



## Framing Jerusalem

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What is Jerusalem? While of course it is a real city that exists "out there," it is not comprehensible as an immediate totality. We approach it through the constructive mediation of various interpretive schema and conceptual frameworks, which bear a relation to the real, but which can never stake absolute claim to it. I was standing in line at a Barnes and Noble bookstore on 86th street in downtown Manhattan in September and noticed in a display of calendars one such attempt to mediate our access to the city, to frame it and fix its meaning. Emblazoned on the cover of one of the calendars was the word "Israel," but

what really struck my eye was the background photo, a low-angle shot of the Dome of the Rock rising up majestically to the heavens. I did a double take. In what remarkable system of categories and beliefs can the Muslim Dome of the Rock—powerful symbol of Islam's claim to the city and of Palestinian nationalism—come to serve as a symbol of Israel? In his essay "Projecting Jerusalem," Edward Said suggests that "only by first projecting an idea of Jerusalem could Israel then proceed to changes on the ground."<sup>1</sup> Every colonial or imperial project has its integral ideology, which serves not merely to rationalize the project after the fact, but to constitute it and make it possible in the first place. Thus Said says, "I do not see how anything can be done to inhibit or somehow affect Israel's measures in Jerusalem without attending to the informational-ideological framework it has erected around the city."<sup>2</sup> When Said visited South Africa in 1991, a well-meaning friend of Nelson Mandela's received him, displaying a copy of Teddy Kollek's coffee-table book about himself and Jerusalem to make Said feel at home.<sup>3</sup> So successful had Kollek been in projecting himself as a supporter of peaceful racial and ethnic coexistence that even supporters of the Palestinian cause in South Africa had been taken in.

A central aim of ideology is to make the arbitrary natural, the historical universal. The subjects of ideology are meant to look at the calendar of Israel with the Dome of

the Rock in the background *without* doing a double take. Ideology aspires to make it impossible to think that Jerusalem is anything but the unified and eternal capital of Israel. The calendar recognizes a Muslim presence in the city, but implies that it is a mere facet of an Israeli national space. It projects Israel as a land with a multicultural and exotic dimension, inviting to tourists. In doing so it ignores that the Dome of the Rock is part of a living Palestinian present. It relegates the city's Arab heritage to a quaint, Orientalized past, presented as a colorful object for tourists' visual consumption. In this world Palestinians may exist, but merely as traces of this residual "Arab" presence, certainly not as a national group in their own right like the Jews of the city. The "Arabs" are reduced to a mere aspect of the "mosaic" of the city, another part of its color and diversity, coexisting in the larger whole thanks to Israel's benign rule.

For Edward Said, writing in 1991, what stood out was the failure of Palestinians to challenge Israel's hegemonic claims about Jerusalem. As he said, "there has also been no collective Palestinian projection for Jerusalem since its all-too-definitive loss in 1948 and again in 1967. The effect of this quite extraordinary historical and political neglect has been to deprive us of Jerusalem well *before* the fact."<sup>4</sup> Recent months, however, have witnessed a spate of challenges to Israel's control over how Jerusalem is perceived that might give Said more cause for optimism. In the war of perception we may not be witnessing a major turning of the tide, but certainly there

<sup>1</sup> Edward W. Said, "Projecting Jerusalem," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no. 1 (Autumn 1995), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

have lately been some satisfying short-term tactical victories that point the way towards future strategies and campaigns.

Last July a coalition of Arab American activist groups led by the American Committee on Jerusalem (ACJ) organized a letter writing and e-mail campaign to protest Sprint's direct mail campaign postcard that advertised low rates to Israel using a picture of the Dome of the Rock.<sup>5</sup> The protest worked. Sprint promptly canceled distribution of the ad.<sup>6</sup> Similarly in September the Arab League and the Palestinian Authority protested against an Israeli winery that was distributing a wine with labels inscribed "Jerusalem 2000" showing a skyline of the city, including al-Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock. The wine maker quickly discontinued the labels, but declared he had not intended to offend anyone. As is usual with hegemonic belief systems, the subject of them is not conscious that there is any political dimension to his "common sense" perceptions. The owner, Golan Tishbi, declared, "There's no political meaning. We don't think wine is involved in politics in any way."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> More recently, ACJ sponsored a Congressional hearing at the U.S. Congress on 22 October regarding the final status claims on Jerusalem. The president of ACJ, Rashid Khalidi, criticized Congressional efforts to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem as prejudging and prejudicing the final status negotiations. Salim Tamari of the Institute of Jerusalem Studies (IJS) examined key issues to be addressed in the negotiations such as sovereignty, access, residency, refugees, and property.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Broder, "The Arab Lobby Goes Online," *Jerusalem Report*, 25 October 1999, p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> See "Palestinians see politics in a bottle," *Ha'aretz*, 29 September 1999, p. 3; and Jenny Badner, "Tempest in a wine bottle," *Jerusalem Post*, 1 October 1999.

By this time a more international protest was underway. In August a ten-member coalition of Arab American lobbying groups led by the group American Muslims for Jerusalem (AMJ) organized a boycott of Burger King to protest the opening in May of a Burger King franchise in the Israeli settlement of Ma'ale Adumim, located several kilometers east of Jerusalem in the occupied West Bank. They mobilized activist organizations around the country and throughout Europe with lightning speed over the Internet and by 19 August had pickets outside U.S. Burger King outlets in 12 states and the District of Columbia. Moreover, they quickly enlisted the support of the Arab League, which within a week of the protest agreed to meet in September to decide on a possible boycott. The pressure worked. On 26 August Burger King announced that it was canceling its contract with Rikamor Ltd., the Israeli company that operated the Ma'ale Adumim franchise.<sup>8</sup>

Subsequently, in September, a coalition of 14 Arab-American organizations was formed to protest an Israeli exhibit focusing on Jerusalem scheduled to open on 1 October as part of Disney World's Millenium Village at the EPCOT center. The groups were spurred by press reports indicating that the exhibit's theme was "Jerusalem: the capital of Israel" and that \$1.8 million of the 8 million cost of the exhibit had been supplied by the Israeli

<sup>8</sup> See Chris McDoyle, "Burger King Backs Down," *Middle East International*, 3 September 1999, p. 7; "Having it Burger King's Way," *Chicago Tribune*, 8 August 1999, editorial; Deborah Sontag, "Burger King Outlet in West Bank Becomes a Political Dispute," *New York Times*, 30 August 1999, p. A7.

Foreign Ministry. Again the groups succeeded in enlisting Arab League support. On 15 September the Disney World president met with an Arab delegation, including representatives of the Arab-American organizations and of Morocco and the United Arab Emirates. In the following days they also took measures to organize a boycott of Disney in the Arab world and pressured Disney into letting them tour the site before its opening. Although not admitting it had changed anything in the exhibit, Disney did issue a statement on 17 September that the exhibit contained no references to Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.<sup>9</sup>

From subsequent news reports it is possible to piece together some idea of the exhibit. Visitors enter through a model of the Old City walls and Jaffa gate to view a panorama of the Old City and East Jerusalem. A guide named "David" then takes visitors on a ride through Jerusalem's 3,000-year history. The tour highlights the Jewish presence in the city, minimizing the Arab Christian and Muslim role in shaping its character, culture, and history. According to one report, one of the films shown at the exhibit shows the Dome of the Rock fading away to be replaced by the Star of David.<sup>10</sup> This is a favorite image of right-wing settler groups in the Old City, who distribute postcards with a similar

visual effect. As the lobbying groups complained, while there is no explicit statement in the exhibit that Jerusalem is Israel's capital, "the overall thrust of the Israeli exhibit is to stake an exclusive claim on the city, its physical structure, its history, its spirituality and its people." They demanded that East Jerusalem not be portrayed at all unless there is acknowledgment that it constitutes illegally occupied Palestinian territory under international law.<sup>11</sup>

Even if the Arab groups did not get their way in every demand, they scored a major victory just by calling the Israeli projection of the city into question so publicly. In the case of both the Burger King and Disney battles, the pro-Israel side was caught off guard, unused to having their hegemonic conceptions challenged and often entirely unaware of their political character. The Rickamor Ltd. CEO said dismissively, "Our policy is, we're going to open restaurants wherever we can make money." And at first Burger King claimed it was doing nothing political, only "taking its brand to its customers." Similarly Disney defended itself by saying, "We are an entertainment company," we are "merely letting countries tell their stories," we are not involved in "politics." Israel and the pro-Israel lobby in the U.S. both tried to suggest that it was the Arabs who were trying to "politicize" mere entertainment by bringing back the old tactics of the Arab boycott. In the Burger King case, they suggested that Arabs were racist and anti-

<sup>9</sup> For just a small sampling of coverage of this story, see Nitzan Horowitz, "Mickey feels Middle East heat over Jerusalem pavilion at Epcot," *Ha'aretz*, 19 September 1999; and Carl Shrag, "Israel at EPCOT: It's a small world after all," *Jerusalem Post*, 1 October 1999.

<sup>10</sup> American Muslims for Jerusalem, e-mail press release, 1 October 1999.

<sup>11</sup> George S. Hishmeh, "Arabs gain clout in U.S.," *Gulf News*, 23 September 1999, op-ed.

Semitic for trying to prevent American companies from selling products in Jewish areas. In the Disney case, they averred that Arabs were trying to "delegitimize" the link between Jerusalem and Israel.<sup>12</sup> In reality, Israel's supporters were the ones refusing to grant legitimacy to the Palestinians. For in this case Palestinians were not denying the Jewish right to national recognition or their claim to Jerusalem, but only affirming their own parallel right and claim. But these Israel supporters were incapable of understanding the positive Palestinian demand for recognition as anything but a negative denial of their own Jewish existence, suggesting how threatening the idea of Palestinian identity was to their own sense of self. They proved to be the ones who really needed to "delegitimize" the other. There were even attempts to suggest that the use of the boycott was a form of "political blackmail" and the equivalent to "terrorism."<sup>13</sup>

In fact, in foregrounding the arbitrariness of the Israeli construction of the city and forcing Israel's supporters to defend it, the Arab-American groups had already won the day. One effective strategy was to use the professed values of Disney and of many Americans to attack the exhibit. The

Millennium village's aim is to celebrate "cultural diversity." Its slogan, ironic in light of the reality of Jerusalem today, was "a world without borders." The protesters made a point of recognizing both the State of Israel itself and the Jewish attachment to Jerusalem. Their only demand was that the Palestinian claim to East Jerusalem be recognized. This implicit affirmation of Israel's own legitimacy, this rejection of the old rhetoric of Israel as the "Zionist entity," made it hard for Israel supporters to convince the public that the protesters were mere anti-Semites and terrorists. Their vituperations rang hollow. They wanted to engage the debate in the old terms, which made it easy for them to stereotype Palestinian supporters, but for once the Arab organizations succeeded in controlling the terms of the debate to their own advantage.

The same effective strategy was adopted in the Burger King case. Protesters made two arguments. First, they said that Burger King was sanctioning a violation of international law by opening a franchise in the occupied West Bank. Second, they said that Burger King was contradicting its own "diversity" policy by opening a restaurant in an area reserved exclusively for Jews. The latter argument that Burger King is sponsoring a form of apartheid carried particular weight with the American public, being less abstract and more familiar to Americans than the argument based on international law. As part of this strategy, the Arab-American groups decided against calling for a boycott of all Israeli products and limited themselves to calling for a boycott of Burger King. Moreover, they only protested the Burger King in the

<sup>12</sup> For Israeli responses to the boycott, see "Boycott Wars with Burgers," Michael S. Arnold, *Jerusalem Post Magazine*, 27 August 1999, pp. 14-17; and Michael S. Arnold, "Boycotting for Peace," *Jerusalem Post*, 22 October 1999, Friday section, p. B4.

<sup>13</sup> At a reception to mark the opening of the Israeli Pavilion, the Israeli Ambassador to the U.S., Zalman Shoval, said, "Political blackmail is just another word for terrorism, and we all praise Disney for not letting it pass." See Carl Schrag, "Shoval salutes Disney's stand against Arab League blackmail," *Jerusalem Post*, 30 September 1999.

occupied West Bank, choosing not to engage in a battle over the Burger King that is located in a mall in West Jerusalem. At the encouragement of the Israeli peace group Gush Shalom, they made a clear distinction between the legitimate State of Israel and illegal settlements as an obstacle to peace. This strategy succeeded. There was a brief effort to shift the discourse to a post-Oslo framework in which settlements are not on "occupied" but rather "disputed" territories. Thus Burger King initially tried to justify the franchise on the grounds that Ma'ale Adumim is located in Area C, "which, according to the Oslo accords, belongs to Israel." Fortunately, the discourse of international law and racial apartheid prevailed over the latter Oslo discourse. The exception was perhaps U.S. news reporters, who, in their concern to appear "balanced," were always careful to designate the idea that East Jerusalem is occupied territory as "the Arab view," despite its also being the U.S. and the international position.<sup>14</sup>

The success of these campaigns contains some important lessons for activists.<sup>15</sup> One thing that they demonstrated is the power

<sup>14</sup> For examples of this "balance," see James Sterngold, "Disney Stage Embroiled in Middle East Politics," *New York Times*, 18 September 1999; and "Gustav Niebuhr, "Debate Flares As Exhibition on Jerusalem is Set to Open," *New York Times*, 1 October 1999.

<sup>15</sup> Some good discussions of the new strategies involved are Arnold, "Boycott Wars with Burgers"; Broder, "The Arab Lobby Goes Online"; Marilyn Henry, "Flexing New Muscles," *Jerusalem Post*, 22 October 1999, Friday, p. B4; and Caroline de Gruyter, "Anger about Whoppers in the West Bank," *NRC Handelsblad*, 10 August 1999, trans. Arjan El Fassed for an American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee press release.

of the Internet as an organizing and lobbying tool. Within a few hours of learning about the Burger King franchise, Ali Abunimah, a researcher at the University of Chicago, was able to get out a message to tens of thousands of people, who in turn could pass it on to thousands more.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, this networking was accomplished at nominal expense compared to the costs of organizing by telephone. And it resulted in effective coordinated activity on the part of grassroots coalitions of NGOs working and lobbying together within the U.S. and simultaneously working with like-minded activists and government agencies in other countries. Within a week, Friday sermons throughout the Arab world were denouncing Burger King. Within a few weeks of the Arab-Americans getting wind of the Disney exhibit, Palestinian children in the Gaza strip were out in the streets burning Disney toys.<sup>17</sup> For Arab Americans the protests also marked an important shift towards action that worked within the system and appealed to existing American values. They rejected the old in-your-face protest style featuring slogans such as "Shamir, Murderer" and "Zionism = Racism" in favor of appeals to racial diversity and civil rights that resonated with American values and norms and that implicitly recognized Israel's legitimacy within its pre-1967 borders.

Complementing this, they were willing to lobby through existing channels rather than standing apart and denouncing the system

<sup>16</sup> Broder, "The Arab Lobby Goes Online," p. 32.

<sup>17</sup> *Palestine Report*, 6 October 1999.

as a whole. And they encouraged their constituency to protest in a way likely to have the most impact. In requesting that e-mail recipients write Burger King or Disney, they gave them the appropriate contact persons, asked them to be polite and concise, and gave them talking points.<sup>18</sup>

Of course there are limits to working within the system. For one thing, contacting the existing media and getting one's voice heard through letters and coverage of one's side of the story is not the same thing as having one's own alternative media able to develop consistent alternative perspectives and form its own broad, well-informed constituency. The impact of recent campaigns will fade when the stories are no longer in the headlines. But they represent a rare and successful challenge to the ubiquitous pro-Israeli projections of Jerusalem. The issue now is how to sustain this challenge so that the next time the Dome of the Rock appears on a calendar of Israel, or a Sprint ad, or an Israeli wine bottle, more than just a few activists will be doing a double take.

<sup>18</sup> See the e-mail press releases and bulletins of the American Muslims for Jerusalem and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee.

صدر حديثاً عن مؤسسة الدراسات  
الفلسطينية في بيروت

## تاريخ فلسطين

في أواخر العهد العثماني  
١٧٠٠-١٩١٨

(قراءة جديدة)

حزيران ١٩٩٩

عادل مناع

## اعادة اكتشاف فلسطين

اهالي جبل نابلس ١٧٠٠ - ١٩٠٠

بشارة دومانى

تطلب من باعة الكتب

ومن مؤسسة الدراسات المقدسية في القدس