

Jerusalem as a City 'Reclaimed': Orientalism and Biblical Discourse in US Media 1948 and 1967

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Introduction

This brief analysis is an attempt at revealing some of the primary influences that have created, and perpetuated the Arab-Israeli conflict as it exists today vis-à-vis the role of the United States in facilitating the Israeli occupation of Palestine and justifying the Israeli occupation of all of Jerusalem. What I argue here is that within the US there is an inherent bias rooted in Christian Zionist thought and a pervasive Orientalist discourse in the mainstream media that is readily observable in western reporting on conflict in Israel-Palestine. This discourse in the US media often utilized similar phraseology often used today by much of the evangelical and fundamentalist Christian community and still facilitates views and policies that give little-to-no credence to Palestinian claims to their own land, including Jerusalem, and creates an American public opinion decisively sympathetic to Israel. These opinions shape voting patterns, which then puts those policy makers in the American government reflective of those held views sympathetic to Israel. This discourse and inherent bias is observed here through the use and analysis of mainstream newspaper and news magazine articles published during pivotal points of crisis in Israel-Palestine, more specifically during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the Six-Day War of 1967.

The primary documents and supporting evidence used in this paper consist of a sampling of American newspapers and magazines, primarily *Time Magazine*, *Newsweek*, *New York Times*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Los Angeles Times* during points of conflict in Israel-Palestine in 1948 and 1967. The articles are analyzed through a framework of Edward Said's framework of Orientalism. Said described Orientalism as

“a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European Western experience,” or a system of politically charged thinking, writings, and teaching. Of special concern here is the Orientalist “othering” of the Arabs and Palestinians that is seen so often in the mainstream media and evangelical discourse. This form of Orientalism also involves the racially-charged discussion of Arabs in the media. This study will also attempt to uncover the more ways in which current popular evangelical preachers presented Israel as a kin or surrogate of the US and the Christian community, as well as a pivotal player in ‘end of days’ scenarios.

The evidence analyzed here must read while keeping in mind the concept of social collective memory, “the relationship between history and memory... and their impact on the political sphere.” These concepts are explored in Yael Zerubavel’s *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*. In her book Zerubavel examines “how the meaning of the past is constructed, and how it is modified over time” as a result of social and collective memory, which is distinctly different from the study of history and actual historical events themselves. According to Zerubavel, history is “the product of a scholarly scrutiny of the records of the past,” which is a “super-organic” science detached from the pressure of the immediate sociopolitical reality. Collective memory, on the other hand, is an organic part of society that is continuously transformed in response to a society’s changing needs.” Often these changing needs are geo-strategic and thus determined for the public by the government and corporate conglomerates through the mass media, but packed in a way that suits the public’s collective understanding, fears, and emotional interests. In the case studied here, those emotional interests and fears lie in premillennial dispensationalist beliefs, and biblical literalism. At the center of most Christian and Evangelical beliefs on the role of Israel in regards to the ‘end of days’ is premillennial dispensationalism, “A complex and deeply believed interpretation of scripture as prophecy regarding the Second Coming of Christ and the End Times.” Beliefs concerning the events surrounding the End of Days are based on readings of “Mark 13, Matthew 24, and Luke 21,” and a belief in the Book of Revelation as a prophecy for the end of the world. As evidence for the correctness of these scriptures, those whom believe in premillennial dispensationalism see the influx of Jews to the ‘Holy Land’ and founding of the state of Israel as precursor to the End of Days scenario. After the founding of the state of Israel in 1948, “believers are encouraged to believe that the prophecies are, in fact, true.”

In my use of the concept of collective memory here, the interpretation of historical events is a result of a fixed discourse on those events, one that began from the very onset of the 1948 War that has pervaded the discourse on subsequent events in the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is precisely this fixedness in discourse, combined with the predetermination rooted in religion Irvine H. Anderson discusses in *Biblical Interpretation and Middle East Policy* that is such an integral part of US policy towards Palestine. This fixedness has effectively hindered Americans’ ability to reinterpret (in a more accurate historical context) and lend a balanced view to significant events in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Jerusalem in US Reporting on the 1948 War

To say the historiography of the 1948 War and the founding of the state of Israel varies widely is a vast historical understatement. Few historical events are as contentiously debated as the events in Israel-Palestine in 1948. Perhaps one of the most pointed debates regarding a nation's founding principles, its collective memory, and historical narrative is seen in the ongoing debate between historians of all nationalities and leanings concerning the Palestinian exodus and creation of the state of Israel.

In the last seven decades leading up to the 1948 War, Zionist groups had been actively emigrating Jews from Europe, Russia, the US, and the Arab world to Palestine in hopes of establishing a Jewish majority and state there. Jewish Zionism, as opposed to religious Christian Zionism, can partly be considered the product of European and Russian anti-Semitism and discrimination. The infamous Dreyfus Affair in France and the pogroms in Russia stand as examples of the anti-Jewish sentiment that was so widespread in those areas and helped to crystallize the Zionist position on the need for a Jewish state. Tensions gradually rose between the Arab Palestinians and the newly emigrated Jews in Palestine. The sting of European colonialism still remained quite palpable for the peoples of the Middle East during this period and tensions were also existent between the Jews of Palestine and with the neighboring Arab countries that began to view the Zionist movement as a continuation of European colonialism as the number of Jewish émigrés rose into the thousands. In addition, one cannot discount the rising tide of Arab nationalism during this period in history; it had risen to greater prominence as the Turkish Ottoman Empire was dismantled in the early 20th century and Arab nationalists began calling for differing forms of Arab sovereignty. The loss of Palestine first to the British and then to the Zionists as such an important religious, historical, and regionally important piece of land was viewed as a large and bitter blow for the Arab nationalists, as Palestine was lost to “an intrusion by an alien religious, cultural, and ethnic community into a region that they regard peculiarly their own.”

Not long after fighting between separate Arab and Zionist militia resistance forced the British to vacate Palestine, the partition of Palestine into separate states was declared by the United Nations in November 1947. This, coupled with the Israeli declaration of independence, eventually led to the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli War in May of 1948 until July of 1949. It was in the midst of the evacuation of European colonial rule from the Middle East, Arab resistance to the establishment of Israel, and the Israeli engagement of the Palestinian militias and attacking neighboring Arab military forces in this period that the Palestinian expulsion took place in Palestine from December 1947 until March 1949.

The primary media and historical narrative of these events read in America is arguably sympathetic to and based on Zionist and Israeli sources. This is apparent in even the first news stories, books, and mainstream media accounts of the Israeli ‘War of Independence’. Within these narratives the voices of the Arabs and Palestinians is rarely, if ever, heard, and arguably one of the main reasons, besides religious and racial biases and predispositions, that US support for Israel has been so unconditional

and unwavering. In addition, biblical rhetoric and discourse was quite prominent in American mainstream media, which only increased the American predisposition to favor Israeli aims in Palestine.

The Orientalist portrayals of Arabs and Palestinians include myriad stereotypes and negative characterizations. These characterizations in the media describe Arabs as inherently fanatical, stupid, and socially backwards. These descriptions are juxtaposed with writings on “the new children of Israel” who had taken over Arab homes and cleared them out for new émigrés, “spurred by an idealism to assist in the creation of a new civilization in the old, old Levant.” Kenneth Bilby, a reporter for *The New York Herald Tribune* at the outbreak of the 1948 War, recounted his views of the war in his 1950 book *New Star in the Near East*. Bilby mainly describes these ‘new Israelis’ who “lived in the midst of an Islamic civilization, surrounded by hostile neighbors forty times more populous” as a cornered, cowering Jewish population seemingly unable to defend itself. While attempting to dismiss the myth and “romantic concept of the fierce, hard-charging Bedouin soldier, mounted on a fleet Arab pony” he expresses his being impressed with “The man from the ghetto, equipped a weapon and serving his own government for the first time, fighting with his back to the sea, became brave and ruthless when necessary, and surprisingly adaptable to military discipline.”

The American newspaper reporter also repeatedly compares the ‘new Israelis’ to American revolutionaries and frontiersmen, who “displayed all the irascible qualities of a brawling Western outpost in America’s frontier days.” Bilby compares Moshe Dayan, who “had never been exposed to anti-Semitism,” to “Indiana farmers” who were also free of such “complexes.” According to Edward Said, an important aspect in American Orientalist views is that “Americans tend to identify with foreign societies or cultures projecting a pioneering, new spirit (e.g., Israel) of wresting the land from ill use or savages, whereas they often mistrust and do not have much interest in traditional cultures, even those in the throes of revolutionary revival.” This is most certainly seen in Bilby’s and the Western press’ regular praising of the ‘frontier spirit’ of the Israelis.

The Arabs of Palestine and the greater Levant, however, are also consistently portrayed throughout *New Star in the Near East* as stupid, lacking direction, nefarious, and threatening. The reader is told of “the war chants of Arab soldiers” echoing through the hills, as if they connoted a savage element to the Arab forces. When speaking with King Abdullah of Transjordan in 1948, *Time* magazine states that “Like all Arab leaders, he had to make warlike noises and gestures.” In stark contrast, the cheers of Israelis are Americanized when they are celebrating, and labeled a “Bronx cheer.” This very simple, but important example is reflective of Said’s writing on Muslims and Arabs being viewed as “them” and the Israelis as “us,” a dichotomy that portrays Muslims as “doomed to rage in irrationalism as ‘we’ are to the enjoyment of rationalism and cultural supremacy.” Said continues: “...(Muslims) rail and cry and froth in a world that is scarcely more than puerile fantasy. Finally, “our” world is the world of Israel and the West; theirs is that of Islam and the rest.” This dichotomy appears to extend even to the way in which their celebrations and exclamations are described.

Edward Said has discussed the nature of the western media’s attitude and reporting

on Islam, Muslims, and Arabs at length. In *Covering Islam* Said states that “much of what one reads and sees in the (western) media about Islam represents the aggression as coming from Islam because of what “Islam” is. Local and concrete circumstances” like the aggression of outside forces and colonialism of western powers “are thus obliterated. In other words, covering Islam is a one-sided activity...and highlights instead what Muslims and Arabs by their very flawed nature *are*.” (original emphasis) What Muslims and Arabs “*are*” within the discourse of the western media, according to Said, is created by “representations of Islam designed to show the religion’s inferiority with reference to the west, which Islam is supposed to be hell-bent upon opposing, competing with, resenting, and being enraged at.”

Concerning Jerusalem in particular, the media accounts of the 1948 War continued an Orientalist discourse and seem to suggest that the threat to both the new Israelis and Jerusalem, a holy city to all three Abrahamic religions, was also a product of Islam itself. Bilby often portrays the Arab inhabitants of Palestine as foreigners in their own land or purposefully omits altogether that Palestine is an Arab country. In descriptions how “Arabs had formed a loose ring around Jerusalem, and Arab villages blanketed the Holy City’s outskirts in a 360-degree radius,” and setting the scene for a battle in Jerusalem in 1948 he implies that the very people that lived there represented a threat to the Jerusalem itself. Newspaper stories from 1948 also strongly suggest that the Arab forces were invaders in Palestine. The headline “Four Arab Armies Reported on March Toward Palestine...Holy Land Will Be Under Attack Tomorrow” introduces a story in which Jewish forces are labeled “Jewish defenders.” The use of such terms, in calling the Arabs the ‘attackers’ and the Jewish forces “defenders” paints a stark picture of aggressor and victim for the uninformed reader, with no historical background.

Newspaper reports like this provide some of the most easily attainable answers as to why Americans had and have such negative views of Arabs vis-à-vis the Arab-Israeli conflict and why they support such an imbalanced policy. Other headlines, such as “Arabs March Into Palestine” and “Defender’s Plight Desperate” (referencing the Jewish forces) also exacerbate the problems inherent in such media accounts, the language of which inherently, and often explicitly, favors Israelis and views them as the rightful owners and inhabitants of Palestine. Such careful choice of wordage is sure to leave a marked impression on the average American reader and one should consider that in the Palestinian view, the Arabs forces were the defenders. That is, the labeling of aggressor is relative, and only one side is consistently provided in these accounts. The Arab claim to Palestine is also explicitly brought into question through the selective use of language and punctuation, such as is seen in *Time Magazine’s* November, 1948 story where the magazine claims “the Mufti’s Arab Palestine government...declared itself ready to cede “its” territory to Transjordan’s King Abdullah.” The use of quotation marks around the word “its” is obviously meant to imply that the Arabs and the Arab Palestinian government had no legitimate claim to Palestinian land in the first place.

In some sources the fighting is blamed solely on the Arabs, and described as a ‘Holy War’ in the view of the Arabs. For example, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* ran the headline

“Syria Takes Lead in Fight on Partition: Trains Warriors for Holy War” amidst the early fighting of the 1948 War and labeled the clashes “Arab warfare in the Holy Land,” giving the impression that the Arabs were sole aggressors or perpetrators of the fighting.

In several instances in *New Star in the Near East*, Bilby links, as well as justifies, the creation of the state of Israel to biblical prophecy. He opens the book by saying the Palestinian village of Sassa, “which had been unchanged for over a thousand years,” “was on the altar—an offering, like the lambs of Abraham, for the betterment of the people of Israel.” Again, as is seen in selected quotes above, it is the Arab Palestinians making the sacrifice for the “betterment of the people of Israel.” With seemingly no context or introduction whatsoever, Bilby inserts a remarkably out-of-place paragraph stating “David, Saul, Solomon, and the other biblical monarchs would have been surprised if they had revisited their old homeland in 1949” though he does not say why or pursue this statement any further. The journalist also sees historical continuity, based solely on the Bible, in the founding of Israel, “an emotional moment—the hour of redemption, the re-creation of a Jewish state after a gap of two thousand years.” The leaders of the ‘new Israel’ are analogized with the biblical characters of the ‘old Israel’:

“In this era of great flux Ben-Gurion stood forth as the Joshua, the leader who crushed foreign and domestic opposition like the walls of Jericho. The Moses was Dr. Chaim Weizmann, brilliant British scientist, a product of Russian ghettoism, who in forty years had led the Chosen People through the wilderness of world politics to the goal of national redemption. The Balfour Declaration of 1917, pledging a national home for Jews in Palestine, was his first great triumph; the proclamation of statehood was his second.”

Time magazine also makes David Ben-Gurion larger than life and biblicalizes the man himself, calling him a “prophet with a gun” and describing how “his voiced throbbed loudly, as if speaking against the winds of Mount Carmel.”

Again concerning discourse on Jerusalem, in Kenneth Bilby’s reporting, one is led to believe two of the most damaging myths repeatedly utilized by Zionists and their supporters— that the Arab-Israeli conflict is thousands of years old and it has remained unchanged throughout those thousands of years since biblical times. The reader is told of a Jerusalem “holy to Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, drenched in blood for five thousand years...” and that “Centuries of war and brief periods of peace had not altered the life of Jerusalem’s Old City.” A number of historians of Jerusalem and Palestine would take issue with such a remarkably simplistic and historically incorrect statement, especially the assertion that Jerusalem has remained unchanged throughout thousands of years.

The myth of eternal warfare in Palestine and Jerusalem was repeated in several other mainstream newspaper stories from 1948. A story from *New York Amsterdam News* carries the title “An Ancient Dispute” and then ignores thousands of years of history, only to give the reader the impression that Jews and Arab Palestinians have been fighting over the ‘Holy Land’ for millennia, or as the reporter calls it, “an ancient

dispute between the Jews and Arabs over Palestinian territory.” The history invoked in the article from May 28th, 1949 is highly questionable and selective, and infers that Palestine is, in fact, “the country of the Jews,” though “it is heavily populated by Arabs, who have lived and flourished there since Mohammed.” The Arabs are called “great hordes” who “swept into Palestine, which though a small country became greatly crowded.” The author then appears to subtly suggest the Palestinian Muslims did not sufficiently appreciate Jerusalem and Palestine, as “The Mohammedans... continued to worship in the ‘Glorious City’ of Baghdad in Iraq, where the romantic tales of Arabian Nights were first made famous.” (It is worth noting that a major source of western and European Orientalism—“Arabian Nights”—is mentioned here.) Thousands of years of important history, and any mention of a shared, intersectarian coexistence in Jerusalem, as well as the British Mandate period, is ignored, considering that the very next sentence of the story is: “Following World War II, new disputes arose between the Jews and the Arabs over Palestine, as we have seen, with fighting and bloodshed.”

No less problematic is the repeated use of the term ‘Holy Land’ as synonymous with ‘Palestine’ in the coverage of nearly every newspaper, which places the 1948 War in a religious context in major media sources. For example, the story titled “King Abdullah Plans for Holy Land War” from the *Los Angeles Times* calls King Abdullah an “Aging Warrior” who is heading the Arab forces plans to “cross the Holy Land’s southern frontier,” also carries the connotation of a war with religious implications. Some news stories also repeat the mistakes of 19th century European ‘Holy Land’ travelers’ and pilgrims’ looking to the Bible as a reference for understanding the lands and peoples of Palestine, as is also observed in Issam Nassar’s *European Portrayals of Jerusalem: Religious Fascinations and Colonialist Imaginations*. A May 16th, 1948 *New York Times* story that blames the Palestinians for somehow having “reverted” much of the country “to desert during centuries of neglect.” How exactly the Arab Palestinians ‘neglected’ the land and caused it to become desert, or when it was so fertile is left to question when the author of the article references the Book of Job and states “there are “thistles instead of barley.”

What is seen here, in the major newspaper reporting of the 1948 War, is a consistent favoritism and praise for Israeli and Zionist forces alongside a concurrent marginalization and derision of Arab soldiers and people. In the major newspaper reports covering the 1948 War the Arabs were violent Muslim ‘invaders’ led by an “obsessed” Arab king, waging a war in the ‘Holy Land’ that was not theirs, under the banner of Islam. Additionally, the reader is consistently left with the impression that the Arabs have no legitimate claim to the land, despite two-thousand years of inhabitation, which is conveniently omitted. The Arab Palestinians are simply painted as alien invaders in their own land. Perhaps the most significant omission, though, is the complete ignoring of the Palestinian refugees; in searching news articles from five major newspapers during the fighting in 1948 and 1949 I was unable to find a single mention of the Arab Palestinian refugees, while there is repeated and sympathetic mention of the situation concerning the Jewish civilians in Palestine. While the Palestinian refugee apparently does not exist

in the view of these newspapers, open and great concern is expressed for the Jewish civilian in Palestine and Israel. The Jewish claim to the land of Palestine, most of which became the new state of Israel, is repeatedly supported through biblical references and the utilization of biblical terminology.

Jerusalem in US Reporting on the 1967 Six Day War

Leading up to the Six Day War in 1967, Gamal Abdel-Nasser, who in 1952 seized control of Egypt from the British-supported monarchy of King Farouk in a coup enacted with his Free Officers Movement, was riding high on a wave of resurging Arab nationalism, world reaction to the Suez affair of 1956 (which consolidated Arab opinion in his favor against the West), as well as his rise in popularity as a staunch opponent of Zionism in Palestine. But, according to Charles D. Smith in *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, “Whereas the Suez affair had greatly enhanced Nasser’s prestige, the 1967 War nearly toppled him.” Israel destroyed the entire Egyptian air force as it sat amassed on the ground in Sinai just hours into the war. Egyptian troops were rendered nearly defenseless with no air cover against Israeli air and ground forces, and Israel occupied all of Sinai by June 9th. Israel asked King Hussein of Jordan “to stay out of the fighting, but once it became clear that Jordanian shelling would continue, the (Israeli) cabinet decided to fulfill the “historic opportunity” afforded them, namely, the taking of the old city of Jerusalem.” All of Jerusalem was under Israeli control by June 7th, and their forces quickly move into and occupied the West Bank. Egypt accepted a ceasefire on June 8th and Syria on June 9th. Moshe Dayan, Israeli Minister of Defense, ignored orders of the civilian Israeli cabinet, and launched a full assault on the Golan Heights in Syria, which was under Israeli control by June 10th.

According to Charles D. Smith, “it is unlikely that anyone, including the Israelis themselves, anticipated the scope of their victory, including Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights, in addition to Sinai.” When hostilities ceased, East Jerusalem was incorporated into Israel and the city became united again, the first time since the 1948 War. Soon after, “Israeli officials ordered the demolition of the Maghrebi Quarter opposite the Western Wall and the eviction of its over 600 Muslim residents so that Jews coming to worship at the holiest site in Judaism on the next Sabbath would be secure and have ample room to pray.” These actions were made quickly “to create new realities and preempt any U.N. resolution regarding Israel’s administration of East Jerusalem.” In addition to those who lost their homes in the East Jerusalem, in the West Bank over 100,000 Palestinians became refugees because of the Six Day War. Many of those new refugees were removed by force and several Palestinian villages bulldozed and destroyed so that the Palestinians could never return. Though Israel previously promised the Johnson Administration in the US to not expand their territory during the conflict, “Israel’s pre-war assurances that it would not expand its borders became moot, overrun by euphoria and a sense of having broken the noose of

encirclement that seemed to threaten it.”

But the postwar euphoria was not confined to Israel, nor limited to the US administration who had both predicted and favored a victory over Nasser and the Arab states. With Israel reunifying the ‘holy city’ of Jerusalem and occupying all of Palestine, which is often referred to as ‘biblical Israel’ by fundamentalist Christians, American evangelicals were reinvigorated by what they perceived as a further fulfillment of biblical prophecy. This sense of euphoria and celebration was reflected in the mainstream media just as much as in the evangelical discourse on the War of 1967, and greatly contributed to the greater prominence of evangelicals and fundamentalists in America.

Despite their being written some twenty years after the 1948 War in Israel-Palestine, the media stories on the Six Day War from 1967 are rife with similar elements of Orientalism, racist over-generalizations of Arabs, and a more marked favoritism for Israel in the conflict. There is also an unmistakable sense of celebration in Israel’s victory in 1967 reflected in most American news sources. The mainstream media coverage of the Six Day War also regularly portrays Israel as a ‘tiny’, ‘defenseless’ nation and invokes biblical language, sometimes even more so than in coverage from 1948, in asserting Israel’s claim to Jerusalem and the lands of Palestine.

Several studies attest to the significant impact that American media coverage of the Six Day War had on American views of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Janice Monti Belkaoui, in “Images of Arabs and Israelis in the Prestige Press, 1966-74,” argues that media bias in favor of Israel and an Israeli victory “can quite clearly be seen in the press images of the Middle Eastern leaders,” which mirrors the press treatment of Israeli leaders during the 1948 War. According to the Belkaoui, in 1967 “Israeli leaders are cast as “heroes” and more precisely...as “winners” and “splendid performers.”” Also mirroring the patterns in the 1948 press coverage, “Israeli political leaders are strong, decisive, and confident; their military leaders are cool, calm, legendary and dashing handsome, and their military forces are powerful, efficient, skillful and proud. Their cities and citizens are peaceful and serene.” *Time* magazine repeatedly refers to Moshe Dayan as “the dashing, one-eyed hero of the Sinai campaign” and as “the dashing, one-eyed ‘Hero of the Sinai’.” Even the military equipment is described appealingly, as “Swept-wing French jets, the Star of David gleaming in blue and white on their wings, swooped down on Jordanian positions around the city in a spectacular exhibition of night bombing that left the skies red with flames.”

Throughout the coverage of the Six Day War, as well as most western coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict, very seldom are Arab officials quoted or interviewed, if at all, while extensive quotes from Israeli officials are used in these stories to describe events. This presents a very one-sided view of the conflict and allows Israeli leaders to frame the coverage in the way they choose for the American public. According to Michael Suleiman in “National Stereotypes as Weapons in the Arab-Israeli Conflict,” an examination of media coverage “suggests that, by and large, the Israelis have had tremendous success in defining the problem in their own terms and having these terms accepted by Americans.” Suleiman argues that when the historical background

of the conflict is discussed in the American media “Jews in Israel are seen to be the *victims of persecution*, but the problem of the Palestinian Arabs is seen merely as one of *victims of circumstance*.” (original emphasis) A prime example of this is seen in the article “Israel: A Nation Under Siege” in the June 9th, 1967 edition of *Time* magazine. While describing that the Arabs as having their “pride stung, and they swore vengeance” after 1948, this sentiment is attributed to being defeated in war and not to the plight of the Palestinian refugees. Instead, it is simply stated that “During the war...750,000 Palestinian Arabs fled from the land of their ancestors; they filed sullenly into refugee camps across Israel’s borders, where they have stayed for 19 bitter years waiting to return.” Again, no context nor explanation for the creation of the refugee problem—they are described as “having fled,” which can only lead one to view them, as Suleiman says, victims of circumstance.

The use of biblical terminology and the framing of the 1967 War as a continuation of biblical history, a justification for taking all of Jerusalem, and occupying what remained of Palestine is frequently seen as well. In a section on “The Promised Land” *Time* recounts the life of Jacob and his battle with the Angel of God says that Israel “is the fulfillment of a struggle that has pitted the Jews against the world for 2,000 years.” Again, as in the media coverage of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War that utilized biblical rhetoric, biblical history is presented as indisputable fact when they describe Palestine as “the Land of Canaan to which Abraham was given a divine deed after he left Ur in the 18th century B.C., the promised land toward which Moses led his people in the 13th century B.C.” The *New York Times* states that in winning the 1967 War “the Israelis have won the battle but envenomed the ancient conflict.” This representation of the fighting in Palestine as eternal and ancient simply dooms the region to endless conflict within the American mindset.

A piece by Anthony J. Lukas that ran in the *New York Times* on June 6th, 1967 titled “Rival Claims to Palestine Date From Biblical Times” frames “the war in the Middle East” as “an outgrowth of the conflicting claims that go back to Biblical days.” Lukas links the Arab-Israeli conflict as it existed in 1967 to disputes between the descendants of the sons of Abraham: “Ishmael, from whom the Arabs claim the descent” and “Isaac, to whom the Jews trace their origin.” According the Lukas, the very roots of the conflict lie in the fact that the lands of Canaan (biblical Palestine) were promised to the sons of Isaac, but at the same time, “According to the Koran, God promised Ishmael that he and his seed would be dominant.” Thus, “Today, the descendants of Isaac and the descendants of Ishmael are fighting for possession of the land of Canaan, which the Arabs call by its Roman name, Palestine, and the Jews call Israel.”

The media appears to be nothing short of complicit in arguing the righteousness of the Jewish and Israeli claim to Palestine and the city of Jerusalem, captured by Israel after just a few days of fighting. This assertion concerning the justness of Jewish claims to Jerusalem was by no means limited to op-eds; in several instances news articles assert the correctness of Israel’s claims. On June 23rd, 1967 a *Time* magazine article states “The Jews’ religious, emotional, and historic claim to Palestine as their homeland is probably stronger than the Arabs’.” Time justifies this statement by

saying that “The Jewish claim to modern Palestine is more realistically based” because “it derives from the territorial mandate that the British received from the League of Nations after the collapse of Turkey in World War I and later passed to the U.N.”

Seth King, in the *New York Times* on June 7th, 1967 also notes the Israelis’ taking of Jerusalem as the return of “the site of King Solomon’s temple to the control of a Jewish state after nearly 2,000 years.” On June 28th a *New York Times* article states “No one can seriously dispute the legitimacy of Israel’s interest in the Old City nor the reasonableness of its demands...Israel’s stated objectives—guaranteed access for Jews and others to the Old City’s holy places...must be satisfied.” Other articles, like *Time*’s “Israel: If I Forget Thee” seems to celebrate Israel’s refusal to internationalize Jerusalem through the invocation of biblical history and Jewish historical memory. *Time* also posed the question on June 30th, 1967 “Should the Temple Be Rebuilt?” This reporting appears to have had great effect on the American mindset in terms of Israel-Palestine. Whereas in 1947 “only one-third of those polled said they would be sympathetic to either the Arabs or the Jews should war break out,” by “the close of the 1967 War, only one American in seven agreed with the statement that Israel should be required to return lands occupied during the June war of that year.” It is also worth noting that “One out of every four believed Israel should be allowed to keep all conquered land.”

The Six Day War represented a major turning point for the American evangelical community, though the initial Christian reaction was one of indifference. The Protestant community, however, was one that almost immediately “revelled in Israel’s victory.” Within months, the writings of prominent Protestants and evangelicals on the Six Day War, the growth in Christian fundamentalism and evangelism in the US, and the participation of evangelicals in the American political sphere greatly impacted American-held views of the Arab-Israeli conflict and of the Palestinians. According to Sarah Schmidt in *Jewish Political Studies Review*, “Before the establishment of Israel and its expansion in 1967, dispensationalists were content to teach their doctrine, look for signs of the Second Coming, and predict future events...After Israel claimed its place in Palestine, however, dispensationalists moved from being observers to participants, helping to turn their theories into self-fulfilling prophecies.”

For many evangelicals the Six Day War was the next step in preparing for the second coming of Jesus according to their interpretations of biblical prophecy. They already saw “the ingathering of Jews to Palestine in the twentieth century” as a sign that “the End Times were at hand.” Still, after 1948 and the founding of Israel, “Israel’s initial territory was incomplete because it had not occupied all of Jerusalem.” Israel’s taking of Jerusalem and its expansion to its biblical borders was a vindication of their predictions and interpreted by many evangelicals that the prophecies were coming closer to fruition and “proof that the Second Coming was fast approaching.”

Since the Six Day War, along with a great rise in their popularity, several prominent American evangelical preachers have spoken out in support of Israel and their keeping territorial gains from both the 1948 and 1967 Wars. Just one year after the Six Day War “the country’s best known evangelical, Reverend Billy Graham” “urged Israel not

to relinquish land it had conquered” saying that the Jews were “God’s chosen people” and the land of Palestine belonged to them. In a 1967 issue of *Christianity Today*, Nelson Bell, Billy Graham’s father-in-law, wrote “That for the first time in more than 2,000 years Jerusalem is now completely in the hands of the Jews gives a student of the Bible a thrill and renewed faith in the accuracy and validity of the Bible.”

Since 1967, partly due to the perception that Israel’s easy military victory was a fulfillment of biblical prophecy and another step towards the ‘End of Days,’ the evangelical and Christian Zionist rhetoric has become much more inflammatory and brazen. Perhaps one of the most controversial and popular figures are John Hagee, founder of the Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas that boasts around 17,000 members, and Pat Robertson, of the Christian Broadcasting Network. Both these men have used Christian support for Israel and Zionism as a central pillar in their televangelism and preaching, and regularly demonize Islam and Muslims in the process.

In *Allies for Armageddon*, Victoria Clark describes Pat Robertson as a “Christian TV mogul and champion of Israel” and Steven Sizer says that, “Robertson is one of the most powerful men in US political and religious circles today.” Robertson started his Christian Broadcasting Network in 1960 and since then has founded “numerous other educational, entertainment, political and humanitarian organizations, including the Christian Coalition which has around 2 million members.” The Christian Coalition is generally used by Robertson to endorse and foment support for socially conservative Republican candidates in US political campaigns. Robertson’s TV show, the *700 Club*, is estimated to reach about 7 million viewers weekly and his influence on Christian voters in America is widespread and great.

Robertson’s book *New World Order*, which made the New York Times Best Seller List upon its release in 1991, argues there is a worldwide conspiracy towards a one-world government and he strongly insinuates Jewish involvement in this supposed conspiracy throughout the book. For those who believe in premillennial dispensationalism, the prophecies of the Book of Revelation contained in the Christian bible, and the role of Jewish ownership of Jerusalem, Robertson provides ample reasons to lend unconditional support to Israel in terms of the End of Days scenario found in the Book of Revelation:

“It is also clear that Satan’s strategy will include a frontal assault on Israel. Rest assured that the next objective of the presently constituted new world order, under the present United Nations, will be to make Israel its target... A recalcitrant nation whose action does not accord with United Nations policy may be disciplined by military force. That is the newest law of world order. The United Nations General Assembly has already voted to brand Zionism as racism. Surely we can expect, sooner or later, an unreasonably demand for Israel to vacate control of the West Bank and the half of her capital city in East Jerusalem.

Although Israel may be reluctantly conciliatory in regard to some territory, it is absolutely adamant about not surrendering the city won by

King David almost three thousand years ago, then won again by modern Israel in 1967. And if Israel refuses to vacate the Holy City, there will be war—under the world order as it is even now constituted.

Beyond that, Satan will launch a war against the Christian people.”

While many may wish to dismiss such belief systems, raw data speaks to the extent to which Americans' interpretations of reality and the world in which we live are profoundly affected by their religious belief systems and doctrine. It seems that in America, “despite a century and a half of debate over the historical accuracy of the Bible, the argument continues, and the doctrine of inerrancy is widely held by millions of Americans.” For example, “A 1997 Gallup poll revealed that 44 percent of Americans could be considered creationists,” or believe in the narrative found within the Book of Genesis over Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution. Additionally, “in 1985 39 percent of Americans believed that the Bible should be taken literally,” and by 1999 that number was 33 percent.

The importance of these statistics is “the inference that the stories of Abraham, Joshua, and God’s promise of the land to the Hebrew people are taken to be literally true by millions of Americans.” Some Americans are even selective about their literal interpretations of the Bible, with some people “who do not take the Bible to be literal in every aspect believe in the story of the promise.” As cited in Irvine H. Anderson’s *Biblical Interpretation and Middle East Policy*, “A 1996 study by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago revealed that 46 percent of Americans believe that “God promised the land to the Jews.””

When taking into consideration the influence, popularity, and reach of preachers like Robertson through his Christian Broadcasting Network, and his best-selling books, the effects of his writing and rhetoric on the American public and US policy towards the Middle East is very harmful. Robertson assures the reader that any action taken against the policies of Israel is simply a prelude to Satan’s war against Christians and the end of the world. In the words of Grace Halsell, “Since Christian Zionists believe that God is personally involved in all actions taken by the Israelis, they easily concede that others, in particular the United States, should give Israel whatever it wants.” Halsell considers the influence of such televangelists like Robertson a “major scandal” that involves “the political dimensions of TV evangelists who convince millions of their followers that God wants us to end the world.”

For his part, John Hagee may be perpetuating modern Orientalism, the American predisposition against Palestine, and premillennial dispensationalism even more than Pat Robertson today. In *Jerusalem Countdown* Hagee interprets the Book of Revelation to predict that Russia and the Arab states will invade Israel, only to be destroyed by God and usher in the second coming of Christ. Hagee presents the state of Israel and the Jews as essential to the second coming of Christ: “Israel will be the epicenter of the earth’s shuddering travails in the last days, and all pivotal events will center on the Holy Land and the people of Abraham.” According to Hagee, “Proof that we are in the terminal generation is the State of Israel’s existence... biblical prophecy

unequivocally states that Israel must exist before the coming of the Messiah” Hagee calls the Israel’s survival in the War of 1948 “a miracle of God” and the Six Day War of 1967 a “supernatural victory of the Israeli army.” According to Hagee, “Only the mighty hand of God could have preserved Jerusalem from its birth until the stunning moment when Jewish soldiers broke through the Jordanian front and prayed together at the Western Wall.” One does wonder what was threatening to the city of Jerusalem during the 2,000 years span that it was not in Jewish hands; the answer is implied in Hagee’s book that it was Arabs and Palestinians themselves who could not be trusted to populate Jerusalem and that it was God who saved the city from *them*.

Writing on the Six Day War further, Hagee says that, “In 1967, when Egypt mobilized, Israel defended itself, then stood in open-mouthed wonder as God restored Jerusalem and the Temple Mount.” As more evidence that the End of Days is near, Hagee says

“Another proof that we are in the terminal generation is found in Jesus’ words that Jerusalem would be ‘...trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled’ (Luke 21:24)...In the temple, the Levites had a particular psalm they sang for each day of the week. The second temple, the one where Jesus worshipped, was destroyed on a Saturday night—and yet, says a rabbinic legend, that night the Levites inexplicably sang a song for Wednesday. Why?

Perhaps they caught a prophetic vision of the future. For on Wednesday, June 7th, 1967, Israel’s troops retook the Temple Mount, and God’s chosen people once again ruled the mount of God. That day marked the birth of a new era and offered another proof that we are living in the latter days.”

The televangelist also describes the flag of Israel as divine in nature in a section titled “The Flag of Israel and the Name of God” saying, “God has gathered the Jewish people from the gentile nations to the promised land under His flag. He designed it, and the Jews have worn it for generations.”

Perhaps most significantly, in regards to the effects of premillennial dispensationalism, Christian Zionism, and US-Middle East policy, Hagee’s writings are nothing short of fatalistic. According to Hagee, Muslims “want to control Jerusalem, and to control Jerusalem, they must conquer Israel. Holy war is coming, no matter how much Arafat or Putin or members of the United Nations talk of peace. The previously signed peace accords are as useless as gasoline in a fire extinguisher.”

It would be most convenient to write off the ideology and attitudes taken by the reporters, evangelical Christian Zionists, and premillennial dispensationalists covered here and analyze US policy in terms of geo-strategic realities. It also suits the inclinations of most analysts and academics to ignore the discourse propagated by these Christian fundamentalists as the ravings of religious fanatics, or as “useful idiots” used to achieve a neoconservative geopolitical agenda. But due to the influence and sheer numbers of this demographic in American we simply cannot do so. In the words

of Sadegh Kaber, “The pervasive influence of the Christian Right is by no means a figment of ‘liberal America’s’ imagination. In fact, it’s very real, with some experts contending the provenance of American exceptionalism and unilateralism is to be found in Evangelism and its political cognates.” The US must acknowledge the sources of the slanted and biased Orientalist discourse that has dominated the mainstream media and perpetuated a highly imbalanced policy towards Israel-Palestine and sovereignty in Jerusalem. Only after such an acknowledgement and understanding can America come to terms with the reality of the Palestinian situation and create a policy that operates on the principles of human rights and international law that will pay long-overdue credence to the rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people.

One of the primary challenges facing those who understand the need and push for a more sensible US policy toward Israel-Palestine and the status of Jerusalem is that “Dispensational Christian Zionism, which is the dominant form of Zionism in America, with its teaching on the rapture of the church, the rebuilding of the temple and imminent battle of Armageddon, is pervasive within mainline evangelical, charismatic and independent denominations...as well as many of the independent mega-churches.” Current estimates show that there are somewhere “between 25 and 30 million Zionist Christians in America...80,000 fundamentalist pastors, their views disseminated by 1,000 Christian radio stations and 100 Christian TV stations.” Along with the influence of the so-called ‘Israel lobby’, Pat Robertson’s pro-Israel Christian Coalition has “an annual budget of \$25 million and over 1.7 million members” and “is probably the most influential political organization in the United States today.” Additionally, “the National Unity Coalition for Israel,... which brings together 200 different Jewish and Christian Zionist organizations...claims a support base of 40 million active members.” In other words, those who favor this imbalanced policy rooted in biblical literalism are well-organized, well-funded, and represent a formidable political force in the American political arena. Even more problematic is that the views on Israel-Palestine held by this portion of Americans rooted in their religious beliefs inhibit their “ability to think critically and ethically about what is really going on there. For example, many evangelicals are reluctant to even consider the ethical issues involved in the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land.” This inability to think and act critically is a major hurdle that must be overcome in order to foment a sensible policy rooted in reality and one that is adopted in a genuine move towards peace.

Where US policy goes and whether the conditions for peace improve in Israel-Palestine is anything but certain. But “As Christian history makes clear, in the wrong hands the doctrine of providence, divine sovereignty, and eschatology become fatalism; and fatalism takes the significance out of human action.” If this fatalistic view of the Arab-Israeli conflict becomes any more prominent and the US does not adjust its historically unfair discourse and imbalanced policies, the possibility for peace in Israel-Palestine may be forever lost. In order to defeat this fatalistic view of the conflict the dominant narrative within one of its most important actors, the US, must be shifted. In order for this change to take place, the alternative narrative, one that accurately accounts the mass-expulsion of the Arabs of Palestine in 1948 and

acknowledges the legitimacy of Palestinian rights in their own country, must also lose “its oppositional status” in the collective memory of the American public. Hopefully this brief study can make but a small contribution to the loss of the oppositional status for the alternative narratives of the 1948 and 1967 Wars.

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