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Esra KALKAN ÖZHELVACI*

ZIONISM'S PLANS AND ATTEMPTS AGAINST THE AL-AQSA MOSQUE BEFORE AND AFTER THE WAR OF 1967

Abstract: Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) has been the place of struggle throughout history due to its status a holy city for thousands of years in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Hence, the religious perspective is an effective factor in the loyalty of the Jews to Jerusalem. On the one side the al-Aqsa Mosque was an indispensable place for Muslims and Palestinians. On the other hand, Zionism had different plans for the holy place. Born against anti-Semitism, Zionism has strived to protect Jews from persecution in many parts of the world. After Israel was established as a Jewish state in the Holy Land under the leadership of the Zionist movement, the Israelis developed occupation areas in Bayt al-Maqdis to realize the promise of Abraham in which they believed. The al-Aqsa Mosque/Temple Mount became a focal point for the Zionists with the annexation of the old city. Accordingly, they made plans and actions regarding the al-Aqsa Mosque. Even though there were different brands of Zionism, all of them were influenced by the religious perspective toward the al-Aqsa Mosque/Temple Mount. This study discusses the plans and initiatives of the adherents of various kinds of Zionism regarding the al-Aqsa Mosque in Bayt al-Maqdis before and after the War of 1967 and subsequent invasions, and analyzes how the Zionist ideology impacted on the al-Aqsa Mosque.

Keywords: Zionism, Jewish Zionism, Anti-Zionists and non-Zionists, Christian Zionism, al-Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem (Bayt al-Maqdis)

1967 SAVAŞI ÖNCESİ VE SONRASINDA SİYONİZM'İN MESCİD-İ AKSA'YA YÖNELİK PLAN VE GİRİŞİMLERİ

Öz: Beytül-Makdis (Kudüs) üç semavi din için de mukaddes şehir olması sebebiyle tarih boyunca mücadele alanı olmuştur. Dolayısıyla dini merkeze alan bakış açısı, Yahudilerin Beytül-Makdis'e duyduğu sadakatte etkili bir faktördür. Mescid-i Aksa bir yanda Müslümanlar ve Filistinliler için vazgeçilmez bir yer olsa da, öte yandan Siyonizm'in kutsal mekâna karşı farklı düşünceleri vardı. Siyonizm, Anti-Semitizm'e karşı doğan ve tüm dünyadaki zulüm gören Yahudileri kurtarma amacı güden ideolojidir. İsrail Devleti Siyonizm hareketinin önderliğinde kutsal topraklarda yer alan bir Yahudi devleti olarak kurulduktan sonra, İsrailliler Hz. İbrahim'in inandıkları vaadini gerçekleştirmek için Beytül-Makdis'teki işgal bölgelerini oluşturdular. Mescid-i Aksa, eski şehrin ilhakı ile Siyonistlerin odak noktası haline geldi. Bu nedenle Mescid-i Aksa konusunda planlar kurup eylemlerini gerçekleştirdiler. Bu amaca göre Siyonistler farklı ideolojilere sahip olsalar dahi Mescid-i Aksa'ya dini perspektiften yaklaşmışlardır. Bu çalışma 1967 Savaşı ve akabindeki işgaller öncesi ve sonrasında Mescid-i Aksa üzerinde çeşitli Siyonizm türlerine dayalı plan ve girişimleri tartışmakta ve Siyonist ideolojinin Mescid-i Aksa'yı nasıl etkilediğini analiz etmektedir.

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Siyonizm, Yahudi Siyonizmi, Anti-Siyonistler ve Siyonist olmayanlar, Hristiyan Siyonizmi, El-Aksa Camii, Kudüs (Beytül-Makdis)

Introduction

Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem), sacred in Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, has been the focal point for both Muslims, Jews and Christians. Christians believe that religion has expanded from this region and that it is a haven for the Christian religion. For Muslims, al-Aqsa Mosque is accepted and respected as the third most important mosque, and the place of the occurrence of the Night Journey event. For Judaism, on the other hand, the area of Bayt al-Maqdis is regarded as the land promised by God to Abraham, the first ancestor of the sons of Israelites, and his descendants. At the same time, according to Jewish belief, this region refers to the Ard al-Mi'ad (Promised Land), the boundaries of which are controversial.¹ Moreover, Judaism attaches importance to Bayt al-Maqdis based on its holiness. The reason for this is the Solomon Temple, which was built on Mount Moriah, considered the pinnacle of the world.² Nevertheless, the sacred connotations of Bayt al-Maqdis are not limited to the pre-Islamic period. Prophets who lived, visited, and died in Bayt al-Maqdis and found mention in the Quran reinforces its holiness in Islam. In addition, this region, considered as a fertile land by God, is mentioned in many verses of the Quran.³ Because of the Night Journey in which Prophet Muhammad revealed the importance of the al-Aqsa Mosque it has become an indispensable area for Muslims. They regard it as the center of holiness and fertility, just as the Jews believe in the holiness of Bayt al-Maqdis.⁴ Therefore, Bayt al-Maqdis, and particularly the al-Aqsa Mosque enclave have been the center of conflict and strife for religious and political reasons. This is because Bayt-al Maqdis appears as the place where Jews immigrated and then fulfilled their desire to become a nation. One of the architects of this desire is the Zionist movement. Thus, it could be said that the region has also been the target of Zionism.

Besides, while the al-Aqsa Mosque was an indispensable place for Palestinians, the Zionist movement had different attitudes towards the holy enclave. According to the beliefs of the Jews, the Bayt al-Maqdis region is the

¹ Semiha Karahan, "Siyonist Öğretide Vaat Edilmiş Topraklar," *Ortadoğu Etütleri* 13, no. 2 (2021): 188.

² Ibid., 189.

³ Khalid El-Awaisi, "Mapping the Borders of Holiness: IslamicJerusalem and Its Holy Land.," *Milel ve Nihal* 14, no. 2 (2017): 130.

⁴ Khalid El-Awaisi, *Geographical Dimensions of IslamicJerusalem* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 64.

land promised by God. Therefore, the struggle of the Jews for the return to Bayt al-Maqdis continued for years under the impact of Zionism. Jews living as excluded minorities in various geographies went in search to acquire a homeland. The reason for this was the anti-Semitism and the increasing violence of pogroms that broke out under the influence of nationalist movements aiming at homogeneity. This situation caused an increasing number of Jews to regard the Zionist movement with sympathy. However, during World War I, Zionism lacked international political support and was in search of it. The anticipated opportunity emerged with the help of the British. Lord Balfour, who took office as foreign minister with the change of the British cabinet, supported Zionism's aim to establish a Jewish homeland in the Holy Land. Thus, the Zionists' attempts to establish a Jewish state in the Middle East by the help of the British and on the basis of the Balfour Declaration was a crucial turning point for the Palestinian Arabs. The Balfour Declaration stated that the British government would support the establishment of a "Jewish home" in Palestine. After the British had allowed the immigration of hundreds of thousands of Jews to Palestine during the Mandate period, it ended the Mandate system and left the control to the United Nations. The United Nations' Resolution 181 in 1947 complemented the initiative of the British for a Jewish state. Even though it was stated by the representatives of some countries in the United Nations that the British did not have the right to dispose of Palestine and that the promise of a "national home" for the Jews was a violation of the rights of the Palestinians.⁵ The establishment of the state of Israel after the 1948 war showed that the Mandate and Resolution 181 had not been in vain. Thus, the idea of establishing a Jewish state, the primary aim of Zionism, seems to have been realized.

Despite this, the state of Israel was not accepted by the Palestinian Arabs and the Arab states in the region. On the other hand, Israel consolidated its existence in the region through armed conflicts, but did not control the al-Aqsa Mosque and Old City as yet. It was only in the 1967 War that Israel gained the opportunity to bring the al-Aqsa Mosque and its environs under its control. In addition, the purpose of Zionism to gather Jews together by using religion for some Jews and nationalism for some others had its common focus on the al-Aqsa Mosque. Thus, Zionism managed to bring under its control the al-Aqsa Mosque enclave and its surroundings.

⁵ "The Origins and Evolution of the Palestine Problem Part I: 1917-1947 - Study (30 June 1978)," accessed June 26, 2021, <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/5ba47a5c6cef541b802563e000493b8c/aeac80e740c782e4852561150071fdb0?OpenDocument>.

In his article "The Temple Mount/al-Aqsa in Zionist and Palestinian National Consciousness," Hillel Cohen states that Zionism tries to remove the Jews who believe in the messiah from the messianic framework and that for this purpose the Israeli government prevents them from entering the al-Aqsa Mosque.⁶ In this respect, Zionism is far from a religious framework. However, on the other hand, it could be said that Zionism did not give up the holy areas and continued to carry out actions against the al-Aqsa Mosque through religious Jews. As a result, the author emphasizes, some Jews moved away from the holy areas under the influence of Zionism, and did not pay attention to it as much as Muslims, while some other Jews adhered to the holy area according to their religious beliefs and paid attention, even if this attention was for destroying the al-Aqsa Mosque and converting it into a Jewish area. Furthermore, according to Taylor's article "Zionism and Jewish History," Zionist ideology developed around the terms land and people. Even though it had a realist outlook, however, it occasionally utilized the traditional Messianic understanding for its purposes.⁷

The present study will offer an analysis of the perspective of the Zionist movement regarding the al-Aqsa Mosque. Although Zionism does not have a religious purpose in the first place, it deploys various methods against the al-Aqsa Mosque and its environs like digging tunnels underneath, destroying neighborhoods, and oppressing the population around the area. Thus, Zionism has created a margin to carry out its plans regarding the al-Aqsa Mosque.

In the light of these statements, the methodology of the article is to reveal and explain the various forms and structures of Zionism's understanding of the sacred area, as well as the plans and attempts against the al-Aqsa Mosque and its environs. The attempts of Zionism on the al-Aqsa Mosque are analyzed and explained analytically on the bases of example cases. The period chosen is the years before and after the threshold of 1967, as certain important events affected the fate of the al-Aqsa Mosque in these years. The main argument of the article is that Zionism has had a destructive effect not only on the Palestinian Arabs but also on the al-Aqsa Mosque and its material and spiritual situation.

The article consists of five sections part from the introduction and the conclusion. The first section gives information about the meaning of Zionism and the perspectives of its various types regarding the al-Aqsa Mosque. The

⁶ Hillel Cohen, "The Temple Mount/al-Aqsa in Zionist and Palestinian National Consciousness: A Comparative View," *Israel Studies Review* 32, no. 1 (2017): 1–19.

⁷ Alan R Taylor, "Zionism and Jewish History," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 1, no. 2 (1972): 40.

second section discusses the importance of the al-Aqsa Mosque for the parties to the conflict. The third section provides information on the historical developments in the period under consideration. The fourth and fifth sections focus on the al-Aqsa Mosque and discuss the plans and initiatives of Zionism regarding the al-Aqsa Mosque.

1. Meaning, Emerging, and Types of Zionism

Zionism in the broadest sense is to gather all Jews together.⁸ According to another description, Zionism represents the fulfillment of the Jewish experience such as rebuilding the Jewish nation, returning to the ancestral homeland, and resuming the messianic role. Theodor Herzl had originally combined Judaism with Zionism by making a definition of nationhood that excluded religion and tradition. On the other hand, as Taylor indicates, Zionism also aimed at “the recovery of institutional nationhood, the restoration to the ancestral homeland, and the resumption of Israel's messianic role in the reconciliation of history and metahistory.”⁹ Hence, Zionism was integrated with Judaism and the Jewish society. In this regard, the propaganda of Zionism directed at the Jewish people is very crucial. This propaganda sometimes bases the importance of the national movement on religious beliefs and the desire for holiness.¹⁰ Although Zionism thus takes advantage of religious and sacred identities in the belief that the Jewish people may be better influenced in this way, national identity is at the forefront of the movement. Accordingly, it could be said that the Zionism movement worked for a national revival within a religious framework.¹¹

Moreover, the idea emerged that there could be a Jewish nation thanks to the Zionism. The most important reason that brought the Jews to the idea of becoming a nation was that they were persecuted. They were exposed to state-sponsored pogroms involving destruction, violence, oppression, looting and rape in Eastern Europe, and especially in Czarist Russia.¹² Large-scale waves of such pogroms that had an important bearing on the Jewish national movement took place between 1881-1884, 1903-1906, and 1907-1921.¹³ The

⁸ Sedat Kızıloğlu, “İsrail Devleti’nin Kuruluşuna Kadar Geçen Süreçte Yahudiler ve Siyonizm’in Gelişimi,” *Kırıkkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 2, no. 1 (2012): 47.

⁹ Taylor, “Zionism and Jewish History,” 35.

¹⁰ Cohen, “The Temple Mount/al-Aqsa in Zionist and Palestinian National Consciousness: A Comparative View,” 1.

¹¹ Tomer Persico, “The End Point of Zionism: Ethnocentrism and the Temple Mount,” *Israel Studies Review* 32, no. 1 (Summer0 2017): 107.

¹² Tuğba Köse, “Yahudilerin Devletleşme Sürecinde Dönüm Noktaları: Pogrom, Aliya ve Siyasi Siyonizm (1881-1903),” *Ortadoğu Etütleri* 13, no. 1 (n.d.): 123.

¹³ Ibid.

reason for pogroms was the anti-Semitist scapegoating of Jews. Indeed, beside the pogroms in Russia, the Jews were blamed for the loss of the First World War in Germany.¹⁴ In addition, German Nationalism claimed that Jews had caused a degeneration in the quality of the German race. The rulers of the Austro-Hungarian Empire cited the increasing population and economic power of the Jews as the justification for anti-Semitism, claiming that this endangered their people.¹⁵ The most important event that caused France to be anti-Semitic was the trial of a Jewish captain named Alfred Dreyfus on the claims that he was spying on behalf of the Germans.¹⁶ This trial was also influential in persuading Herzl of the necessity of establishing a Jewish state. Thus, ethnic nationalism, anti-Semitism, and economic pressures on the rise against Jews, particularly those in eastern Europe, caused them to emigrate in mass and led some to embrace Zionism. The majority migrated to America, among other countries, while some immigrated to Palestine.

The term Zionism was introduced by Nathan Birnbaum (1864-1937) for the first time. He declared that he understood Zionism as the establishment of a political party organization whose members were Jews, intended to relocate Jews to Palestine.¹⁷

Besides, Leo Pinsker is one of the Zionist leaders who founded the Lovers of Zion Association aiming to settle completely in Palestine and to rediscover Hebrew. In his article "Zionism and Jewish History," Taylor emphasizes that this organization represented the bridge between Jewish nationalism and the Holy Land.¹⁸

In the 1900s, Theodor Herzl was the most important leader and activist behind the Zionist movement and the first to pose the Jewish question on an international platform. Having witnessed the stripping of the rank of Captain Dreyfus on charges of which he was innocent, Herzl argued that the Jews over the world should not be oppressed in this way.¹⁹ It was necessary for them to emigrate to a country that belonged to them. Indeed, in his book *The Jewish State* he emphasized that Jewish life had to be free and that the Jews deserved

¹⁴ Mustafa Selim Yılmaz, "Bir Terimin Arkeolojisi: Antisemitizmin Teolojik ve Politik Tarihi," *Cumhuriyet İlahiyat Dergisi* 21, no. 2 (2017): 1209.

¹⁵ Mim Kemal Öke, "Siyonizm ve Filistin Sorunu [Zionism and the Palestinian Question]," *İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi*, 2012, 25.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20–28.

¹⁸ Taylor, "Zionism and Jewish History," 40.

¹⁹ Öke, "Siyonizm ve Filistin Sorunu [Zionism and the Palestinian Question]," 39.

a land of their own.²⁰ Accordingly, the First Zionist Congress was held in Basel, Switzerland, under the leadership of Herzl to gain the support of Jewish people. The aims of the Zionist movement were discussed and explained in this Congress, which its participants considered as a national assembly.²¹ Theodor Herzl and the Zionists in the Congress considered many possible regions in which a Jewish state could be built.²² The location of the planned state had to be suitable for all conditions.²³ Accordingly, Palestine was regarded as the final destination of the Jewish state to be established, since it had topographic features suitable for the economic expectations of Jews.

This choice of Herzl and his followers was based on the calculation that they would thus gain the support of both the Lovers of Zion and religious traditionalists even if they themselves did not believe in religion.²⁴ Even though it has been argued by Eli'ezer Don-Yihya that Herzl's main purpose in founding the Jewish state was to protect Jews from antisemitism,²⁵ most Jews in western Europe did not immigrate to Palestine.²⁶ Some of the Jews who were exposed to antisemitism stayed in the country they were in, and some migrated to other countries. On the other hand, Don-Yihya rightly observes that due to the establishment of the Jewish state, a different form of antisemitism emerged against the Jewish state in Islamic and Third World countries.²⁷ In time, Zionism would adopt the religious perception of Judaism regarding Bayt al-Maqdis and Palestine. It was calculated that the religious value attached to the al-Aqsa Mosque area would strengthen Jewish nationalism and ensure the existence of the Zionist movement.

Insofar as Zionism promoted a Jewish to return to Palestine, which was accepted as their holy land,²⁸ religious groups and political secular Zionists had a common benefit and mutual understanding. Indeed, at the time when Zionism emerged, the Jews often lacked a sense of unity and nationalism,

²⁰ Robert S. Wistrich, "Theodor Herzl: Zionist Icon, Myth-maker and Social Utopian," *Israel Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1995): 14.

²¹ Öke, "Siyonizm ve Filistin Sorunu [Zionism and the Palestinian Question]," 41.

²² Hinnerk Gölnitz, "International Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Barrier by Israel in the West Bank," LL.M Minor Dissertation (University of Cape Town, 2005), 7.

²³ Gideon Biger, "Territory and Space in Israeli Society and Politics," *Indiana University Press* 13, no. 1 (2008): 75–78.

²⁴ Roger Garaudy and Nezih Uzel, *Siyonizm Dosyası* (Pınar Yayınları, 1983), 11.

²⁵ Eli'ezer Don-Yihya, "Zionism in Retrospective," *Modern Judaism* 18, no. 3 (1998): 268.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Mustafa Alıcı, "Üç Kudüs: Kudüs'e Siyonist, Evanjelik ve Reel-Politik Yaklaşımlar," *Akra Kültür Sanat Ve Edebiyat Dergisi* 6, no. 15 (May 8, 2018): 45.

especially in the Diaspora.²⁹ Therefore, the Zionist pioneers wanted to create a nation by adding politics and nationalism to Judaism. Indeed, the ethnic and mystical nature of the Jewish nation had shown that political secular Zionism would not achieve much. Religion and religious arguments would also be necessary to build the Jewish nation. Therefore, religion served as an effective political card for Zionism in general. In this respect, political Zionism seems to have made some concessions from its mainly secularist understanding.³⁰

Concessions were also made however by Orthodox Jews in religious Zionism. Indeed, a part of the Orthodox Jews also had a goal of establishing a Jewish homeland, like political secular Zionists. Rav Kook one of the pioneers of Religious Zionism, developed an ideology combining religion and secular political Zionism. According to him, refusing Zionism as a movement amounted to refusing the establishment of a Jewish homeland. This was because he believed that secular political Zionism would accelerate Jewish emancipation even though such human intervention was forbidden in Orthodox Judaism. According to Orthodox Judaism, Jewish homeland could not be built and salvation could not be achieved by sinners who did not obey Jewish law. In contrast, Kook saw this kind of Zionism as a fundamental condition for the coming of the Messiah. Moreover, he considered secular political Zionists as a part of the pre-Messiah generation. He was convinced of their capacity to create a Jewish homeland as the "donkey of Messiah." He also argued that they contributed to the natural process of state formation, and expected the religious Zionists to believe this. Accordingly, the arguments of secular political Zionists and religious groups were integrated in his teaching.³¹

Thus there has emerged two different main branches of Zionism, with their own shifting perspectives of the al-Aqsa Mosque and its environs. Of these, political Zionism aimed to return Jews to their old glorious days.³² It had a secular structure that saw the Jews as a community above all else. This was because according to political Zionism, the priority lay in building the Jewish people into a single community and establishing a Jewish state.³³ According to these aims, political Zionists preferred to gain power in political

²⁹ Persico, "The End Point of Zionism," 113.

³⁰ Uri Ram, "Why Secularism Fails? Secular Nationalism and Religious Revivalism in Israel," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 21, no. 1–4 (2008): 60–61.

³¹ Aden Benarroch, "Rav Kook and Secular Zionism," *Dorot: The McGill Undergraduate Journal of Jewish Studies*, 2015, 18.

³² Yaakov Ariel, "Terror at the Holy of Holies: Christians and Jewish Builders of the Temple at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century," 2007, 68.

³³ Garaudy and Uzel, *Siyonizm Dosyası*, 10.

and economic terms. Moreover, the main aim of Political Zionism was to establish a Jewish homeland without the culture and traditions of Judaism.³⁴ They even ignored the Old City, the al-Aqsa Mosque and its environs at first, and remained aloof to religious considerations. Thus Chaim Weizmann, who would become Israel's first president, said that he "would not accept the ancient city of Jerusalem even if it would be given as a gift."³⁵ Also, Ben-Gurion argued that the holy sites were contrary to the modern worldview of Israel.³⁶

The other branch, Religious Zionism, attaches great value to religion and tradition. It awaits the coming of the Messiah, and aims to save Jews by bringing them to the promised land. Religious Zionism believes in the necessity of keeping one's distance from the Temple Mount (as the al-Aqsa Mosque is called in Jewish tradition) while one is still unclean and waiting for the coming of the Messiah. Thus, the Temple Mount agenda has to be invalid for them. Nevertheless, it should be stated that this conviction underwent a change.³⁷ Eventually they preferred to approach the Temple Mount rather than moving away from it, and the transformation involved the wish to pray there as well. The transformation became manifest when some Rabbis permitted them to visit the al-Aqsa Mosque. The permission was legitimized on the grounds of witnessing the holy site, praying, and creating awareness about the Temple and its meaning.³⁸ Today, religious Zionism is supported by the Likud Party and its supporters. Likud's members in Knesset attach great importance to the Temple Mount.³⁹ For instance, Yuli Edelstein, a member of the Knesset, said that "My job is to deal with the daily process, connecting and building the People of Israel, which leads to the Temple Mount." Also, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ze'ev Elkin stated about the al-Aqsa Mosque enclave: "We must explain to broad swaths of the people that without this place, our national liberty is incomplete."⁴⁰ Apparently, the members of the Knesset from the governing Likud party showed a close interest in the al-Aksa Mosque area in keeping with their own Religious Zionist convictions.⁴¹

³⁴ Benarroch, "Rav Kook and Secular Zionism."

³⁵ Persico, "The End Point of Zionism," 106.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 111-12.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 115.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 49.

Another sort of Zionism that is different from both Secular and Religious Zionism is Christian Zionism. It could be defined as Christian support for Zionism. It is also a political form of sympathy for Judaism.⁴² At the point of intersection of Christian Zionism with Jewish Zionism stands the belief that God has a special relationship with and moral purpose for the Jewish people. Christian Zionists defend the belief that the Jewish people have the divine right to Palestine. They also argue that Jews should return to that homeland. Accordingly, the advocates of Christian Zionism, Lord Shaftesbury, Sir Laurence Oliphant, Naftali Imbar, Gilead Plan, and Benjamin Disraeli, offered proposals for the Jewish homeland.⁴³

Christian Zionists also paid serious attention to the reconstruction of the Jewish Temple.⁴⁴ Based on the Old and New Testament prophecies, they believed that a third temple would be built in the place of or near the Dome of the Rock. The third temple, however, would only be a shadow of the real temple.⁴⁵ The prophecies in question concerned the return of Jesus Christ, and as a prequel to it, the return of Jews to the promised land. Accordingly, Christian Zionists were active in helping Jewish organizations in such tasks as investigating the Temple field, facilitating the building program, breeding red heifers, and funding.⁴⁶ It is obvious that these activities created a conducive environment for the realization and facilitation of prophecies, since Christian Zionists did not endorse waiting passively for the prophecies to be realized. They even said that "The war must be fought in Jerusalem, and God must be our general. Because Messiah will not come alone, we must bring him by fighting. And God expects us to lift the Dome."⁴⁷

Christian Zionism also influenced Evangelism, with the result that Evangelist advocates like David Lloyd George, Arthur Balfour, and Mark Sykes supported the establishment of a Jewish homeland.⁴⁸ They also believed that Jesus would return to save the world for a second time, and attributed a main role to the al-Aqsa Mosque enclave: They claimed that the Temple of Jesus would be built before the turn of the century. They also believed that after the reconstruction of the third temple it would be demolished again, and

⁴² Stephen Sizer, "Christian Zionism," *Road Map to Armageddon*, 2004, 13.

⁴³ Stan Meyer, "Christian Zionism and the Balfour Declaration," 2018, 5.

⁴⁴ Andrew F. Bush, "The Implications of Christian Zionism for Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 33, no. 3 (July 2009): 144.

⁴⁵ Stephen Sizer, "Christian Zionism," *Road Map to Armageddon*, 2004, 215.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁴⁸ Meyer, "Christian Zionism and the Balfour Declaration," 7–8.

only the side of Jesus Christ would remain as the place of worship.⁴⁹ Therefore, they cared very much about both Bayt al-Maqdis and the al-Aqsa Mosque.

Anti-Zionists, in contrast to the adherents of these different branches of Zionism, considered the Zionist ideology and practices to be in contradiction with the foundations of Judaism. They regarded Zionism as a concept foreign to Jewish tradition and the state of Israel as a temporary state. Along with the non-Zionists, they rejected the link established between nationalism and divine salvation.⁵⁰ Additionally, both Anti-Zionists and Non-Zionists protested the Zionists' violations of the al-Aqsa Mosque, as these violations were interpreted as a rejection of deep-rooted Messianic faith. They believed that taking the holy place by violence amounted to breaching their promises to God.⁵¹

2. The Importance of the al-Aqsa Mosque for Muslims and Jews

The al-Aqsa Mosque is a kind of enclave that includes many special sites, such as the Dome of the Rock, the Congregational Mosque, the Mercy, the Golden Gate, and the Tribes Gate, and surrounded by walls including the al-Buraq Wall which is important for Muslims as well insofar as it is part of the al-Aqsa Mosque compound.⁵² It is located in the eastern part of the city of Bayt al-Maqdis, and also covers an area of 142,000 square meters.⁵³ Thus the al-Aqsa Mosque occupies a specific place in Bayt-al Maqdis. The al-Aqsa Mosque, also called al-Masjid al-Aqsa, means "the farthest Mosque" in the English language. This is because there is a "great distance" between the al-Aqsa Mosque and al-Masjid al-Haram in Makkah.⁵⁴ From the Islamic point of view, the al-Aqsa Mosque has a crucial importance in regional, historical, and religious respects and a sacred site. Some of the Quranic verses specifically refer to the al-Aqsa Mosque. For instance, the Night Journey is crucial for understanding the importance of the al-Aqsa Mosque. This event is described in a verse in the Qur'an as follows: According to Verse 1 of Chapter 17, Prophet Mohammad traveled by the Night Journey from the al-Haram

⁴⁹ Ibid., 52.

⁵⁰ Yakov M Rabkin, *Yahudilerin Siyonizm Karsitligi The Teat from Within: A Century of Jewish Opposition to Zionism*, 1st ed. (Istanbul: Iletisim yayinlari, 2018), 43.

⁵¹ Ibid., 49.

⁵² Haithem F al-Ratrout, "The Second Mosque on Earth That Islamicjerusalem Forgot: Revealing the Ancient al-Aqsa Mosque," *Journal of Islamicjerusalem Studies* 13 (2013): 34.

⁵³ Ibid., 24.

⁵⁴ Mohamad Roslan Mohamad Nor, "The Significance of Islamicjerusalem in Islam: Quranic and Hadith Perspectives," 2006, 19.

Mosque at Makkah to the al-Aqsa Mosque at Bayt al-Maqdis.⁵⁵ During the journey, he attached his horse Buraq to the wall in the west of the al-Aqsa Mosque area. The wall was subsequently known as the al-Buraq Wall and held sacred by Muslims as being an integral part of the al-Aqsa Mosque enclave. After the Night Journey, Prophet Muhammad emphasized the importance of the al-Aqsa Mosque and demanded that it be given importance in the Muslim faith. Indeed it is today considered by Muslims as the first Qibla and the third significant mosque. Moreover, Muslims accept that the region around Bayt al-Maqdis and the al-Aqsa Mosque has hosted many prophets throughout history. All this shows that the importance given by Muslims to the al-Aqsa Mosque and its environs in history is based on the roots of Islam.⁵⁶ Bayt al-Maqdis including the al-Aqsa Mosque was also among the first places to be captured at the beginning of the Islamic conquests.⁵⁷ It became an important visiting center for Muslims, next in rank after Mecca and Medina. Besides, the al-Aqsa Mosque is still run by a Muslim foundation.

Adherents of Judaism accept the al-Aqsa Mosque enclave, the Temple Mount, as the most sacred place in the promised land. The al-Buraq Wall,⁵⁸ which they call the Western Wall and respect greatly, is part of the al-Aqsa Mosque. Jews consider this wall to be the ruins of the Temple of Herod (20 BC), so they come to pray and lament for the Roman destruction of the Temple.⁵⁹ Moreover, they argue that the land housing the Temple is where God gathered them, and that God has chosen Jerusalem as his eternal place.⁶⁰ Hence, they believe that two Jewish Temples were built on the promised land.⁶¹ They consider themselves to be the people chosen by God and claim that the place of the destroyed Temple belongs to them. They also believe that

⁵⁵ Abd-al-Fattah Muhammad el-Awaisi, *Introducing Islamic Jerusalem*, 3rd ed, Monograph on Islamic Jerusalem Studies 5 (Dundee: Al-Maktoum Institute Academic Press, 2007), 31–32.

⁵⁶ Hillel Cohen, "The Temple Mount/al-Aqsa in Zionist and Palestinian National Consciousness: A Comparative View," *Israel Studies Review* 32, no. 3 (2017):3

⁵⁷ Özkan et al., *Mescid-i Aksa Sempozyumu*, 86.

⁵⁸ Haithem Fathi al-Ratrout, "The Architectural Development of al-Aqsa Mosque in Islamic Jerusalem in the Early Islamic Period: Sacred Architecture in the Shape of 'The Holy'," 2002, 193. In detail; "A part of this wall to the south is greatly revered by Muslims not only because it is part of the al-Aqsa enclave, but also because it is believed to be associated with Muhammad's translocation from Makkah to Jerusalem. It is known as the 'al-Buraq wall'."

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Kamal-deen Olawale Sulaiman, "Jerusalem as a Uniting Factor for Muslims and Christians: Historical and Scriptural Grounds," *The IAFOR Journal of Arts and Humanities II*, I, 2014.

⁶¹ Ibid.

the Old Testament Ark⁶² was located in the destroyed temple and strive to reach it even though place is in the hands of Muslims.⁶³

3. A Historical Brief about the Holy Land

During World War I, Palestine was occupied by Britain, which was later granted a Mandate over the region. Even before the occupation was completed, Lord Rothschild, the head of the British Zionist Association, had made three important proposals in his letter to British Foreign Minister Balfour.⁶⁴ The three proposals included in his letter were that Palestine would become a Jewish home, the Jews would be able to migrate to Palestine without any restrictions, and they would govern Palestine. The British Government responded to these requests with the Balfour Declaration of 1917, committing to building a "Jewish home" in Palestine. The existence of the Palestinian Arab population was ignored.

According to Zionists, there was the necessity of more Jewish immigration to Bayt al-Maqdis to establish a Jewish Homeland. Indeed, it was difficult for the Zionists to persuade the Jews to emigrate if there was no legal basis for Jewish immigration. Thus, Sir Herbert Samuel, a British Jew and the first High Commissioner of Palestine, prepared an immigration decree to set down the conditions of immigration to Bayt al-Maqdis.⁶⁵ The third and subsequent waves of migrations toward Palestine, called Aliyah,⁶⁶ were supported by this decree. Another legal regulation regarding Jewish immigration was made by Winston Churchill through the White Paper.⁶⁷ Thus, Jewish immigration was legalized. As the British supported Jewish immigration to Palestine through these legal arrangements and other means, the demographic structure and cultural values of the city of Bayt al-Maqdis were altered.

⁶² Alici, "Üç Kudüs," 46.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Kızıloğlu, "İsrail Devleti'nin Kuruluşuna Kadar Geçen Süreçte Yahudiler ve Siyonizm'in Gelişimi," 49.

⁶⁵ To find the details in this article: Can Deveci, "Herbert Samuel Döneminde Filistin'e Yahudi Göçleri (1920-1925)," *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, no. 42 (2017): 7.

⁶⁶ The First Aliyah took place in 1882-1903. In this first immigration, the Jews settled in the fertile agricultural lands of Bayt al-Maqdis instead of the Old City. Jews at that time wanted to strengthen their finances by choosing fertile areas for their economies. The Second Aliyah that involved immigrants mainly from Eastern Europe took place between in 1904-1914. The Third Aliyah took place between in 1919-1923. Hillel Cohen, "The Temple Mount/al-Aqsa in Zionist and Palestinian National Consciousness: A Comparative View," *Israel Studies Review* 32, no. 1 (2017): 12.

⁶⁷ Deveci, "Herbert Samuel Döneminde Filistin'e Yahudi Göçleri (1920-1925)," 8.

These changes eventually led to conflict. One of the most important of these, known as the Buraq Wall rebellion,⁶⁸ which began on August 15, 1929, resulted in the death of many Muslims and Jews. Besides, the revolt spread to the cities of Hebron, Safed, and Tel Aviv and resulted in the deaths of numerous other Muslims and Jews. The causes of the revolt were later investigated by a special committee formed by the League of Nations in 1930. The Committee, in its report published in 1931, decided that the al-Buraq Wall belonged to the Muslims.⁶⁹ The revolt placed the dispute over the region at an impasse.

The following Arab uprising that began in 1936 was an indication that the conflict in the region continued. Even though this was suppressed and the years of World War II saw a temporary pacification, the British ended the Mandate administration in 1947, and the region was left to the administration of the United Nations. The withdrawal of the British and the appearance of the United Nations on the scene affected the region, especially Bayt al-Maqdis, in a drastic manner. Indeed, the United Nations decided to divide the region between the Palestinians and Jews in 1947 with Resolution 181. As for Bayt al-Maqdis, its administration was given to the Trusteeship Council on behalf of the United Nations⁷⁰ and it was decided to make it an international city, a *Corpus Separatum*.

Despite this decision, Bayt al-Maqdis was occupied by Israel after the outbreak of the 1948 War. The War of 1948 was the first step towards the legitimization of the Israeli occupation of the city. With the 1948 war, Bayt al-Maqdis was divided into two parts in terms of sovereignty. While the western part fell under the sovereignty of the newly established state of Israel, the eastern part including the Old City and the al-Aqsa Mosque came under the rule of Jordan.⁷¹ Israel had no access therefore to the holy sites of the historical city.⁷² They would gain this access only in the War of 1967,⁷³ when Israel occupied the eastern part of Bayt al-Maqdis as well as the Gaza Strip, the Sinai

⁶⁸ Moshe Ma'oz, "The Role of the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif in the Deterioration of Muslim-Jewish Relations," 2014, 64.

⁶⁹ Sir Walter Shaw et al., "Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August, 1929," n.d., 200.

⁷⁰ Henry Cattán, "The Status of Jerusalem: under International Law and United Nations Resolutions," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 10, no. 3 (1981): 7.

⁷¹ Omar, "al-Aqsa Mosque's Incident in July 2017: Affirming the Policy of Deterrence," 70.

⁷² Yvonne Haddad, "Islamists and the 'Problem of Israel': The 1967 Awakening," *The Middle East Journal* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 267.

⁷³ Nayef R. F. Al-Rodhan, Graeme P. Herd, and Lisa Watanabe, "The 1948 Arab-Israeli Conflict: Initial Conditions," in *Critical Turning Points in the Middle East: 1915 - 2015* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 80.

Peninsula, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights with five days of the outbreak of the war.⁷⁴ As the Israeli forces raided the old city and the al-Aqsa Mosque, the Mosque was closed for days.⁷⁵

Thus, Israel had gained control of the Jewish settlements of the old city and the al-Buraq Wall. Henceforth, references to the promised land, the demolition of the al-Aqsa Mosque, and the construction of the Third Temple would be made more frequently by Jewish politicians and soldiers. Already by 1967, the commander of Israel paratroopers, Mordechai Gur, had uttered his famous declaration "the Temple Mount/Haram al Shariff is in our hands."⁷⁶ He had attributed the outcome of the war to the spiritual value of the Temple Mount. The war also reinforced the Zionists' sense of loyalty to the holy city, and was interpreted in secular messianic terms. The victory was regarded as a crucial step in the process of creating a permanent Jewish state in the homeland of their ancestors. This is evident in David Ben-Gurion's statement *Jerusalem Post* that Jerusalem had been the "Israeli capital" in the days of King David and that it would henceforth remain so "forevermore."⁷⁷

4. Zionists' Plans on the al-Aqsa Mosque's Enclave

Even though the Temple Mount/al-Aqsa Mosque was still in the hands of Muslims, Israel had now the opportunity to consolidate its control on the area over the years. It also continued to impose the symbols of its sovereignty on the holy city. While the Palestinians had to endure increasing restrictions over time, they managed not to break away from the al-Aqsa Mosque thanks to the support of Muslim organizations. They attached great importance to maintaining a Muslim presence in the al-Aqsa Mosque in order to break the Israeli siege of Bayt al-Maqdis and keeping new Jewish settlers from the area of the mosque. They also promoted the presence of Muslims in the al-Aqsa Mosque by organizing social programs.⁷⁸

Despite this success of the Palestinians in holding on to the al-Aqsa Mosque / Temple Mount, it continued to be an indispensable site for all brands of Zionism. Since the Zionists represented Jerusalem as the holy capital of the Jewish nation, the Judaization of both the al-Aqsa Mosque and

⁷⁴ "The Six Day War," May 29, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Six-Day-War>.

⁷⁵ Abdallah Marouf Omar, "al-Aqsa Mosque's Incident in July 2017: Affirming the Policy of Deterrence," *Insight Turkey* 19, no. 3 (2017): 70.

⁷⁶ Ammon Romman, "Dilicate Balances at the Temple Mount 1967-1999," in *Jerusalem: A City and Its Future*, 2002, 296.

⁷⁷ Türkkiye Ataöv, "Kudüs ve Devletler Hukuku," 1980, 44.

⁷⁸ Craig Larkin and Michael Dumper, "In Defense of al-Aqsa: The Islamic Movement inside Israel and the Battle for Jerusalem," *The Middle East Journal* 66, no. 1 (2012): 48.

the city of Bayt al-Maqdis was their primary goal.⁷⁹ Accordingly, their plans aimed at isolating the al-Aqsa Mosque enclave and its environs, to create a direct and permanent Jewish presence there, and to remove Palestinians from the area.⁸⁰ Palestinian neighborhoods would be completely removed from the east of the city and the Jewish settlements would be combined to create a purely Jewish urban area.⁸¹ Accordingly, the Zionists tried to persuade the Palestinian people to demolish some of the buildings on the al-Aqsa Mosque area.⁸² Once the demolition was completed, the Third Temple would be built in its place.⁸³

Furthermore, some radical Jews within the Zionist movement made plans to blow up the al-Aqsa Mosque, with the goal to free the Temple Mount.⁸⁴ This plan was even voiced by Chief Rabbi Goren on the same day of occupation of Old City by the Zionists in 1967: "He asked the Central Region Commander to place 100 kg of dynamite in the Dome of the Rock. He insisted on the need to blow up the building."⁸⁵ Similarly, Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi David Lau mentioned the plan to blow up the al-Aqsa Mosque square. His argument was based on the size of the planned Third Temple. He said, "In that place, by the way, in the same place where it was, there is room for Jews, there is room for Christians, there is room for Muslims, there is room for everybody, it will not take up the entire al-Aqsa Mosque — take a look at its measurements."⁸⁶ But he also claimed that a Muslim sanctuary was not necessary on the Temple Mount and that specifically the Dome of the Rock had to be demolished to make space for the Third Temple.⁸⁷

In addition to these statements, al-Aqsa Mosque was also the target of highly threatening plans. One of the radical Jewish organizations distributed a banner in which military planes bombed and destroyed the mosque, marked

⁷⁹ Özkan et al., *Mescid-i Aksa Sempozyumu*, 104.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Bashir AbulQaraya, "al-Aqsa Mosque and The Third Palestinian Intifada", *Global Journal of Business and Social Science Review* 5, no. 3, (2017): 119.

⁸² Cohen, "The Temple Mount/al-Aqsa in Zionist and Palestinian National Consciousness: A Comparative View," 7.

⁸³ Özkan et al., *Mescid-i Aksa Sempozyumu*, 27.

⁸⁴ Ma'oz, "The Role of the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif in the Deterioration of Muslim-Jewish Relations," 64.

⁸⁵ Yoel Cohen, "The Political Role of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate in the Temple Mount Question," *Jewish Political Studies Review* 11, no. 1/2 (1999): 102.

⁸⁶ Omer Man and Michael Schaeffer, "Israel's Chief Rabbi Urges Building Jewish Temple on Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif," 2016, 972mag. com.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

with the statement "This day will come soon."⁸⁸ According to the security reports, the possibility of such a plan remained serious in view of the claim that those who prepared this scenario worked for the Israeli Airforce.⁸⁹

Initially, it was forbidden for Jews to enter the al-Aqsa Mosque according to their beliefs. Therefore, they mainly strove to gain control over the al-Buraq wall. Some Zionist and religious leaders, however, were also bent on building the Third Temple.⁹⁰ Accordingly, once Israel had proved its power in the 1967 War, radicalized and religious Jews and some of the rabbis pressured the Israeli government to allow Jewish worship in the al-Aqsa Mosque area.⁹¹ This pressure was a demonstration of power, having the potential of inciting Muslims to revolt as it was a challenge against their beliefs and evidenced lack of respect towards their holy site. Moshe Dayan, the defense minister at that time, allowed the radical Jews to enter the al-Aqsa Mosque, but did not allow them to worship there on the grounds of established regulations. Even this permission was sufficient to keep their hopes alive about the al-Aqsa Mosque.

While the Israelis were unable to gain direct control of the al-Aqsa Mosque after the invasion of 1967, some restrictions were imposed on it.⁹² For instance, they stated that Israeli law and sovereignty would apply in the al-Aqsa Mosque to have more effective control there.⁹³ This was because many administrative offices, some churches and municipal services as well as the Islamic Foundation in the eastern half of the city remained under the control of Palestinian Arabs⁹⁴. The Israeli government endeavored to take these places away from the Muslims. Thus, the path would have been paved for Jewish settlers.

Accordingly, the Israelis carried out actions that were perceived by the Muslims to be in violation of the holiness of the al-Aqsa Mosque. They first demolished the al-Maghribi Quarter. After that, they made excavations under the al-Aqsa Mosque courtyard. They considered sharing the administration of the al-Aqsa Mosque with Palestinian Muslims. They also strove to take control of the gates of the al-Aqsa Mosque. In October 2015, Israel suggested

⁸⁸ AbulQaraya, "al-Aqsa Mosque and The Third Palestinian Intifada", 126.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ma'oz, "The Role of the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif in the Deterioration of Muslim-Jewish Relations," 63.

⁹¹ Ibid., 65.

⁹² Larkin and Dumper, "In Defense of al-Aqsa: The Islamic Movement inside Israel and the Battle for Jerusalem," 34.

⁹³ Marian Houk, "Dangerous Grounds at Al-Haram al-Sharif: The Threats to the Status Quo," *Jerusalem Quarterly*, no. 63 (2015): 113-15.

⁹⁴ Nazmi Al Jubeh, "Bab Al-Magharibah: Joha's Nail in the Haram al-Sharif," 2003, 17.

that metal detectors be installed on the gates of the al-Aqsa Mosque for security reasons. It soon had to abandon this suggestion due to the uprisings in Jerusalem.

Furthermore, the Israeli government attempted to change the perception of Muslims' holy sites. It drew the public's attention away from the whole sacred enclave to the individual buildings in it, the Congregational Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. Thus, it claimed that when Israeli soldiers or Jewish civilians entered the courtyard of the al-Aqsa Mosque, they did not enter the holy precincts. However, the place known as the al-Aqsa Mosque is the whole area surrounded by walls. The whole structure is sacred for Muslims, up to and including the al-Buraq Wall, which is also sacred for the Jews under the name of the Western Wall.⁹⁵

To sum up, the Zionists made efforts to maintain the Jews' ties with the al-Aqsa Mosque. Their plans and propaganda were aimed to prepare the ground for extending full control over Bayt al-Maqdis, and in the case of some radical groups, for building the Third Temple.

5. The Zionist's Attempts against the al-Aqsa Mosque enclave

Israeli propaganda tried to intimidate the Palestinians by applying different strategies regarding the al-Aqsa Mosque. Israel took control of Bayt al-Maqdis after the 1967 War and started to implement a new urban plan in the Old City. It started with the area around the al-Aqsa Mosque to isolate the Mosque from a dense population Palestinian Muslims. Thirty-five Arab houses and two mosques that made up the al-Magharibah Quarter adjacent to the al-Buraq Wall were destroyed by bulldozers, and many Palestinian Arabs were evacuated to create an open space for Jewish access in front of the wall known as the Western Wall Plaza.⁹⁶ The demolition of the Quarter enlarged the Jewish place of worship before the Wall and reduced the Muslim population around it. It also served to keep Muslims away from the area of Jewish worship.

In the decades that followed, Israel developed projects such as the David Site, the Torah Park, and the Tolerance Museum to be built in the place of the al-Magharibah Quarter.⁹⁷ The demolition of the quarter thus turned out to be the beginning of the increasing Israeli intervention in the area of the al-Aqsa Mosque, which left it vulnerable.⁹⁸ As a result, some radical Zionists were

⁹⁵ Omar, "al-Aqsa Mosque's Incident in July 2017: Affirming the Policy of Deterrence," 71–72.

⁹⁶ Erik Freas, "The Six Day War and Its Aftermath," in *Nationalism and the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount*, by Erik Freas (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 100.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁹⁸ Al Jubeh, "Bab Al-Magharibah: Joha's Nail in the Haram al-Sharif," 19.

encouraged to challenge the Palestinian Muslims many times. For instance, they entered the al-Aqsa Mosque enclave with alcohol and intoxicating substances. They walked around the al-Aqsa Mosque in their prayer clothes to show that they could worship there. They also showed posters and drawings of the temple they wanted to be built in the al-Aqsa Mosque enclave. Moreover, they attempted to invade the al-Aqsa Mosque and carry out armed attacks inside.⁹⁹ In a particularly tragic occasion in 1969, due in part to the weakening of Muslim control in the area after the demolition of the al-Magharibah Quarter. In August 1969, the Congregational Mosque in the al-Aqsa Mosque enclave was attacked and set on fire by a young Australian and Christian Zionist, Dennis Michael Rohan.¹⁰⁰ This fire inflicted serious destruction on the thousand-year-old wood and ivory pulpit which had been made on the orders of Nur al-Din ibn Zengi and installed by Salah ad-Din Ayyubi after the conquest of the city.¹⁰¹

This act set an example of how to apply messianic and evangelist ideas and encouraged other radical Jewish and Christian Zionist groups. Consequently, similar attempts were made not only in the al-Aqsa Mosque but also other parts of Palestine, like the Hebron Massacre. Moreover, despite the tragic event in the al-Aqsa Mosque, Jewish leaders reopened it for tourist visits¹⁰² and some Jews also visited the area. Such visits led to interference with Muslim worship and caused concern for Palestinian Arabs who saw Zionists with access to the al-Aqsa Mosque.

The tunnel excavations represented another attempt that shook the Palestinian Arabs and had an adverse effect on the al-Aqsa Mosque. Excavation were launched to the north of the al-Buraq Wall after the occupation of Bayt al-Maqdis.¹⁰³ The first steps to establish a Jewish presence under the Muslim holy site was undertaken with this tunnel excavation. An area was cleared under the al-Aqsa Mosque in 1979 for a Jewish synagogue and Israeli museum¹⁰⁴, and thus the visitors were able to enter underneath the al-Aqsa Mosque enclave. Another aim of the excavation was to find what they claimed to be the main entrance of the Second Temple from two thousand

⁹⁹ AbulQaraya, "al-Aqsa Mosque and The Third Palestinian Intifada," 122.

¹⁰⁰ Ariel, "Terror at the Holy of Holies: Christians and Jewish Builders of the Temple at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century," 63.

¹⁰¹ Lambert Dolphin, "Moving Towards a Third Temple," accessed March 21, 2021, <http://www.templemount.org/tempprep.html>.

¹⁰² Al Jubeh, "Bab Al-Magharibah: Joha's Nail in the Haram al-Sharif," 20.

¹⁰³ Abraham Rabinovich, "Tunnel Vision," accessed June 10, 2020, <http://www.templemount.org/tunnel.html>.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

years ago.¹⁰⁵ Significantly, the excavation work was made by the Israeli Ministry of Religious Affairs,¹⁰⁶ but the archaeologist Meir Ben Dov was later appointed by the Israeli government to examine the excavation in order to legitimize it in scientific terms.¹⁰⁷

The tunnel excavation affected the al-Aqsa Mosque and the residents of the Muslim Quarter both financially and emotionally. This was because after 1982, the houses of the Arab residents in that area were expropriated or given directly to Jewish settlers.¹⁰⁸ Due to further excavations in the area called the sacred basin, moreover, a classroom in the Quds Primary School in the Bab al-Magharibah region collapsed. This event revealed that the excavations had reached the north of the Selva district, only 100 meters from the south wall of the al-Aqsa Mosque.¹⁰⁹ The excavations encouraged some radical messianic, religious Zionist rabbis and their followers to embark on preparations for the planned reconstruction of the Third Temple.¹¹⁰ For instance, they produced clothing intended for the Temple and the altar.¹¹¹ They also started to raise red heifers for the Temple, since they believed that red heifers had to be killed to cleanse their sins, as mentioned in the Old Testament.¹¹² Many radical religious Jews around the world were expected to be involved in the preparations. Even an advertisement that would mobilize them for this purpose had been published in newspapers before the occupation of Bayt al-Maqdis.¹¹³

Beside the excavations, the Israeli government also confiscated the Tankiziyya Madrasa, one of the prayer halls of the al-Aqsa Mosque, and converted into a Jewish synagogue after the invasion of 1967.¹¹⁴ The establishment of a Jewish synagogue in the al-Aqsa Mosque enclave was considered by Palestinian Muslims to be one of the most serious initiatives that threatened the future of the al-Aqsa Mosque.¹¹⁵ As well, the Israelis

¹⁰⁵ AbulQaraya, "al-Aqsa Mosque and The Third Palestinian Intifada," 123.

¹⁰⁶ Dan Bahat, *The Jerusalem Western Wall Tunnel*, 1st ed. (Israel Exploration Society, 2013).

¹⁰⁷ Rabinovich, "Tunnel Vision."

¹⁰⁸ Dağ, "Kudüs'e Yönelik Tehditler Görünenden Daha Büyük."

¹⁰⁹ Özkan et al., *Mescid-i Aksa Sempozyumu*, 104.

¹¹⁰ Ariel, "Terror at the Holy of Holies: Christians and Jewish Builders of the Temple at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century," 63.

¹¹¹ Structure on which offerings are made to a deity.
<https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/altar/> Date of Access: 3/21/2021

¹¹² Dolphin, "Moving Towards a Third Temple."

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Özkan et al., *Mescid-i Aksa Sempozyumu*, 28.

¹¹⁵ AbulQaraya, "al-Aqsa Mosque and The Third Palestinian Intifada," 125.

prevented restoration materials necessary for the al-Aqsa Mosque¹¹⁶ to be brought into the courtyard. They arrested some Muslims for praying at the al-Magharibah gate,¹¹⁷ and prevented others from praying at the Mosque of al-Marwani.¹¹⁸ Moreover, they seized the keys to the al-Magharibah gate from the Islamic Foundation in charge of protecting and taking care of the al-Aqsa Mosque, and this reduced the control of Palestinian Muslims over the Mosque, leaving it vulnerable. Israeli forces were deployed at the gates of the al-Aqsa Mosque, subjecting the Muslim visitors to long checks.¹¹⁹ In full control of the entrances to the area, they implemented a policy of intimidation against the Palestinian Muslims. For example, Palestinians under the age of 60, or sometimes under 50 or under 30 are denied access to the Mosque for security reasons¹²⁰. Besides, the hours and days of visit have been divided between Palestinians and Jews, and entrance and exit times have been set for Jewish worship.¹²¹ All this shows that the al-Aqsa Mosque is in the danger of being subjected to a mandatory regime similar to that imposed by Israeli officials in the Abraham Mosque in Hebron.

Palestinians on their part tried in various ways to assert their presence in the al-Aqsa Mosque, so it would not find itself in an even more difficult situation. The Murabitun and Murabitat¹²² movement, a part of the general Islamic movement, was embraced by many Palestinian men and women who came to be called "the guardians of the al-Aqsa Mosque."¹²³ However, the movement was banned by Israel in 2015 and many Murabitun were either arrested or prohibited to enter the al-Aqsa Mosque, which was left without their protection.¹²⁴

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 121.

¹¹⁷ "The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and The State of Palestine Ee Status Report on The State of Conservation of the Old City of Jerus," accessed March 22, 2021, <https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:W6AjRpyv2VsJ:https://whc.unesco.org/document/127758+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=sg>.

¹¹⁸ Özkan et al., *Mescid-i Aksa Sempozyumu*, 28–29.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ AbulQaraya, "al-Aqsa Mosque and The Third Palestinian Intifada," 122–23.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Murabitun (for men) and Murabitat (for women) were part of an Islamic Movement created in Israel in 2012. They "used to stay in al-Aqsa Mosque during the daytime to protect it against Jewish extremists." Abdallah Marouf Omar, "al-Aqsa Mosque's Incident in July 2017: Affirming the Policy of Deterrence." *Insight Turkey* 19 (3): 69–82. 2017.

¹²³ Kristen Miller, "Beyond Sacred Space: The Struggle for al-Aqsa and the Islamic Movement in Israel," 2020, 89.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

Conclusion

This study has shown that al-Aqsa Mosque was affected by the Zionist plans and attempts in the periods both before and after 1967. Although Zionism normally has a secular framework, it utilized religious concepts to gather and mobilize the Jewish people. On the other hand, some groups within the movement, like the Religious Zionists, maintained a more direct link with the religious perspective and looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. In keeping with this religious perspective, since or professed, the Zionists undertook many attempts against the al-Aqsa Mosque, which they called the Temple Mount. The demolition of the al-Magharibah Quarter after the War of 1967 made it easier to isolate the al-Aqsa Mosque from the encircling Muslim population. They also sought to establish full control over the Mosque and its gates, so that they could enter the courtyard of the mosque for worship or touristic visits. At the same time, they restricted access to Muslims on various pretexts. The danger of this situation was proved by the arson in the Congregational Mosque in 1969. Tunnel excavations represented another attempt to access the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The purpose of the excavations was both to search for archeological remains from the Biblical Period and to create a place of worship that would merge with the Western Wall and the al-Aqsa Mosque. As a result of all these plans and developments, the Al-Aqsa Mosque finds itself in a difficult state today, faced with the danger of being divested of its Islamic character. Accordingly, the tension around it surmounts.

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