and masses mobilized for their realization.

The actions and blunders of the conflict’s Jewish-Israeli party (which has had security control of the site since 1967) as well as extraneous events have played into the hands of the Muslims. The fire lit by an Australian Christian tourist at the al-Aqsa Mosque in August 1969 was the starting point for the *masira*—the campaign that has been waged more intensively over the last decade under the banner “al-Aqsa is in Danger.” The essence of this campaign is that for as long as East Jerusalem (and in particular the Old City and its holy sites) remains under Israeli control and sovereignty, al-Aqsa will be in danger, and thus it is a religious duty incumbent upon all Muslims to seek to liberate it. The campaign’s primary message is, moreover, that any belittling of al-Aqsa or concessions over al-Aqsa or Jerusalem may lead to a belittling of Mecca (which is connected to al-Aqsa via the Prophet Muhammad’s miraculous Journey). This message seeks to exert a threatening and deterrent effect on Saudi Arabia and the other Arab countries. Jihad, in its militant sense, is the means chosen by the various radical Islamic factions to perform what they view as their religious duty. However, there are additional ways of achieving the desired goal. For example, public and political pressure may be applied to the Arab regimes from below, in order to halt any normalization of relations with Israel until the Palestinian issue and its central problem of Jerusalem are resolved. Another way is by raising funds and using them for what the Muslims call “preservation of Jerusalem’s Arab and Islamic character,” that is,

construction, renewal, preservation, development, and housing projects in the Arab section of Jerusalem.

Analysis of texts appearing in books, Web sites, religious rulings, and in the public and media discourse indicates the existence of a *new Islamic ethos of Jerusalem*. This new ethos, which emerged within the context of the Muslim campaign for Jerusalem as depicted in this study, is reflected in three main awareness-raising processes:

The first of these is the tendency to elevate the sanctity of al-Aqsa and, along with it, the sanctity of al-Quds in Islam. Based on an analysis of contemporary Islamic discourse, a site's degree of sanctity is not currently measured in terms of classical ritual observance (such as pilgrimage). Rather, the research shows that the concept of "sanctity" must be viewed in a broader and more inclusive sense than that of the purely theological one. Pilgrimage to Jerusalem is not going to become a basic religious duty on the order of the *hajj*. However, the Muslim masses who visit al-Aqsa during the month of Ramadan (in much greater numbers—indeed hundreds of thousands more than used to arrive there in the past) do so out of a sense of "political duty," no less than out of religious belief in the power of prayer from the al-Aqsa Mosque. The issue of al-Aqsa and al-Quds has come to generate an intensive discursive political ritual in the contemporary Muslim world, as reflected in special conferences held on the subject. Under the banner of "al-Quds Day" or "al-Aqsa Week" numerous sermons are delivered in mosques around the world and the public discourse is flooded with writings and statements on the issue. The rallies, conventions, and other means of political protest that are organized during al-Quds Day, al-Isra' Day, and other occasions constitute a modern rite that elevates al-Aqsa and the holy city of Jerusalem from both religious and political perspectives. These activities themselves create a cult of glorification and sanctification, while at the same time serving to blur the distinction between the "political" and the "religious." A variety of means are employed in the reconceptualization of al-Aqsa's sacred status, the most important of these being the retrieval from oblivion of ancient traditions that testify to the site's sanctity, and their mass dissemination.

The second process is that of denying the religious and historical connection of the other party to the conflict—the Jews—to the city and its holy sites. This process stems from an internal Islamic drive toward self-justification. The Jewish connections to the Temple Mount site identified with Mount Moriah and the present al-Aqsa site—the

Jewish belief in *Even ha-Shtiya*, the “Foundation Stone” said by some to have been the rock upon which Abraham bound his son Isaac up for sacrifice, the Temple of Solomon as inspiration of the Dome of the Rock location and the centrality of Jerusalem to Judaism in general—are also anchored in authentic Muslim traditions. As a result, a trend has recently emerged in Islam to ignore these traditions or their accepted interpretations. There are two preexisting polemical strategies—one maintaining that the Jews betrayed the true faith and thus lost their right to the site, and the other maintaining that a fleeting presence in Jerusalem 2,000 or 3,000 years ago cannot translate into sovereign rights after an absence extending over at least the 1,400 years of Muslim rule (apart from the Crusader period when the Jews were also expelled from Jerusalem). In the last generation, a third strategy of partial or total denial of a Jewish connection to Jerusalem has been added. Most of the more educated Muslim public does not participate or support this denial, but the fact is that almost no one has been willing to denounce publicly this campaign of denial.

The third process is familiar from the ways in which modern nationalisms are shaped, as elucidated by Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, Anthony Smith, and others. Arab territorial nationalism has been preoccupied for decades with the construction of an ethos of antiquity that connects its present existence with a point in the past at which the modern Egyptians may be identified with the Pharaohs, the modern Iraqis with the Babylonians, the Lebanese and the Syrians with the Phoenicians, the Palestinians with the Canaanites or the Philistines or—in the context of Jerusalem—with the Jebusites; this is where the innovation lies. Special political myths are emerging in connection with Jerusalem’s Islamic history. The most prominent of these has to do with Saladin—Jerusalem’s conqueror/liberator from the Crusaders—and reflects a fatalistic and deterministic belief in the eventual appearance of a second Saladin, who will liberate Jerusalem from “the new Crusaders”—the Jews who rule Jerusalem.

The multiplicity of actors in the campaign for al-Quds, their wide range of social affiliations (political and academic elites alongside the uneducated and the Islamic movements in peripheral areas), their geographic and ethnic diversity (Palestinians, Jordanians, the Middle Eastern countries in general and the Muslim communities outside of the Middle East), their affiliation with various religious, political, and media circles, and, finally, the variegated dissemination methods described in this study—all of these elements compel the conclusion that the processes described here in a general way are not marginal phenomena.

During the last generation (and at a more accelerated rate since the first Intifada), a general sense of Muslim solidarity has developed in connection with Jerusalem and its holy sites. This solidarity has emerged at two levels: at the governmental level, as reflected in the declarations and actions of Arab and Muslim political leaders, and, no less importantly, at the popular level, among the masses who have so readily absorbed the political messages that have become intertwined with the religious symbols in question.

The issue of the Temple Mount and al-Aqsa was one of the main reasons for the failure of the second Camp David summit, at which the Israelis and the Palestinians were unable to reach a permanent peace arrangement. Since July 2000, the symbolic significance of the Temple Mount and of al-Aqsa has risen even higher in Jewish, Israeli, Palestinian, and Muslim awareness. This raises a key question in terms of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. Is this religious ethos an “iron wall” for Muslims in general and for Palestinians in particular with regard to the possibility of compromise over Jerusalem’s holy sites, or is this obstacle on the road to peace a surmountable one?

There are four main components to the religious obstacle as perceived by Islam with regard to the Haram/Temple Mount. The first of these is the Muslim rejection of the Jewish connection to the compound and the Palestinians’ consistent and unyielding position that rejects the possibility of granting Jews the right to pray anywhere on the site and that denies the legitimacy of any Israeli authority over it or underneath. Although the waqf, with its various Jordanian and Palestinian Authority (PA) affiliations, has been able to reach informal and practical agreements with the Israeli authorities regarding security, entry, and behavior at the site, it makes a distinction between these temporary arrangements—which it regards as compelled by the existing circumstances—and a permanent solution.

As an example, a recent book describing the Palestinian perspective of the negotiations of 2000 gives the following explanation why there is no room for compromise over the al-Aqsa/Temple compound:

The adverse positions on Jerusalem and the al-Aqsa Mosque put the negotiations back to square one, because the Israelis asserted to have sovereignty over the entire mosque (compound), or on part of it, or alternatively on what they call the holy of holies underneath the entire surface of the mosque (compound), while the Palestinian party asserted on having complete sovereignty over the whole compound but expressed readiness to compromise

on the sovereignty over the al-Buraq [Western] Wall and the Mughrabi plaza... on December 23rd (2000) Clinton suggested another proposal: effective control for the Palestinians on the mosque (compound) combined with respect of the Jewish beliefs. The proposal had two options: Palestinian sovereignty over the mosque compound and Israeli sovereignty over the Western Wall and the holy of holies underneath the mosque; or that the issue of digging underground of the mosque and beyond the Western Wall would be shared by both Israel and the Palestinians. Barak rejected the idea that the Palestinians would have complete sovereignty over the mosque compound and Arafat rejected the idea of sharing sovereignty of any part of the mosque. Then it became clear that the issue of the al-Aqsa Mosque could not be compromised by either of the two parties.²

On October 12, 2007, five weeks before the inauguration of the U.S.-led peace conference in Annapolis the PA chief mufti Sheikh Muhammad Hussein released a public call revealing his rejection to a Palestinian compromise over the al-Aqsa compound and its “surroundings” [Western Wall plaza?]. In what was seen as directed to his leader—Mahmoud Abbas—he said that al-Aqsa is not a patrimony of the Palestinians but of God, and it was given to the Arabs and Muslims as a trust to be protected and not for negotiations at all. He added that “the Palestinian leadership past and present is not a traitorous agency to compromise even a single stone of the walls that encompass the mosque” [meaning also the Western Wall].³

A parallel call was issued by the Western Wall Rabbi Shmuel Rabinovits, who said: “The history of ownership of the Temple Mount and the Western Wall is inscribed in divine history. Its re-writing [by Muslims] does not grant [them] ownership over the holiest place of the Jewish people... we returned to the holy [city] in order to remain in it for eternity. Such announcements [by politicians regarding compromises in Jerusalem] only mitigate against peace and harm our people’s feelings from our ancestral past.”⁴

The second component of the religious barrier is the message that the Palestinians have worked to disseminate regarding Jerusalem, namely that it is not only a Palestinian issue but rather a matter of concern to the entire Muslim nation. This idea has been absorbed and internalized within the Muslim world to the extent that, in academic forums and semiofficial meetings in which not only Israelis and Palestinians but also representatives of Arab countries participate, the latter now express

more extreme opinions regarding the possibility of compromise on Jerusalem than do the Palestinian representatives. As for the Arab states, the Arab League Web site stressed that “the City represents a red-circle that should not be trifled or squandered under any condition”⁵

The second Camp David summit underscored the already well-known fact that the issue of Jerusalem’s Islamic holy places and of East Jerusalem generally has ceased to be a Palestinian issue only. The transatlantic talks held by President Clinton with the leaders of Arab countries in July 2000, at the behest of Yasser Arafat, for the purpose of hearing their opinions regarding the compromise proposals that had been raised with regard to Jerusalem, are a living testament to this. The Palestinian side, which sought to enlist support within the Muslim world, succeeded beyond its expectations and perhaps even more than it had itself desired. As a result, at this point the Palestinians’ hands are tied to a great degree and their latitude for compromise is limited. Regarding any proposals on Jerusalem that may be placed on the negotiation table, the Palestinians will have to seek the approval of central figures in the Arab-Islamic world, primarily that of the leaders of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Jordan, and the wealthy oil-producing countries whose financial assistance the Palestinians need. Moreover, the success of the “al-Aqsa in Danger” campaign makes Arab decision-makers more attuned to the adherents of Muslim Brothers groups who constitute a growing opposition to the current regimes. Thus, political maneuvering space with regard to Jerusalem and the holy sites has diminished, and the entire game has moved to the broader theater of the international community.

The third component is the position held by Palestinian and other Islamic religious leaders and organizations: The PA’s ability to reach a compromise on Jerusalem will be limited not only by the Hamas, but also by Muslim clerics who are not affiliated with the radical factions. Thus, for example, while Yasser Arafat was conducting peace talks at Camp David in July 2002, Sheikh Ikrima Sabri, the Arafat-appointed Palestinian mufti, wrote for publication in his journal that “our right to Jerusalem must not be relinquished, since our presence there has been divinely, not humanly, ordained.”⁶ Another example of this is the pressure exerted by the heads of the Islamic Movement on the al-Aqsa compound waqf administrators. When in March 2003 it became known that an understanding had been reached between the Israeli authorities and the waqf administration regarding the renewal of tourism at the Temple Mount (that is, the enabling of Jews to visit the site), Sheikh Ra’id Salah, head of the Islamic Movement, published an article in his

organization's journal in which he warned that "none will dare to defy the will of Allah and to let Jews set foot on the Temple Mount." In April 2003, Arafat rejected the waqf initiation and Salah's article succeeded in backing this position; as a result, Israel was obliged to seek Jordanian intervention with the waqf. Jewish and other tourism at the Temple Mount were renewed only after Sheikh Ra'id Salah and other senior members of his movement were jailed and put on trial.⁷ Nevertheless, accumulated experience from peace agreements signed by Arab leaders with Israel shows that leading clerics have always been found to justify agreements with Israel by means of well-reasoned religious rulings. This is what happened after the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt, and after the signing of the Oslo Accords.⁸

The fourth component is the fact that both parties to the territorial conflict—the Palestinian and the Israeli—have a flawed perception of the site's religious status in the eyes of the opposing society. Over the last few years, I have heard many Palestinians playing a behind-the-scenes role in the peace process express their certainty that the Israeli side will, at the moment of truth, consent to full Palestinian sovereignty over the Temple Mount and the al-Aqsa compound, in exchange for full Palestinian recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Western Wall and the Old City's Jewish Quarter.⁹ They incorrectly assume that the Temple Mount is not particularly sacred to the Jews and that Israel is merely using the Temple Mount issue as a bargaining chip, in order to obtain concessions on other matters to be raised during negotiations. Their assessment is based primarily on the Israeli Chief Rabbinate's ruling prohibiting Jews from entering the Temple Mount site due to religious reasons, as well as on the secular nature of the Israeli political system and of a large portion of Israeli society, and on the fact that since 1967 Israel has refrained from exerting full control over the Haram/Temple Mount. They are not aware of the intensification of the Temple Mount's symbolic significance among both observant and secular Israelis, precisely because Yasser Arafat denied the Jewish connection to the Temple Mount and the Western Wall at the second Camp David summit. This denial exposed many Israeli Jews to the cultural gap that prevails between them and the Palestinian side as represented by Arafat and in turn served to rally the Jewish public around the Temple Mount as a national symbol. The latter phenomenon has been reflected in public opinion surveys, the most recent of which found that only 9% of Jews are willing to agree to exclusive Palestinian sovereignty over the site, while 51% insist on exclusive Israeli sovereignty over the Temple Mount.¹⁰

On the other hand, the Jewish party to the conflict is also guilty of underestimating the awareness-raising processes that the Palestinian and world Muslim populations have undergone with regard to the al-Aqsa/Temple Mount site, as described in the present study. The idea of shared Israeli sovereignty over the Temple Mount/al-Aqsa compound, which was raised by Israeli negotiators at the July 2000 Camp David talks, or the idea of setting aside a place of worship for Jews somewhere in the compound's open space or underneath exemplifies the degree to which Israelis overestimate the Palestinians' maneuvering space in light of the aforementioned processes.

In conclusion, over the last four decades Jerusalem has been the subject of a long and relentless campaign to penetrate the Muslim world's awareness. The campaign began in Jerusalem after the al-Aqsa Mosque arson of 1969 with a massive campaign barrage aimed at the entire Muslim world, and from there reverberated back to Jerusalem. Not only that, but the campaign that is being waged by various Islamic and Arab entities under the banner "al-Aqsa is in Danger" (and that it needs to be "freed from its captivity") features prominently in Islamic public discourse and is associated with statements aimed at delegitimizing Israel and the Jews—some of which are obviously characterized by anti-Semitic motifs.

The upgrading of Jerusalem's sanctity in contemporary Muslim awareness, the denial of any Jewish connection to Jerusalem and of the legitimacy of a Jewish presence in the city and on the Temple Mount, the development of a new historical, religious, and political ethos that accentuates Jerusalem's importance to Arabs and Muslims, and the fact that the consent of important Muslim political leaders will have to be obtained in order to reach an agreement regarding Jerusalem—all of these factors significantly restrict the Palestinians' flexibility in negotiations over the future of the city and its holy places. *Dividing sovereignty over the Temple Mount/al-Aqsa between Jews/Israelis and Muslims/Palestinians, whether on a geographical or a functional basis, does not appear to be a practicable option.*

The limited latitude for compromise over the sacred sites between Israelis and Palestinians perhaps leaves room for only one option in a future peace agreement: international involvement in the administration of the Old City (the Historical-Holy Basin) with each side retaining its current proprietorship of the holy places under a third party supervision for at least an interim period.

NOTES

1 Introduction

1. Klein, *Jerusalem Problem*, p. 73.
2. Interview with Dennis Ross on Fox News, quoted by Shlomo Ben-Ami, p. 229.
3. Sher, pp. 157, 186, 193–194, 231; Amirav, p. 245.
4. Makiya was born in Iraq and grew up there. He studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and worked there until 1981. His book *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq*, on Iraq under Saddam Hussein, was published in 1989 and became a bestseller after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Afterward Makiya became active in organizations that opposed Saddam Hussein's regime; he published additional books, participated in filmmaking and won awards in recognition of his work. He teaches at Brandeis University in the United States.
5. Makiya, p. 213. The sources of the idea of the erotic connection are discussed in greater detail on page 330.
6. See Lustick, pp. 168–176.
7. On changes in the position taken by Jewish religious figures and bodies, see Amnon; Inbari.
8. Sivan, Introduction.

2 The Elevation in Sanctity of al-Aqsa and al-Quds

1. Hayes, p. xxi.
2. Durkheim, pp. 206–229.
3. Hayes, p. xxi.
4. Park, p. 245.
5. Eliade, p. 155. On sanctification, see also Scott and Simpson-Houseley.
6. Turner.
7. Wieggers, p. 4.
8. Van der Leeuw, pp. 210, 395–396.
9. Chidester and Linenthal, pp. 7–9.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 15–20.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
12. See Elad, p. 63.
13. Rubin, pp. 104–106, in Hebrew, forthcoming in English.
14. Sivan, p. 113.

15. Sivan, p. 115. The term *Al-Quds* (which also appears in the combinations *al-Quds al-Sharif*, or *al-Quds al-Arabiyya*) has been used by Muslims for generations to denote Jerusalem's Old City or East Jerusalem and, at times, Jerusalem in general. In the discourse analyzed in this work, the term usually refers to the Old City. For reasons of convenience, I have generally translated *al-Quds* as *Jerusalem*.
16. Reiter, *Sovereignty of God and Man*, pp. 5–20.
17. Kister, "You Shall Only Set Out."
18. On *hadith* and *hadith* criticism, see Kister, *Studies*; Motzki.
19. According to his book *Qa'ida fi Ziyarat Bayt al-Maqdis*. See Matthews.
20. Palazzi, a prominent leader of the Italian Muslim community, also believes that the Jerusalem site does not have the status of *haram*, and that its sanctity extends to only the two buildings (the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque). Palazzi, p. 16.
21. Barzaq, p. 11.
22. Shurab, pp. 341–342.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Ikrima Sabri, "Maqanat al-Quds fil-Islam," in Mahmud, pp. 29–34.
25. Al-'Almi, p. 504; Friedlander and Hecht, p. 49; Reiter, "The Third in Holiness," p. 163. See figure at the Jerusalem Waqf Web site: <http://www.alaqsa-online.net/public/ask/allaqsa.jpg>.
26. Al-Sa'ih, pp. 72–73, 103–105.
27. Ahmad Muhammad 'Arafe, *Al-Qahira*, August 5, 2003 (published by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture).
28. Al-Waqidi, part III, p. 958. The author Muhammad b. 'Umar b. Waqid (al-Waqidi) died in 207/822. I am indebted to Dr. Mordechai Kedar for the reference.
29. A new interpretation of the Supreme Shiite Council is that al-Aqsa and al-Quds are a piece of heaven on the earth (*qit'ah min al-sama' 'ala al-ard*), see <http://www.shiitecouncil.gov.lb/nachatat/index.php?id=419>.
30. Rubin, "Muhammad's Night Journey." See also Livne-Kafri, "The Early *Ši'a* and Jerusalem."
31. *Ibid.* See also El-Khatib.
32. See, for example, the articles of Emmanuel Sivan and Isaac Hasson in Sharon, pp. 35–68; Sivan, pp. 85–120.
33. From the fact that Taqi al-Din Ibn-Taymiya wrote at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries that Jerusalem should not be called *haram*, it may be inferred that this was already customary at the time. See his work *Qa'ida* in Matthew.
34. "Al-Haram al-Sharif," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.
35. For a discussion of *haram*, see Serjeant, p. 50.
36. Kister, p. 196.
37. A *fatwa* from December 21, 2003, and another from June 17, 2003, in response to a question posed by Bashir Abu Umar in which he inquired about the interpretation of the words "whose precincts we did bless" of the *Isra'* verse. See www.alaqsa-online.net. See similar assertions in the following Web sites: <http://www.agentspro1.com/vb/showthread.php?t=9264>, and <http://www.alsaqr.com/vb/showthread.php?t=3722>.
38. A *fatwa* from December 21, 2002 on www.alaqsa-online.net.
39. Reiter, "The Third in Holiness," p. 163.
40. Elad, p. 62.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 63. Elad attributes these traditions to the Umayyad era.
42. See the tradition quoted in *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, Vol. 4, p. 137, Vol. 10, p. 211; and in Bukhari, *Sahih*, Kitab al-Anbiya' 407/6, Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifa; additional examples: Mansur, p. 73; Salim, pp. 152–261. On the origin of this tradition, see Livne-Kafri, p. 39.
43. Al-'Abadi, p. 13.
44. Luz, p. 28.

45. www.alaqsa-online.net, October 20, 2002. See an additional ruling on this site on the same subject from August 3, 2003.
46. Shurab, pp. 300, 305.
47. Abu 'Aliya, pp. 36, 42–43, bases himself on Abu Abdallah Mahmad ibn Ahmad al-Qurtubi, *Al-Jami' li-Ahkam al-Qur'an* (Beirut, 1964), Vol. 4, pp. 138–139.
48. Abu Aliya, p. 59.
49. Al-Qasim, p. 25.
50. See, for example, 'Abd al-'Aziz Mustafa, pp. 51, 59, quoting from 'Abd al-Hamid al-Sa'ih's work *Ahmiyat al-Quds fil-Islam* See also Jabr, p. 200; the article by Egyptian political writer Dr. Ra'fat Sayyid Ahmad on the www.elquds.net Web site, document 98.
51. www.aqsa-mubarak.org, the Web site of the southern branch of the Islamic Movement. An article of Muhammad al-Halayqa (2002) entitled "Aqsa al-Muslimin wa-Haykal al-Yahud" is based on Mustafa 'Abd al-'Aziz.
52. *Sawt al-Haqq wal-Hurriya*, September 8, 2000. The Islamic Movement in Israel has initiated in October 2007 the publication of a booklet containing 40 traditions (*ahadith*) praising the al-Aqsa Mosque (entitled *Al-Arba'un al-Maqdisiyya*) forwarded by Dr. Sheikh Ra'id Fathi and published by the Al-Aqsa Association for Reconstructing Islamic Sacred Sites.
53. Live-Kafri, *Jerusalem in Early Islam*, p. 23.
54. Baydun, p. 11.
55. A former member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood who left Nasser's Egypt for Qatar; he appears on a weekly program on *al-Jazeera* and has several important Web sites. He is known for his anti-Israeli opinions, but regarded as a centrist and moderate with regard to social issues.
56. *Al-Jazeera*, January 24, 2001.
57. Shaqaldi, p. 13.
58. Al-'Asali, *Bayt-al-Maqdis fi Kutub al-Rahalat*, p. 16.
59. "Mi'radj," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.
60. Ibid.
61. On the connection between Jerusalem and Mecca and the two places sacred to Islam, see Busse.
62. Baydun, p. 11.
63. Shurab, p. 70.
64. Television interview of January 24, 2001.
65. <http://www.al-multaqa.net/aqsa/archive/1426/voice/>; http://www.qaradawi.net/site/topics/printArticle.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=4082&version=1&template_id=119&parent_id=13.
66. Reuters, June 14, 2001; quoted by Pipes.
67. Barzaq, pp. 15–80.
68. See Ghawsha, Preface. See also Salama's statements at a lecture given in the United Arab Emirates that appeared in *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, November 21, 2002.
69. In a lecture that he delivered at a conference held at Al-Azhar University during April 29–30, 1997, entitled, "Peace Hinges on Jerusalem."
70. Al-Nahawi, p. 19.
71. See the figure at http://www.qaradawi.net/mritems/images/2002/10/3/2_2520_1_15.jpg.
72. See the illustration on http://www.qaradawi.net/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=3131&version=1&template_id=117&parent_id=188.
73. See, for example, the fifteenth-century miniatures housed in the British Museum that appear on www.geocities.com/khola_mon/myth/Isra.jpg & http://www.geocities.com/khola_mon/myth/Miraj.html & http://www.geocities.com/khola_mon/myth/Isra.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.geocities.com/khola_mon/myth/Isra.jpg&w=66&w=351&sz=31&tbid=RSQnbvdCOAAJ:&tbnh=132&tbnw=77&start=72&prev=/images%3Fq%3Disra%26start%3D60%26hl%3Diw%26lr%3D%26sa%3DN.
74. Rosen-Ayalon, pp. 11–17 including figures.

75. Sivan, p. 116 and Reference 34.
76. *Majalat al-Akhar al-Islamiyya*, Vol. 13, 3–4 (Jerusalem: Ministry of Religious Affairs, Muslim Department, December 1971), p. 4.
77. Reiter, “Third in Holiness,” p. 164.
78. “Ihtifalat al-Watan bi-Dhikra al-Isra’ wal-Mi’raj,” *Al-Quds*, November 28, 1997.
79. Jabr, p. 200.
80. October 2, 2002 *fatwa* on www.alaqsa-online.net.
81. See the figure at http://www.aicpmultimedia.org/html/Umsiyat_Al-Ibtihaj.html&h=400&w=262&sz=35&hl=en&start=1&um=1&tbnid=iqS7aHNF6uOraM:&tbnh=124&tbnw=81&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dumsiyat%26svnum%3D10%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den%26rls%3Dcom.microsoft:en-us%26sa%3DN.
82. Mansur, p. 101.
83. *Al-Rai*, October 6, 2002. For an additional example, see Baydun, p. 11.
84. “La tushadd al-rihal illa ila thalatha masajid: al-masjid al-haram, wa-masjidi hadha wal-masjid al-Aqsa,” Kister, “You Shall Only Set Out for Three Mosques.” See Baydun, p. 11.
85. Kister, p. 188.
86. See, for example, Qardawi, p. 13.
87. See the tradition of Abu Bakr al-Wasiti in Hasson, p. 25.
88. See, for example, *fatwa* no. 8718 of Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, May 7, 2000, on [Islam-Online.net](http://www.Islam-Online.net); Faisal al-Mawlawi’s *fatwa* of February 12, 2000, published on his Web site www.mawlawi.net and in the Jordanian weekly *al-Sabil*; the announcement made by the Muslim Council in East Jerusalem, headed by Sheikh Sa’d al-Din al-‘Alami, the then mufti (n.d.); and a *fatwa* issued by the Palestinian mufti Sheikh Ikrima Sabri, *al-Isra’*, April–May 2001, pp. 116, 121; and another *fatwa* of October 13, 2002, on the Jerusalem Waqf Web site.
89. The Jerusalem Waqf administration’s Web site, www.alaqsa-online.net, cites Qardawi’s *fatwa* in response to a question from October 13, 2002.
90. Pre-Muhammedan prophets are described as Muslims in the Qur’an. See Rubin, p. 103.
91. Shurab, p. 291. The connection between the Prophet Muhammad and Jerusalem is depicted in a different manner by Dr. Mustafa Rushwan, instructor in one of the Egyptian Al-Azhar University’s faculties; he writes in his book that, according to Muslim tradition, the Prophet Muhammad chose Palestine and Syria as a safe haven for Muslims endangered by civil war (*fitna*). Rushwan, pp. 46–53.
92. *Fatwa* of August 3, 2003 on www.alaqsa-online.net.
93. See al-Nahawi, pp. 14, 213. Jordan, by the way, is presented in the Jordanian National Charter of 1990 as the point of assembly and preparation (*ard al-hashd wal-ribat*) for the Islamic wars to liberate Syria and Palestine [a safe haven for those Arabs who were struggling against French occupation of Syria and British occupation of Palestine]. See <http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/charter-national.html>.
94. Livne-Kafri, p. 113.
95. See the interview with Ikrima Sabri in *al-Rabita*, issue 404, November 2002, pp. 10–13.
96. Jabr, p. 200; Talhami, p. 24.
97. Rushwan, pp. 46–53.
98. See *Fatwa samahat al-mufti al-akbar al-sayyid amin al-husayni bi-sha’n bay’ al-aradi bi-filastin lil-sahyuniyyin* (Al-Quds: Matba’at Dar al-Aytam al-Islamiyya, n.d.). A similar *fatwa* signed by 249 Palestinian religious leaders is published in Zu’aytar, p. 374.
99. <http://www.bma-alqods.org/arabic/page015.htm>.
100. Ra’id Sallah, “Li’annahu al-Aqsa al-Mubarak,” *Sawt al-Haqq wal-Hurriya*, September 15, 2000, p. 5.
101. Majir al-Din, 1:127; Abu ‘Aliya, p. 34.
102. Sivan, p. 94.
103. See the works of Mashtahri, Shaqaldi, and al-Qa’ud, p. 90.

104. Shaqaldi, p. 10.
105. Owadally, p. 59.
106. Harkabi, *Arabs' Position in the Conflict*, p. 246.
107. Al-Maqid. Another author who mentions Jerusalem in a Messianic context is al-'Alam.

3 Denial of an Authentic Jewish Connection to Jerusalem and Its Holy Places

1. According to journalist Ksenia Svetlova who was present at the meeting and related the incident to the present author.
2. Kamal Salibi, p. 110.
3. Zaki al-Ghul, "Hal Kana Hunaka Haykal Haqqan?" (Did a Temple Truly Exist?) in 'Alayan, pp. 31, 36.
4. Interview with Dennis Ross on Fox News, quoted by Shlomo Ben-Ami, p. 229.
5. *Makor Rishon*, May 22, 1998.
6. On the history of the Temple Mount in early Judaism and Christianity, see Eliav.
7. See, for example, the articles in Lavsky.
8. Ben-Ami, p. 219.
9. Hasson, *Fada'il*, p. 11.
10. Daniel Pipes summarizes in his article many of the Jewish and Israeli claims.
11. For a discussion of Muslim interpretations that do not view al-Aqsa as being in Jerusalem, see Hasson, "Jerusalem from the Muslim Perspective."
12. Harsegor and Stron, p. 125, On Abd al-Malik's considerations, see Elad.
13. Hasson, *Fada'il*.
14. Al-Waqidi, *Kitab al-Maghazi* (Oxford University Press), part III, p. 958. The author Muhammad b. 'Umar b. Waqid (al-Waqidi) died in 207AH/822AD. I am indebted to Dr. Mordechai Kedar for the reference.
15. Pipes.
16. Ibid.
17. <http://www.gamla.org.il/article/2000/april/harel1.htm>.
18. "Al-Mustashrikun al-Yahud Yuhawilun al-Tahwin min Qudsiyyat al-Quds wa-Makanatiha fi al-Islam" (The Jewish Orientalist Attempt to Belittle the Sacredness of Jerusalem and its Important Status in Islam) on the site www.alqudsqate.com/studies/studies7.htm.
19. See, for example, al-Maqid, p. 79.
20. Sha'ath, Chapter 6. In Chapter 11 of the same book it is stated that the Jews were always a minority in Jerusalem and that in 1481 there were 1,500 Jews out of a population of 10,000 [exaggerated and baseless figures], while a year later, after the Jews' expulsion from Spain, their numbers rose.
21. Thus writes al-Katib, p. 155; see also Aamiry, p. 2; Harkabi, *Indoctrination against Israel in U.A.R. Armed Forces*, p. 20; and 'Aliq's article.
22. Al-Qasim, pp. 160–161.
23. See www.jerusalem-studies.center.org.
24. *Al-Mufassal*, p. 546; *Ta'rikh al-Quds*, p. 233.
25. He bases his assertion on records of the Shari'a Court of Jerusalem 55/207. *Ta'rikh al-Quds*, p. 234.
26. Aamiry, pp. 1–2, 40.
27. Ibid., pp. 51–52.

28. Article entitled "Al-'Arab Sukan al-Quds al-Awa'il" (The Arabs Were the First to Reside in Jerusalem) (s.n.), on www.qudsonline.net/articles/document/seraching005.html.
29. 'Abd al-Tawab Mustafa, pp. 31–32.
30. Soucek, pp. 102–104. Her article discusses Solomon's Temple in Muslim tradition and art.
31. See Hasson, *Fada'il*.
32. *Brief Guide to al-Haram al-Sharif Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: The Supreme Muslim Council, 1929), p. 4.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
34. Palazzi, pp. 8–12, quoting from a Qur'anic commentary of Qadi Baydawi (d. 1286).
35. Luz, pp. 36–41.
36. On the sacredness of the Temple Mount site in Islam and its attribution to Solomon at the end of the seventh century, see Soucek.
37. Elad, p. 131.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
39. Al-'Asali, *Bait al-Maqdis fi Kutub al-Rahalat*, pp. 39–40.
40. *Ta'rikh al-Quds*, p. 16.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 294.
42. *Al-Mufasssal*, pp. 12–13.
43. 'Abd al-Tawab Mustafa, pp. 3, 33.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 12. Another work of similar intent based on analysis of biblical texts is that of Idris.
45. Article entitled "Al-Haykal Badalan min al-Masjid, Isra'il wa-Khurafat al-Baqara al-Hamra'" (The Temple Instead of the Mosque, Israel and the Fable of the Red Cow) (s.n.), on the Web site www.qudsonline.net/articles/document/searching008.html.
46. 'Abd al-Tawab Mustafa, p. 17.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 21. He cites a study by Dr. 'Abd al-Raziq Qandil, "Al-Ma'ahid al-Yahudiyya fi Masr" (The Jewish Temples in Egypt), *Risalat al-Mashriq*, Cairo University, Markaz al-Dirasat al-Sharqiyya, 1993, pp. 309–336. On Onias the Priest, see <http://www.daat.ac.il/encyclopedia/value.asp?id1=1179>.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
49. Matthew 21:12–13: "And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, 13: And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves."
50. A similar claim is made by other authors as well. See, for example, al-Fanni and al-Nammari.
51. Report by 'Ali Waked in YNET, March 18, 2007: <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3377822,00.html>.
52. *Report of the [Western Wall] Commission*, p. 57.
53. Kenyon, *Digging Up Jerusalem*.
54. Quoted from 'Adwan, pp. 89–92.
55. 'Abd al-Tawab Mustafa, p. 33 (Arabic).
56. *Digging Up Jerusalem*, p. 110.
57. Al-Qasim, p. 156.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 157. See also Aamiry, p. 10.
59. Al-Qasim, p. 228. A similar denial is presented by 'Aliq.
60. See Nadia Abu El-Haj work regarding Israeli archaeology in Jerusalem. While claiming that it ignores the non-Hebrew periods (and peoples' civilization), she also implicitly denies the Jewish narrative. See also Ricca, p. 61.
61. See also what is written in Sha'ath, Chapter 5: "The Zionists who are currently undertaking these excavations in Al-Qods have some specific objectives in mind, for they are constantly seeking for arguments to support their alleged historic right to Al-Qods and to Palestine.

Their investigations have produced vain results and their simplistic theories have dealt a fatal blow to the cultural heritage of both Al-Qods and Palestine, for they remain based on false and unfounded claims." See also the article by al-Miqdad.

62. See al-Halayqa.
63. See Mazar.
64. Conversation of the author with Eilat Mazar.
65. Al-Sa'ih, p. 97.
66. www.islamic-aqsa.com, article 232.
67. Shurab, quoting historian Ibn al-Batriq (d. 328), see pp. 59, 64, 273–276.
68. 'Anani, p. 11.
69. www.alaqsa-online.net, April 28, 2002.
70. *Fatwa* from April 28, 2002, on the www.alaqsa-online.net Web site.
71. Abu 'Aliya, p. 31.
72. He bases himself on (Dr.) John Thomson, *Qamus al-Kitab al-Muqaddas* (The Dictionary of the Holy Book), Beirut 1964, and on (Dr.) Muhammad Ahmad Hasan, *Al-Masjid al-Aqsa fi al-Kutub al-Muqaddasa* (The al-Aqsa Mosque in the Holy Books), p. 127.
73. Abu 'Aliya, p. 33.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 47. Additional examples may be found in the article by al-'Alim, p. 3. Another approach to the Temple, one characterized by anti-Semitic motifs, is the claim that the Jews were materialistic and turned their temple into a money-changing site. See 'Abd al-Aziz Mustafa, p. 70.
75. <http://www.rapeta.org/researches.asp?pagenum=2>.
76. <http://www.bma-alqods.org/histor10.htm>.
77. <http://www.bma-alqods.org/mosque.htm>.
78. <http://www.bma-alqods.org/histor11.htm>.
79. *Ibid.*
80. Interview of January 24, 2001.
81. See, for example, *Radio Sawt Filastin*, January 4, 2001; *Die Welt*, January 17, 2001.
82. *Makor Rishon*, May 22, 1998.
83. *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, January 10, 2003; *Al-Dustour*, January 10, 2003.
84. *Al-Ayam*, July 27, 2000.
85. Ben-Ami, p. 219.
86. *Ibid.*
87. *Ibid.*, pp. 219, 224.
88. See Jiryis.
89. See Ghawsha.
90. *Report of the [Western Wall] Commission*.
91. *Ta'rikh al-Quds*, p. 233.
92. *Ibid.*, pp. 233–234.
93. See interview with Palazzi: http://www.hebroots.org/hebrootsarchive/9811/9811_i.html.
94. See note 24.
95. www.aqsa-mubarak, article from 2002.
96. *Al-Isra'*, April–May 2001, p. 118.
97. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
98. Interview of January 24, 2001.
99. Sabri in an interview with *al-Jazeera*, December 17, 2000. See also *al-Ayam*, November 22, 1997.
100. He bases himself here on statements made by Dr. Yossi Beilin to the Israeli-Arab newspaper *Kul al-'Arab* on August 18, 2000. A similar assertion is made in an article published by Ibrahim 'Abd al-Karim on one of the Islamic Web sites. See 'Abd al-Karim. For additional examples of denial of the Jewish connection to the Western Wall, see al-Fanni and al-Nammari, p. 36; 'Anani, p. 99.

101. Reuters, February 22, 2001, from the *al-Jazeera* Web site. Sabri's *fatwa* was published in reaction to reports that a stone had been found at the top of the Western Wall that was in danger of detaching and rolling down, and that the Israeli authorities were seeking to address the matter.
102. Egypt State Information Service, April 28, 2001.
103. *Yedieth Aharonoth*, November 11, 1996. See also statements made by Eng. Raif Nijm, the Jordanian engineer in charge of repairs at al-Aqsa, in 'Alayan, p. 127.
104. *Kul al-'Arab*, August 18, 2000.
105. www.arableagueonline.org/arableague/index_en.jsp.
106. Cf. Ghawsha.
107. *Sawt al-Haqq wal-Hurriyya*, September 8, 2000.
108. *Or Commission Report*, Vol. 2, p. 544. In an article published on the Web site of the Islamic Movement's southern branch, historical evidence is offered of the Western Wall plaza's status as Islamic waqf originally dedicated by the son of Saladin—al-Malik al-Afdal Nur al-Din 'Ali—in 1193, as an endowment that included the Western Wall itself and its adjacent plaza, together with the entire Mughrabi Quarter—for the benefit of the Mughrabis, in recognition of this ethnically North African community's participation in Saladin's war to conquer Jerusalem; he established an Islamic seminary that was named after him: al-Madrasa al-Afdaliyya. The endowment's deed (*waqfiyya*), according to the article's author, was re-registered by the Jerusalem qadi in 1596. The plaza's dimensions were recorded in two additional Mughrabi endowments, in an endowment made by the Mughrabi Abu Midyan Shu'ayb (d. 1198). See "Al-Hait wa-Sahatuhu Waqf Islami," www.aqsa-mubarak.com.
109. The Egypt State Information Service, April 2, 2004. Also published on www.qudsqay.net. The author bases his statements on an Arabic translation of Armstrong's book, p. 327 in the English original. He also relies on the *Encyclopedia Judaica's* entry on the Western Wall, where it is written that worship at the site began in approximately 1520, after the Jewish expulsion from Spain and the Ottoman conquest.
110. 'Abd al-Karim.
111. *Betelem—Journal of the Movement for Progressive Judaism*, issue 1, July 1999, p. 6.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
113. See Palazzi.
114. Al-Khateeb, p. 182.
115. In this book Koestler, a Jewish atheist, raises the dubious idea that the Ashkenazi Jews were not descended from the ancient Hebrews but rather from the Khazars, a Jewish kingdom situated on the Black Sea whose leaders converted to Judaism in the ninth century. His declared aim in the work is to invalidate the foundations of anti-Semitism by proving that there is no connection between European Jewry and the biblical Jewry to whom anti-Semites attribute the murder of Jesus. Ironically, this theory has actually been adopted by anti-Semitic groups. Supporters of the Palestinian cause have tried to use the theory in order to deny the Jewish right to Palestine.
116. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
117. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
118. Nusseibeh, p. 20.
119. Lima Nabil, "Jerusalem . . . 5,000 Years of Arab History," available at www.palestine-info.co.uk/am/publish/printer_30.shtml. In an article of Lima Nabil published in a Jordanian daily in February 2003, she maintains that "the Israelis themselves do not deny what their excavations have recently revealed—a Canaanite water system was discovered and up to the present, no traces have ever been found of Solomon, his kingdom, or his temple."
120. Finkelstein and Silverman.

4 Creating a New Islamic Ethos of Jerusalem

1. Gellner, p. 169: "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: It *invents* nations where they do not exist."
2. Anderson, p. 6: "Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined."
3. Charles D. Smith, p. 609.
4. Anthony Smith, pp. 147, 212:
If the nation is to become a political community on the Western territorial and civic model, it must, paradoxically, seek to create those myths of descent, those historical memories and that common culture which form the missing elements of their ethnic make-up, along with a mutual solidarity. It must differentiate itself from its closest neighbours, distinguish its culture from theirs, and emphasize the historic kinship of its constituent *ethnie* and their common ties of ideological affinity. This is done by creating or elaborating an "ideological" myth of origins and descent.
5. Chejne.
6. For a review of this topic, see Tamir.
7. The other two techniques are (1) selective historical memory and (2) the rediscovery of parts of the past that have been forgotten or consigned to oblivion. See Lewis, p. 55.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 292.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 283, 291.
10. Bishara, p. 254.
11. Benvenisti, *City of Stone*, p. 1ff.
12. See <http://www.jr.co.il/pictures/stamps/jrst0001.jpg>. Interestingly the Argentine Post Service issued a special postal stamp on May 10, 1996, commemorating "the third millennium of the city of Jerusalem...since when King David made that city the capital of his kingdom." The stamp design reproduced a mosaic from the seventh century found in Madaba, in which a map of Jerusalem appears. See <http://www.raoulwallenberg.net/?en/interfaith/986.htm>.
13. The view of Israel Finkelstein, an Israeli expert on archaeology from Tel-Aviv University, that the David's and Solomon's kingdoms were not monumental empires is a minority opinion among Israeli scholars. See Finkelstein and Silverman.
14. <http://www.jerusalem.muni.il/english/tour/history.htm>.
15. Mazar; Avi-Yonah, p. 16. On the antiquity period of Jerusalem, see Armstrong, p. 3; Avi-Yonah, pp. 13–66.
16. Abraham Malamat, "The Dawn of Jerusalem," in *Sepher Yerushalayim*, p. 13; Ahituv; Avi-Yonah.
17. Avi-Yonah, p. 131.
18. From the clan of David, nominated by Daryavesh as governor of Judea in 520 BCE.
19. Jerusalem Municipality's Web site: <http://www.jerusalem.muni.il/english/tour/history.htm>.
20. Harsgor and Stroun, pp. 22–88.
21. Jerusalem Municipality's Web site: <http://www.jerusalem.muni.il/english/tour/history.htm>.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Pipes, first page.
24. On the Jewish perspective, see Jospe.
25. *Ibid.*, *passim*.
26. *Report of the Commission*.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Raphael Israeli, p. 148.

29. Reiter, *Sovereignty of God and Man*, p. 297.
30. Sivan, p. 119. For an example of an article in which Jerusalem history begins with the Muslim conquest, see al-Bash, "Al-Quds fi Zill al-Dawla al-Islamiyya." See also works by Christian Arab writers: Jiryis, p. 6; al-Khuri, p. 43.
31. See, for example, the contentions set forth by Aamiry, a Jordanian Foreign Service official, in his book on Jerusalem's Arab heritage, p. 27.
32. Kenyon, *Jerusalem Excavating 3000 Years of History*.
33. See "Important Dates in the History of Jerusalem," in Mazar, p. 101.
34. *Al-Mufasssal*, p. 83.
35. Armstrong, p. 14.
36. www.bma-alqods.org/englishsite/histor11.htm. See Kanyon's books on Jerusalem in the list of references.
37. www.arableagueonline.org/arableague/index_en.jsp.
38. www.bma-alqods.org/englishsite/histor03.htm.
39. Published in a Web site that was founded and supervised by two prominent Saudi Islamic scholars: <http://www.alukah.net/Articles/Article.aspx?CategoryID=35&ArticleID=792>.
40. On the myth of Canaanite origin, see Zilberman.
41. Baydun, p. 8. `Abd al-Aziz Mustafa, p. 48; al-Khuri; Mansur. Shurab (p. 55) writes that the historian ibn Jubayr al-`Arabi wrote that the Canaanites were Arabs of the desert and associates them with the Amalekites and with all of the inhabitants of the Mashriq descended from them.
42. For further discussion, see al-Maqid.
43. See Mushtahri, p. 74; Sha`ath, p. 333.
44. Al-Dajani, "Matlub Qira'a Sahiha li-Ta'rikh al-Quds."
45. www.elquds.net, document 96.
46. *Yawm al-Quds, Abhath al-Nadwa al-Sadisa*, pp. 43–46.
47. Jabr, p. 25; Abu `Aliya, 17.
48. `Anani, p. 9.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 9–10.
50. Abu `Aliya, p. 46.
51. Shurab, p. 55.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 274.
53. `Aliq.
54. Article entitled "Al-`Arab, Sukan al-Quds al-Awa'il" on www.qudsonline.net/articles/document/searching005.html (s.n.). Also: "al-Quds `Ibra al-Ta'rikh al-`Arabi al-Da'im wal-Yahudi al-Tari" (Jerusalem through the Arab Long and Jewish Fresh History), article published on www.alqudsgate.com/studies/studies19.htm.
55. See Qaradawi.
56. Sheikh `Abd al-Mu`izz `Abd al-Satar, "Iqtirab al-Wa'd wal-Haqq ya Isra'il" (Oh Israel! The Promise and the Truth are Near at Hand); Muhammad Sabih, "Ta'rikh al-Yahud" (The History of the Jews); and Dr. Hassan Hathut.
57. Qaradawi, p. 64.
58. 1 Joshua 3.
59. Palazzi (pp. 11–12) refers to a different narrative, according to which Caliph Umar did not accept Sophronius's terms. He brought 70 Jewish families from Tiberias to live in Jerusalem, in the area that eventually became the Jewish Quarter, in recognition of the assistance that the Jews had rendered him in locating the spot from which the Prophet Muhammad had ascended to heaven.
60. Qaradawi, pp. 82–83.
61. *Ta'rikh al-Quds*, pp. 11–15.

62. *Al-Mufasssal*, p. 11.
63. Al-ʿArif writes:
The historians tells us that the Jews were exterminated (by Nebuchadnezzar) due to their nature and their greed, and due to their inability to assimilate into the surrounding peoples as a result of their belief that they were God’s Chosen People, despite the fact that they lacked the qualities appropriate to such a status. They were characterized by: greed, envy, contentiousness, promiscuity and licentiousness; they shrank from no crime or despicable deed capable of bringing them financial gain or advancing their interests. *Al-Mufasssal*, p. 18
64. Harkabi, *Indoctrination against Israel*.
65. Aamiry, Preface.
66. *Ibid.*, pp. 22ff.
67. Al-Halayqa, basing himself on ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Mustafa.
68. In a lecture delivered at al-Azhar University at a conference held on April 29–30, 1997, entitled *Peace Hinges on Jerusalem*. See the books by al-Naqar and Shandi that are devoted mainly to the subject of the Arabs’ Jebusite origin and of Jerusalem’s ancient history; also Idris, chapter 1, p. 4; al-Bash, “Al-Quds fi Zill al-Dawla al-Islamiyya,” p. 12; al-Jawabra, p. 84; Sha’ath, p. 19; al-Maqid, p. 39.
69. Masalha, p. 79.
70. <http://www.bma-alsods.org/arabic/page015.htm>.
71. <http://www.bma-alsods.org/arabic/oic.htm>.
72. See the books by Mansur, al-Qaradawi, and Idris.
73. ʿAnani, p. 13.
74. Mahmud, p. 227.
75. Shurab, pp. 502–506.
76. See Baydun, “Historical Introduction,” pp. 8–10; Mashtahri, p. 74; ʿAnani, p. 13; Abu ʿAliya, p. 50; Shurab, p. 59.
77. Abu ʿAliya, p. 54.
78. ʿAbd al-Tawab Mustafa, p. 71.
79. *Jews, Christians, War and Peace in Egyptian School Textbooks*, pp. 102–103.
80. See Mas`ud.
81. Al-ʿArif, *Al-Mufasssal*, pp. 84–86.
82. *Ibid.*, pp. 83–94.
83. *Ibid.*, pp. 95–96. See also Donner on traditions regarding the conquest of Jerusalem.
84. Lazarus-Yaffe.
85. Jabr, pp. 8–10.
86. On Muslim personages buried in Jerusalem Muslim cemeteries in the city, see al-ʿAsali, *Ajaduna*. On Muslim travelers and other figures associated with Jerusalem; on early geographers of the city, see his book *Bayt al-Maqdis fi Kutub al-Rahalat*.
87. *Ibid.* See also al-Jawabra, p. 128.
88. “Al-Quds al-Islamiyya,” unsigned article on www.alqudsgate.com/studies/studies8.htm.
89. See, for example, archeologist Dr. Marwan Abu Khallaf’s list of madrasas in Reiter, Eordegian, and Abu Khallaf, p. 143.
90. www.bma-alsods.org/englishsite/histor03.htm. See also Talhami; Tibawi.
91. See Frenkel.
92. Reiter, “The Entire Land of Palestine is Holy Islamic Waqf.”
93. In my research on the Jerusalem Waqf, I have shown that waqf property may be exchanged and, in fact, sold, both in Shari’a law and, particularly, in practice. See Reiter, *Islamic Endowment*, pp. 171–208; *Islamic Institutions*, pp. 69–80.
94. Al-Harub, p. 77.

95. See <http://www.mideastweb.org/hamas.htm> for the original Arabic text. My translation diverts from that of Rafael Israeli by using the relevant legal terms (Israeli's translation is available at <http://www.palestinecenter.org/cpap/documents/charter.html> and taken from Alexander and Foxman 1990).
96. English translation: "Muslim Authorities Reiterate Islamic Stance on Palestine, Jerusalem, Refugees," *Palestine Times*, Issue 110, August 2000: <http://www.palestinetimes.net/issue110/index0.htm>.
97. *Ibid.*
98. Rushwan, pp. 46–53.
99. See Qaradawi's *fatwa*, "*al-Aqsa wa-Khatar al-Tahwid*," of July 24, 2001.
100. Salah Lutfi, "al-Quds wal-Masjid fi al-Tasawwur al-Islami," *Sawt al-Haqq wal-Hurriyya*, September 15, 2000, p. 6.
101. 'Abd al-Tawab Mustafa, pp. 39–41.
102. Jabr, p. 191; Abu 'Aliya, p. 41.
103. Interview conducted on January 24, 2001.
104. *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, November 21, 2002, with Sheikh Yusuf Salama, Palestinian minister of waqf and religious affairs and al-Aqsa Mosque preacher.
105. www.alaqsa-online.net, article 164.
106. *Fatwa* of March 1, 2004, on www.alaqsa-online.net.
107. <http://memri.org.il/memri/LoadArticlePage.asp?enttype=4&entid=1466&language=Hebrew>.
108. Rubin, p. 103.
109. At Markaz Zayed lil-Tansiq wal-Mutaba'a (Abu Dhabi) on December 20, 2002.
110. Shaqaldi, pp. 12–13.
111. For a pictured survey of al-Quds Day celebrations of 2006, see <http://www.snappedshot.com/archives/348-Al-Quds-Day-Blame-Da-Jooos-Day.html>. For an example from Houston Texas Muslim rally of 2005, see <http://www.arabvoices.net/QudsFlier2005.pdf>.

5 Islamizing the Conflict

1. Report of the commission appointed by H.M. government "... to determine the rights and claims of Moslems and Jews in connection with the Western or wailing wall at Jerusalem," December 1930, p. 57.
2. Kupferschmidt, pp. 185–200.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Fatwa Samahat al-Mufti al-Akbar al-Sayyid Amin al-Husayni bi-Sha'n Bay` al-Arabi bi-Filastin lil-Sahyuniyyin* (al-Quds: Dar al-Aytam al-Islamiyya, n.d.). A similar *fatwa* was issued by 249 Palestinian clerics, see Zu'aytar, p. 374.
5. On *fada'il al-quds* manuscripts, see al-'Asali, *Makhtutat*. On *fada'il al-quds* literature, see Livne-Kafri; Hasson, *Fada'il*; Sharon.
6. *Al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya*, January 24, 1935.
7. Reiter, *Islamic Endowments*, p. IX.
8. Frisch, p. 100; *Qur'an* 2:58; 4:154–156; 7:161–162; 5:21–26, quoted from Rubin, p. 102.
9. See, for example, the Johannesburg speech in Musallam, p. 27.
10. See note 1 of chapter 2.
11. Al-Qaradawi.
12. Mahmud, pp. 362–397. The claim that the conflict is a religious one appears on page 389. Mahmud bases himself on the following work of Yusuf al-Qaradawi: *Al-Itar al-'Amm lil-Sahwa al-Islamiyya al-Mu'asira, Nadwat al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya wa-Humum al-Watan al-'Arabi*, edited by Saad al-Din Ibrahim (Amman: Muntada al-Fikr al-'Arabi, 1998), p. 94.

13. London-published *al-Arab*, December 11, 2002, quoted on www.elquds.net, article 98 (Arabic).
14. Jabr, Preface.
15. `Abd al-Tawab Mustafa, p. 5.
16. Amara, "The Islamic Nature of the Struggle over Jerusalem."
17. *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, November 21, 2002, with Sheikh Yusuf Salama, Palestinian minister of waqf and religious affairs and al-Aqsa Mosque preacher.
18. Ghawsha, Preface, pp. 5–7.
19. See Sha'ath.
20. See Sivan, p. 117.
21. See, for example, the article by Kan'an in a book published by Markaz al-Dirasat al-`Arabi-al-Urubi, pp. 263–322.
22. Nadav Shragai, "Opinion Poll: 91% of Jews Unwilling to Relinquish the Western Wall for Peace," *Haaretz*, March 10, 2005.
23. For further discussion, see Ramon's article.
24. Berkovitz, *Battle for the Holy Places*, p. 88.
25. Al-Qasim, p. 229.
26. Ghawsha, pp. 22–23. This Palestinian narrative is mentioned in other places as well. See, for example, the article by al-Miqdad and the book by Khatib, p. 119.
27. www.arableagueonline.org/arableague/index_en.jsp. See also Hamas-affiliated Web site: <http://www.rapeta.org/arcticledetails.asp?ID=61>.
28. Benziman, 141. See also Benvenisti, 248; and Shragai, 40.
29. Article entitled "Al-Haykal wal-Ustura, Ikhtibar lil-'Arab wal-Muslimin" (s.n.), on www.qudsonline.net/articles/document/searching009.html.
30. *Haaretz*, August 24, 1969; Shragai, p. 42.
31. Qaradawi in a January 24, 2001 television interview.
32. *Jordan Times*, August 19, 2002.
33. *Al-Arab al-Yawm*, August 21, 2002.
34. Deputy Director Hajj Hasan Khudruj justified the previous day's terrorist attack in which 20 Israelis had been killed.
35. On this incident, see Shragai, pp. 39–46.
36. Kama, p. 29.
37. From the end of the Intifada until the opening of the Western Wall tunnel's exit in September 1996, there were no unusual disturbances at the Haram/Temple Mount except for Hamas's nonviolent parade on June 12, 1996, in which demonstrators burnt Israeli flags. For a survey of these events, see Berkovits, pp. 115–116.
38. Shragai, p. 335.
39. Kama, p. 15. Another book, one written in the spirit of the Islamic Movement in Israel's northern branch, describes the danger posed to al-Aqsa. See Al-Husayni, Yusuf Kamil Hasuna. *Filastin wal-`Tida'at al-Isra'iliyya `ala al-Muqaddasat al-Islamiyya* (Palestine and Israeli Violations of the Islamic Holy Places) [Hebron], 2000 [Arabic], p. 9.
40. Shragai, *Temple Mount Conflict*, pp. 340–363.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 357.
42. Sa'id `Iyad, *Majzarat al-Aqsa . . . wal-Tahaddi al-Kabir* (The al-Aqsa Massacre . . . and the Extreme Provocation). Acre: Dar al-Aswar [n.d.] [Arabic]; Dawlat Filastin. *Majzarat al-Aqsa, Shahadat wa-Watha'iq* (The al-Aqsa Massacre, Testimonies and Documents). Ittihad Lijan al-Mar'a lil-'Amal al-Ijtima'i [PLO: The Women's Union for Social Action], 1992 [Arabic].
43. Dawlat Filastin, *Majzarat al-Aqsa*, 1992. On the second book, see `Iyad. See also the chapter on the "Monday Massacre," in al-Zaru, pp. 114–127. *Judge Ezra Kama Report*, p. 15; al-Husayni, p. 9.
44. *Ma'ariv*, September 29, 1996, quoted in Berkovits (supra, n. 29), p. 116.
45. *Filastin al-Muslima*, November 1996, title page and p. 4.

46. See also the claim made by Palestinian mufti Sheikh Ikrima Sabri in *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, August 30, 2002.
47. *Fatwa* published on the Jerusalem Waqf Web site on April 29, 2002, copied from the Ibn Baz Web site.
48. *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, August 30, 2002.
49. *Report of the Or Commission*, Vol. 2, p. 543.
50. Interview conducted on January 24, 2001.
51. `Abd al-Aziz Mustafa, pp. 51–59.
52. Reiter, “Jewish-Muslim Modus Vivendi,” pp. 269–295.
53. Luz, p. 45.
54. Dayan, p. 501.
55. *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, August 19, 2000.
56. Ghawsha, Preface, pp. 5–7.
57. *Ibid.*
58. Al-Husayni, p. 9.
59. <http://www.bma-alsqods.org/Visit24.htm>.
60. <http://www.bma-alsqods.org/Histor11.htm>.
61. *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 22, 2001.
62. *Report of the [Western Wall] Commission*.
63. `Abd al-`Aziz Mustafa, p. 130.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 205.
65. *Ibid.* See the similar claim in Dajani’s article *Matlub Qira’a*.
66. `Abd al-Tawab Mustafa, p. 29.
67. Al-Qasim, pp. 147–148.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
69. The article was written in the United Arab Emirates on September 9–10, 2000 and was cited on www.aqsa-mubarak.com.
70. Yasir al-Za`atara, “Humum: Mahrajan al-Aqsa wal-Hamla al-Mas`ura Did Munazhzhimiha,” *al-Dustour*, August 29, 2002; `Ali al-Safdie’s article in the same issue is entitled “Tazhahurat al-Aqsa.”
71. Khalil al-Sawahri, a publicist who writes a column entitled “Ma`a al-Hayat wal-Nas,” in *al-Dustour*, May 22, 2003, article entitled “Al-Haykal al-Thalith” (the Third Temple). The item appeared in *Kol Ha’ir*, December 13, 1998.
72. `Abd al-`Aziz Mustafa, pp. 6–8.
73. Issued on September 27, 1996.
74. Announcement of September 27, 1996.
75. Ben-Ze`ev, p. 650.
76. www.Islam-online.net in the news archive. For a discussion of the organized transportation activity, see also Luz, p. 15.
77. *Al-Dustour*, May 21, 2003.
78. Musallam, pp. 26–28.
79. *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, August 20, 2000.
80. Interview of January 24, 2001.
81. *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, November 21, 2002, with Sheikh Yusuf Salama, Palestinian minister of waqf and religious affairs and al-Aqsa preacher.
82. Ghawsha.
83. *Al-Isra’*, September–October 2001, p. 121.
84. Another example is a statement made by the Teheran representative to the Iranian parliament, in the context of a discussion of the Muslim obligation regarding Jerusalem, according to which the Muslims bear particular responsibility for the Palestinian question. See <http://memri.org.il/memri/LoadArticlePage.asp?enttype54&entid51466&language5Hebrew>.

85. *Al-Masjid al-Aqsa Ayyuha al-Muslimun!!* The view of Jewish control of Jerusalem as a stain on the brow of all Muslims is a common motif in this type of literature. See, for example, the article by al-Miqdad.
86. Shragai, p. 320, basing himself on Sivan, p. 118.
87. The tenth session of *al-Majma' al-Fiqhi al-Islami* convened in Mecca on October 17, 1987. *Al-Quds Bayna Mashru'iyat al-Jihad wal-Khudu' li-A'da' al-Islam*.
88. Mushtahri, p. 6.
89. Abu `Aliya, pp. 43, 172.
90. `Abd al-`Aziz Mustafa, p. 205. See also the articles by al-Bash. For versions of the *hadith*, see al-Albani, nos. 7414, 7427, 2977.
91. `Abd al-Tawab Mustafa, pp. 64–67.
92. Shaqaldi, pp. 9–10.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
94. Al-Nahawi, p. 213.
95. www.shianews.com/hi/middle_east/news_id/0000183.php.
96. www.islamic-aqsa.com/ar/modules.php?news&file=print&sid=689. Also participating in the opening ceremony was the holder of the keys to Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Wajih Ya'qub Nusseibeh (a Muslim), as well as al-Aqsa compound and Mosque museum guards. One of the guards, Ziad Da'ud, said that the Israeli excavations greatly endanger the Mosque, which is on the verge of collapse (*a'il lil-suqut*), and that the Israelis are pumping water from the site's underground springs so that they will be able to penetrate the al-Aqsa compound from below.
97. Abu-Amr, p. 26.
98. See Mubarak's article, p. 1.
99. Ghawsha, Preface.
100. Barzaq, p. 7.
101. Item in *al-Dustour* (Jordan), n.d. (in the author's possession).
102. *Al-Arab al-Yawm*, August 21, 2002.
103. *Yaum al-Quds, Abhath al-Nadwa al-Thaniya*, p. 26. See also the articles by Dr. Mustafa al-Hiari (pp. 89–96) and by Dr. Salah al-Hamarna (pp. 97–112) in this volume. Mubarak. See also the book by al-Hazayma of the Applied Science Private University. The book's back cover features a picture and quote connected with Saladin.
104. *Our Jerusalem, a Collection of Educational Activities on the Subject of Jerusalem*, Society and Youth Administration, Ministry of Education and Culture and Melitz—Institutes for Jewish-Zionist Education [n.p., n.d.], p. 39.
105. See al-Zaban.
106. Abdul Hadi, p. 64.
107. *Al-Musawwar*, July 28, 2000.
108. *Qur'an* 5:85, in a lecture delivered at a conference at al-Azhar University held on April 29–30, 1997, under the rubric "Peace Hinges on Jerusalem."
109. *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, August 8, 2000.
110. *Al-Ayam*, August 10, 2000.
111. NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation), August 18, 2000.
112. The *fatwas* are summarized in an article published on www.laylatalqadr.net.
113. Quoting the tradition from Ibn Hisham, I, pp. 575–577.
114. The *fatwas* are summarized in an article published on www.laylatalqadr.net. Wafa, in referring to the Jews as "the sons of monkeys and pigs," made use of a familiar anti-Semitic motif based on a Qur'anic verse (65:2).
115. See, for example, Tsimhoni, pp. 66–69.
116. According to a 1992 survey conducted by Bernard Sabella of Bethlehem University, 35% of the Christian population of the West Bank emigrated between 1967 and 1992 (47%

- to the United States) versus only 16% of the Muslim community during that period. See Bernard Sabella, "Socioeconomic Characteristics and the Challenges to Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land," *Christians in the Holy Land*, ed. Michael Prior and William Taylor (London: World of Islam Festival Trust, 1994), pp. 41–42.
117. On the change in the situation of the Christians in Palestine, see Daphne Tsimhoni, "Israel and the Territories—Disappearance: Disappearing Christians of the Middle East," *Middle East Quarterly* (Winter 2001).
118. Sayed Anwar, "Exiled Palestinian Militants Ran Two-Year Reign of Terror," *Washington Times*, May 13, 2002.

6 Actors, Disseminators, and Achievements

1. *Davar*, February 3, 1986.
2. The northern branch's site: www.islamic-aqsa.com; the southern branch's site: www.aqsa-mubarak.com.
3. See the list of Web sites in the bibliography.
4. See also the article by 'Abd al-Rahman 'Abbad, "al-Quds fi al-Shi'r al-Filastini al-Mu'asir," in Khuri, Musallam, and Darwish, pp. 455–478.
5. www.elquds.net, article 356.
6. There were plans in June 2005 to hold the conference in Bahrain with the participation of the King of Bahrain and of the Bahraini Islamic Movement—*Jam'iyyat Munasarat Filastin* (the Society for Assistance to Palestine)—but the authorities rejected this initiative.
7. For details, see <http://www.alquds-online.org>.
8. www.alquds-gate.com/gate.htm.
9. *Jews, Christians, War and Peace in Egyptian School Textbooks*, pp. 91–97, 151.
10. Be'eri, p. 54.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 55. See more on this at Dumper, pp. 250ff.
12. See the picture in *Majalat al-Akhbar al-Islamiyya*, Vol. 13, 1–2 (Jerusalem: Ministry of Religion, Muslim Department, December 1971), p. 41.
13. Tal, p. 195. Jerusalem's senior conspirator was Dr. Musa 'Abdallah al-Husayni. There are, however, other opinions regarding the plotters' identities. See, for example, al-Nashashibi.
14. Section 13 of the Writ of Mandate required them to provide free access to and freedom of worship at the holy sites.
15. Law No. 33. al-'Abadi, p. 30.
16. *Majalat al-Akhbar al-Islamiyya*, Vol. 13, 1–2 (Jerusalem: Ministry of Religion, Muslim Department, December 1971), p. 43.
17. Katz, pp. 107–110.
18. Merhav and Giladi, p. 70. Ref. 159.
19. Bin Talal.
20. Basus, p. 237.
21. Reiter, "Third in Holiness," p. 170.
22. Menachem Klein, *Jerusalem the Contested City* (London: Hurst and Company in association with the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 2001), p. 149.
23. Reiter, *Temple Mount*, p. 18.
24. Statement by Foreign Minister Peres in an interview with *Yedioth Aharonoth*, July 17, 1994. Quoted by Berkovitz, p. 203.
25. Berkovitz, p. 203.

26. AFP (Agence-France Presse) and the Associated Press, December 15, 1994, cited by Berkovitz, p. 208 and Ref. 494, p. 480.
27. Klein, pp. 43–56.
28. Ibid.
29. *Al-Ahali* (Jordan), January 29, 1994, article summarized in *Haaretz*, January 30, 1994, cited by Berkovitz, p. 386.
30. Interviews with King Abdallah in *al-Qabas* (Kuwait), September 9, 1999, and in *al-Hawadeth* (Lebanon), September 16, 1999. *Newsweek*, June 12, 2000.
31. Yoav Stern, “Jordan Increases its Involvement at the al-Aqsa Mosque,” *Haaretz*, September 24, 2007.
32. Reiter, *Temple Mount*, p. 18; Reiter, *Islamic Institutions*, p. 97.
33. The Waqf was ordered to cede involvement in this issue to Ruhi al-Khatib, the Amman-based shadow-mayor of East Jerusalem (he served as Mayor of Jerusalem prior to the Six-Day War). `Alami, p. 271.
34. *Haaretz*, May 20, 1979, cited by Berkovitz, 58.
35. R. Tzach, “The Golden Dome Is above Me,” *Kol Ha’ir*, July 29, 1994, cited by Berkovitz, 205.
36. www.al-bab.com/arab/docs/league/abdullah00.htm.
37. Berkovitz, p. 5.
38. `Alami, pp. 290–292.
39. The article, entitled, “*Ta’thir al-Muqaddasat al-Diniyya `ala al-Markaz al-Qanuni li-Madinat al-Quds*,” was published on www.alquds.gate.com.
40. See Salim, p. 163.
41. *Al-Quds*, December 15, 1994.
42. *Yedioth Aharonoth*, January 28, 1981, January 29, 1981, cited by Berkovitz, p. 62.
43. Pipes, available at <http://www.meforum.org/article/490>.
44. *Yawm al-Quds, Abhath al-Nadwa al-Sadisa*, p. 20.
45. Ibid., pp. 34–35.
46. See Mahmud. The editor was head of the History Department and also of the Jerusalem Preparatory Conference at Zarqa Private University.
47. www.Islam-online.net, in the news archive.
48. Sherrie Gossett, “Mecca Conference Criticized for Hypocrisy on Holy Site Destruction,” *CNSNews.com*, December 29, 2005.
49. http://www.oic-oic.org/english/is/9/9th-is-sum-final_communique.htm.
50. The document was apparently written by A.B.H. Kargbo of Sierra Leona. See <http://www.bma-alquods.org/arabic/indexa.htm>.
51. <http://www.bma-alquods.org/arabic/proglist.htm>.
52. Ibid.
53. *Haaretz*, September 27, 1996.
54. *Kol Ha’ir*, June 27, 1997, cited in Berkovitz, p. 80.
55. www.isna.net.
56. Reiter, “Third in Holiness.”
57. Ginat and Winckler.
58. *Al-Jazeera*, January 24, 2002.
59. Interview with *al-Jazeera*, December 17, 2000.
60. Dhunaybat praised the sacrificial activity of the Palestinian terrorists in Israel and called for opposition to normalization with Israel. See Qasim al-Khatib, “Al-Dhunaybat Yafatihu Usbu` Fi` liyyat al-Aqsa fi Ma`an,” *al-Dustour*, September 2, 2002.
61. *Filastin al-Muslima*, Year 8, April 1990, pp. 6–8.
62. Known by me to be a pragmatic person of moderate views.
63. *Al-Rai*, June 13, 2002.
64. *West, Christians and Jews in Saudi Arabian Schoolbooks*, pp. 102–103.
65. Ibid.

7 Conclusion: The Religious Barrier

1. See Albin; Ginges et al.
2. "Israeli Aggressions against the Holy Places in Jerusalem 2005–2006," p. 3. www.alquds-online.org.
3. *Al-Khaleej*, December 10, 2007.
4. Nadav Shragai, "The Last Leaflet of Rabbi Shapira," *Haaretz*, October 11, 2007.
5. www.arableagueonline.org/arableague/index_en.jsp.
6. *Al-Isra'*, April–May 2001, p. 116.
7. For a discussion of the pressure exerted by the Islamic Movement on the Palestinians, see Luz, pp. 14–20.
8. See, for example, the *fatwa* of Egyptian mufti Jad al-Haqq `Ali with regard to the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel: fatwa no. 1316 of November 26, 1979, p. 3621, *Al-Fatawa al-Misriyya, Dar al-Ifta' al-Misriyya*. And see the *fatwa* of Ibn Baz after the Oslo Accords, published in *Al-Muslimun*, January 22, 1995.
9. For Israeli-Arab statements along these lines, see Luz, pp. 46–51.
10. Nadav Shragai, "Opinion Poll: 91% of Jews Unwilling to Relinquish the Western Wall for Peace," *Haaretz*, March 10, 2005.

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| www.al-azhar.org | Al-Azhar Institute, Cairo |
| www.alqudsgate.com | Al-Quds Center for Media and Culture |
| www.alquds-online.org | Al-Quds Organization |
| www.alukah.net | Saudi Islamic scholars |
| www.aqsa-mubarak.org | Islamic Movement in Israel, southern branch |
| www.arableagueonline.org | The Arab League |
| www.bma-alquds.org | <i>Bayt Mal Al-Qods</i> Agency of the Organization of the Islamic Conference |
| www.hashd.org | Hashd Party, Palestinian peace and democracy movement (Sari Nusseibeh) |
| www.Islamic-aqsa.com | Islamic Movement in Israel, northern branch |
| www.islam-online.net | Inter-Islamic, provides <i>fatwas</i> on-site |
| www.jerusalem-online.org | The al-Quds Institute (Mu'asasat al-Quds) |
| (formerly www.elquds.net) | |
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| www.mesc.com.jo | Middle East Studies Center, Jordan |
| www.oic-oci.org | Organization of the Islamic Conference—57 Islamic member states |
| www.palestinhistory.com | Palestinian Authority Web site |
| www.qaradawi.net | Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi |
| www.qudsonline.net | Organization whose goal is to liberate Jerusalem |
| www.qudsway.net | Islamic Jihad movement |
| www.rapeta.org | League of Palestine Islamic Scholars (Rabitat `Ulama' Filastin) |

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