



JPA

Jerusalem Peace Academy

Zippori Campus, Jerusalem Forest, P. O. Box 3353, Jerusalem 90133

Jerusalem – Symbol of the three Religions of the Book

Your Highness, dear Chairman, dear panellists, dear and respected audience!

With great respect and love I welcome you with all my heart and I invoke the presence of the One Spirit who has created this universe as well as the spirit in our chest, the One Spirit which dwells in the temples of the Hindus, the Buddhists, the Parsees, in Synagogues, Churches and Mosques and last not least in the hearts and souls of all of us. To Him I bow and to Him I pay reverence.

It is a great honour and privilege for me to be invited and allowed to share some thoughts about one of the most sacred and equally diversely disputed and claimed places in the world.

Jerusalem as the symbol of the three Abrahamic Religions of the Book has become the one focal point of world awareness and attention, the one focus of hope for the world, but – sad to say – even more the place of most painful rivalries of believers of all contaminations and an issue of endless disputes and deadly fights throughout the world.

Jerusalem was designated by God as a fountainhead of blessings and a source of divine life and heavenly wisdom. Peace and spiritual welfare should flourish from there and flood the nations. Yet it has become the subject of religious envy and endless opposing claims and the cause of trouble and terror. Many threads of world destiny (and national Karmas) are linked there and bound to it. Once cutting through its knot they all can be dissolved, and as the call for Peace in Jerusalem reverberates in this entire universe, so people in the whole world intuitively understand: “If Peace gets established in Jerusalem it will easily come to prevail everywhere in the world.”

There is a saying born in the wake of spiritual awareness of the scientific world today that he who picks a flower touches the stars. This statement is pointing to the fact that everything is connected with everything. And there is the biblical saying put into the mouth of the Almighty that whoever touches Jerusalem touches the apple of His eye (...). God has chosen this place as His future and final abode on earth and the dwelling place of His most powerful and most tangible manifestation and Glory – the Sh’khinah – within humanity, and He has put the Israelites in charge to guard and watch over it. From here God has chosen to bring forth redemption for the world and good fortune for all the nations.

In this way Jerusalem is the biblical icon for a world of perfection and peace and the city of the perfected. Jerusalem, meant to be the source of light and the fountain well of wisdom for mankind, has become a stumbling stone and a stone of challenge for all faiths.

As is stated in the Scriptures: “I have put a single stone before Jeshua and the seven eyes of God are resting on it.” (Zech 3. 9-10) This stone which was designed as the foundation-stone – and which was

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rejected by the builders (Psalm 118. 22) – has become the cornerstone of the Temple and a stumbling stone for the nations (...).

As the Scriptures teach us, the foundation stone of Jerusalem and Moriah was laid by Melkizedek, initiator of Avraham, the king of the just and high-priest of the one and highest God for eternity (...).

Here Abraham came after being called out from the land of his fathers to establish the base of the Promised Land, here he intended to sacrifice Isaac and here he blessed Ishmael. Here it was where David had purchased land in a just and righteous deal for the later establishment of a House for the Lord and the indwelling of His Sh'khinah. Here it was that Hiram built the first Temple on Mount Moriah under the supervision of King Salomon. And here it was where the Levites had put the Holy Ark of the Covenant and here it was where God's spirit descended to take possession of the Holy of Holies to hover over His sacred Ark in between the two Cherubim until Salomon and his followers have left the path of righteousness. Yet to here He promised to return and to once more manifest in all His Glory.

From here the Jews were dispersed and scattered all over the world after the conquest of Roman tyrant Nero who put Jerusalem into ashes in 72 C.A. and to here they were destined to be gathered from the four corners of the world to once more guard the place and to finally become a "kingdom of priests and a consecrated people", as well as a "light unto the nations".

All this is still only a promise and a source of hope, which has not yet been fulfilled. Therefore we call the land the Promised Land because it was promised by the Holy one to bring forth peace and blessings, wisdom and final redemption into the world. And I say: Peace is not a matter of negotiations, but – as the Scriptures put it – "a reward of righteousness" (...).

Jerusalem is the place where Prophet Mohammed, may God bless him, had his Hedshra, his nightly ride on horse al-Buraq, and Jerusalem was the place where Salah ed-Din had established his righteous rule and in remembrance of God's promise to the Israelites called the scattered Jews to return to their homeland holding his protecting hands over them while they were persecuted and slaughtered in most parts of the occidental world. To here the Egyptian martyr Anwar el Sadat came from Cairo in recognition of Israel's divine mission and right to exist to offer an agreement of peace and friendly coexistence, which he dreamt to be accepted in near future in the entire Middle East as well as the rest of the world.

Mount Moriah with its divine purpose to be fulfilled is the essential attribute which makes Israel what it is meant to be, a consecrated nation and the abode of the Lord on earth. Without it Israel and Zion would be without any meaning and equal to all other nations, but not the zeal of God. And it was because of this divine promise that after the Holocaust the UN has restored the nation of Israel in 1948 at the location originally chosen by God.

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Dear friends, I do not retell this story to provoke anyone of you or to return to dogmatic claims, but because of deep concern. Jerusalem is not an object of negotiation or being pushed around or to be made a punching ball in our hands, but it is a place of sacred and eternal promises, a place of divine destiny and as long as this destiny is not fulfilled and as long as we do not surrender to the call of the divine and His sacred plan, there will not be peace, nor will there be a choice of human consideration.

That is why it says: “I will make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples. ... On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt himself.” (Zechariah 12 2-9)

We all know and recognize by our own life-long experience that all problems in this world – no matter if individual or collective – are caused by not being in tune with God and cosmic moral law. As soon as we tune our attitudes and spirit to the wise will and love of our Creator, all doors open and life flourishes. This is not only the promise of our diverse Scriptures, but our day to day experience as faithful devotees of the Lord and just world citizens and worthy members of the human race.

The second ideological obstacle to world peace is the neglect of divine revelations and prophecies which God gave for the good of humanity and which are referred to at length in the Scriptures.

In fact the Scriptures – Thanakh, Gospel and Qur’an – unanimously and in full agreement – offer clear solutions for all problems and questions which touch or lives in this land and its City: As the Torah and the Prophets repeatedly demand the respect and protection of equal rights for all who live in this land – as it states in its own words “for all who have given birth to children” – should be perfectly treated without any ambiguity and discrimination, in a way of human equality and likeness, so the Qur’an in the same way clearly confirms the right of the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish state and the return of the Jews to the divinely designated area as long as it does not exclude non-Jews from justice and human rights and refrain them from being treated with dignity and perfect humane equality. The Qur’an states that Allah gave the land of Israel to the Jews and will restore them to it at the end of days: In its own words: “O my people, enter the Holy Land which God has assigned unto you, and turn not back ignominiously, for then will ye be overthrown, to your own ruin.” (Qur’an 5. 20-21)

Moreover - and those who try to use Islam as a weapon against Israel always conveniently ignore this point - the Holy Qur’an explicitly refers to the return of the Jews to the Land of Israel before the Last Judgment - where it says: “And thereafter We [Allah] said to the Children of Israel: ‘Dwell securely in the Promised Land. And when the last warning will come to pass, we will gather you together in a mingled crowd.’” (Qur’an 17. 104)

Sheikh Imam Palazzi says: “I realize that a neglect of rights of the Jews over the Temple Mount is popular opinion. My approach, however, is not based on popular opinion or the current political situation, but on a theological analysis of authentic Islamic sources.”

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So I believe that loyal Arabs and Palestinians living in the Holy Land should be treated as being one of the lost tribes of Israel.

Following the Scriptures in their original purity, they provide justice, peace, coexistence and welfare for all without any discrimination. In fact, for all accurate and vivid questions, which are crucial for the survival and well-being of our two nations and their children we can find clear answers, prescripts and solutions of undreamt modernity and practicality in them if we only add two conditions: The release of all claims of exclusiveness and the respect of the universal laws of “diversity in unity” and “unity in diversity”. A real servant of God, a real devotee of truth and justice, of human dignity and divine destiny will always care for the rights of his brethren – not matter to which cast, creed, gender or tribe one belongs. All these discriminations are clearly demonic and do not stem from God.

Secondly, we need to respect the different individualities and callings of people and nations. Here too the Scripture show us the way.

With respect to Jerusalem and the Temple Mount we clearly see that it is God’s will and choice to have set the Israelites as the guardians over Mount Moriah under presumption that they would grant justice and truth for all and offer the Temple as a “House of Prayer for all nations.” This term forbids and excludes all forms of exclusiveness expressis verbis – opposite to the painful exclusiveness practiced in different faith communities today.

Jerusalem and the Temple Mount are not meant as places to execute or establish human or political power, but they are designated places to be preserved for the realization of divine destiny. Only by refraining from any personal or political claims over them and consecrating them purely to the will and spirit of the One and Indivisible God we will find a path towards peace, reconciliation and coexistence between Jews and Muslims, Arabs and Israelis.

We have to remember that Avraham was not called to settle in the land of Canaan for the purpose of colonialization, but for a purely spiritual mission. In the same way Moses has not been brought back to the land of his fathers for just giving an earthly homeland to the Israelites, but to bring the Ark of the Covenant to there and to lay the foundation of a sacred abode for the dwelling of His Sh’kinah.

In the same way I did not leave my birth country and my fathers home and come there for any earthly reason, but for the fulfilment of our calling and the restoration of our community of Jews and Muslims to God and His righteousness. As it is exclaimed in the Scriptures: “For the sake of Zion I cannot keep quiet, for the sake of Jerusalem I cannot keep silent until His justice shines forth in brightness and His salvation like a torch.” (Yeshayahu 52. 7) For me this is the calling of my life and that of every Jerusalemite citizen – and in this call I include every Jew and Palestinian, Christian and Muslim, Druse and whomsoever dwelling with respect and dignity in this Holy Land and its City. Only if we overcome our shameful animosities and petty limited personal interests we will be worthy of being called children

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of God and only then, in recognition of our common loving Father Divine we will be able to live in peace, dignity and friendly coexistence with each other.

To imply these words into practice we will certainly have to struggle for a just, life-worthy and godly solution. We will have to use the weapons of self-inquiry, mercy and forgiveness, of divine wisdom and understanding. The struggle is not one between Jews and Muslims or Jews and Palestinians, but between light and darkness, virtue and vice, wisdom and ignorance. And we all will have to refrain from violence and suppression and follow God's advice: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts." (Zechariah 4. 6)

On the grounds of this understanding the solution for Jerusalem and the Holy Land is rather simple:

We have to not only accept, but even promote and strive for a just two state solution, for the end of harassment and provocation from the side of the Israeli Government and Jewish extremists, the respect of equal human rights for all non Jews within the compounds of the Jewish State, the surrender of Muslims to the fact of the existence of the State of Israel as confirmed and even demanded in the Holy Qur'an, to put an end to the world-wide neglect of Jewish rights over the Temple Mount and the access to it, and to design and establish Jerusalem as an Open City:

In a joint long-term and profound scientific project between a Jewish and Palestinian partner – namely Prof. Shlomo Hasson and Rami Nasrallah – in which they have designed several possible Scenarios they came to the following mutually agreeable vision for the City of Jerusalem:

Jerusalem has to be established as

- a *physically undivided*, yet
- *politically divided* city, being the administrative
- *capital of two states* and
- a *consecrated site of pilgrimage* to the holy places for all believers – especially the three Abrahamic traditions – in the world:

Different models of administration and governance have been suggested, which are all in line with divine impetus. For a final decision the advocacy of the different advantages have to be offered and the civil society may be included.

Wanting to solve the Middle East Conflict we cannot rely on human opinion and just good will; we need to follow God's guidance and rely on divine wisdom and understanding and a clear insight to its very roots.

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In order to solve the conflict we need to deal with its causes on all levels – emotional, mental, political and spiritual. But first of all we have to realize that the conflict is not a mere territorial, but one of misguided existential religious claims and wrong beliefs. Here the responsible intervention of spiritual and religious leaders is in want.

A just solution for Jerusalem and the Holy Land cannot be a matter of bargaining between tribal, ethnic or cultural preferences and claims, but can only be found, offered and advocated by reasonable spiritual and religious leaders, who abide in righteousness and on the ground of universal and human principles and the divine revelations of the three religions of the BOOK. Only in a second step such a solution can be implemented by politicians and diplomats within the frameworks of local and international legal and constitutional conditions.

The implementation of a new thinking and agreeable visions will need to develop strategies which include extended spiritual training, a new approach of integral education, the media, joint economic development and building sustainable cultural and industrial bonds.

The heart of such an initiative can only be a core group of Imams and Rabbis in cooperation with representatives of civil society and NGO's who feel bound to God's revelation and the well-being of their people. Here, at this conference – with God's help – we have made a good start.

Leaving this conference with inspiration, hope and commitment to the cause I want to express my deeply felt need to carry on developing a strategy and agenda for such a long-term initiative of religious and spiritual leaders, in which more and more people of positive influence should get involved, who do not avoid or exclude the edges of society and even the extremists.

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