

DAVID'S BILL OF SALE

According to one ancient Jewish legend, David bought Jerusalem for 600 shekels and received a proper bill of sale.

Some semites from Arabia left evidence of their presence in Jerusalem about 4000 years ago. Later, the city, known as Urusalim, was a vassal of Egypt, ~~and~~ ~~the~~ ~~Jebusites~~, of Hittite origin, were in control of Jerusalem when the Israelites marched in and took over about 3000 years ago.

According to the Jewish legend, the Jebusites had received a promise from Abraham that in return for the Cave of Machpelah, the descendants of Abraham would never try to take Jerusalem away from the Jebusites. They inscribed some monuments with Abraham's promise. When David approached Jerusalem, the Jebusites reminded him of the monuments.

Using a cypress tree as a catapult, Joab vaulted the Jerusalem wall and destroyed the monuments, thus preparing the city for possession by the Israelites. David, however, did not want to take the city by force. Instead, he bought Jerusalem from the Jebusites for 50 shekels per tribe, and received his bill of sale.

This old Jewish legend just reinforces the historical fact that Jerusalem had been under the political control of many different peoples before the first Jews controlled it -- as indeed it has been under the political control of many different peoples since.

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Another ancient Jewish legend demonstrates how central Jerusalem became to Jewish religious consciousness, whatever the political control. It is a legend appropriate to Rosh Hashonah, traditionally identified with the creation of the world. According to that legend, the world's creation began with Jerusalem, the center of the earth, from which the first rays of light emanated. There are some intensely religious Jews who believe that Jerusalem is so sacred that it should not be politicized by the Jews at all.

However, Jerusalem has become one of the hottest political subjects on the world scene, like it or not. One strategy now abroad is to use Jerusalem, dear to so many religious traditions, as a lever with which to attack the security of Israel.

Many Israelis, such as Ted Kolleck, the Mayor of Israel, believe that, in this objective, the hostile forces have been given aid and comfort by the Israeli government. Kolleck says that the new Knesset law declaring ~~Israel~~ <sup>Jerusalem</sup> to be the indivisible capital of Israel, gained nothing, and added nothing new to the situation but an opportunity for those who desire to dismantle that city. He and other Israeli critics of the Knesset action, cite the sad statement of Netherlands:

"The Netherlands government, immediately after the Knesset had approved a 'basic law' declaring the whole of Jerusalem to be the indivisible capital of Israel, issued an official statement strongly deploring this Israeli decision, which unilaterally alters the status of the city...(and now makes the decision) to transfer her majesty's embassy from ~~Israel~~ <sup>Jerusalem</sup> to Tel Aviv...Because of the special relations between the Netherlands and Israel, this decision will arouse an emotional response among many people in Netherlands as well as Israel."

The statement also "deplores the pressure, partly ultimative in nature, which has been exerted in particular upon the Netherlands because of its embassy in West Jerusalem." The suggestion is that the Netherlands might have been able to continue to resist the pressure if the Knesset action had not taken place.

There are factors which make it imperative for Jerusalem to remain undivided: the holiness of the city for the Jews...the Jewish experience of having been denied access to their holy places, under Arab control...and the strategic importance of East Jerusalem, a factor often overlooked. Nothing would make the defense of "West" Jerusalem and of Israel more difficult than the existence of hostiles in "East" Jerusalem. That is one of the reasons why Jerusalem is a better "leverage issue" than even the West Bank for Israel's enemies; it is less negotiable.

And that is why this new year will be the "year of Jerusalem" for the wrong reasons. We will be continually required to astutely and pragmatically wrestle the issue back into the frameworks of Israel's existence, and American national interest. Neither David's " Bill of Sale" nor a law passed by the Knesset will suffice.