

QUOTES FROM A VISIT TO JERUSALEM

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In May, 1994, while on my sabbatical, I led a delegation of professors who spent two weeks in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We arrived a week after Palestinian police replaced Israeli soldiers in Gaza and Jericho. We interviewed several specialists in a pre-departure orientation and in-country interviewed dozens of Israelis and Palestinians. Below are excerpts from what they said. The quotes are anonymous and without comment. They constitute a mosaic, not necessarily representative. Almost all Palestinians support a settlement but their mood was downbeat. They think the Oslo Accords are seriously flawed, that there is no sincere Israeli commitment to withdraw, and that the Palestinian government will most likely fail since it lacks the resources to correct the disaster of 27 years of occupation. They also question whether Israel will bring violent settlers under control. The Israelis were polarized between those who support the Agreements and those who do not. Supporters fear the Agreements do not go far enough, that terrorism will turn the public against the Accords, and that Labor could be replaced by Likud in two years. Opponents say the PLO is unstable, HAMAS is not controllable, and that pulling back settlements will threaten security. Some feel the Occupied Territories are Jewish by Divine Gift. It was the most depressing visit I have ever had to the region, even more so than a visit in the wake of the Gulf War.

AMERICANS

1. "You are a great man, what you are doing for your people. When you come to Washington, I want to show you what happened to my people." Miles Lehrman of the Holocaust Center, who had tears in his eyes as he met Arafat in Cairo. As told by someone present.
2. "Support what you can get rather than what you want." Comment by Arab-American activist who had been criticized for being too supportive of the agreements and of working with Israelis.
3. "There would not be an agreement between Rabin and Arafat without HAMAS." Regional specialist.
4. "Iranian aggressiveness in the early 1980s energized the Gulf States." Military specialist. Cited creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council & new leadership in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province.
5. "If 80% of the American public took a position, it might make no difference. Politicians bend to pressure groups, not to public opinion." Educator/publisher on the limits of public education.

ISRAELIS

1. "Israelis do not exercise the phenomenon of Greater Israel." Noting that Israelis do not visit East Jerusalem.
2. "I made sure no future government would be able to make any compromise." Quoting Ariel Sharon.
3. "The major challenge to Israelis and Palestinians is their ability to forget."
4. "The next breakthrough will be more painful than the last." On Rabin's need to reach agreements on East Jerusalem, settlements, and other issues.
5. "Unlike in South Africa, the Israelis and Palestinians lack decisive, charismatic leaders. Politicians prefer to postpone a decision even if a crisis results."
6. "There was a revolution in Israel this week." On the fact that Haim Ramon took control of Histadrut from Labor.
7. "Before a Syrian-Israeli agreement must come a Syrian-American agreement."
8. "Some Israeli generals feel having American troops in the Golan would make Israel look weak, like another Korea requiring American troops to protect it."

9. "We do not want any American mother to regret that her son died for Israel." Rabin, as frequently quoted.
10. "I like financial solutions. They only cost money, not lives." Member of Knesset (MK) saying 60-70% of settlers would return to Israel if paid.
11. "It is up to leaders to make decisions and then convince the public." MK asked about public opinion. Many Israeli leaders feel this way and do not hang on public opinion as Americans do.
12. "Gaza has 4,000 Jewish settlers and 40,000 Palestinian babies are born a year." Speaker advocates dismantling Gaza settlements.
13. "For a couple of months, I was afraid to wake up in the morning...a person killed here, another there. People's fears are not negotiable....Our Palestinian friends can't understand why we are afraid. We are so strong."
14. "Jewish religious leaders are playing no positive role in the peace process. Religion is being used."
15. "Jerusalem is the test case of the whole agreement." Speaker would have East Jerusalem as capital of a Palestinian state, but says it must be "shared" at five to ten levels.
16. "If the Palestinian leaders don't succeed, we don't succeed."
17. "As the occupation continues, Israel is deteriorating into a non-democratic society. You cannot erect a wall and say it will happen there but not here."
18. "There is no chance for economic success without land and water."
19. "These judges sincerely believe that the security of the Israeli state is dependent upon my talking to NGOs in Geneva." Peace activist on why she was detained at the airport and why a three-judge panel approved the ban on her travel.
20. "Feminists see this as a normal male-dominated nation state but it is also a Jewish religious state."
21. "A few rabbis for peace are very active, but they are Americans. We don't have the tradition of secular, progressive Labor."
22. " I was in Palmach. In October, 1948 hundreds of women and children were starving & begging to return to their villages near Zakaria. American volunteers conducted reconnaissance and told of the tragedy. They said they were disgusted that Israel was not caring for these people. I wrote my mother that I was fed up with these 'philanthropic Americans.' I intentionally avoided calling them humans. We had read Marx and Engels and considered ourselves progressive and enlightened, but this was seen as security. From kindergarten we are taught that the Holocaust is an a-historic phenomenon. It cannot be compared. When a man wanted to teach the Armenian genocide, the Ministry of Education objected. 'How can you compare,' they asked? Any other suffering doesn't exist. During the Gulf War Palestinians had five weeks of curfew. Their economy collapsed. They could not even feed their cattle. I asked professors at Hebrew University to sign a petition, but they said 'this is security.' They do not see a human with a shop, but an abstract Palestinian."
23. "We have to deal with the Jerusalem Syndrome, in which people come here because God told them to come. A crazy Australian tried to burn Al Aqsa Mosque. Christians from America write telling us to destroy the Dome of the Rock." Jerusalem official.
24. "This is a free country. Anybody can live where they like. But you don't go where you create yourself problems." Jerusalem official on the Four Quarters of the old city.

25. "We are trying to help the Christians but they sometimes do not help themselves." Jerusalem official who said Christian schools in East Jerusalem resist Hebrew. Christian Palestinians are leaving but Israel welcomes Christians from Yugoslavia.
26. "Peace is our security." Labour party official on the danger of ruling Palestinians and creating a non-Jewish majority.
27. "An Israeli physical presence in the Jordan Valley would meet the needs for security." Labor party official.
28. "There is a terrible rise in violence in Israeli society, wife beating, child battering, suicide, road violence. Doing violence on Palestinians transfers to violence on others. Once you use violence it is hard to go back, on the road, in the office, in the home." Kibbutznik.
29. "We have a dictator for prime minister."
30. "The only way to have a Palestinian state is to continue the Intifada...Killing Jewish people may be the only way to bring change." Person emphasized she is NOT advocating this, but feels militant settlers will only leave if forced out.
31. "I want to live in a democratic country." Young soldier who says Israel was formed on an injustice. Palestinian refugees should be allowed to return and the Law of Return should be abolished to change from a Jewish state to an Israeli state.
32. "Buy now before the Temple is rebuilt and prices go up." Sign in the Jewish Quarter in a shop featuring Third Temple items.
33. "The people are with the Golan." Sign hanging from homes and other buildings showing resistance to withdraw from the Golan.
34. "Nobody listens to someone who is silent. If a baby does not cry, no one knows to feed him." Young soldier on how the Intifada made him aware of Palestinian grievances, and how Israeli soldiers only respect Palestinians when they resist.

ISRAELI WRITER AND POLITICAL INSIDER

1. "A majority (of Israelis) favor trying peace but no majority believes peace is possible."
2. "We all know where we are going." Quoting Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin, who favors a Palestinian state.
3. "If we have an election on this, we lose." Labor pollster on lack of popular support for the agreements, as quoted.
4. "Israel is reassessing its relationship with US Jews...There is a crisis in the relationship."
5. "Rabin is teflon. With Peres, anything sticks."
6. "Netanyahu is a typical product of the media. He is good for ten minutes. After 30 minutes he sounds foolish."

YAD VASHEM HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL CENTER

1. "6,000,000 and one" exhibit shows Jesus being taken from the cross by a soldier and added to a line of Jews being taken away.
2. Slavs "were denied their national and cultural identity. Many were enslaved while their leaders were interned or killed... Yet for political expediency, Hitler supported the Slavic puppet states..."

3. "The Jewish people will never forget the righteous among the nations who endangered their lives in order to save Jews from the Nazi murderers and their collaborators. In their praiseworthy deeds they saved the honor of mankind."
4. "I'm curious whether the good old days will ever return and I'll be able to sit alone in the toilet, not surrounded by ten people urging me to finish." Caption of painting showing four men back-to-back in a toilet, with snarling faces at the side. The commentator is holding a newspaper.
5. "Behold, I will cause a breath to enter into you and you shall live...and I will place you in your own land." Ezekiel 37, quoted in the Hall of Names. There is a computerized list of all who died in the Holocaust, with a retroactive Certificate of Israeli Citizenship possible for a registration fee.

PALESTINIANS UNDER OCCUPATION

1. "In the Middle East there is either one state too few or one people too many." PNC independent.
2. "In 1984 the PNC met in Jordan. I was in Amman getting a haircut. The debates were broadcast over the radio. A delegate was speaking when Arafat tried to make a point and was ruled out of order by the Speaker. The Jordanians were astounded that someone could tell him to be quiet." PNC member on the democratic tradition among Palestinians.
3. "The Nakhsba is ongoing. Each generation re-experiences it. It is not an ancestral memory. It is a personal thing." Nakhsba is the Palestinian word for catastrophe, meaning the events of 1948, including exile and the destruction of Palestinian society. PNC member explaining why all Palestinians identify with the national movement, even those who dissent.
4. "The court ruled that he had the right to title of property but could not live there." Academic specialist on 1975 Israeli Supreme Court ruling that the Old City had four distinct Quarters and that a non-Jew could not live in the Jewish Quarter. The context of the discussion was the destabilizing penetration of militant Jewish groups into the Muslim and Christian Quarters.
5. "No one could do as much harm as Kolleyck." Jerusalem personality on whether Likudist Mayor Ehud Olmert is different from Labourite Teddy Kolleyck. He said Kolleyck supported the classic Zionist goal of seizing land and did much damage to the city.
6. "I am graduating this semester. It has taken me ten years. I was imprisoned 3 times, once for two and a half years." Student.
7. "We will document and highlight violations no matter who are the violators." Human rights activist, asked how they would react to new Palestinian government.
8. "Killing is the ultimate human rights violation. No one has the right to confiscate the life of another person." Human rights activist.
9. Human rights monitoring is ultimately "a shaming process."
10. "People fear they will be free in a small area, a prison, surrounded..." On doubts about the future.
11. "We grew up with the idea that on the other side of the wall there is a monster." On life in the Jordanian ruled West Bank before 1967. The first time he met a Jew in an American classroom he was "shocked" to realize his humanity. "Israelis were taught the same of us."
12. "Son, 23 Arab countries cannot protect you. How do you think I can protect you." West Bank university administrator to the leader of a delegation of several hundred students from Gaza about to be deported back to Gaza in violation of the Oslo accords. The student had said the university should protect them. Many of the students attend classes but sleep in the mountain caves near the university to avoid arrest by the Israeli police.

13. "The Israelis look to the small words of the agreement rather than to the spirit of the settlement. The Palestinians look to the spirit and ignore the words."
14. "You will either leave our land through negotiations or we will drive you out." Student activist relating what he told a hostile Jewish heckler at Georgetown Hillel.
15. "Turn off your televisions." Student activist telling how he answered Americans who asked what they could do to contribute to the peace process. He says American TV news is stultifying.
16. "We were successful in resisting occupation. We learned from the Palestinians that land would be the focus of the occupation. We were self reliant. People planted trees. It was not always financially beneficial but it saved the land. Our resistance was economic, not political." Druze leader in the Golan Province.
17. "They took the fans from the ceilings." Palestinian leader on how Israelis behaved when leaving Jericho.
18. "Ask him how many housing permits were issued to Palestinians since 1967." Prominent Palestinian being told of an anticipated interview with a Jerusalem city official.
19. "We have a different type of Islamic group in Palestine than elsewhere." Palestinian leader on why HAMAS would not be a threat to foreigners or to an election.
20. "A child was born in Jericho today." Saeb Erakat, Palestinian negotiator, quoted on the Israeli army withdrawal from Jericho.
21. "Since 1967 Palestinians in Jerusalem were allowed 3,000 new housing permits. There were 100,000 Israeli units built."
22. "Peace will not last without a Palestinian foothold in Jerusalem."

PALESTINIANS IN ISRAEL

1. "The only Jews who study Arabic are those in the security forces." Haifa University graduate on her classmates.
2. "They are martyrs who died to protect the land and that we could live, so they live." Plaque at Martyr's Memorial in Sakhnin where four killings on March 30, 1976 are commemorated annually on Land Day. Islam teaches that martyr's never die.
3. "Israel cannot kill all the Arabs and the Arabs cannot throw the Jews into the sea. The only solution is a Palestinian state."
4. "When true peace comes, this will turn to a paradise for the whole world. War elsewhere does not affect the world but war here affects all. We are a crossroads of Asia, Africa, Europe." This was a common view.
5. There is a "large scale noticeable exit" of Palestinian Christians, mostly from the Occupied Territories. The situation is "delicate." The reason is economic. If peace comes, the situation will stabilize.

AN ISRAELI COLONEL

1. "The Palestinian leaders are the problem. Go to a camp and see the Peugeot's. Of four kids, three are in the US studying. In 27 years in Gaza they did not put in a single pipe. Why do they send their kids overseas? Bring them home. Build a hospital. Don't play the oppressed. You are NOT oppressed. They could never grasp it. The Israeli people have a lot of anger inside of them at the Palestinians."
2. "There will be another war. We will go in and determine it once and for all."

3. On Gaza: "Don't think they were oppressed. They were NOT oppressed. They have weak leaders. Arafat is not a true leader. He is not a Ben-Gurion or Begin....We never killed six million of them..."
4. "The Palestinians ruined Lebanon. They almost ruined Jordan. Why not built instead of tearing down? I don't know if the situation will ever be solved."
5. "We don't need outsiders advising us."
6. "If Sharon was Prime Minister, Eitan was head of the IDF, and Gandhi (Zeevi) was Defense Minister, everything would be ok." (Zeevi is head of the Molodet Party, Eitan head of Tsomet. Both are very right wing).
7. "My daughter is really to the right."

A SETTLEMENT LEADER NEAR JERUSALEM

1. "We see ourselves as a neighborhood of Jerusalem" but adds "we can only pray and hope." He says "the settlement freeze does not apply (here)" and outlines plans to treble of his settlement the population by 2000. "We cannot accept that Jerusalem be the capital of more than one state...We came to this small place. History is cruel. Americans kicked out Indian people..."
2. Current immigrants from Ethiopia and Russia are being settled in ethnic neighborhoods where they remain separate and do not become part of the common culture. "We are making the same mis takes we suffered from."
3. "I am personally proud of the Masada syndrome. I have it. All Israelis have it. Masada is a historical point in Israeli behavior. The ideology of the Arabs is throwing us into the sea. The person who signed the peace treaty said in South Africa to make Jihad in Jerusalem. And everybody knows the meaning of Jihad. If they can, they will. Masada is a symbol. We cannot afford to lose a war. The result is to be kicked into the sea or to commit suicide. It is a symbol of our future."
4. "The Germans conquered Libya, my home, and what happened there you can guess. One day in Israel my mother nearly lost her mind and began to shout at me. I was 19, a soldier. She apologized. 'We who survived the holocaust sometimes collapse. Forgive me.' I said 'I am not much different. I am the son of a holocaust survivor.' When I opened my eyes in Israel I saw terrorism and border attacks. I took part in the Six-day War, the 1973 War, the Lebanon War, and everything in between. It has costs. No one can doubt it. But other places have costs. In New York you are afraid to go out at night. Sometimes I am pessimistic about human beings. We attack each other. We are not like animals. Each society has its problems. We have our security problem with the Arabs. We try to solve it as best we can. People in Norway have no problem but a high suicide rate. We create our own problem. Perhaps we are fortunate for our problems are outside."
5. Asked if there will be an end to the conflict: "Problems cannot exist forever. They have to be solved by logic or force. Peace, they kick us out or we kick them out of this area. It cannot exist forever. Every war has to end. Someone wins, someone loses. I must be a philosopher. I believe there is a solution. This problem must be solved. But sometimes I am very pessimistic. I created a simulation game. Those of the left want to go to the border of June 6, 1967. What then? There are 800,000 Arabs. By 2150 Arabs will be 51%, factoring in immigration. Gandhi (Zeevi) wants 'willing transfer.' Give someone a knife and commit suicide with a knife. He is legal because he says 'willing.' I don't believe the Palestinians are a nation. They are not. At the beginning of this century, there were a few hundred only. Look at the names, tribes. They are Ottoman tribes. This was a land of refuge for thieves. They are not originally from this place. They have nothing in common. They are from different places. They call each other brothers but look at the differences. Look at the shape of their faces and color. It is not a nation. Still, it is not what they say about you but what they want. What is in the heart cannot be denied. If they want to be a nation, no one can deny it. The biggest mistake the Americans made (and we made) was protecting King Hussein. Sixty percent of Hashemite kingdom are Palestinians, 40% are Bedouins. Bedouins wander from place to place, although now they settle a little. Let them rule there. Then they would have a state and the issue would be about a line, not about the principle. Today it is about a principle: they want a state and we do not want them to have a state. You cannot negotiate a feeling but you can negotiate a line. We still protect King Hussein in his chair. The same in East Europe.

US did nothing. Communism was a balloon. For 50 years people lived under it. It exploded. The same will happen in Jordan. King Hussein is a sick man. What will happen on the day he passes? I think of the price the Jordanian people will pay in blood. We make the same mistake America made in Europe. America let people suffer 50 years from the communist messiah. We do the same. America has a destiny to be the greatest power in the world. God decided it. Look at France and Great Britain. For 100 years they can only lose wars. The Americans are drivers. They have responsibility to drive the world. When there is an accident I blame the driver."

6. "America is our major ally...our only ally."

HEBRON IN THE WAKE OF A MASSACRE

American born settler Baruch Goldstein went into the Ibrahimi/Hebron mosque on the first day of Ramadan with two assault rifles and killed 29 worshippers before being beaten to death as he was reloading. In the post-massacre demonstrations, other Palestinians were killed.

1. "39 was not enough." Hebrew graffiti referring to the Muslim worshipers killed February 25 by Baruch Goldstein.
2. A teacher sees a six-year old boy looking into space and asks "What are you thinking about?" The boy says, "About how to be HAMAS and be martyred for Palestine." The boy's uncle had been killed in the Ibrahimi mosque massacre.
3. "Holding the territories is like holding a poisonous snake in the hand. There is a danger to keep holding and a danger to let go." A prominent Palestinian on the Israeli dilemma.
4. "They are afraid of everything. They want to go home." Young Israeli soldier on what those on patrol in Hebron are thinking.
5. "Many consider this the first bullet in a religious war, many on both sides." Gaza leader on the Hebron Massacre.
6. "Hebron was ours in the past and is ours forever." Israeli Bumper sticker showing resistance to withdrawal.

PALESTINIAN CHRISTIAN CLERGY

1. "Palestinian Christians do theology through telling stories."
2. "The Old Testament has more than one Exodus story. The first came up with an exclusionary theology of the land. The native people are negated and exterminated. The first Exodus is used to justify conquest. Today some Jews call Palestinians Amalakites. But the prophets brought a Second Exodus. Jeremiah and others speak of the return to the land but tell Jews to live with others on the land. Ezekiel 47 says to share land with the inhabitants. In Leviticus, God says 'The Land is mine. You are all strangers.' We must create an inclusive theology of God, not the God of the Jews, the God of the Muslims. When Goldstein went into the mosque, he went with an exclusive theology of God. When he kills Palestinians he does the work of God."
3. "Suffering can make us more compassionate. Other times it can make us more bitter. Some Jewish people imagine suffering. They have not suffered but they have been taught suffering. They impose suffering on others to prevent suffering themselves. There is a national illness that they must deal with. In the way they have treated the Palestinians they have almost seen the Palestinians as Nazis. Why would a soldier beat a child? He sees the Nazi in this child. They have to show 'never again' by beating a Palestinian child. In Yad Vashem, is a very subtle way they associate the Palestinians with the Nazis through Haj Amin. Unless the Jews begin to confront this part of their history--to see we are the children of today, we have all suffered, we can all be oppressors, we are all potential oppressors--there will be no change. We must create a new history."
4. "You must give strength to others. To be a true Christian, you must be strong and without fear."
5. "Jews always said next year in Jerusalem. Now Moslems say next year in Jerusalem. If Jerusalem wants to be a City of Peace it cannot be governed by one people or religion."

6. "The Israelis say there is free access to Jerusalem but it is not true. Christians from all over the world can come but not from Bethlehem or the Arab world. They cannot guarantee free access or religious freedom unless government in Jerusalem is shared."
7. When five Palestinian Christian Bishops met Arafat in Tunis and gave him a cake with "Peace Through Jesus Christ" written on the frosting, Arafat responded, "Yes, and for all he stands for, peace, brotherhood, and justice."
8. A Christian clergyman who ran for the Knesset always campaigned in Muslim areas in Christian clerical robes. He told the crowds, "we are supposed to kill, not our enemies but enmity." The crowd would respond, "May the Peace of Allah be upon Jesus." About religion and politics, "the Knesset is another pulpit."
9. "I read Psalms 91 every day. My Grandmother told me this. She was a simple person, a teacher. She told me if a snake attacked me and I read Psalms 91 the snake would stand on its tail."
10. Asked if he was pessimistic, a Christian leader said the following: "Life is a strife. If you don't defeat it, it will defeat you. At times you sit by yourself and are lonely. But in South Africa one million prayed for peace in one service. People pray for us, I can feel it. I wrote an essay entitled 'Good Monday' suggesting that a Christian pilgrimage recreate the footsteps of Abraham, from Iraq to Jerusalem. Good Friday was a time of Death but the Resurrection followed. More innocent people will be sacrificed before this is over but peace is coming. The extremists put 'The people are with the Golan' on their cars, but others put 'The people are with Shalom.'"

GAZA PALESTINIANS

1. "Arafat thought he was dealing with Arabs." On why Arafat signed documents that were "masterpieces of constructive ambiguity." Negotiator.
2. "Palestinians will fall into the swamp of Gaza. We will not be able to deliver in Gaza. Israel could not deliver in 27 years. How can Arafat deliver in three to four weeks? There is not chance. The agreement is totally unsustainable and will collapse." Negotiator.
3. "The multilateral talks have one purpose: to get Israel into the Arab world. This is done." Negotiator.
4. "The peace climate has been poisoned." Gaza human rights activist who got May agreement from Israeli Knesset member because Palestinian leaders are allegedly ashamed to distribute it.
5. "It's a one man show." On who controls the police.
6. "This is not mathematics, it is chemistry." On integrating Intifada committees into the new administration.
7. "I am seriously worried about the economic future."
8. "We are not interested in your garbage, your streets, or your criminals. Get your garbage out of our face." On what Israelis mean by autonomy.
9. All Gaza is like Brooklyn."
10. "Ordinary people are shattered, between the emotional and the mental."
11. "The Israelis and Americans played a very clever role in telling the world that something substantial has taken place."
12. "When I saw Palestinian soldiers I was moved to tears."
13. "Welcome to the other side of the moon."

14. "The Accords could not be understood by 100 professors of law."
15. "This bloody fire between ourselves and our cousins, the Israelis, we have to close it. We have to succeed or the peace process will explode."
16. "People are starving. We have reached the red line."
17. "In Gaza they live in terror." On the settlers.
18. "I will not take this hole of snakes." Sadat when offered Gaza at Camp David.
19. "It is my home, my people." Prominent leader on why he accepted appointment to the powerless Palestine National Authority.
20. "If there is no change in a few weeks or months, happiness will be overturned. Soon they will throw stones at Palestinian police."
21. "I would never have signed this. I can't believe our people would sign." On the water provisions of the Cairo Agreement.
22. "I took my children to the beach. They had never been there." Gazan, asked the first thing he did after the Israeli soldiers left his town.

AMERICANS

1. "We don't live here." American official asked if the US has interests in the outcome of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.
2. "It's a cultural thing." US official on why Palestinians are not ready for self-government. If Jews were involved, he says they would have created a secret government ready to take over.
3. "I saw the side of a hill that had been ripped away by a bulldozer." Archeologist on how the Israelis pillaged potential archeological sites in Jericho in the weeks prior to withdrawal.

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