

Why Isn't the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem?

As I sit in my hotel room in **Jerusalem**, I can't help but think of how this city has been a city of controversy for endless centuries. And the controversy shows no signs of going away. In fact, barely two months ago, the Democratic National Convention waffled over recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's (undivided) capital. Why the constant controversy about this city?

Twenty-five hundred years ago, when the returning Jewish exiles were attempting to rebuild the city, their opponents sent a letter of warning to the king of Persia. (At that time, Judah was a province of Persia). "Be it known to the king," the letter stated, "that the Jews who came up from you to us have gone to Jerusalem. They are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city. They are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations. Now be it known to the king that if this city is rebuilt and the walls finished, they will not pay tribute, custom, or toll, and the royal revenue will be impaired" (Ezra 4:12-13)

They even urged the king "that search may be made in the book of the records of your fathers. You will find in the book of the records and learn that this city is a rebellious city, hurtful to kings and provinces, and that sedition was stirred up in it from of old. That was why this city was laid waste" (Ezra 4:15)

How interesting that more than 2 1/2 millennia ago, Jerusalem had a bad reputation (at least to its enemies). It was already branded "rebellious and wicked," a hotbed of sedition, and a bane to rulers and nations.

The warning even went one step further: "We make known to the

king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls finished, you will then have no possession in the province Beyond the River" (Ezra 4:16). In other words, once the Jews rebuild Jerusalem, you will lose the entire province of Judah in Trans Euphrates.

Five hundred years later, Jesus himself referred to Jerusalem as "the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!" (see Matt. 23:37) And the ancient prophet Zechariah predicted that at the end of the age, "all the nations of the earth will gather against it" (see Zech. 12:3)

But as fascinating as these texts are, given the current controversy about the status of Jerusalem, there's another question almost no one seems to be talking about: If Jerusalem is really Israel's capital, as both our political parties still affirm (even if the Democrats do it with reserve), why haven't we moved our embassy there? From a political perspective (as opposed to a biblical perspective), if we truly recognize it as the undivided capital of Israel, why haven't we relocated our embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem?

Considering the fact that Jews have been saying, "Next year in Jerusalem" for the last 20 centuries, it's no surprise that Jerusalem was declared Israel's capital in 1950. And the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995, "passed by overwhelming bipartisan majority in both the House and Senate," states that "Jerusalem should be recognized as the capital of the State of Israel and the United States Embassy in Israel should be established in Jerusalem no later than May 31, 1999."

We have now passed the 13th anniversary of that Congressional deadline, and yet our embassy remains in Tel Aviv (along with the embassies of virtually all other countries that recognize the State of Israel). How has this happened? As noted on the United with Israel website, "since the congressional act allows the President to implement a waiver at six-month intervals, that's exactly what has happened every six months since 1995."

But why? Why pass the Jerusalem Embassy Act—note that word *Embassy*—in such overwhelming, bipartisan fashion and then not move the embassy? Even **Ron Paul**, not known as a staunch supporter of Israel, once said, “If Israel wants their capital to be Jerusalem, then the United States should honor that. How would we like it if some other nation said, ‘We decided to recognize New York City as your capital instead, so we will build our embassy there’?”

In 2008, candidate Obama declared that any agreement with the Palestinians “must preserve Israel’s identity as a Jewish state with secure, recognized, defensible borders. And Jerusalem will remain the capital of Israel and it must remain undivided.”

In July, candidate Romney declared, “A nation has the capacity to choose its own capital city, and Jerusalem is Israel’s capital. I think it’s long been the policy to ultimately have our embassy in the nation’s capital of Jerusalem.” And now, both party platforms have reaffirmed Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.

So why not move the embassy? Mr. Obama (or Mr. Romney), will you do it? If not, why not?

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