

# Journey to Bayt Al-Maqdis & Jordan – Part 6

*by Mushtaq Shaikh*

- Arrival in Palestine
- Entering the Al-Aqsa Compound
- Chronology of Al-Quds / Old Jerusalem

## Arrival in Palestine

Prior to reaching the arrival terminal, the coach came to a stop. All passengers were instructed to empty the coach leaving behind all baggage. An armed soldier was positioned just outside the door, keenly eyeing all passengers exit the bus. My six year old daughter, who was ahead of me, decided to stand and stare at his gear and impassive face, I hastily pulled her away. We were all ushered into the bus shelter, which was a relief from the intense heat. A female officer began checking our passports and verifying our identity. This was our first encounter with Israeli officials. Once this was complete, we all boarded the coach again and were finally driven to the arrival terminal. The terminal on the west side of the Allenby Bridge is actually in the West Bank, yet customs and immigration are entirely under Israeli control.

We got off the coach and collected our baggage. The officials ordered us to leave all luggage with the baggage handlers for security clearance. We were assured that it would be available for pick up after clearing immigration. We gave our bags and joined the line outside the terminal building at a second checkpoint; fortunately it was a shaded area. Israeli soldiers with additional armed plain clothes officers were clearly visible patrolling the area, an obvious deterrent for anyone with ill-intentions. A male officer was seated at the counter checking the identification of all passengers. When it was our turn he confirmed mine and the childrens' identity, but did not ask my wife to remove her *niqab* or face veil. After this, we were directed to go inside the building into the security hall where all passengers were being searched, similar to a security check prior to boarding a plane. While we were walking through the metal detectors, the previous male officer instructed the female security officer to confirm my wives' identity. She respectfully asked my wife to remove her face veil for identification. This show of courtesy towards my wife was well appreciated, but unfortunately not all Israeli officials were as courteous. After clearing security, we proceeded to the immigration hall.

Upon entry, tourist may request the Israeli officials to not stamp their passports. They are accustomed to this and in most cases cooperative. This is highly recommended for travelers intending to visit countries that have not formally recognized Israel, eg. Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, etc. and for travelers who wish to avoid any probability of being thoroughly interrogated upon returning to their home country or visiting any other country. Most western countries can get a visa on arrival. Generally visitors will be granted a three month visa. Canadian passport holders are also given a three months tourist visa upon entry. There is no visa/entrance fee.

We joined the queue at the immigration counter and waited for approximately 20 – 25 minutes. The snacks we brought along were very instrumental in lulling our children during this time. We steadily moved forward, ignoring the trail of crumbs that was getting longer at each step. Two female immigration

officers were at the counter. After a friendly exchange of greetings, I submitted our passports and requested them not to stamp inside. The officers asked the following questions:

Why are you here?

Where are you coming from?

How long are you here for?

Where will you be travelling to from here?

Will you be visiting the West Bank?

Where will you stay in Jerusalem?

Can I see your hotel reservation?

Can I see your return ticket to Canada?

Why do you not want your passports stamped?

She gave me five visa forms to fill out, one for each of us. 'State of Israel' was written in bold, upper case letters on top of each form, yet we were entering the West Bank which is in Occupied Palestinian Territory. This was going to be our official document which will bear the Israeli visa stamp and must be carried with us in our passports at all times. After filling them out, she stamped each one, returned it all to us with our passports and directed us ahead. We made our way towards another counter where our visa papers were double-checked. After passing through we picked up our luggage and exited the building where we were met by Arab taxi and bus drivers eager to fill their vehicles with passengers to Jerusalem. I looked at my watch and *Al-Hamdulillah*, within one hour we had passed through immigration. This was totally against what we had anticipated.

It was not possible for us to reach Jerusalem before Asr, but we certainly had a chance to be there for Maghrib. We decided to take the minibus to Jerusalem instead of the private taxi. The minibus is a ten to twelve passenger van. Bus and taxi fares are priced in Israeli shekels, but US dollar is accepted. We paid the fare and now we were on our way to Al-Quds.

The drive to Jerusalem was approximately forty-five minutes. The weather was hot and dry. The children were fast asleep in our laps and I was too busy peering out the window waiting for the Jerusalem skyline to emerge on the horizon. The traffic gradually began to increase, a sure sign of approaching our destination. We exited off the highway and into the city. My eyes were glued to the scenery, eagerly searching for any sign of the Old City. We drove past a mountain where due to the familiar churches and the number of tourist strolling on this mountain, I immediately recognized it to be the Mount of Olives. Instantly, I looked west of it, and there it was, the Al-Aqsa Compound with the Golden Dome glittering in the sun and powerfully dominating the urban landscape.

We were dropped off at the bus station which was located north of the Old City on Sultan Sulaiman St. From here we walked to Damascus Gate and entered Old Jerusalem. The place was lively and bustling with people shopping for Eid al-Adhaa. We somehow navigated through the crowd on Souq Khan El Zeit St. towards our hotel. We had chosen the Hashimi Hotel for our place of accommodation. Its prime location in the Old City and proximity to Masjid Aqsa were the main factors behind this decision.

Once we were checked in and shown our room, we prayed Asr. We were all hungry so we decided to pray Maghrib in our room as well and then have dinner. May Allah reward my aunties and cousins in England; we enjoyed the sandwiches they had packed for our journey, thus saving our precious time on this first day in Al-Quds. After dinner I called our guide from the hotel and we decided to meet in Masjid Jami near *Mibrab Zakariyya* after Esha.

## Entering the Al-Aqsa Enclave

“Glorious is He Who made his servant travel by night from Al-Masjid-ul-Haram to Al-Masjid-ul-Aqsa whose environs We have blessed, so that We let him see some of Our signs. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.” (The Holy Qur’an 17:1)

*Let my heart burn  
A candle of love  
At Al-Aqsa Gate.*

– Hydar Mahmoud<sup>1</sup>

We made our way through the narrow meandering streets of Old Jerusalem periodically asking for directions to the Al-Aqsa Compound. We reached *Baab al-Qattanin* or The Gate of the Cotton Merchants which is on the west side of the compound just opposite the Dome of the Rock. Israeli police officers were at the gate, but they did not question us. Soon as we walked into the compound, the Dome of the Rock majestically towered over us glistening brilliantly under the flood lights. My eldest child stood there in utter amazement. Love and excitement pierced the core of our hearts. Emotions were beyond our control. For a split second we were frozen in our tracks, ecstatic at the sight before us. Our gazes were scanning the compound as our hearts were trying to absorb the reality we were in.

Pages of history were flashing through my mind: Prophet Yusha’/Joshua (A), Prophet Dawud/David (A), Kingdom of Prophet Sulaiman/Soloman (A), the devastation of King Nebuchadnezzar, Prophet ’Uzair / Ezra (A), Family of ’Imran, Birth of Maryam / Virgin Mary (A), Prophet Zakariyya / Zechariah (A), the ascension of Eesa / Jesus (A), *Is’raa’ / Mi’raj* – The Night Journey of Prophet Muhammad (S), *Khalifah Umar* (R) entering *Al-Quds*, the Crusades, Salah al-Din/Saladin, etc.

Years of yearning had now come to an end. Our wish had come true. Prayers had been answered. A promise was kept. Our hearts were now at ease, for we had just set foot in the third holiest place in Islam, *Al-Masjid al-Aqsa*.

In January, 2006, my wife and I went to Jordan, but due to visa restrictions she was unable to visit Palestine and I did not want to proceed without her. At that time I had promised her that I will bring her back. Now, in November, 2010 we were both walking in the Al-Aqsa Compound with our three children. Our tongues were moist in gratitude to Allah, for without His Grace and Mercy, the pinnacle of this journey would have been beyond our reach.

We hurriedly made our way to Masjid Jami to perform Esha. After Esha we met our guide who then led us back to our hotel. Upon reaching the hotel we sat down and planned our itinerary for our stay in the *Holy Land*.

### *Al-Quds / Old Jerusalem*

*Al-Bayt al-Muqaddas* is more commonly known as Jerusalem. The city is also known as *Al-Quds*, *Bayt al-Maqdis* and *Eilaa* (Al-'Affani, 2001) (Al-Khateeb, 1998, pp. 25, 26). The name *Al-Bayt al-Muqaddas* is also used to describe *Al-Masjid al-Aqsa* (Amini, 2009, p. 97). The Ottomans called the city *Al-Quds Al-*



Figure 1: Street in the Old City after Esha, by MS

<sup>1</sup> (Jayyusi & Ansari, 2005, p. 248)

*Sharif* (Sharrab, 1987, p. 36) (Al-Khateeb, 1998, p. 25). *Al-Quds* is the most popular term used today amongst the local Arab population (Patel, 2006, p. 7 of intro.).

The name *Jerusalem* comes from the word *Rushalimum* (Armstrong, 2005, p. 6). With respect to the name *Rushalimum*, Karen Armstrong writes:

*“Here we should pause to consider the name of the city. It seems to have incorporated the name of the Syrian god Shalem, who was identified with the setting sun or the evening star.”* (Armstrong, 2005, p. 7).

The city of Jerusalem is situated 48 km east of the Mediterranean Sea and 40 km west of Jordan. The population of Jerusalem is numbered at 3,738,500 within an area of 109 sq km. Its ethnic composition is 70% Jewish; 30% Arab. Jerusalem consists of three main areas. The New City is located west of the Old City. This is a modern, predominantly Jewish area of Jerusalem, also known as Modern Jerusalem. To the east of the Old City lies East Jerusalem, the Palestinian part of the city.<sup>2</sup> The main attraction is the Old City within the historic walls. In the south-east corner of this Old City is the Al-Aqsa Compound.

The history of this great city dates back to 3000BC, according to some historians, even beyond. (Amini, 2009, p. 94) The city, that is considered to be one of the oldest inhabited cities of the world, *Arihaa* / Jerico, is approximately 50km west of *Al-Quds*. According to one report, the city of *Arihaa* / Jerico was established some 10,000 years ago. (Patel, 2005, p. 03) Below is a chronology of some noteworthy events pertaining to *Al-Quds*.



Figure 2: Children playing in the Old City, by MS



Figure 3: Street of Old City, by MS

<sup>2</sup><http://www.encyclopedia.com>. "Jerusalem." Junior Worldmark Encyclopedia of World Cities. 2000. Encyclopedia.com. 07 July, 2011 <<http://www.encyclopedia.com>>.

# Chronology Spanning over 5000 years

YEAR (estimated) <sup>3</sup>	EVENT
3000BCE	The city of <i>Al-Quds</i> is built by the Canaanites <sup>4</sup> .
1900BCE	Prophet Ibrahim / Abraham (S) journeys from Ur, Iraq to Can'aan / Canaan.
1850BCE	Prophet Ibrahim/Abraham (A) comes to <i>Al-Quds</i> .
1750BCE	12 tribes of Israel migrate to Egypt.
1250BCE	The 12 tribes escape Egypt under the leadership of Prophet Musa/Moses (A).
1200BCE	Prophet Musa/Moses (A) leads the Israelites' exodus from Egypt.
1200BCE	Prophet Yusha'/Joshua (A) conquers Can'aan / Canaan.
1020BCE	<i>Talut</i> / Saul is appointed king of the Israelites by Prophet <i>Shamwil</i> / Samuel (A).
Sometime between 1020 – 1000BCE	The Battle between <i>Talut</i> / Saul v. <i>Jalut</i> / Goliath. <sup>5</sup>
1000BCE	Prophet Dawud/David (A) conquers <i>Al-Quds</i> .
970BCE	Beginning of the kingdom of Prophet Sulaiman/Soloman (A) in <i>Al-Quds</i> .
930BCE	Death of Prophet Sulaiman/Soloman (A).
970 – 931BCE	Kingdom of Prophet Sulaiman/Soloman (A) in <i>Al-Quds</i> .
597BCE	King Nebuchadnezzar arrives in <i>Al-Quds</i> the first time and deports the people to Babylon.
587BCE	King Nebuchadnezzar destroys <i>Al-Quds</i> & enslaves the Jewish people.
586BCE	King Nebuchadnezzar <sup>6</sup> arrives in <i>Al-Quds</i> the second time and destroys the city.
Sometime between 586 – 538BCE	Prophet 'Uzair / Ezra (A) <sup>7</sup> dies and is resurrected after 100 years, <sup>8</sup> when the Jews have resettled in <i>Al-Quds</i> .
539BCE	Cyrus's <sup>9</sup> army defeats the Babylonians.
538BCE	Persia conquers Babylon and permits exiled Jews to return to <i>Al-Quds</i> .
63BCE	Roman troops conquer <i>Al-Quds</i> .
39CE	Herod named King of the Jews.
4BCE	Death of King Herod.
Between 4BCE – 36CE	Birth and ascension of <i>Eesa</i> / Jesus (A).
70 <sup>10</sup>	Romans conquer <i>Al-Quds</i> .
135 <sup>11</sup>	The Roman king, Hadrian expels the Jewish people from <i>Al-Quds</i> & surrounding.

<sup>3</sup> Conflicting dates regarding ancient historical events is not uncommon.

<sup>4</sup> Amini also claims, "the current Palestinian people are from the progeny of the Canaanites." (Amini, 2009, p. 57)

<sup>5</sup> (The Holy Qur'an, 2:246-251)

<sup>6</sup> (The Holy Qur'an, 17:4-8)

<sup>7</sup> According to Sh. Hifzul-Rahman, this prophet is Prophet *Aramiah* / Jeremiah. See *Qasasul-Qur'an* / Stories of the Qur'an (Urdu & English) (Seyuharwi)

<sup>8</sup> (The Holy Qur'an, 2:259)

<sup>9</sup> According to Sh. Hifzul-Rahman (Rh), King Cyrus is the *Dhul-Qarnayn* mentioned in *Surah Al-Kahf* / The Cave. See *Qasasul-Qur'an* / Stories of the Qur'an (Urdu & English) (Seyuharwi)

<sup>10</sup> First war

<sup>11</sup> Second war

	areas.
135 – 326	<i>Al-Quds</i> known as Aelia Capitolina part of the Roman Empire. <sup>12</sup>
326-638	Byzantine <sup>13</sup> rule in <i>Al-Quds</i> .
400-636	Period of Byzantine rule in <i>Al-Quds</i> .
570	Birth of Prophet Muhammad (S).
620	<i>Israa / Mi'raj</i> The Night Journey of Prophet Muhammad (S).
632	Demise of Prophet Muhammad (S).
633	Sophronius becomes Patriarch of <i>Al-Quds</i> .
634	Abu-Bakr (Rd) dies and 'Umar (Rd) becomes <i>khalifah/caliph</i> .
636	Muslims defeat the Byzantine army in the Battle of Yarmouk.
638	Khalifah/Caliph 'Umar (R) enters <i>Al-Quds</i> .
638 – 1099	Period of Muslim rule in <i>Al-Quds</i> .
1099	Crusaders seize <i>Al-Quds</i> .
1099 – 1187	Period of Crusader rule in <i>Al-Quds</i> .
1187	Salah al-Din/Saladin enters <i>Al-Quds</i> .
1250 – 1516	The <i>Mamluks</i> reign over <i>Al-Quds</i> .
Dec. 01/1516	Sultan Selim enters <i>Al-Quds</i> .
Aug. 29/1897	1 <sup>st</sup> Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. Objective: "To create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law."
1517 – 1917	<i>Al-Quds</i> under the Ottoman Empire.
Dec. 11/1917	The British enter <i>Al-Quds</i> .
Nov. 29/1947	The internationalization of <i>Al-Quds</i> by the UN.
May 14/1948	Israel's proclamation of independence.
May 15/1948	British leave <i>Al-Quds</i> .
July 1948	<i>Al-Quds</i> is divided into East (including Old City) & West.
Nov. 15/1948	King Abdullah of Jordan is crowned King of <i>Al-Quds</i> in the Old City.
Dec. 13/1948	Jordanian parliament approves the union of Jordan & Palestine. Inhabitants of East <i>Al-Quds</i> & West Bank are granted Jordanian citizenship.
Dec. 13/1948	Israelis announce that the Knesset should be moved to West Jerusalem.
Mar. 16/1949	Israel & Jordan sign an agreement accepting the armistice lines as the border between the two countries.
1949 – 1967	<i>Al-Quds</i> divided into East Jerusalem & West Jerusalem between Jordan & Israel.
April 1951	King Abdullah of Jordan is assassinated at the entrance of <i>Al-Masjid al-Aqsa</i> .
June 07/1967	Israeli troops enter the Old City.
June 17/1967	Muslims are promised control of the Al-Aqsa Compound.
June 28/1967	Israeli Knesset formally annexes the Old City and all of <i>Al-Quds</i> .
Aug. 21/1969	Fire breaks out in <i>Al-Masjid al-Aqsa</i> , caused by Australian tourist. <i>Mimbar</i> (pulpit) installed by Salah Ad-Din (Saladin) is burnt.
1980	Israel's announcement of an eternal, undivided <i>Al-Quds</i> /Jerusalem being their capital.
July 31/1988	King Hussein relinquishes Jordan's claim to West Bank & East Jerusalem.
1990 & 1996	Riots erupt in Al-Aqsa Compound.
2000	Ariel Sharon visits the Al-Aqsa Compound.
July 31/2001	Jewish extremists lay cornerstone for a third Jewish temple in the Al-Aqsa

<sup>12</sup> At this time the Romans were polytheists

<sup>13</sup> Christians

	Compound.
Oct. 04/2002	Israeli soldiers storm the Al-Aqsa Compound.
Oct. 11/2002	Israelis bar Palestinians from praying at Masjid Aqsa.
July 25/2003	Israel restricts access for Muslims to Masjid Aqsa.
Aug. 27/2003	Jewish extremists defile Al-Aqsa Compound.
Feb. 27/2004	Israeli police storm Masjid Aqsa.
Feb. 08/2007	Israel continues excavation work near Masjid Aqsa.
Feb. 09/2007	Israeli police storm Masjid Aqsa.
Feb. 16/2007	Worshippers barred from Masjid Aqsa.
Feb. 19/2007	Israeli archaeologist Yuval Baruch reveals that remains of an ancient Muslim prayer room was found under the dirt embankment adjacent to Al-Magharbah Gate <sup>14</sup> in 2004.
March 2007	Turkish team visits Jerusalem to inspect Al-Aqsa digging.
May 2007	Israel bans Muslim burials next to the Masjid Aqsa.
Nov. 01/2009	Palestinian security forces foil a lone Jewish gunman's attempt to infiltrate Masjid Aqsa.
Nov. 02/2009	Al-Aqsa is the red line, warns OIC.
Dec. 11/2009	Israel set to make Aqsa museum a synagogue.
Dec. 24/2009	Umayyad-era artifacts stolen from Jerusalem.
Feb. 05/2010	Palestinian buildings in Jerusalem to be razed.
Feb. 07/2010	Israel gives \$15 Billion to Judaize Al-Quds.
Sept. 03/2010	250,000 Muslims attend Masjid Aqsa for prayers.
Sept. 24/2010	Israel bars Friday worshippers from Masjid Aqsa.
State of Old City during our visit (Nov.2010)	Divided into 4 areas: Muslim Quarter, Christian Quarter, Jewish Quarter and Armenian Quarter. Public can freely enter any quarter. We rarely saw Israeli uniformed officers patrol the streets. Christians, Muslims and Jews are regularly seen walking through each other's neighborhood without restrictions. See map of Old City. We stayed at Al-Hashimi Hotel, just south of Damascus Gate in the Muslim Quarter.
State of Al-Aqsa Compound, The Holy Sanctuary during our visit (Nov.2010)	It is administered by the <i>Waqf</i> board which is independent of Israeli government. Israeli security officers patrol The Holy Sanctuary. All entrances are guarded by Israeli security. Only Muslims are permitted entry. Arab security is also present. Generally, Muslims have access, but restrictions can and have been enforced by Israeli security personnel at their sole discretion. During our stay we saw armed Israeli officers patrolling The Holy Sanctuary but we did not see any armed Arab security officer. Non-Muslims (mainly tourist) are allowed entry in the morning.
Jan. 25/2011 <sup>15</sup>	Ancient tunnel found connecting Jerusalem's Old City to volatile neighborhood. Israel digs tunnel near Masjid Aqsa.
Feb. 16/2011	Warning issued by Muslim & Christian officials of continuing Israeli violations in Jerusalem.
April 21/2011	Israel preparing to open a tunnel network under Masjid Aqsa.
May 13/2011	Israel bars worshippers from reaching Masjid Aqsa.
May 19/2011	Israel Approves 1,500 settler homes in East Jerusalem.

<sup>14</sup> One of the gated of Masjid Aqsa

<sup>15</sup> Same news report with two completely opposite headings. MS

June 08/2011	Jewish extremists desecrate Masjid Aqsa.
Aug. 01/2011	Jerusalemite youths abort settlers' attempt to storm Masjid Aqsa.
Aug. 07/2011	Israeli police remove worshipers from Masjid Aqsa after Taraweeh.
Aug. 08/2011	Jewish settlers storm the Masjid Aqsa.
Aug. 21/2011	Israeli police prevent afternoon (Asr) Prayer in Masjid Aqsa.
Aug. 23/2011	Israel digging new tunnels in Muslim Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City.
Sept. 04/2011	Jewish settlers storm Al-Aqsa Compound.
Sept. 27/2011	Israeli government gives the go-ahead for construction of 1,100 new Jewish housing units in East Jerusalem.



Figure 4: Outside the Old City wall, by MS



Figure 5: South wall of Old City, by MS

From the above table of events it is apparent that the reins of this city have changed hands multiple times. Karen Armstrong, in her book, *Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths*, has vividly described the manner of how the different religionist conquered this city and behaved towards its inhabitants. Each king and conqueror that came claimed entitlement to this land. Some were followers of one of the Abrahamic faiths and acted under the disguise of religion. Some were merciful and others were brutal. The Holy Land has witnessed the unimaginable. Its land has absorbed the blood of thousands. Its walls have been demolished and rebuilt numerous times in the history of mankind. From the ruthless massacres of the general public to igniting places of worship, nothing and no one was spared. Men of God and prophets were put to the sword. Homes were burnt, divine books were desecrated, markets were looted and innocent civilians were murdered. Those that survived these atrocities were hauled away into slavery. Many men, women and children were either killed, imprisoned or expelled. They became homeless in their own nation, refugees in their ancestral land. Their villages were wiped off the map. It leaves the reader perplexed as to how can such satanic, barbaric and unholy crimes be committed in the name of holiness in the Holy Land? Since when did the killing of civilians, irrespective of gender and age, become divinely sanctioned? No heavenly scripture or man of God would legalize such carnage and devastation.

*“The blood of Abraham, God’s father of the chosen, still flows in the veins of Arab, Jew, and Christian, and too much of it has been spilled in grasping for the inheritance of the revered patriarch in the Middle East. The spilled blood in the Holy Land still cries out to God – an anguished cry for peace.”* (Carter, 2007, p. 19)

But not every page in the history of Jerusalem is tainted with blood. The city has also seen a period of peaceful coexistence of all the Abrahamic faithful. It has also witnessed a general announcement of amnesty from the conquering power towards all of its residents. Freedom of religion, movement and access to education was granted to all of its citizens. Places of worship were protected by law. Housing

was available for everyone, regardless of their faith. Demolishing homes and barring worshippers from their places of worship, was unheard of. Whenever the ruling class upheld the concept of justice, equality and education, its natural outcome was an inclusive society free of oppression, discrimination in all its ugly forms and extremism. Citizens of a specific class, race, religion or tribe were neither marginalized nor segregated from the mainstream population. The stench of apartheid was not even sensed from afar.

The history of *Al-Quds* is witness to the fact that peace and security in the Holy Land is a possibility and the level of peace and stability in the world is directly linked to the events that unfold in the Holy Land. Peace has prevailed there before. It can happen again. History *can* repeat itself, but when?

*“Peaceful coexistence in the Holy City is not an impossible dream. If Jerusalem has become the symbolic heart of the conflict that now threatens the whole world, then a solution is a matter of the highest importance. It will require imagination and commitment to find a solution to the problem of Jerusalem; everybody will have to make sacrifices; everybody will have to compromise in the interests of peace. But people were able to share the Holy City once, and they can therefore, do it again.”* (Armstrong, 2005, preface)

*“It still remains true, when we look back on the long history of Jerusalem, that the societies that have lasted the longest there have, generally, been the ones that were prepared for some kind of tolerance and coexistence in the holy city. That, rather than a sterile and deadly struggle for sovereignty and total victory, must be the way to celebrate Jerusalem’s sanctity today.”* (Armstrong, 2005, p. 430)

*“Relations between the Islamic world and the West have reached an all-time low, and Jerusalem can be regarded as the bleeding heart of the problem.”*<sup>16</sup> (Armstrong, 2005, preface)

*“Islamicjerusalem had always held the key to war and peace in the region. Whenever it has been blessed with security and peace, the whole region has enjoyed peace, security and stability. There is no doubt that settling the issue of Islamicjerusalem in a way that ensures justice and restores the rights of its people holds the key to world peace and regional stability. One can argue that, to achieve global peace and stability, it is necessary to have peace and stability in Islamicjerusalem. Until this is achieved the entire world will not rest. Peace and stability in that region would bring about global peace and stability. Indeed, Islamicjerusalem acts as a centre for peace and for conflict in the world.”* (El-Awaisi, 2007, p. 119)

*“Today the growth of Islamic extremism and the unprecedented hostility toward America in the Islamic world is directly related to the continuing bloodshed between Israelis and Palestinians. To think otherwise is foolish and dangerous.”*<sup>17</sup> (Carter, 2007, p. 254)

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<sup>16</sup> Written in the fall of 2004

<sup>17</sup> Written in May 2007

# City of Olive Branches

Nizar Qabbani

*I wept*

*Until every tear had dried*

*I prayed*

*Until every candle had melted*

*I asked*

*About Muhammad within your walls*

*I begged news*

*Of Jesus in your street*

*O Jerusalem!*

*Swiftest path between heaven and earth*

*O Jerusalem*

*City of Sorrow*

*Swollen teardrop brimming in the eyes*

*Who can prevent*

*Atrocities at your holy gates?*

*Jerusalem*

*My city!*

*Tomorrow*

*Orange blossoms will flower again*

*Tomorrow*

*Wheat will fatten, olives will fruit*

*Tomorrow*

*Laughter will ring out once more*

*Tomorrow*

*Doves will return to the blessed rooftops*

*Tomorrow*

*Children will take up their games*

*Tomorrow*

*Fathers and sons will meet again*

*Jerusalem*

*City of olive branches*

*Jerusalem*

*City of peace!*

(Jayyusi & Ansari, 2005, pp. 246, 247)



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