

Will Trump Follow Through on His Promises for Jerusalem?

Jerusalem is said to be central to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. But as much as the Al Aksa Mosque is important to Islam as its third holiest site, Islam can do without it.

Neither the mosque that was built on the Temple Mount several hundred years after the second temple was destroyed by the Romans nor Jerusalem is ever mentioned in the Koran. When praying on the Temple Mount itself, Muslims turn their back on the site of the temple to face Mecca. By contrast, no matter where a Jew is, when we pray, we face not just Jerusalem but that very point on the Temple Mount where the holy of holies stood. I know Christians who do the same and who believe that all Christians should do so.

Unlike Jerusalem being tangential to Islam, Jerusalem is inseparably central to Judaism and Christianity. Psalm 137:5-6 best illustrates this: "If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill. If I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy." It's just a little more significant than Sinatra's "New York, New York."

This is all the more reason why Jerusalem has become a central issue in recent decades, and especially today. Ardent Islam is the mother of replacement theology, not just architecturally but theologically. While two prominent mosques have stood on the Temple Mount since the seventh century, several hundred years after the Second Temple was destroyed, the prevailing voices in Islam deny the legitimacy of Judaism and Christianity and the centrality of Jerusalem to and in both our faiths. The very denial of the architectural reality of the Temple Mount being home to the first and second temples undermines the scriptural and theological fact and

archaeological evidence.

Fast forward to today. In 2017, we will celebrate the miraculous 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem. Despite Israel restoring Jewish sovereignty to all of Jerusalem, and restoring and repairing the horrific damage done during Jordanian occupation of the eastern half of the city from 1949-1967, non-Jews are still not allowed to pray on the Temple Mount, and there's no shortage of malicious incitement coupled with biased U.N. resolutions denying Jewish and Christian ties to Jerusalem.

Recently, speaking at the Bless Israel Summit in Orlando, I noted:

According to UNESCO, there is no Temple Mount, and no temple ever stood on the 35-acre plaza built by Solomon, restored by Herod, to which millions of Jews made a pilgrimage at least three times a year. The site that's the very center of our being is now, according to UNESCO, judenrein."

This is despite the fact that two temples stood there, the last destroyed by the Romans several hundred years before Mohammed was even conceived. The Romans themselves documented this, and the looting of Jerusalem, with pride."

This is despite the fact that King David prayed in and for Jerusalem 1500 years before any architect had the hubris to place a mosque on our most holy site. This is despite the fact that the 1925 Supreme Muslim Council Guide Book to the Temple Mount noted the Temple Mount's inexorable connection to the temple built by King Solomon on land purchased by King David, complete with a reference to Samuel.

Of course, this is an affront to Judaism. We're used to that. But my friends, as much as it undermines our connection, it also undermines not just the Christian connection to Jerusalem, but Christianity itself. Because if no temple ever existed, where was it that the Jewish Jesus worshiped,

preached and turned over the tables of the money-changers? The Dome of the Rock? The Arab Market? That little falafel stand that's been there for as long as anyone can remember?

While there are many ways one can look at the outcome of the recent U.S. Presidential election, one of the things that has supporters of Israel excited about is Donald Trump's statement that he'll move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and undo an injustice nearly seven decades old of America not recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

After Trump's election, I received several congratulatory emails, mostly from pastors and other Christian friends praising the inevitability of this long overdue move. Make no mistake: Jerusalem is important, very important. We are charged to remember Jerusalem uniquely, and be watchmen on her walls.

Yet, I am reminded that presidential candidates for decades have promised to move the embassy. Despite a U.S. law mandating it, none has. The difference that seems to excite people about Trump is that he's unconventional and just might do it. He was a different candidate, so maybe he'll be a different president, the thinking goes.

But I am cynical and don't necessarily believe it will happen. I have already heard of people in his team walking this back. In the past, I think candidates have made the promise in a manner of pandering to Jews and Christians for whom it matters, probably never having the intent to do so. That's my gut. Either way, it didn't happen. I wonder if upon moving to the Oval Office, Trump will go back on his word as so many have before him.

I would like to be proven wrong. Time will tell. I understand why presidents have broken their promises and could even make the case for doing so. The issue is black and white: Jerusalem is our capital and should be recognized as such, especially by

our allies. But I also understand why they've not done it yet, because such an action would have a ripple effect that might not be seen as being "worth it" because of a backlash among Arab and other allies.

The past month has seen no shortage of diplomatic terrorism, filled with threats by our Palestinian Arab neighbors and others that Trump moving the embassy, "will open the gates of hell." It is expected rhetoric for their people, underscoring why we can't make peace as long as such threats and incitement is the accepted norm. But it's also a threat that's very real. Of course the losers, again, will be Israelis and Palestinian Arabs who may not love one another but do want to live peacefully and without threat of violence.

I read online the following supposed interaction between a Trump representative and Palestinian Authority representative. It's not confirmed, but illustrates the thinking:

Trump official: *"Why should you object to the U.S. embassy in Israel in West Jerusalem, not the eastern part of the city?"*

Palestinian official: *"Where's the parallel? At the same time, set up the U.S. embassy for Palestine in East Jerusalem."*

Trump official: *"There is no Palestine, and Jerusalem is not your capital. If you stop the incitement to terror, put in place full economic transparency, stop acting unilaterally at U.N. bodies and accept a U.S. embassy in West Jerusalem, we'd consider a U.S. diplomatic mission in Ramallah and call upon the Israelis to enter into serious negotiations with you on a long-term relationship."*

Palestinian official: *"Only if the Israelis stop settlement construction, including in East Jerusalem, and if the negotiations are for a two-state solution based on the '67 lines."*

Will Trump give in to these threats, or will he go ahead with his plans? Will such plans take place in the form of building a new building? Will it involve renaming one of the two U.S. consulates presently based in Jerusalem? Will it involve the U.S. ambassador to Israel working out of one of these two "consulates" while commuting from an official residence near Tel Aviv? Or will Trump leave the situation as is, not to disrupt the status quo?

Ironically, as much as many rightly condemned December's U.N. Resolution 2334 as being grossly biased, feeding Arab demands without their having to negotiate or come to terms with Israel as a Jewish state, in their haste to find a way to condemn Israel, the resolution's authors actually did Israel—and the case for moving the embassy to Jerusalem—a huge favor.

With painstaking efforts to legitimize the boycott against businesses that are based in, or do business over, the 1949 Armistice Line, the Green Line, and de-legitimize any Israeli or Jewish claim to any of that territory (including the tombs of our patriarchs and matriarchs, prophets and others, as well as Old City of Jerusalem), they indirectly affirmed that Israel does have legitimate claim to western Jerusalem. What that means is they made the case for President Trump to move the embassy to the western part of Jerusalem, in complete compliance with Resolution 2334 and aligned with the views of the 14 countries that voted for the resolution, as well as the U.S., which supported it by abstaining.

With Trump now in office, there will be one new factor to deal with that his predecessors haven't. As a result of polarizing the Middle East and emboldening Iran and Syria as well as other extremists, the unintended outcome of Obama's failed Middle Eastern policies is the creation of a block of relatively moderate Sunni Arab states that Israel and the U.S. can work with.

I wonder if, putting aside the threats to bring a new wave of

terror, to maintain this balance, reassure the U.S.' Arab allies at a time when they also felt dissed by Obama, with the motivation to take control from extremists, and in serving the greater good of diplomacy that could have deeper legs for now, Trump will defer this promise.

Yet if I were president, I'd say something like this:

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem, which Israel accomplished in a defensive war that it tried to avoid. Israel beseeched Jordan's King Hussein not to enter the war. He did so anyway, and Israel unified eastern and western Jerusalem, biblical and modern Jerusalem, the former [of] which had been controlled and desecrated by the Jordanians for two decades."

Today, Israel is our ally and, without prejudging the outcome of the broader Arab-Israel conflict, we affirm that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel by moving our embassy there. If and when Israel and the Arab world, whether the Palestinian Authority, Jordan, or a broader coalition of Arab states, enter into a peace agreement, and on their choosing to change the status of Jerusalem, we will consider altering our arrangement. If Israel and the Arab world agree that Jerusalem will also be the capital of a future state of Palestine, we will consider establishing our embassy there as well. Until that point, we will work with our friends in Israel and, without precluding any future arrangements, move our embassy to Jerusalem immediately."

As to threats from the Palestinian Authority and others to break existing relations with Israel and set peace back further by bringing a new wave of violence and terror, we reject that and any threats or incitement to violence, and call upon all peace-loving people of the world to do so as well. Peace will only happen when Israel and its Arab neighbors can sit together and bridge differences. Arab threats to widen the differences are unacceptable. The losers

of such threats of new violence and incitement will be Palestinian Arabs, who will see peace and an independent Palestinian state pushed off the back burner and further from reality.

The ball is in Donald Trump's court now. Will he or won't he? What do you think? What do you think of my idea? What would you do? {eoa}

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