

UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE

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COMMITTEE ON JERUSALEM

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SUMMARY RECORD OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE COMMITTEE
ON JERUSALEM AND THE CHIEF RABBI OF THE ASHKENAZIC
JEWISH COMMUNITY. (TWENTIETH MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE)

held in Jerusalem on 11 April 1949

Present: Mr. Benoist (France) - Chairman
Mr. Yenisey (Turkey)
Mr. Halderman (U.S.A.)
Dr. Serup - Secretariat
His Eminence
Dr. I. Herzog - Chief Rabbi of the
Ashkenazic Jewish Community

The CHAIRMAN introduced the members of the Committee to the Chief Rabbi and explained that the purpose of the visit was to hear Dr. Herzog's opinion on the question of the internationalization of Jerusalem.

The CHIEF RABBI stated that he could not imagine a Jewish State without Jerusalem. In ancient days, when the Jews had returned from Babylonian captivity, the Jewish commonwealth had been concentrated in Jerusalem and its suburbs. The significance of Jerusalem to the Jews was evident from the fact that they mentioned it in their prayers. Jerusalem was admittedly sacred to Christians and Moslems but to the Jews it is the holiest of the holy. To the Christians Jerusalem was holy because of certain associations which the Jews understood and respected, but to the Jews Jerusalem was sacred for its own sake. The Temple had not been in existence for almost 2,000 years but in spite of that, Jerusalem was still for the Jews the holiest city in the world.

In reply to a question, the Chief Rabbi stressed that in speaking of Jerusalem he meant the entire city, since the New City was overwhelmingly Jewish. He explained that the Jews had no intention of rebuilding the Temple. According to their faith, the

/Temple

Temple would be rebuilt upon the coming of the Messiah and as a result of divine manifestation.

The Chief Rabbi further explained that Jerusalem was not only important to the Jews from the point of historical and sacred associations, but also from the standpoint of Jewish civil law. From the time when the Temple still stood up to the present day certain Jewish laws, for example the law on divorce, applied only to Jerusalem. If one of the parties wished to live in Jerusalem and the other refused, this was held to be sufficient ground for a divorce.

In conclusion, the Chief Rabbi asked how the world could conceive that the Jews could acquiesce in the severance of Jerusalem from the State of Israel. The United Nations had done a great thing in fulfilling the Bible promise that the Jews should return to Palestine; it should now do for Jerusalem what it had already done for the rest of the country. He quoted the Psalmist: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither".

In reply to a question, the Chief Rabbi reemphasised that the reconstruction of the Temple would be undertaken by the Messiah and that no Jew would think of undertaking such a task. He added that the Jews asked in their prayers that Jerusalem should become the spiritual centre of humanity, a prayer that was not made, to his knowledge, by either Christians or Moslems.

Mr. HALDERMAN stated that he noted that the Chief Rabbi recognized the Arab claims and in particular their religious rights. He considered that they also had some political rights as a consequence of their prolonged residence in Palestine. He wondered whether the Jews believed that the brotherly relations preached by the Jews themselves could be re-established between Jews and Arabs, and whether religious interests in Jerusalem could transcend political interests. Would the Jews consider a compromise on the political level possible if they were granted full religious rights

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including access to the Holy Places and the right of residence in Jerusalem?

The CHIEF RABBI declared that if the United Nations continued to fulfil its mission, Jerusalem would become a part of Israel. However, the Jews had no intention to deprive the Arabs of their civic rights. The Jews believed in a providential revival of Israel, and it must be admitted that the sequence of events in the last years indicated Divine intervention.

Mr. HALDERMAN stressed that whereas the Chief Rabbi looked to the United Nations to make Jerusalem a part of Israel, the United Nations had already decided that it should be internationalized.

The CHIEF RABBI declared that an internationalized Jerusalem would not be the Jerusalem for which the Jews prayed every day. Jerusalem was and must remain an integral part of Israel. The task now incumbent on the Committee was to bring about a revision of the United Nations decision and to incorporate Jerusalem in the State of Israel. By so doing, the United Nations would fulfil the predictions of the prophets and the angels.
