

# American Rabbis Want a "Shared" Jerusalem

**Monday, July 24, 2000**

By Nitzan Horowitz - Ha'aretz Correspondent

CAMP DAVID - As peace talks here remain deadlocked over the issue of Jerusalem, the Jewish Peace Lobby has reiterated its call for the Holy City to be shared.

In January, the Jewish-American organization collected the signatures of 300 leading American rabbis from various streams of Judaism on a petition entitled "A Rabbinic Call for a Shared Jerusalem."

The organization talked with 1,200 rabbis to convince them to sign the declaration, though no Orthodox rabbis were contacted due to time constraints.

The president of the organization, Dr. Jerome Segal, a research scholar at the Center of International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland and the Peace Lobby's founder, told Ha'aretz yesterday that in light of the growing chasm between the negotiating teams at Camp David over the Old City, support has been increasing for an idea originally raised by King Hussein, that the holy places be placed "under God's sovereignty." This, says Segal, would solve the problem of the city being placed under one state's sovereignty alone, and no side would be forced to give up its claims to the holy sites.

Segal found that a great deal of Palestinians, and especially Hamas supporters, supported the idea of "God's sovereignty" during research he conducted for his recently published book "Negotiating Jerusalem." He also believes the idea could win the backing of Israelis since, in reality, Israel has not interfered in the autonomous operations of the Waqf (Islamic religious trust) at the Temple Mount since taking control of the Old City in 1967. Religious administration of the holy sites could become a solution to the dispute.

The declaration signed by the rabbis, concluded with, "All three faiths view Abraham as their seminal patriarch and prophet, and it is through achieving 'the Peace of Jerusalem' that humankind may aspire to lasting reconciliation among these Abrahamic religions."

The statement asked the public whether it believed that Jerusalem had to be under the sole sovereignty of any one faith and "whether the pursuit of both justice and lasting peace requires that, in some form, Jerusalem be shared with the Palestinian people. We believe that it does. We call for a shared Jerusalem."

The document itself did not suggest how Jerusalem itself may be divided with the Palestinians, but it does recognize that Israel cannot maintain sole sovereignty over the city. The declaration is part of the Jewish Peace Lobby's "Jerusalem project" with the signatories warning that failure to reach an agreement over Jerusalem will prolong the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, making it more bitter and bloody. CAMP DAVID - As peace talks here remain deadlocked over the issue of Jerusalem, the Jewish Peace Lobby has reiterated its call for the Holy City to be shared.

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