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# FOREWORD

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It's early on a sunny autumn morning as I leave the Friends of Zion Museum and walk east, toward Jerusalem's Old City. Horns blare as traffic rushes through the streets of the city. Fumes from the vehicles are overcome by the fragrance of freshly baked bread as I walk the route that will take me from earthly Jerusalem to heavenly Jerusalem—from the modern city to the Temple Mount in the Old City. Ultra-Orthodox Jews dressed in dark suits and wearing wide-brimmed black hats rush past me with children in tow on their way to pray at the Western Wall.

As I ascend one hill in earthly Jerusalem, I can see that at the bottom lies the beautiful new Mamilla Pedestrian Mall. Built on the site of the former no-man's-land between Israel and Jordan, it is now a thriving commercial center filled with tourists and local shoppers. Leaving behind the mall's elegant shops and restaurants, I stroll straight toward the Old City's Jaffa Gate, where I enter the Arab market on my way to the Temple Mount.

This is a special day, as it comes in the midst of the Jewish Festival of Sukkot, when thousands of Jewish worshipers gather at the Western Wall to receive the Priestly Blessing. It is also the day of celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, when 10,000 Christians from 100 countries will gather in Jerusalem. The Old City will be packed with the faithful of both religions, all converging at the same holy place, the Temple Mount.

As I exit the Mamilla mall and climb the stairs to Jaffa Gate, I pause and look to my right across the Sultan's Pool and see the King David Hotel atop the next hill. It is a symbol of resistance to British rule during Israel's struggle for independence. As does every part of Jerusalem, the Sultan's Pool also carries an echo of biblical history; it slopes down to the Valley of Hinoam, where ancient worshippers of the god Moloch would sacrifice their children on burning altars—until Moses brought the law of God to ancient Israelites.

My mind returns to the present, to the walls surrounding the Old City. Dominated by David's Citadel, the walls stand as if on guard above Jaffa Gate, one of the city's eight gates. It points toward the port of Jaffa, the destination of Jewish and Christian pilgrims in previous centuries. Although the walls were built by Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent in the sixteenth century, Jaffa Gate was widened to accommodate the carriage of Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany during his visit to Jerusalem in 1898. His pompous demand was contrasted some twenty years later at the end of World War I, when conquering British general Edmund Allenby dismounted his horse outside the widened gate and declared he would enter the holy city on foot as a Christian pilgrim. I feel Allenby's presence as this pilgrim follows in his footsteps through the Jaffa Gate.

Walking down narrow David Street through the Arab market, I pass colorful shops selling every kind of merchandise, including a wide variety of souvenirs and religious objects for every faith. The winding streets of the *souk*, the Arab market, are divided into sections much like an open-air department store: dry goods on one street, grocery stalls on another, and on yet another, shops selling exotic oriental spices that perfume the air.

Walking past the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on the Via Dolorosa with its Stations of the Cross, I enter a street devoted to

patisseries, among which one can buy a chunk of *halva*, the Middle Eastern sesame-and-honey confection in assorted flavors—pistachio is recommended.

The Arab merchants eagerly call out to passersby to inspect their wares—and bargain for them—and I am no exception. The shop owners expect to do a good business with all the tourists. Today, the Old City is packed with foreign visitors adding to the crush of religious Jews on their way to receive the Priestly Blessing.

This benediction is, in Hebrew, *nesiat kapayim*, or “raising of hands.” In Yiddish, it is known as *dukhanen*, from the word *dukhan*, or platform, the place from which the blessing is traditionally offered by the *Kohanim*, or priests, descendants of Aaron. The Torah decrees that the priests are to raise their hands and bless those gathered in order to transfer Jehovah’s blessings upon the people. Although the temple was destroyed in AD 70, this practice is carried on today in synagogues during prayer services. The verbatim text in the Torah is:

May the LORD bless you and guard you—

יְהוָה יְבָרֶכְךָ וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ

(*Yevhārēkh-khā Adhōnāy veyishmerēkhā . . .*)

May the LORD make His face shed light upon  
you and be gracious unto you—

יְהוָה יִפְתָּח לְפָנָיו וְיִבְרַךְ אֶת פָּנָיו

(*“Yā’ēr Adhōnāy pānāw ēlekhā viḥunnékā . . .*)

May the LORD lift up His face unto you and give you peace—

וְיָשִׁיב פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיַשְׁלֵם לְךָ שְׁלוֹמֹ

(*“Yissā Adhōnāy pānāw ēlekhā viyāsēm lekhā shālōm.”*)

It can be found in the Bible in Numbers 6:24–26.

The crowd jostling through the streets is in a jovial holiday mood. One marvelous thing about Jerusalem's Old City is that it is always open: On the Jewish Sabbath, the Christian and Muslim shops are open; on Sunday, shops of Jews and Muslims are open; and on Friday, Jews and Christians conduct business. Turning aside from the Muslim Quarter, I enter the Jewish Quarter at the Cardo—the ancient Roman market and the country's first shopping mall. It was Jerusalem's main street fifteen hundred years ago. Today the Cardo is a combination of upscale shopping and archeological sites dating back to Roman Emperor Hadrian, including original paving stones upon which Jesus might have walked.

Since entering the Old City at Jaffa Gate, my stroll through the Arab market and the Cardo has been shaded from the harsh Middle Eastern sun. Now, as I climb the stairs and exit into the Jewish Quarter, I emerge into bright sunlight that makes the stone buildings of the quarter glow with a golden light. The first building on my left is the nineteenth-century Hurva Synagogue, rebuilt after having been destroyed by the Jordanian army during the War of Independence. Restored to its former glory, including its magnificent dome, it is the center of the Jewish Quarter, itself lovingly rebuilt after 1967. The plaza at the center is filled, not only with visitors but also with many children at play from the quarter.

I pause in the midst of the usual array of shops and restaurants to note an exceptional site: the ruins of the Burnt House. This magnificent building, uncovered by archeologists, was burned down at the time of the conquest of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70 in the same fire that destroyed the temple.

As I slowly descend the stairs from the Jewish Quarter toward the Western Wall plaza, I turn a corner and am struck by a study in contrasts. Part of the silver gray dome of Al-Aqsa Mosque appears

framed against the background of the Mount of Olives in the distance. I gaze upon the thousands of graves of the oldest Jewish cemetery in the world; the mountain that Jesus is meant to cross on His next visit to Jerusalem. It is also the place overlooking the Valley of the Dry Bones that the prophet Ezekiel prophesied would come to life (Ezekiel 37:1–28) and restore the nation of Israel.

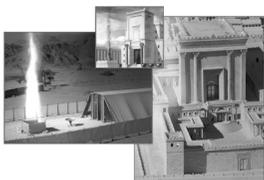
Farther in the distance to the east, the sky is clear enough for me to just make out the Dead Sea some thirty miles away. Just visible in Jordan beyond the Dead Sea are the Mountains of Moab, which conceal the burial place of Moses, who was not allowed to cross into the Promised Land. As I turn the corner, suddenly the entire majesty of the Temple Mount is before me: the plaza leading up to the Western Wall, the Kotel; above it on the left is the sparkling golden Dome of the Rock shrine, and to the right Al-Aqsa Mosque. I am humbled by the incredible holiness of this place that is most sacred to the Jews.

The Dome of the Rock is built over the Foundation Stone, which Jewish tradition teaches is the center of the universe. Centuries before the Dome of the Rock was completed in AD 691, the stone was covered by the Holy of Holies in the temples. Centuries before that, Jewish tradition ascribes the site to Mount Moriah, where God tested Abraham's faith in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac.

Before the second temple was destroyed, a social activist rabbi from the Galilee expelled the money changers from its holy premises, as related by all four gospels of the New Testament. For the Believers who have flocked to the city for the Feast of Tabernacles, not only is Jerusalem the City of David, it is the City of God. It is the location of the garden of Gethsemane, Golgotha, and nearby, the Garden Tomb. It is the home of numerous churches that have been erected over the centuries, including the ancient Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the colorful Church of All Nations. The city is also

home to the Cenacle, believed to be the place where the Last Supper was celebrated by Jesus and His disciples.

I stand reverently before the history that resonates from this place, from the presence of Jesus to the ingathering of the exiles foretold by the prophets. I have walked across the modern, earthly Jerusalem to the one place Jews, Christians, and Muslims believe is the gateway to heaven. These very stones speak to me as I cross the plaza and ascend the ramp to the Mughrabi Gate of the Temple Mount that welcomes me and all who come in peace. Jerusalem. It all began here, and will all end here.



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## JERUSALEM: CITY *of* GOLD

Atop the Mount of Olives outside the ancient city of Jerusalem and looking toward the east, the sun rises over the Judean desert. I can see the buildings in the distance as the sunlight tints the ancient stones with the rosy glow of red and ocher. The sun races across the sky until it reaches apogee and then begins the descent toward the Mediterranean Sea. As the waning sunlight bounces off the royal stone—the crystalline limestone covering the cream-colored façade of one ageless edifice and then another—it produces a golden tinge. It is from this reflection that Jerusalem has become known as the “city of gold.” This sunset is as brilliant as the sunrise—an oft-captured picture-postcard moment in time.

The sweeping panorama of Jerusalem is overwhelming. The multi-towered landscape is a splendid drama written in stone, one that has received rave reviews from countless pilgrims to the Holy Land. Seen from atop the mount are landmarks such as the ancient ruins of the City of David, the gilded cupola on the *Haram esh-Sharif*, the Dome of the Rock, and the Kidron Valley, where tombstones dot the hillside beneath the crenellated walls of the ancient city. These

massive stone walls, with their battlements intact, have proudly witnessed countless sieges of invading armies. The parapets of these walls once sheltered archers; today soldiers patrol those same bulwarks, not with bows and arrows, but with automatic rifles.

The Olivet view entices pilgrims to descend into Jerusalem, a city of magnificent hewn stones, and visit the Old City with its Jewish Quarter. Stones, stones, stones. As the traveler wanders through the tangled labyrinth of narrow alleyways, one can almost touch those stone walls on either side. There are stone arches above and paving stones beneath. From the ancient ruins to the medieval ramparts, these streets and walls that have baked in the warmth of innumerable sunrises each have a story to tell.

Those most beloved by the people of Israel are the stones that rise to form the Western Wall, the holiest shrine of the Jewish faith. The fifty-foot-high wall is all that remains of Herod's temple as it existed in the first century. The stones stacked one upon another to build this wall are so massive it's hard to imagine how they were chiseled out of the quarries outside Jerusalem and then transported up the hills into the city.

To grasp the perspective, it is helpful to look backward across the centuries and to follow the course of events that has led to today's impasse in the City of David. Consider the view from the temple when the stones were newly hewn and the city of Jerusalem shone like alabaster in the morning sun; Herod the Great began rebuilding Solomon's temple in 20 BC; the project occupied the rest of his administration. While the fifteen-story-high temple was constructed during Herod's reign, the outer courts and walls were not fully completed until AD 64, some sixty-eight years after his death.

One day, after Jesus had been teaching in the temple precincts, He called His disciples' attention to the buildings:

“Do you see all these things?” he asked. “Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.” (Matthew 24:2)

The words of Jesus were precisely fulfilled in AD 70 when Roman armies swept through Jerusalem and reduced Herod’s magnificent temple to a pile of blackened rubble. The stones of the temple have been buried in antiquity, somewhere deep beneath the Old City.

The remaining stones of the Western Wall have become a symbol of the enduring hope of the Jewish people. Even nonreligious Jews venerate the Wall as a national monument. The plaza in front of the Western Wall can accommodate 100,000 congregants. It is the gathering place of the people of Israel, the scene of both joyous celebration and solemn memorial. For a city that has been completely destroyed twice, occupied by enemies twenty-three times, surrounded fifty-two times, and liberated forty-four times, the Wall remains a testimony of God’s all-encompassing providence.

The walls of Jerusalem summon pilgrims to return again and again to that eternal city. They speak to the soul and hum with the sound of ancient songs in a minor key—songs of anguish and suffering—songs of, “Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more” (Jeremiah 31:15).

The Western Wall is also known by some as the Wailing Wall. Worshipers who have gone there to pray over the centuries have washed those stones with rivers of tears—tears of mourning, tears of joy, tears of intercession. Visible in the cracks and crevices between the huge stones are tiny pieces of paper, crinkled and wedged in the nooks and crannies of the Wall. It’s a tradition to write a prayer on a slip of paper and place it among the stones. It has become a place of prayer for peoples of all nations. Once each month, caretakers of the

Western Wall carefully remove the scraps of paper and bury them ceremonially.

Stand in front of those hulking stones and a spiritual connection is made with the other worshipers offering their prayers and praises to God. Reach out and touch the ancient weathered boulders. Listen to the eerie sounds of the *muezzin*, the Muslim crier who heralds the Islamic call to prayer from atop Mount Moriah; it is also a reminder of the many Jews killed for daring to stand beside the wall to pray to *Yahweh*. It has long been a silent witness to the sufferings of God's Chosen People. If only those ancient weathered rocks could speak.

The very fact that the Jewish people and the nation of Israel exist today is a miracle. No other group of people has been so systematically targeted for destruction. Most Jews were exiled from their homeland after having been conquered by one kingdom or another, and even then were hunted and humiliated, menaced and massacred by the millions. The Jews as a people would not have survived were it not that the sovereign Lord of the universe ordained their preservation.

The nations that ransacked, burned, and leveled Jerusalem while trying to annihilate the Jewish people are rife with devastation. We have only to examine history to ascertain that the remnants of those once-great empires are now dust and ashes. Many nations have come against Israel from the beginning of her existence. Yet, like the proverbial Phoenix, she has risen from the ashes each time. Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem in 586 BC and was doomed to live as a beast of the field for seven, agonizing years. He was restored to sanity when he recognized the God of the Israelites. (See Daniel 4.) His kingdom of Babylon was conquered by Cyrus the Great.

In 332 BC, Alexander the Great captured Jerusalem. His empire fragmented after his death, and the followers of Ptolemy in Egypt

and then the Seleucids of Syria ruled over Jerusalem. The Jews, horrified by the desecration of the temple under the Seleucid ruler, Antiochus IV, staged a revolt and regained independence under the Hasmonean dynasty. It lasted for one hundred years, until Pompey established Roman rule in the city. The Holy Roman Empire collapsed after destroying the temple and leveling Jerusalem.

The British, who ruled over Palestine and Jerusalem following World War I, boasted that the sun never set on the British Empire. Indeed, one-fifth of the world's population was under its rule. However, after turning away Jews seeking asylum in both Britain and Palestine as they fled Hitler's gas chambers, and after arming Arabs to fight against them in the Holy Land, the empire quickly began to disintegrate. Great Britain today is comprised of just fourteen territories, consisting of a number of islands. Gone are the days when the empire stretched from India to Canada and from Australia to Africa.

Jerusalem, however, continues to stand as a testimony to the determination and courage of the Jewish people. That God has ordained the preservation of His chosen people is written throughout the pages of the Scriptures.

It was first noted in His covenant with Abraham:

The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."  
(Genesis 12:1-3)

In addition to the covenant, the Lord gave Abraham and his descendants, Isaac and Jacob, the title deed to the land of Israel. He declared that it would be in their possession perpetually. In Genesis God again spoke:

On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.” (Genesis 15:18–21)

In secular terms, this would be called a royal land grant. This type of grant, common in antiquity, was perpetual and unconditional. The king, or sovereign, possessed all the land and granted parcels of it to loyal subjects as reward for faithful service. In biblical terms, God is sovereign over all the earth—He created it, and there are no greater rights of ownership than that—so the land is certainly His to bequeath as He wishes.

Years after He made His original covenant with Abraham, God confirmed it. The patriarch accepted the terms of the covenant by the right of circumcision:

“As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their

generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” And God said to Abraham: “As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised . . .” (Genesis 17:4–10 NKJV)

This covenant with Abraham is an eternal one with no preconditions or expiration date. It was given as an everlasting possession to Abraham and his descendants. Only mankind is capable of impeding the fulfillment of the contract through disobedience, but the pact can never be rescinded. Moses declared:

God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? (Numbers 23:19)

To avoid any confusion or equivocation, God reconfirmed the covenant with Abraham’s son, Isaac. Moses related God’s promise:

“For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed . . .” (Genesis 26:3–4)

Neither did God leave out Abraham's grandson Jacob, or the generations that followed. He declared:

“I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” (Genesis 28:13–15)

Of what value is this ancient covenant between God and Abraham today? God remains sovereign over the land He bestowed upon Abraham and his offspring. He has never vacated the title deed, nor, as some believe, has He rescinded His covenant declaration. The land still belongs to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants—as numerous as the sands of the sea.

Today, the place where God made and confirmed this covenant lies in an area north of Jerusalem between Bethel and Ai. It is in the heart of the West Bank (actually Judea and Samaria) on land the United Nations has decreed that Israel occupies illegally. World leaders demand that Israel forego the area for the sake of an ever-elusive peace.