

Jerusalem Day Haunted by P.A. Statehood Bid

As Israelis observe Jerusalem Day Wednesday, a holiday commemorating the Jewish state's 1967 recapture of Jerusalem, Palestinian leaders continue to wrestle with the decades-old victory.

In September, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas plans to take his case directly to the United Nations. His request: a Palestinian state with the eastern half of Jerusalem as its capital. But is there more under the surface?

"We know that the goal of the Arabs is not just to have eastern Jerusalem," said Chaim Silberstein, president of Keep Jerusalem (Im Eshkachech in Hebrew), a group committed to keeping the capital city under Israeli sovereignty.

"The goal of the PLO, the Palestinian Liberation Organization, has said all the decades of their existence is to wipe Israel off the map," he told CBN News.

Silberstein says dividing the city would harm both Jews and Christians.

"Jerusalem is the cradle of Jewish civilization," he explained. "Jerusalem is the heart of the Jewish people and the heart of the State of Israel. It's also very important to the Christian world."

"Forcing us to give away these areas would first of all delete and disconnect the whole of the Christian world as well as the whole of the Jewish world from the very essence of their faith and their belief," he said.

The fate of Jerusalem often centers on the future of the

Temple Mount.

It is the holiest place in the world for the Jewish people, the site of the first and the second temple, the last one destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. Today the Temple Mount is under Islamic religious control.

Recently CBN News was granted a rare look on the Temple Mount and inside both the al-Aksa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock.

"This is the center of the universe and this is where everything revolves around," Alan Baker told CBN News. "If we manage to solve the issue of the holy places in Jerusalem, then they'll no longer be a Middle East problem."

Baker participated in the 2000 Camp David talks. The stumbling block at that meeting was the Temple Mount.

"One of the issues that they fell through was because of the issue of the sovereignty over the holy places. Arafat wanted Palestinian sovereignty. Israel wanted Israeli sovereignty," he explained.

Those talks fell apart and now more than 10 years later Jerusalem stands in the center of the argument. Many believe what happens here will affect not only the Middle East but the world.