

**Contested Religious Space and Time
in the Reconstruction of Historical Memory:
Conflict and Juxtaposition
at the Tomb of the Patriarchs**

Honors Candidate:

Lisa Maren Rampton

International Relations

Honors Thesis

May 1996

First Reader:

Professor Mark Mancall

Second Reader:

Professor Aron Rodrigue

Table of Contents

I. Introduction	1
II. Background Theory	5
III. Background History to Massacre of 1929	15
IV. Conflict Over Hebron Since 1929	
A. Hebron Massacre of 1929 to War of 1967	29
B. War of 1967 to Outbreak of Intifada	38
C. Intifada to 1994	61
D. 1994 Massacre and Post-1994 Structure of Control	72
V. Conclusion	98
Appendix	105
Bibliography	106

I. Introduction

On one side of a keychain given out by the Mayor of Hebron to visitors to his city are the words "Hebron Municipality 1994" and an outline of the Ibrahimi Mosque. Known to the Jews as the Tomb of the Patriarchs and located above the Cave of Machpelah, the monument marking the supposed burial site of six biblical patriarchs and matriarchs is the town's central feature. Its use as a public emblem is therefore not surprising in itself. However, the other face of the keychain explains that it was created "For the Memorandum of Al-Haram Al-Ebrahimi Mosque Massacre, 25 Feb 1994," the assault in which twenty-nine Palestinians were killed during prayer inside the building. The extremist Jewish settler who carried out the attack, Baruch Goldstein, has received his own memorialization by keychain. Produced by settlers who hold radical ideologies similar to Goldstein's, it shows a photograph/montage of him standing in front of the building. The words "The Saint Dr. Baruch Goldstein -- May God Avenge His Blood" are printed on the photo's edge. In the more recent version of the keychain, one of the mosque's two minarets has been altered to appear to be toppling over.

These two images underline the centrality of the dispute over shared or juxtaposed religious sites to the nationalist conflict which embroils the Land considered Holy by three major world religions. Hebron has very unique historical and symbolic aspects: nevertheless, this shrine can also be seen as a model for the emerging conflict over other contested shrines in Israel/Palestine and throughout the world, such as Jerusalem's Temple Mount/*al-Haram al-Sharif*, Rachel's Tomb near Bethlehem, the Tomb of the Prophet Samuel outside Jerusalem, Joseph's Tomb in Nablus, and Ayodhya and Bodh Gaya in India. For example, on a wall

near his desk, Rabbi Kahn, the brother and follower of the late ultra nationalist leader Meir Kahane, has hung a large photomontage with a replica of the Second Temple superimposed on the Haram al-Sharif or Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa have been eliminated. Likewise the head of the Muslim *Waqf*, Hassan Tahboub, has placed in his office several representations of the Dome of the Rock, including a massive color photograph of the Haram area with the Muslim shrines intact. The photograph is flocked on the one side by a map describing the loss of Palestine to the Israeli state, on the other by two miniature Palestinian flags.

Both the keychains and the photographs evoke questions about how political and nationalist conflict shape the way in which the history, the meaning, and the visual presentation of a religious site ^{are} is reconstructed and transmitted to a society. According to Bernard Lewis in History -- Remembered, Recovered, Invented, a society and its people remember the past for several purposes. Two reasons that he offers are especially pertinent to the issue of shared and contested religious sites and are substantiated by the above examples. The first purpose for historical memory is to "explain and perhaps to justify the present -- a present, some present -- on which there may be dispute."¹ The occurrence of such disputes creates the possibility for the emergence of various versions of the past. In Israel, a plethora of shared or juxtaposed religious sites opens the meanings and symbols of the sites to an abundance of representations. The keychains and photographs go a step beyond the justification of the present, by seeking to use the past for the purpose of predicting and even controlling the future. The municipality's depiction of the Mosque strengthens its legitimacy in the eyes of Hebron's Palestinians. The settlers' vision of the future even more explicitly involves a complete reconstruction of physical reality, through its transformation of one of the Muslim symbols on the building. Thus the examples expose relationships between the parties involved in such conflict, and the representation or

¹Bernard Lewis, History -- Remembered, Recovered, Invented, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975): 55-56.

[re]presentation of religious sites for the purposes of influencing the future by controlling perceptions of the past.

At Hebron, the Tomb has become a major bargaining pawn for both Israeli and Palestinian political leaders, "a place defiled" ² for certain of the Israeli secular and religious left, a symbol of the encroachment of Israeli power for the Palestinians, and one of the greatest rallying points for the Jewish religious radical right in Israel and the United States. Redeployment from Hebron is the key issue at the Israel-PLO bargaining table today, and religious prayer protests have erupted in the country and the U.S. over the possibility of the IDF withdrawal from the Arab sections of the city. Both Arafat's and Peres' legitimacy is viewed as tied to the success of such a withdrawal. Other shrines are likewise drawn into the fury. Protests against the Palestinian Authority's proposed control over Bethlehem are rallied with nineteenth century drawings of an idyllic Tomb of Rachel, settlers demonstrate against Rabin's government using sketches and photographs of the Tomb in Hebron, and Palestinians swathe paintings of the Dome of the Rock with their flag and other nationalist symbols. One may question why these religious shrines have become so critical to the nationalist and political agendas of all sides, in a country in which 70% of the people consider themselves to be secular. What has catapulted such sites in general and Hebron in particular to this political and nationalist significance?

The answer must begin with a definition of religious site. Religious site encompasses both sacred space and sacred time. Sacred space is so demarcated because of its alleged connection to a holy person or to a manifestation of divine presence. As such it is considered holy and therefore holds inherent power for that religious community. Sacred time is similar in definition and closely related to sacred space, for it also marks the manifestation of divinity temporally by religious holidays and ritual commemorations. That religious site encompasses not only space but also time is established by the heightened use of religious site during religious holidays. Yet some observers have noted that both the

² Subject #1, Personal Interview, 18 July 1995.

Jews and the Muslims originated from mobile or nomadic backgrounds, and thus have found this emphasis on fixed physical sites surprising. Many have then linked the increase in importance of religious site to the rise of political and nationalist conflict. Whether one agrees with this description of Jewish and Arab attention to place, the larger question of the relationship between the power invested in religious site and the need for legitimation which arises out of political and nationalist conflict remains significant.

This thesis will attempt to explore this relationship through a study of the Tomb/Mosque in Hebron. Specifically, it will address the following questions:

1. How do religious space and religious time contribute to political and nationalist conflict?
2. How are the significance and the symbolism attributed the site by the two disputing groups reconstructed by the conflict?
3. How does the reconstruction of sacred space in political and nationalist terms fuel additional political and nationalist conflict at that site?
4. What is the nature of these reconstructions found in religious, political, and nationalist discourse?

This thesis will begin by examining the concepts of historical memory and reconstruction, exploring their relation to religious site, and discussing the influence of nationalist and political conflict on the reconstructions of religious site.

II. Background Theory

In order to comprehend the impact of political or nationalist conflict on the way the Mosque/Tomb in Hebron is conceived by the two disputing parties, it is necessary to first overview the relationships between religious space and time and the processes of historical memory, commemoration, and reconstruction. In their works on historical memory and the commemoration or mythologizing of specific sites in Israel, historians Nachman Ben-Yehuda and Yael Zerubavel address several concepts which are equally applicable to this analysis of Hebron and the issue of historical memory. According to Ben-Yehuda's definition, "the 'past', as we know it, is a selective construction of a particular sequence of events, structured along a time continuum, that 'makes sense' within a distinctive culture. . . . The large number of sequences dictates, obviously, that there will be a discontinuity effect in remembering the past. However, many of these sequences . . . share certain common elements."³ The concepts of selection and construction separate and define the two major competing analytical trends within the field of collective/historical memory, which Ben-Yehuda seeks to reconcile. The first, which he finds rooted in social constructionism and calls the *discontinuity* approach, basically asserts that "the past is socially constructed in such a way as fit the needs of the present." The second approach, called by Ben-Yehuda the *continuity* approach, claims that the past "enables, indeed shapes, our understanding of the present. . . . This past gives meaning, a sense of continuity and purpose, to the present."⁴ Ben-Yehuda recognizes the possibility of "contextual constructionism"⁵ -- that the two approaches need "not be necessarily contradictory and that they may be integrated into a coherent interpretation that emphasizes both continuity and discontinuity. For Ben-Yehuda, "the collective historical memory always

³ Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *The Masada Myth*, (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 278, 302.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁵ Suggested by the theorist Barry Schwartz. See Ben-Yehuda, 305.

demonstrates continuity but also reveals new elements as the 'past' is made to better fit contemporary needs, concerns, and linguistic habits."⁶

While this selection process is always a political one, at certain times the reconstruction of history accelerates and the discourse takes on a more deeply politicized and conscious character. This is more likely to occur at times of beginnings, according to Ben-Yehuda and Zerubavel, or during periods of liminality, according to Zerubavel and Susan Starr Sered, times when an event or sequence of events becomes commemorated as important to the definition of a group's identity. Periods of political and nationalist conflict, which can be times of both beginning and of liminality, tend particularly to instigate such reconstructions. In such situations the group develops what Ben-Yehuda calls a mythological tale and Zerubavel calls a commemorative narrative. For example, in regards to Masada, Ben-Yehuda sees a disparity between the original "historical" account written by Josephus of the events at that site during the Great Jewish Revolt, and the story or "myth" that developed in the 1930s and 1940s surrounding Masada and its actors. He attributes this disparity to the process of myth-making and ties it to the construction of nation and national identity which shook Palestine during the '30s and '40s. In distinguishing myth from history, Ben-Yehuda finds that "although a mythical 'tale' is usually woven out of a historical reality, it is actually very distinct from it. The historical narrative is frequently adjusted and made to fit the moral theme and lesson of the mythical tale so that the myth will appear more credible, consistent, and coherent. . . . A myth is a highly selective sequence of real or imaginary events, constructed in a special and peculiar narrative."⁷ Thus, while both myth and history must pick from an endless series of events to construct "the past", myths represent a specifically conscious and often politicized "'choice' of specific events and a disregard of others, distinctly different from the historical context."⁸

To reinforce these choices, Zerubavel explains, the group will often create a series of both ritualized and informal acts of commemoration, which together form a commemorative

⁶ Ben-Yehuda, 274.

⁷ Ibid., 283.

⁸ Ibid., 282.

narrative or myth, "a story about a particular past that accounts for this ritualized remembrance and provides a moral message for the group members. In creating this narrative, the collective memory clearly draws upon historical sources. But it does so selectively and creatively."⁹ In the process of commemoration, certain periods of history, especially those during which the group was perhaps part of a larger empire or had not yet identified a separate identity are deemed essentially negative, "attract little attention, or fall into oblivion. . . . Such periods or events that collective memory suppresses become subjects of *collective amnesia*."¹⁰ Other periods, such as those of pioneering, conquest, or struggle for independence, may enjoy multiple commemorations, even to the point of being elevated "beyond their immediate historical context into symbolic texts that serve as paradigms for understanding other developments in the group's experience. . . . Because turning points often assume symbolic significance as markers of change, they are more likely to transform into myths."¹¹

Beginnings are also conducive to commemoration, for "since collective memory highlights the group's distinct identity, the master commemorative narrative focuses on the event that marks the group's emergence as an independent social entity. The commemoration of beginnings is clearly essential for demarcating the groups' distinct identity vis-à-vis others."¹² This is especially so in the case of a disputed beginning, wherein the commemorative narrative can be used, according to Bernard Lewis, to "explain and perhaps to justify the present -- a present, some present -- on which there may be a dispute."¹³ Of all the events with commemorative potential, sacred time is perhaps the most frequently and readily commemorated and ritualized. More so than any other commemorations, those based on religious history most obviously emphasize the continuity perspective, by connecting the present with the past through a legacy of "eternal" ritual.

⁹ Yael Zerubavel, Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 6.

¹⁰ Zerubavel, 8.

¹¹ Ibid., 9.

¹² Ibid., 7.

¹³ B. Lewis, 55.

To further enhance a sense of continuity, a mythical tale often involves or is directly connected to a geographically specific location. This contributes "a tangible and strong sense of continuity between the past and the present. Being able to pinpoint the mythical tale to a specific location is probably one of the most powerful combinations achievable in the social construction of a myth."¹⁴ Ben-Yehuda cites the observations of historians Stanford W. Gregory and Jerry M. Lewis, who affirmed this idea of the importance of site to the process of commemoration by noting that "the erection of public memorials can be understood as a process of creating an 'analogous linkage' between the past and the present. This process may indeed lie somewhere between the above two approaches"¹⁵ to collective memory and helps explain why the reconstruction of history (the discontinuity perspective) relies so heavily on real or supposed historical sites (the continuity perspective). Thus site becomes critical to the construction, credibility, legitimacy of a particular commemorative narrative or mythological tale and consequently to the identity of the group.

Sacred space, perhaps more than any other type of site, holds enormous symbolic power and can therefore become critical to the processes of commemoration and nationalist legitimation. Peter van der Veer, in his research on the conflict over the Muslim/Hindu shared religious shrine in Ayodhya, India, explores the links between myth, nationalism, and site, claiming that "the history of shrines. . . is the history of the nation."¹⁶ Van der Veer recognizes an explicit relation between religious and nationalist claims to territory. He argues that

"[j]ust as t]he religious argument aims at the construction of a community of believers and. . . draws a boundary between believers and others [by relation of] the community to sacred space. . . , the nationalist argument does very much the same thing. It identifies the nation with the community of believers and sacred space with national territory. In that way nationalist discourse incorporates religious discourse and reinterprets it in ways often derived from Western discourse of modernity. It is in this

¹⁴ Ben-Yehuda, 298.

¹⁵ Ibid., 273-4.

¹⁶ Peter van der Veer, "Ayodhya and Somnath: Eternal Shrines, Contested Histories," *Social Research* 59, n 1 (Spring 1992), 87.

reinterpretation that 'historical evidence' as part of the discourse of positive science becomes important. "¹⁷

Thus much of the "positive science" or means by which legitimacy is established relate to the discourse of sacred place and time. One such means is evidence of a continuous presence in the area. A holy site can provide archaeological support, draw pilgrims and institutionalize pilgrimage practices, and create a visual record of one's influence through the erection or renovation of permanent buildings and monuments. Sacred places further contribute to legitimation by constituting a focus for the issue of control, by providing space for religious or political commemoration, by giving form to the concepts of bloodline or belief, and by memorializing a group's leaders or martyrs. Van der Veer furthermore defines sacred sites not only as contested as markers of space but also as markers of time. They are thus "the physical evidence of the perennial existence of the religious community and, by nationalist extension, of the nation."¹⁸ In this context, commemorative narratives combining sacred time with sacred space serve as primary means to nationalist legitimation.

This symbolic power and inclusion in commemorative narratives can cause such space to become the focus of violent dispute and conflict, however, when a site is claimed by two different groups. Thus despite their ideal potential for emphasizing the commonalties between religions and religious histories, shared or juxtaposed religious sites are in fact more frequently the subjects of intense political dispute and thereby intensified processes of myth-making. While an actual physical site may serve to put limitations on the possible mythologies to emerge, when such a site becomes the object of conflict, that dispute serves to open the meanings and physical organization of the site to an abundance of representations and reconstructions. Sacred time, usually commemorated at and closely tied to sacred space, similarly becomes subject to reconstruction through the lens of political and nationalist conflict, often becoming time used for political or nationalist purposes. One explanation for these developments may be found in sociologist Richard Hecht's argument concerning

¹⁷ Ibid., 108.

¹⁸ Ibid.

reconstruction, or “symbolic violence” as he terms it, as a means of legitimation. Hecht writes that

“violence is a form of communication. Symbolic violence is an adjunct to material violence. Symbolic violence, profanation, is used by members of one community or movement in order to mobilize their own communities, to make their definition of reality the dominant one, to demonstrate the ultimate powerlessness of the other, and to redefine the other as radically alien, as profane. By profaning the other’s sacred place you make the other profane, an alien with no claim to possession of that space. Symbolic violence is a way to mobilize intense opposition, to polarize the situation using a very few resources.”¹⁹

In other words, the reconstruction or profanation of another’s sacred place and time serves to legitimate one’s own position by trespassing the “other” as well as amassing support for one’s group. Thus the first hypothesis explored in this thesis is that the nationalist and political conflict both influences and perpetuates the interpretation and re-interpretation of the religious shrine’s symbolic, temporal, and physical organization.

Because of this forcible symbolic violence as well as the great significance to legitimation, those reconstructions of sacred place and time brought about by national and political dispute should necessarily impact and even accelerate further political and nationalist conflict, making the system of conflict and reconstruction come full circle. In other words, once ritual commemorations at sacred place, or historical accounts of sacred time, or visual representations of the site, have been reinterpreted to fuse religious with nationalist or political symbols, one should find that conflict is even more likely to explode at that site. As this reinterpretation either strengthens or weakens a group’s position as regards the “other”, it increases the possibility that further conflict will erupt over the change in the status quo or power equilibrium. A second hypothesis of this paper, then, is that the political and nationalist conflict arises within (and must not be separated from) the context of the representation and the [re-]presentation of the meaning and symbolic significance of the contested religious site.

¹⁹ Roger Friedlander Richard Hecht, “The Politics of Sacred Place: Jerusalem’s Temple Mount/*al-haram al-sharif*,” in *Sacred Places and Profane Spaces*, ed. Jamie Scott and Paul Simpson-Housley, 56.

To investigate this cycle of repeated conflict and reconstruction, one must analyze the nature of such reconstructions, looking for links to the conflict itself. The nature of such reconstructions of sacred place and time appears to be twofold. On the one hand are the very concrete, physical reconstructions of religious space and time which have both followed and induced the contest over the shrine. On the other hand are the historiographies which have developed within the various competing groups at the shrine. These constitute reconstructions of a more abstract and historical nature. In the case of Ayodhya, India, the historiographic and verbal reinterpretations induced a form of symbolic violence, that is the physical destruction (or reconstruction) of the shrine. The nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party depicted what the Muslims regarded as a mosque as a testament of "Muslim tyranny" in what had been a Hindu country. The words "Muslim tyranny" were used regularly to incite passion and draw parallels to current Hindu discontent over issues such as affirmative action ("reservations") for Muslims. Such frequently repeated phrases were very potent in fueling passion and inciting the Hindu upsurge that led to the mosque at the site being seriously damaged on December 6, 1992. I hypothesize that at Hebron a similar interaction of concrete and abstract reconstructions is taking place, in which the religious site is fused with nationalist and political dimensions.

Over the past century, such severe political and nationalist conflict has exploded around Hebron and throughout the entire area of historic Palestine. The subsequent enlargement in scope and intensity of the political and nationalist discourses has led to increased opportunities for symbolic reconstruction. These reconstructions appear to have promoted increased conflict. While little scholarly work has been completed on the site at Hebron, there is a significant volume of research on the process of myth-making in regards to religious symbols and sites. Susan Starr Sered, in her research of Rachel's Tomb near Bethlehem, attempts to explain the reconstruction of a specific shrine's meaning and importance as a function of social upheaval (what she terms "societal liminality") and of a "perceived convergence of the aspects of the saint's biography with current political and social conditions." She finds that during

periods of social upheaval -- "when the old symbols and cultural metaphors become insufficient but new ones have not yet been crystallized" -- an increase in pilgrimage to shrines may indicate a collective attempt "to make sense out of current reality by linking it to sacred history." In such periods of societal transformation, new symbols, metaphors, and rituals can emerge in the form of a commemorative narrative more easily than in periods of stability. Although her theory concerns a site relatively undisputed during the period she examines, it is nevertheless relevant to other contested shared religious sites where the precondition of societal upheaval is so often met.²⁰

Much more has been written about the conflict in Jerusalem, especially over the Temple Mount, or *al-Haram al-Sharif*. Amos Elon, in an article titled "Jerusalem: The Future of the Past," parallels the increase in conflict over the site with the changing nationalist demands of the two populations in Israel. Prior to the second half of this century, Elon suggests, most leaders of the Jewish *Yishuv* were willing to abandon all of Jerusalem if needed to establish an independent Jewish state elsewhere in the country.²¹ But the battle for Jerusalem in the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 created a discourse of near-mythic terms surrounding the city, and the UN proposal only one year later to internationalize the city shocked the Israelis so intensely that their cabinet met on the next day and "resolved for the first time that Jerusalem was 'an inseparable part of the State of Israel and its eternal capital.'" ²² Elon makes a parallel analysis of the change in Palestinian conceptualization of the city, noting that "Palestinians today make every effort to remember Jerusalem. . . in their customs, their songs, their prayers. Stylized views of the city hang on the walls of countless homes all over the Near East. . . . There is a 'Jerusalem quarter' today in every Palestinian refugee camp." Thus not only written and verbal but also visual and spatial discourse surrounding the city have shifted, as a national mythology surrounding the site has emerged. Although Elon never explicitly attributes the

²⁰Susan Starr Sered, "Rachel's Tomb," *Religion* 19, no. 1 (January 1989), 27 and 37.

²¹The loss of Jerusalem was "the price we must pay," according to David Ben-Gurion, and Chaim Weizmann went as far as to say that he "would not take the Old City [even] as a gift."

²²At this point, Ben-Gurion, when challenged by the Vatican, claimed that "Jerusalem was Israel's capital a thousand years before the birth of Christianity."

shift in historical memory concerning Jerusalem's religious sites to the rise of questions and disputes of nationhood, he does link the concepts in his reference to the "dark chords of memory [that] swell the chorus of nationalism and of faith."²³

Despite the research available on Jerusalem and Ayodhya, and Sered's unique piece on Rachel's Tomb, little scholarly analysis has been done on the shared religious site of the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron. At this volatile site, both Sered's precondition of instability and Elon and van der Veer's emphasis on the convergence of nationalism, religion, and history are applicable. Thus one would expect that the emerging symbols used in pictorial, verbal, and written narratives would be framed in terms of the intersection of religion and nationhood. The Tomb in Hebron has several levels of symbolism, and thus is open to various narratives or myths based on this symbolism. On a religious level, it demarcates the traditional site of the burial place of six Biblical patriarchs and matriarchs, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Leah. Because both the Jews and the Muslims regard themselves as posterity of Abraham, through Isaac and Ishmael respectively, this "starting point" has been readily incorporated into the nationalist commemorative narrative. In some ways, the Tomb operates as a kind of "foundation myth"²⁴ in terms of the claims of the two groups to the Land. According to one Israeli rabbi, for example, the Tomb is a site "more befitting prayer than other places" because it was "the first part of the Land of Israel that was possessed by Jews."²⁵ This statement, however, is an anachronistic reconfiguration of the past, a segment of a historical myth, which defines Abraham's plot of land in Hebron in terms of a people and a nation not yet existent at the time that he first settled the area. The account of Abraham's journey to reach this final settling place, after several hundred miles and many years of displacement, may also contribute to the reinterpretation of the site. Both Jews returning from

²³Amos Elon, "Jerusalem: The Future of the Past," New York Review of Books, 17 Aug. 1989, 37+.

²⁴Lewis, 59. According to Lewis, "foundation myths" are important ways by which history is invented and the past is recreated. Most countries and peoples, Lewis argues, after rising to greatness "seek to improve or conceal their undistinguished beginnings and attach themselves to somethings older and greater."

²⁵Clyde Haberman, "Where Arabs died at prayer, praying is banished," New York Times, 5 September 1994, B2.

the Diaspora and Palestinians who now have no nation, may reconstruct the mythology of the site in order to conform with their personal and collective recent national histories. While certain levels of symbolism of the Tomb on a religious level may be inherent to the nature of the site, I argue that it has only been recently reinterpreted or revitalized within the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the emerging nationalism and questions of nationhood of both groups.

The city of Hebron and the site of the Tomb of the Patriarchs has undergone these processes of historical reconstruction and myth-making, and has become critical to the commemorative narratives of certain (though not all) groups on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While this historical reconstruction process is obviously one which has not begun overnight in regards to Hebron, nevertheless this thesis maintains that over the past century the political and nationalist conflict has formed a lens through which the commemorative narrative of that site has been projected and amplified. Thus the selection of events to include in various "history" accounts as become increasingly conscious and politicized. From the available legacy of historical and semi-historical accounts, mythological tales, pilgrimage records, and archaeological findings, certain mythological tales or commemorative narratives have been selected by the groups involved in the conflict to reflect their social, religious, and political agendas. Biblical accounts have been amplified to become property deeds, pilgrimage accounts are used to suggest eternal importance and presence, and even archaeology is not immune from the politics of the site. In order to later be able to recognize this selection process as it has occurred since the rise of the Jewish and Arab nationalism, I will present now a brief but comprehensive account of history of Hebron prior to the conflict.

III. Background History to Massacre of 1929

The modern period is not the first in which conflict over sacred space and time has existed in Hebron, and in which this conflict has accelerated the development of historical myths and commemorative narratives around the Tomb and the city itself. The history of the city is a long one, and even today some repeat an ancient claim that Hebron is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world.²⁶ An understanding of key historical events and archaeological findings from this long history is necessary in order to contextualize and explore the present events and conflict in that city and at its principal religious shrine, the Tomb of the Patriarchs, and to recognize how its history has been reconstructed as a function of this conflict. In retelling these events this thesis too will participate in a process of historical reconstruction, and is limited in its presentation by the events which have been preserved in historical memory and in written sources. Nevertheless, by drawing on sources from a plethora of time periods, historical sources, and religious groups, it hopes to construct a history which is more complete and less subject to the “collective amnesia” which pervades many of the accounts made by the separate groups.

The original settlement in Hebron began on a hill, called by archaeologists Tel Rumeida or Tall al-Rumaytha, which was first inhabited before the year 3000 BCE. The earliest written reference to Hebron is found in the Bible, the chief source of early historical reference to the town, and dates from what biblical scholars call the Kiryat Arba or Genesis Phase (ca. 2000-1750 BCE).²⁷ Thus in Genesis 13:18 we read that, having migrated to the land of Canaan,

²⁶ A claim which echoes that recorded by Josephus in the first century C.E.: “According to the statements of the inhabitants, Hebron is more ancient than Memphis in Egypt; it is reckoned as two thousand and three hundred years old.” Gaaylah Cornfeld, *Sacred Jewish Sites*, (Tel Aviv: World WZO Department of Organization and Education, 1970), 304.

²⁷ Jeffrey Chadwick, *Archeology of Biblical Hebron in the Bronze and Iron Ages*, (Ph.D. dissertation, 1992), 13. Some may disagree with the use of the Bible as a primary historical document. The purpose of this thesis is not to debate the historical accuracy nor the mythological component of that text. Rather, because the Bible is today used as a source upon which many of the contesting parties base their claims to

the nomadic prophet and patriarch “Abraham moved his tent, and came and dwelt by the terebinths of Mamre, which is in Hebron.” Several years later, following the death of his wife Sarah, it is recorded that Abraham went to a Hebronite landowner by the name of Ephron the Hittite, in hopes “that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me for a possession of a buryingplace amongst you.”²⁸ Yet when Ephron offered to give the land to Abraham, the patriarch refused, insisting on paying the full price to ensure his ownership. It is said that Ephron then proceeded to request an inordinate sum of money -- four hundred shekels of silver -- which Abraham paid in full. Thus

“the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession. . . . And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre: the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan. And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a buryingplace by the sons of Heth.”²⁹

The Bible records that subsequently Abraham, his son Isaac and his wife Rebecca, and Jacob and his wife Leah were also buried in the Cave of Machpelah.

Yet despite the significance attributed this purchase by modern-day Jewish accounts of Hebron, the village remained a Canaanite one, although it came under the rule of the Hyksos (a dynasty of foreign Asiatic kings in Egypt) around 1750 BCE. According to the biblical account, it was not until approximately 1230 BCE that the town was captured and settled by the Hebrew tribes.³⁰ During the Hyksos Phase (1750-1550 BCE), a massive wall and revetment were built around the town, and it is this establishment of Hebron as a walled city that is likely

possession and legitimacy, we will represent the biblical accounts as original historical texts from which historical mythologies have been subsequently reconstructed. Thus, the Bible will be seen as a kind of historical text, without comment on accuracy.

²⁸ Genesis 23:9, Bible, (King James Version).

²⁹ Genesis 23: 17-20. I quote this text in full because of its importance to Jewish claims to Hebron today. “Hebrew tradition considers the tombs of the Patriarchs to be the legal foundation for the claim of the Jewish people to this territory.” Fabio Bourbon, The Holy Land: Lithographs and Diaries by David Roberts R.A., (Israel: Steimatzky, 1994), 102.

³⁰ Something I almost forgot after reading the literature printed by the religious nationalists today about the Jewish claim to the entire Land of Israel based on this purchase. This interim period is usually forgotten or at least unmentioned in Jewish histories of Hebron.

the proper interpretation of the biblical assertion that “Hebron was built seven years before Zoan [Tanis] in Egypt,”³¹ that is, around 1728 BCE. This parenthetical reference to Hebron is the only one in the Bible for this period, “ironic . . . when it is considered that the period was probably the city’s heyday. It was the time of Hebron’s greatest growth and influence in its entire ancient existence (David’s later capital there notwithstanding).”³² During the ensuing *El-Amarna* Phase (1550-1200 BCE), so named after a series of letters from this period found at Tell el-Amarna in Egypt, Hebron as well as the rest of Canaan remained under Egyptian control, although the foreign Hyksos kings were replaced by native Egyptian rulers. The *El-Amarna* letters do refer to a town which seems to be Hebron. “If this is so, it would be the only historical reference to the Hebron region in the Bronze Age [i.e. 3150-1200 BCE] outside of the Bible.”³³ Again, this period is not referred to in the Bible except in relation to the approach and then the capture of Canaan and Hebron by the Hebrew tribes. The only mention of Hebron occurs in an account of the cities visited by the twelve spies sent out by Moses to reconnoiter the land of Canaan.³⁴

Around 1230 BCE, the Hebrew tribes [re]entered the land of Palestine, and according to the biblical record captured Hebron as well as several other Canaanite cities. Archaeological evidence of a destruction level dating from this period supports this account, although the amount of destruction appears limited and it is possible that the infiltration of Hebron and of Canaan in general was more gradual and peaceful. At this point the frequency of references to Hebron greatly increases in the biblical account and in Jewish historical memory. Shortly after the conquest of Hebron, one reads, the Israelite warrior Caleb was granted the Hebron area as

³¹ Numbers 13:22.

³² Chadwick, 15. There are no less than 34 references in the Bible to Hebron in the Davidic Capital Period. Following David’s establishment of Jerusalem as his capital, Hebron is again only mentioned sparingly in the biblical record. See also Chadwick, 18, 19.

³³ Chadwick, 17.

³⁴ The biblical record only states that the spies “ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron; where Ahiman, Shesai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, were. Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.” (Numbers 13:22) Of the twelve only two (Joshua and Caleb) returned with encouragement of the possibility of capturing or settling the land. Jewish folklore states that the two gained strength to adhere to such a plan by praying in the Cave of Machpelah.

an inheritance "unto this day,"³⁵ an account which was probably used to reinforce the Jewish claims to the site. The city became "an Israelite city of refuge and a levitical city for Aaronic priesthood families. . .around 1200 BCE,"³⁶ events which surely increased its importance. However, the event from this period which remains foremost in the minds of Jews today is the coronation of King David in Hebron and his 7 1/2 year reign there.³⁷ As we have noted already, however, Hebron was shortly "demoted" as David moved his capital to Jerusalem.

According to biblical and Jewish historical records -- and especially according to Jewish settlers today, who wish to prove a continuous Jewish presence at Hebron up to 1929 -- Jews continued to inhabit Hebron until the Persian conquest and subsequent Babylonian exile in 586 BCE. The Book of Nehemiah, affording the final biblical reference to Hebron, asserts that a small colony of Jews resettled the town after their return to Palestine in 539 BCE. No archaeological evidence of occupation has as of yet been found on the tell from this time to support this claim, but it may be due to the small area excavated, or the small size of Persian Period Jewish settlements.³⁸ There is little if any surviving folklore surrounding the Jews of this period. During the following Hellenistic Period (332-63 BCE), a significant Jewish community inhabited Hebron, although the town was ruled by the Edomites (also called Idumeans), blood relatives but traditional enemies to the Hebrew tribes. At this time the Cave of Machpelah was incorporated into the apocryphal or pseudepigraphical books known as the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, "a second century BC work whose title refers to the 12 sons of Jacob. A notice at the conclusion of almost all the other apocryphal testaments of Jacob's sons tells us that the putative author (and subject of the work) was either buried at Machpelah or instructed his survivors to bury him there."³⁹ The appearance of these works corresponds loosely to the period in which the Jewish rebel Judah Maccabee attacked and

³⁵ Joshua 14: 12-14.

³⁶ Chadwick, 18; see also Joshua 20 and 21.

³⁷ Many Israelis today, both secular and religious, will refer to this period when asked whether Hebron has ever been a political center. Few if any Palestinians will make the same allusion.

³⁸ Chadwick, 43.

³⁹ Nancy Miller, "Patriarchal Burial Site Explored for First Time in 700 Years," Biblical Archaeology Review, May/June 1985, 37-38.

burned Edomite Hebron and his nephew John Hyrcanus conquered the entire Edomite kingdom and converted the residents to Judaism.⁴⁰ It is impossible to state a causal relationship between the folkloric traditions and the political conflicts of the era. Nevertheless it may be that the conflict contributed to these expansions of the mythological narrative surrounding the town.

Shortly after the commencement of the period of Roman rule in Palestine (63 BCE to 324 CE), both Hebron and Jerusalem came under the jurisdiction of King Herod, himself an Edomite convert to Judaism. As in Jerusalem, Herod ordered the building of a great stone structure at Hebron, here encircling the traditional Cave of Machpelah. The similarity of masonry work and proportionality of size to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem have caused some to wonder if his purposes in constructing the two buildings were not similar -- that is, to appease his Jewish subjects. In any case, the building was a major reconstruction of public and religious space, remaining even today "the largest Jewish monument in the world,"⁴¹ and thus we can assume that already by this time the site was well-known and highly considered (if not revered) by the Jews in the area. The building of the enclosure coincided with and perhaps accelerated the abandonment of Tel Rumeida as a city, and a shift in settlement down to the area surrounding the structure. From that point on the Herodian monument formed the center of the community and town, which expanded around it, and figured, according to one tract printed by the Supreme Moslem Council in 1928, "as a mysterious blind enclosure filling the spectator with but awe and bewilderment called forth by the huge mass. . .round something covetously cherished though altogether invisible."⁴² With the Jewish wars that erupted against the Romans in the later half of the first century CE, Hebron was first taken and plundered by a Jewish insurrectionist, and then captured and burned by the Roman commander Cerealius. According to the 1925 edition of the New York-based Jewish Encyclopedia, "Jews did not

⁴⁰ *Encyclopedia Judaica*, [n.d., approx. 1970 ed.] s.v. "Hebron.," by Moshe Shapira, 227.

⁴¹ "The Cave of Machpelah: The Roots of the Jewish People," Booklet, (Kiryat Arba: Midreshet Hebron, ca. 1994).

⁴² "Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi Al-Khalil: A Brief Guide," Supreme Moslem Council, (Jerusalem: Moslem Orphanage Press, 1928), 4.

inhabit Hebron after the destruction of the Temple, nor under the Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, or Crusaders.”⁴³ A post-Six Day War edition of the Jerusalem Encyclopedia Judaica differs, however, claiming the “the Jews continued to live there” throughout history.⁴⁴ It is difficult to tell whether this claim is based on additional knowledge and research, or a product of the increased emphasis on maintaining a continuous Jewish presence in Hebron which occupies a great deal of post-1929 and especially post-1967 Jewish writing on the city, a phenomenon this thesis will later explore.

With or without a permanent community, it is clear that active worship was conducted by Jewish and Christian pilgrims in Hebron during the Byzantine Period (324-614 CE). As early as the 4th century CE, Saint Jerome notes that Christians, Jews, and pagans were vying over sacred space in the area. During this period it appears that the principal site of pilgrimage -- and contest -- was not yet the Tomb of the Patriarchs but the traditional Oak of Abraham in Mamre, located on a hill a few kilometers outside of the town of Hebron.⁴⁵ Jerome describes a sacrificial altar constructed at the foot of the Oak. There the different groups commemorated their separate religious holidays: “the Jews honor the memory of their patriarchs; the Christians the appearance of God and his angels; one thinks that there the pagans express a cult of angels in the form of gods or of good demons. They offer to them libations of wine and incense; others immolate a cow, a he-goat, a sheep or a rooster, which they have fed carefully all year for the feast of this holiday.”⁴⁶ Relations between the three groups were strained even at that time, and the conflict increased symbolic violence at the site. Jerome complains

⁴³ The Jewish Encyclopedia: 1925, 312.

⁴⁴ p. 227.

⁴⁵ The Christians repeat this emphasis on Mamre today, as the Russian Orthodox Church maintains control over the oak and a church nearby. I found it interesting, after having been told by both Jewish and Muslim tour guides in Hebron that the Tomb of the Patriarchs was among the most important holy sites in the world, when the guide in the Russian Orthodox Church leaned towards me and whispered that *this* site was one of the most important in the world. It was as F. E. Peters has written regarding Jerusalem: “God’s place is *my* place, saith Emperor and Sultan. And if the omens are right and the bills, material and spiritual, are paid in full, it is just conceivable that God’s spokesman in that city will turn the phrase nicely reciprocal: the king’s place is also God’s place. . . .” (F. E. Peters, The Distant Shrine, (New York: AMS Press, 1993), 245.

⁴⁶ Quoted by Ermette Pierotti in Machpéla, (Lausanne, 1869), 19. Translation mine from French.

that during these pagan festivals it became impossible to draw water from the wells, “because the pagans dumped into them wine, perfumes, cakes, pieces of money, and lamps that they had lit. The crowd of those who came there was so great that a fair was established and continued over a long period, and Adrian caused to be sold there at dirt cheap prices, as in Gaza, an endless number of captive Jews. . . .”⁴⁷ The Emperor Constantine, after hearing his mother-in-law’s account of her pilgrimage to and the “superstitions” practiced at the Oak of Abraham, called on the Bishop Eusebius and other clergymen “to upset the altar to the false gods and to build a church in its place.”⁴⁸ Though this was “in principle the first formal Christian claim to a Jewish holy place,” the apparent intent according to Eusebius was “merely reclaiming Mamre from the pagans, who had built a temple there.”⁴⁹ Even so, it represents a reconstruction of the site, produced by religio-political conflict.

Despite this focus on Mamre, the tombs in the city below also received attention, and there is evidence that a Jewish synagogue may have been built near the Herodian structure and that by the 6th century a Byzantine church was constructed over the Cave itself, within the Herodian enclosure. A certain Antoninus Placentinus, also known as the Piacenza Pilgrim, visited that shrine sometime between 560 and 570 CE. From his description it appears that a physical arrangement existed similar to that which divides the building today. “Christians, he says, ‘entered from one side and Jews from another side, burning much frankincense.’ Nothing remains of this church, however. It must have been destroyed to accommodate a mosque that was built after the rise of Islam in the region.”⁵⁰ Before the final Muslim consolidation of power around 640 CE, however, the Persians ruled for a brief period from 614 to 629 CE. When the Muslims did conquer the area, initial relations between the local Jews and the Arab conquerors were friendly, according to a Christian Frankish account, which states that “the Jews showed the Arabs the entrance to the sanctuary which had been walled up

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Eusebius, qtd. in *ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁹ F. E. Peters, 31.

⁵⁰ Miller, 37.

by the Byzantines, and in return they were allowed to live in peace in the town and build a Synagogue next to the sanctuary.”⁵¹ Some even state that supervision of the Cave of Machpelah was given by the Muslims to the Jews, and that, as late as a few decades before the Crusades, “the [Jewish] official responsible for the area bore the title of ‘The Servant to the Fathers of the World.’”⁵²

Even so, the religious competition over space and site in Palestine which intensified with the addition of still another religion and which climaxed with the Crusades had the effect of accelerating the interpretation of Hebron’s importance for all three faiths. What occurred in Islam is perhaps better documented due to its later occurrence, but may be indicative of processes undergone with each previous series of religious competitions. Initially, the Arab conquest of Hebron was “passed over with no special remark” other than “the legend of the bestowal of the place on Tamim al-Dari and his descendants by the Prophet.”⁵³ Moreover, although Abraham is referred to frequently in the Koran, “there is no reference whatsoever to the Patriarch’s burial place at Hebron either in the Koran or, as far as one can see, even in the far-flung standard Sunna.”⁵⁴ However, during the first two centuries of Arab control, the city underwent a process of Islamic sanctification, whereby it was connected initially to the memory of the Prophet Abraham, the “first Muslim.” The town became known to the Muslims as “al-Khalil” or “The Friend”, an allusion to Abraham’s title, “The Friend of God.”⁵⁵ Nevertheless by the 8th century CE, “the older Biblical traditions were no longer sufficient for an Islam that had to confront both Christianity and Judaism; the Islamised places had to be connected to the founder of the faith,” the Prophet Mohammed. Similarly, as the importance attributed to

⁵¹ Encyclopedia of Islam, (1978), s.v. “Al-Khalil,” 956.

⁵² Encyclopedia Judaica, 673.

⁵³ Encyclopedia of Islam, 956. A legend which may nevertheless have played the important role of property entitlement deed, paralleling the function of the biblical story of Caleb’s receipt of Hebron after the Israelite conquest. Indeed, it is referred to frequently in Muslim pilgrimage literature from the post-Crusader period, perhaps to strengthen Muslim claims to the site immediately following a period of intense competition over it. The story of Caleb is occasionally referred to by Jews today as another facet of their claim to Hebron; I have not heard the story of Tamim al-Dari invoked to bolster Palestinian claims today.

⁵⁴ Charles Matthews, Palestine, Mohammedan Holy Land, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), vi.

⁵⁵ Muslims today often refer to this meaning as a means of supporting their assertions of the significance of the town to Islam. The name Hebron is also related to the Hebrew word for friend.

Jerusalem increased, commemorative narratives or “local traditions developed very rapidly connecting the sanctity of Jerusalem with that of al-Khalil, enhanced no doubt by the interest in establishing the Islamic holiness of Palestine *vis-à-vis* Christianity and in attracting pilgrims and settlers to it.”⁵⁶ Soon the tale of Mohammed’s night vision incorporated Hebron, as well as Mount Sinai, as a resting place on the sacred Night Journey.

Hebron, like Jerusalem, was captured in 1099 by the Crusaders, who converted the mosque into a church and changed the name of the town to Saint Abraham. The Crusaders forbade Jews and Muslims from worshipping in the church, and according to some accounts even expelled the Jews.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, both Muslim and Jewish pilgrims continued to visit Hebron during this period, including the Jew Benjamin of Tudela and the Muslim ‘Ali b. abi Bakr al-Harawi, both of whom visited the town in 1171 CE. Ali al-Harawi recounts a series of investigations of the cave area undertaken by the Christians around 1119 CE, led by a monk named Arnoul, and it appears as though this event may have sparked a proliferation of folkloric tales about the underground caves and have created a new emphasis in the pilgrimage accounts on their exploration. In 1168 the town was elevated to the rank of an episcopal see, but in 1188 CE control reverted to the Muslims after Salah al-Din (Saladin) conquered Hebron.

Despite the return of the city to Muslim jurisdiction, the conflict of Crusades had left their imprint on the significance attributed the shrine. Although under Salah al-Din, all Peoples of the Book were allowed to visit the shrine (for a fee), and “the structure of the building was retained, the building itself was converted once more into a mosque.”⁵⁸ Even this version of inter-religious tolerance was soon done away with, however, perhaps impelled by increased religious tension of the post-Crusade period as well as the civil wars which engulfed the Muslim Ayyubids and caused Hebron to shift hands seven times in as many decades.⁵⁹ Thus

⁵⁶ Encyclopedia of Islam, 956.

⁵⁷ If they were indeed expelled at this time, one can suppose that small numbers of Jews began to move back to Hebron around 1260, “at which time the Jewish settlement apparently began to be perceptibly renewed.” Encyclopedia Judaica, 230.

⁵⁸ Miller, 37.

⁵⁹ Encyclopedia of Islam, 958.

“when Mamluk rule was established in Egypt and Syria [ca. 1260 CE], the sanctuaries of both Jerusalem and Hebron were given particular attention” and in 1266 CE an order was issued “banning the Christians and Jews from entering the sanctuary. . . . This ban continued in force until Israel occupied Hebron in 1967.”⁶⁰ The Jews and Christians were permitted to ascend to the seventh step along the eastern wall and to insert petitions into a hole in the wall. The conflict of the Crusades further left its mark on the folklore which developed around Hebron. Julian Obermann, in his foreword to a translation of two 14th century Muslim pilgrimage treatises, explains that a “cycle of pious sayings and stories. . . , centered around the Cave of Machpelah. . . developed under the impact of Christian pilgrimage, and may have been further stimulated as a reaction to the Crusades. . . .” These two pilgrimage treatises were written and widely circulated, advocating the virtues of pilgrimage to the Tomb of Abraham. One, entitled The Book of Inciting Desire to Visit Abraham the Friend of Allah, was written in 1351 CE by Abu ‘l-Fida’ Ishak al-Khalili, the then preacher of the Hebron mosque, and is dedicated solely to Abraham and his tomb in Hebron. According to one source quoted by Abu ‘l-Fida’, Allah himself said:

“O Habra [Hebron]! Thou art my brightness. . . ; thou art my holiness; in thee are the stores of my knowledge, and upon thee have I sent down my mercy and blessings. Unto thee shall I gather my servants of the children of My Friend. And blessed is he who toucheth his face to thee in prayer! I shall give him to drink of the presence of my holiness, and I shall keep him safe from the terror at my resurrection, and I shall make him to dwell in Paradise by my mercy. And blessed art thou, and blessed! I am burying in thee My Friend!”⁶¹

By the 14th century, too, these tales constructed connections between Hebron and the Ka’bah of Mecca, claiming that Abraham and his son Ishmael built the latter shrine, which “is significant also in that it shows that Moslems regard Palestine as worthy to be ranked with the most holy places of their history and faith.”⁶² A pilgrimage to the Tomb of Abraham was also

⁶⁰ Ibid., 960.

⁶¹ Quoted in Matthews, 120.

⁶² Quoted in ibid., xiv.

touted as the “equivalent to the Pilgrimage” to the Prophet’s Tomb in Medina,⁶³ and the ceremonies that grew up around the former mirrored those practiced at the latter.⁶⁴

When the Ottomans occupied Hebron in 1517 CE, they made it an administrative center within the *sandjak* of Jerusalem. Like the Mamluks before them, “the Ottoman sultans regarded the repair and the maintenance of the sanctuaries in it and in Jerusalem, as well as elsewhere in the country, as a major obligation. Large numbers of pilgrims from all over the empire and from other countries visited them and had to be protected and provided for.”⁶⁵ A tradition which had been established several centuries before, that of distributing the *simat al-Khalili*, a daily meal of lentils and bread in honor of Abraham’s hospitality, apparently continued, and grains were even imported from Egypt in a time of drought at the beginning of the Ottoman rule. Certain modern Jewish historians see the Ottoman Period (1517-1917) as “a definite turn for the better in the situation of the Jews of Hebron.”⁶⁶ Towards the beginning of the Turkish rule, the Jewish population grew when “some of those Jews who were expelled from Spain went to Hebron, probably contributing by their strength and wealth to the spiritual and material enrichment of the settlement.”⁶⁷ In 1540 the town’s first rabbi, Malkiel Ashkenazi, moved to Hebron, marking “the foundation of the modern [Jewish] community.”⁶⁸

Yet throughout this period both the Jews and the Muslims of Hebron “continued to suffer even more intensely from both the Bedouins and the continuous warfare between the Kays and Yaman factions.”⁶⁹ In fact, “Hebron and its vicinity were at the mercy of the Bedouins until modern times. . . . On the other hand, being the only urban centre in the vicinity and the main market place of the area, the Bedouins usually refrained from attacking

⁶³ Quoted in *ibid.*, 119.

⁶⁴ *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 957.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 960.

⁶⁶ *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 230.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁶⁸ *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 312.

⁶⁹ *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 960.

Hebron openly, and economically the city was prosperous. In the closing years of the 18th century and during the Napoleonic wars. . . , Hebron flourished as one of the most important commercial centres in Palestine.”⁷⁰ Even so, one Jewish historian, writing around 1760, noted the large numbers of Jews leaving Jerusalem and commented that “life is also difficult in Hebron, Safed and Tiberias. . . . I can tell you that in fifty years’ time no Ashkenazis will be living in this land any more.”⁷¹ It would appear the times of economic (and political) well-being and strength for the Jews and the Arabs in Hebron have not usually coincided.

Similarly, this was a time of Christian weakness in terms of presence and power in Hebron, and neither Western nor Arab Christians exerted significant control over sacred space during this time. As with the Jews, they were not allowed into the mosque, or Haram Ibrahimi, although with a firman from the sultan the Prince of Wales was able to enter it in 1882. Although Christian pilgrims did continue to visit the city, it appears that the waning of Christian control over the Tomb area in Hebron was accompanied by a proliferation or increase in the prominence of other Christian holy sites in the area. As we have noted previously, beginning some time before the 19th century the Christians began to shift their focus of worship back to the Oak of Abraham in nearby Mamre. Moreover, although the site does not seem to be noted in the pilgrimage accounts of early Christians, two Christian travelogues from the second half of the 19th century mention a “Village of the Virgin” a short distance from Hebron, “where the Holy Family is said to have halted on the journey to Egypt.”⁷² While this site may never have obtained the pilgrimage level of the Oak and the Tomb of Abraham, it is interesting that it began to gain prominence as Christian presence in Hebron proper diminished. Around the same time, the Christian historiographies written on Hebron similarly reflect the periods of Christian dominance of the site. For example, a chronology provided in the Christian authored Machpéla has frequent dates for Christian period (i.e. 325, 1100, 1102,

⁷⁰ Ibid., 961.

⁷¹ F. E. Peters, 221.

⁷² John Fulton, The Beautiful Land. Palestine, (New York: T. Whitaker, 1891), 147.

1167, 1187, and 1192 CE) but lists no events between the Muslim capture of Hebron in 1192, and 1834 CE .

In general the 19th and early 20th centuries were periods of calamity for Hebron. With the Egyptian occupation of Palestine by Ibrahim Pasha from 1831 to 1840, “[t]he town began to deteriorate.” Hebronites took an active part in the 1834 revolt against the Pasha, and as a result the town “was besieged by the Egyptians, its citadel destroyed by cannon fire, and it was occupied and sacked.”⁷³ Three years later, an earthquake caused additional damage to the town, and in the 1840s a rebel from nearby Dura killed the Egyptian governor of Hebron and proclaimed himself governor. Although the Egyptians destroyed and looted the town in his pursuit, he was not caught, and for many years he “terrorised Hebron, especially the Jews and Christians in the town, from whom he used to extort heavy taxes.”⁷⁴ Of this “disastrous chapter in its history,” a Western commentator writing around the turn of the century felt that Hebron’s “trade has not yet recovered” from the terrible blow of repeated destruction.⁷⁵ Moreover, while the numbers of the Jewish community in Hebron increased with the addition of Habbad Hasidim in the early 19th century, and while two yeshivot opened in Hebron around the turn of the 20th century, nevertheless by 1910 there were only 700 Jews in Hebron. In 1929 the same number was found, out of a total population of 18,000.⁷⁶

The opening of the Jewish yeshivot, and with that the immigration of several young foreign Jewish scholars to Hebron, may not have been viewed as an entirely positive development by the local Arab population. The newcomers’ arrivals coincided with the beginnings of Zionist immigration and the start of the British Mandate period and subsequent Balfour Declaration, and thus they were likely seen as Zionists by the Arabs. The development of Arab nationalism throughout Palestine likely encouraged this perspective. As was the case with the Christian historiographies of the 19th century, both

⁷³ Encyclopedia of Islam, 961.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 961.

⁷⁵ The Holy Land.

⁷⁶ Encyclopedia Judaica, 235.

Arab and Jewish historiographies written a few years prior to the riots of 1929 also choose to highlight the events important to their separate groups. Thus in the 1925 edition of The Jewish Encyclopedia, the history of Hebron that is depicted is one of the Jewish history of Hebron. Almost no mention is made of the Christian or Muslim periods except in reference to Jewish pilgrims or communities there. Similarly, the Supreme Moslem Council published a brochure on the shrine in 1928. In it the periodization is divided as such: The Pre-Islamic Period; After the Islamic Conquest; During the Crusades; and After the Crusades. Thus the tendency of a group to highlight its own history is not only prevalent during times of intense political or nationalist conflict.

IV. Conflict over Hebron Since 1929

A. Hebron Massacre of 1929 to War of 1967

Although the Tomb/Mosque in Hebron witnessed a series of repeated conflicts throughout history, and although historiographic selection was evident even before 1929, the massacre and evacuation of the Jewish population at that time created a definite change in both the nature of the conflict and the nature of the reconstructions it has engendered. As was said earlier, before then the religious aspect of the site was in no way completely devoid of all nationalistic or political dimensions. Nationalism and religion have always been at least partially convergent, especially in Zionism and Arab nationalism. Nevertheless, before 1929 and even during the course of events leading up to the riots of 1929, the political discourse concerning the shrine was primarily local in level. That is, the shrine held a certain level of political significance as a local institutional and community symbol. The Arab town had grown up around the shrine, indicating its role as a community focal point. The Hebron municipality, since its establishment around 1910, has used a depiction of the building in the municipal stamp.⁷⁷ Likewise, in the early 20th century the letterhead of the Chief Rabbinate of Hebron bore a sketch of the Tomb, which emphasized any resemblance to a synagogue the building might have (although the two minarets and the crescent moon atop the shrine remained). In some cases the words “And the covenant of the fathers to the sons will be remembered” arched over the sketch.⁷⁸ Yet despite these political dimensions, the disputes over the sacred space and time of the shrine rarely surpassed the local level in periods prior to 1929.

But with the acceleration of nationalist tension prior to the riots of 1929, the meaning of this and other sacred space and time in Palestine began to be incorporated into the emerging nationalist discourses. Approximately three weeks before the riots, the Palestine Post carried

⁷⁷ Nazmi Al-Jubeh, Personal interview, 3 August 1995.

⁷⁸ Oded Avisar, ed. *Sefer Hebron*. (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 1970).

an article stating that a number of Jewish school girls from Jerusalem had been assaulted by a group of Arab boys "when they came with their teachers to visit the Patriarchs' Cave," compelling the party "to return without seeing the Cave."⁷⁹ The occurrence of school field trips to the site indicates the inclusion of the shrine in some form of institutionalized secular or religious education, and the passage hints at possible fermenting conflict, although the article implies that the incident did not occur on the grounds of the shrine itself. For many in Hebron, however, the first significant reverberations of the wider nationalist dispute were only felt a few weeks later, when the rapid succession of Tisha B'Av (Aug. 14-15), Mouled el Nabi (the birthday of Mohammed, Aug. 15-16), and the Jewish Sabbath (Aug. 16-17) created a merging and clashing of sacred time, and a dispute broke out in Jerusalem at the Temple Mount/*al-Haram al-Sharif*. Thus in his testimony to the investigative commission after the riots, Rabbi Meir Franco, a member of the "Old Yishuv" born in Jerusalem and a resident of Hebron for the previous 50 years, stated that the Hebronite Jews and Arabs had "very good relations" throughout his entire habitation at Hebron, until "Friday, the 16th of August, when we began to notice tension and bad relations."⁸⁰

The investigative commission also determined that to an extent the Arab Muslim leadership used the Ibrahimi Mosque to rally the Hebronite Arabs. Aref el Aref, an Arab government official in Beersheba who himself was charged but acquitted with inciting protests in Jerusalem in 1920-21, testified that on Friday Aug. 16 (Mouled el Nabi), certain sheikhs gave speeches in the Mosque protesting the actions of the Jews as regards "two matters -- the Burak and the desires which the Jews have on it, and the Balfour Declaration."⁸¹ Although Aref felt the worshippers left the Friday prayers without particular agitation, a demonstration led by two sheikhs proceeded from the Ibrahimi Mosque to the office of Mr. Abdullah Kardous, the District Officer of Hebron, in protest of the situation at the *Haram*/Western Wall

⁷⁹ "School Girls Assaulted at Hebron," *Palestine Post*, 8 April 1929, 3.

⁸⁰ *Palestine Commission on the Disturbances of August, 1929*, vol. 2 (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1930), 23 December 1929.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 6 December 1929.

in Jerusalem. Descriptions of the size of this procession vary, however, from a group of some five men plus tag-along children to nearly 100 people. Though it is thus difficult to assess its political importance, nevertheless it does indicate the linking and meshing of religious and nationalist time and space.

Even so, the subject of both the alleged speeches and the demonstration indicates that the shrine in Hebron apparently was not the primary concern. Instead, for Muslims the sacred places of Jerusalem were made the focus of anti-Zionist and Palestinian nationalist discourse, as the Mufti called upon Muslims all over Palestine to defend the al-Aqsa Mosque from the Zionist danger. Thus the day that the riots broke out across Palestine, Muslims from Hebron and the surrounding villages left by the busloads to go protect the Jerusalem shrine, indicating that the Ibrahimi Mosque was not deemed in great danger (and so probably had not been a focal point in the nationalist discourse and conflict thus far), or if it was, nevertheless was not deemed as important as the Jerusalem sacred sites. Moreover, those that did attack the Hebron Jews appear to have been rallied with references to the Jewish danger to Jerusalem's (not Hebron's) holy sites. Thus a Mr. Haim Bagayo of Hebron claimed that on August 23rd he heard a certain Sheikh Taleb Markha preaching in Hebron that "God and Mohammed are calling upon you to revenge the blood of your brethren that has been shed in Jerusalem."⁸² Despite the primary emphasis on Jerusalem, however, the Ibrahimi Mosque *was* watched by British policemen in the week preceding the riots, and though no inciting speeches or actions were detected, the British apparently assumed that that space had been or might be used politically. This indicates that although not as pronounced or developed as that of the Temple Mount/*al-Haram al-Sharif* in Jerusalem, the process of the nationalization of the conflict in Hebron had indeed begun.

For the Jews of Hebron the Tomb of the Patriarchs was likewise not the sole factor in the community ethos and the initial interpretation of the riots. To them, the yeshivot and synagogues represented their sacred space and their establishment in the land, moreso than the

⁸² Ibid., 23 December 1929.

Tomb, since they were not allowed within the Haram enclosure. The Slobodka Yeshiva had been newly built only five years earlier, and by 1929 had attracted 194 scholars, mostly from Eastern Europe and the United States. At the founding of the Yeshiva, "the elders of the local Arabs came to the management and expressed their satisfaction that such an institution was founded in Hebron."⁸³ It appears, however, that by 1929 the presence of large numbers of foreign students may have caused the Yeshiva to become the focal point of Arab violence. Although it was probably not a great national symbol in the minds of Hebron Jews, who were of the Old Yishuv and not great supporters of "secular" Zionism, to the Hebron Arabs it may have been a physical manifestation of the Zionist encroachment on Palestine. On Friday August 23, two Hebron rabbis attempted to lodge a protest against "the spying that was going on round the Yeshiva as it was rumoured [amongst the Arabs] that the Yeshiva boys were going to attack the Arabs. . . , [the rabbis] saying the students at the Yeshiva are people who have nothing to do with politics."⁸⁴ Later that day, it was this Yeshiva that was the first object of mob attack, when two students there were killed. Furthermore, according to Officer Kardous, "on Saturday morning the mob was the whole time making for the Yeshiva."⁸⁵ By the end of the riots, about one-third of the more than 60 Jewish fatalities were Yeshiva students or other recent immigrants to the town, all of whom may have been perceived as Zionists by the Hebronite Arabs. The Yeshiva and synagogues were burnt and destroyed.

On the whole, then, the religious space of the Slobodka Yeshiva served as an important focus for nationalist violence and physical reconstruction in the Hebron riots in a way that the Tomb/Mosque did not. Although Raymond Cafferata, the Assistant District Superintendent of Police at Hebron, asserted that the Friday afternoon attack "was not a deliberate attack on the building itself,"⁸⁶ this kind of symbolic and material violence is significant, laden with the possibility for the reconstruction of space and history. In the aftermath of the riots the process

⁸³ "The Hebron Yeshiva," Palestine Post, 6 September 1929, 4.

⁸⁴ Palestine Commission on the Disturbances of August, 1929, 23 December 1929.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 7 November 1929.

of reconstruction accelerated, on both physical and historiographical levels. Attempts at the reconstruction of the physical/concrete came first. About a week after the riots an announcement appeared in the Palestine Post of a drive started in the United States among Orthodox Jews to rebuild the Yeshiva. Already on October 13 of the same year an editorial appeared in the Post calling for both the "Mosque of Omar" and the "Hebron Mosque" to "be made public. Do away with this inaccessibility. Open the door and let in the wide world."⁸⁷ Though this physical reconstruction of sacred space was hardly a new idea amongst the Jews who had been barred since the 13th century from the Ibrahimi Mosque, the riots and massacre surely substantiated or legitimized the idea. One month after the riots the Post printed this statement by Menasseh Manny, "who went through the horror of Hebron":

"We shall not abandon the graves of our ancestors to unclean hands nor shall we leave the graves of our martyrs desolate. We shall return to Hebron. . .to rebuild her ruins. The new Hebron which we shall build, will be a monument to those sixty-four martyrs who fell within her walls. We shall show that what was meant for our day of doom shall be the day of our rebirth. Our House of Prayer which we built within her is desecrated. We shall build a new House of Prayer. From the cupola of our synagogue we shall greet peacefully the muezzin calling faithful Moslems from the minaret to prayer. That minaret which towers over the Tomb of our Patriarchs."⁸⁸

This statement combines the commemoration of the new Jewish martyrs with the process of reconstructing profaned sacred space, as well as an awareness of the symbolism behind the actual design of that space (i.e. the minaret towering over the Tomb).

Although, as the above statement foresees, the massacre provided material for the development of a Jewish national myth, the incorporation of the religious site into nationalist discourse and the historiographical reconstruction of the site were somewhat slower developments. Indeed, the main historiographic reconstruction of the periods up to and including 1929 occurred after 1967, which we will explore later. Nevertheless, the British trials and commission abetted the integration of the site into nationalist discourse and conflict. It is apparent from the records of the investigation and the trials following the riots of 1929 that

⁸⁷ p. 2.

⁸⁸ "Hebron survivor says, 'We will build a new Hebron,'" Palestine Post, 24 September 1929, 2,4.

the British thought the contest over holy sites to be of great importance, although in the trial proceedings themselves this idea is only weakly corroborated as regards Hebron. Although a small group of Jews attempted to resettle in Hebron in 1931,⁸⁹ the effort lasted only until 1936 when the outbreak of the Great Arab Revolt prompted the British to evacuate the community. According to the Jewish "Palestine and Near East Economic Magazine" of 1932, "the city of Abraham" had "not changed since the times of the ancients -- nor has the character of its inhabitants," who along with the inhabitants of Nablus the magazine describes as primitives, "dervishes, advancing. . . in wild, swaying hordes, tapping drums of ominous sound, waving unsheathed swords, one of them every few yards borne aloft on shoulders and swung from side to side to shout exhortation in fierce staccato phrases to the mob which hurls the words back in triumphant answer."⁹⁰ Though the author of this tract obviously takes an entirely negative view of the Arab Hebronites, it is interesting that no emphasis is made on Jewish presence, even though Jews were living in Hebron at the time. The Tomb/Mosque is likewise left completely unmentioned (although a drawing of it from 1847 is included), perhaps due to the subsiding of the nationalist debate.

But as the nationalist conflict resurfaced in the late 1930s and simmered throughout the early 1940s, attention was given to the Hebron area by a small body of Orthodox Jewish settlers. After several attempts to settle in the general area, the Kvutzat Avraham Pioneering Group was approached by the Zionist settlement authorities and asked to settle Kfar Etzion, a few kilometers from Hebron. The group did so in April of 1943, but only after an extensive debate which took into consideration the difficult agricultural conditions, the scarce water sources, and the "unruly" Arab inhabitants of the region, weighing these factors against the "privilege to re-establish a Jewish settlement between Jerusalem, City of David, and Hebron,

⁸⁹ The 1931 census found 135 Jews in Hebron. Ghazi Falah, "Recent Jewish Colonisation in Hebron," in *The Impact of Gush Emunim*, ed. David Newman (London: Croom and Helm, 1985), 246.

⁹⁰ "Tourist Number 32," *Palestine and Near East Economic Magazine*, ed. Evserov and Torokor, vol. vi, nos. 23-24 (Tel Aviv: Mischar W'Taasia Publishing and Exhibition Co. Ltd.), 455, 462.

City of the Patriarchs.”⁹¹ In addition to this desire to reestablish the former Jewish presence in Hebron, they also saw themselves as Israelite-like warriors in the process of “conquest and settlement,” attempting to strike new roots in the area and not just to revive old ones. Thus their claims to the land relied both on biblical ties as well as the issue of the severed Jewish presence in the area. Within a short period of time they were launched into the Arab-Jewish conflict that preceded the declaration of the state of Israel, and this region -- the Etzion Bloc well-known today in Israel military legend -- became the center of many fierce battles. The city of Hebron, though not actual site to the clashes, because of its proximity and size was important politically. The desire to compensate for the events of 1929 was a factor in the minds of certain of the Jewish combatants, when in April of 1948 the Mayor of Hebron, Saleb Jaber, published a statement calling on the Jewish settlements to come to peace with the Arabs by giving up their arms and undertaking not to attack again. In response the diarist “Yisakhar” wrote: “Has the Mayor of Hebron forgotten the fate of the Jewish community of his town, during the bloody riots of 1929?” Even so, the fighters saw themselves less in the vanguard of Hebron than of Jerusalem. Yisakhar continues: “The settlements around Jerusalem, ‘the islands in the Arab sea,’ can serve only as auxiliary outposts in the Jerusalem campaign.”⁹² Thus Hebron was again secondary to Jerusalem. For the Arabs of the region, the issue was somewhat more internal. Hebron was the regional political and economic center, and thus after the battle at Nebi Daniel, a Jewish armored car that had been capture was paraded through Hebron. Likewise, many other rallies for the battles in the general area were held in Hebron.⁹³

After the establishment of the state of Israel and the ending of the war between Israel and the Arab states, control of Hebron passed to Jordanian hands. In some senses, “the *nakba* (catastrophe) of 1948, which deprived Hebron of some sixteen villages of its hinterland even

⁹¹ Dov Knohl, ed. Siege in the Hills of Hebron: The Battle of the Etzion Bloc. (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1958)., 36.

⁹² Ibid., 208-9.

⁹³ Ibid.

as it brought some 70,000 refugees into the city. . .[was] without question, the defining event in the modern history of Hebron.”⁹⁴ Yet without the Jewish presence this period remained a relatively still one, in terms of historical or physical reconstruction of the site, and likewise in terms of violent incidents at the site. For the Arabs, Hebron remained under rightful Muslim control. Although a “list of Jewish property, including buildings, shops, apartments, rooms, yards and plots of land” had been prepared by Jews in 1946 and presented for re-registration, the war had “put a stop to this procedure and the property fell into the hands of the Jordan government as enemy property.”⁹⁵ During this period, the old Jewish Cemetery was destroyed, the tombstones carried off to be recycled as building material. It is difficult to determine whether its destruction was a gradual wearing down and eventual demolition with little political intent, or whether it was a deliberate act of symbolic and material violence meant to assert political control by profaning the religious space of another.⁹⁶ While Hebron remained important economically, the shrine itself subsided as a political or nationalist symbol for the Arabs, although sketches of the Ibrahimi Mosque were used on Jordanian national stamps issued in 1953 and 1963. These stamps reflect the shrine’s continued connection to the legitimization process. At the same time, the town’s economy was severely affected by the severance of its ties with Beersheba and Gaza. “When it ceased to be a crossroad, thousands left. None of its intellectuals who studied abroad returned home and presumably none of the some 3,000 Hebronite university students now studying in Arab countries and Europe are planning to come back.”⁹⁷ This loss of human capital may have further sapped the religious-national debate.

For the Jews in Palestine, Hebron had become after 1936 a place lost, a kind of mythical and untouchable area, and this identity was only reinforced after the establishment of the state in 1948. For much of the Israeli leadership, Hebron held little political or nationalist

⁹⁴ Sellick, 73.

⁹⁵ Quoted in Falah, 247.

⁹⁶ In either case the destruction of the cemetery became a focal point of Jewish commemoration after the Six Day War. This will be examined in greater depth later.

⁹⁷ Jerusalem Post, 5 April 1968.

significance, and it was traded to Jordan in the secret negotiations between Golda Meir and King Abdullah. For most Jews, who “couldn’t get to Hebron. . . , it became almost a mythological place. When you can’t get to a place it becomes a kind of myth.”⁹⁸ Although “the militaristic wing of the Labor Party always wanted to. . . ‘straighten the line to the Jordan River,’ . . . this was sort of a dream. . . it was a rubric of a dream.”⁹⁹ The statesman Abba Eban noted in a letter dated July 21, 1980, that “during the twenty years of Israeli statehood prior to 1967, there is hardly any nostalgic literature about Hebron, Shechem, Bethel, or other places that lay outside Israel’s jurisdiction.”¹⁰⁰ The few references to the site were primarily religious in focus, and even the events of 1929 slipped into the back recesses of Israeli collective memory as the nationalist conflict simmered down.¹⁰¹ In the place of the Western Wall and Tomb of the Patriarchs, the Israeli-controlled Mt. Zion became the primary national holy site. As Dr. Sh. Z. Cahana, Director General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, explained in a text published by the Mount Zion Committee a few years prior to the Six Day War, several

“sacred sites of Judaism in the Holy Land, such as the Wailing Wall, Rachel’s Tomb and the Cave of Machpelah, remained outside the boundaries of the State of Israel, and are no longer accessible to Jewish pilgrims. But many places. . . have remained within the territory of Israel, and continue as before to attract pilgrims from abroad and from Israel. First and foremost among these places is Mount Zion, eternal beacon of Jewish spiritual life. . . . [T]he holy places of Israel, which have helped to keep the flame alive for 2000 years, must and will be restored as national symbols and religious landmarks of supreme importance.”¹⁰²

The last statement of Cahana’s quote illustrates the type of generalized, non-specific rhetoric which linked national and religious symbols prior to the Israeli victory in 1967. One case of

⁹⁸ Yossi Klein Halevi, Telephone interview, 2 August 1995.

⁹⁹ Yehuda Litani, Personal interview, 11 August 1995.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in William Davies, *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), 143.

¹⁰¹ One notable exception is the 1958 compilation of the diaries of the Etzion Bloc fighters, in which the editor Dov Knohl used fairly nationalistic language, describing Hebron and the surrounding area as the cradle of the Hebrew nation, and emphasizing the historical “density of the [Jewish] population and intense cultivation. . . by the Jewish farmers.” (Knohl, 25)

¹⁰² *A Pilgrim’s Sketchbook of Mount Zion and the Holy Places of Israel*. Mount Zion Committee. Jerusalem, n.d. approx. 1966.

similar discourse, however, was after the War seized by radical religious nationalists as a prophetic call to return to these sites. In a “festive sermon” on the eve of Independence Day in May 1967, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, whose teachings later inspired much of the messianic and fundamentalist ideology of the Israeli religious radical right, “bemoaned the partition of historic Eretz Yisrael and the inability of the Jew to return to the holy cities of Hebron and Nablus. His faithful disciples were told that the situation was intolerable and must not last. When just three weeks later, in June 1967, some of them reached the Wailing Wall as soldiers and found themselves citizens of an enlarged Israel, the graduates of [Kook’s yeshiva] Merkaz Harav were convinced that a genuine spirit of prophecy had come over their rabbi. . .[who] was elevated to the status of a charismatic guru.”¹⁰³ Thus, while the religio-nationalist discourse surrounding Hebron and other “lost” shrines may have decreased between 1948 and 1967, nevertheless Sprinzak’s observation demonstrates how this religious discourse both utilized nationalist terminology and context and was later interpreted to support such nationalist discourse.

B. War of 1967 to Outbreak of Intifada

In June of 1967, Israel captured the West Bank in the Six Day War, marching into Hebron on June 8th. Interestingly enough, immediately following the capture of the Hebron region, it is the Etzion Bloc area which the Jerusalem Post describes as “a site of special significance to us [the Israelis]. . . , of which we have many memories from the days of the War of Independence.”¹⁰⁴ Hebron is not even mentioned. On June 9, 1967, the Post did carry an article touting the Mayor of Hebron’s statement that Jordan’s “Hussein was mad,” with a one-paragraph reference to the entrance of Jewish forces into the Tomb.¹⁰⁵ Within a few days David Ben-Gurion was urging “the immediate re-settlement of Jews in the Old City,

¹⁰³ Ehud Sprinzak, The Ascendancy of Israel’s Radical Right, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 44.

¹⁰⁴ 8 June 1967.

¹⁰⁵ Jerusalem Post, 9 June 1967.

Hebron and the Etzion Bloc. . . , [saying] that such a movement would demonstrate to the world that Israel was resolute in her decision to ensure possession of these areas that were populated by many Jews until their expulsion in 1948 by the Jordanians.”¹⁰⁶ Ben-Gurion's conflation of the expulsion of Jews from Hebron in 1929 and the loss of certain Jewish areas in the 1948 War demonstrates that the events of the latter date and not of 1929 were the primary focus in the immediate collective memory of the majority of Israelis and their leaders. The military victory was thus emphasized more than religio-historical events.

Immediately thereafter the physical reconstruction of sacred space began, and since that time the Israelis have sought to gradually Judify the Mosque/Tomb itself, as well as the town of Hebron, both of which are places built primarily by Muslims. This was done and continues to be done by means of actual physical changes to the Mosque, by reorganizing the division of religious time between the two groups, by visual representations of the Mosque which Judify its appearance, as well as by the reinterpretation and reconstruction of the shrine's history. While both the Israelis and the Palestinians have participated in this process, the actions of the former are more apparent and more substantial, as they have held final control over the site. In the symbolic manifestations of their new control and presence that initially formed the Israeli religious and national leadership's response to the space, the reference point was repeatedly the events of 1929. Immediately the "heads of the Hebron Yeshiva in Jerusalem. . . asked the Premier and the Defense and Religious Affairs Ministers to permit them to establish a branch in the city from which the yeshiva was banished after the 1929 massacre. Twenty-four unarmed Rabbis and students of the yeshiva were among the victims of the massacre.”¹⁰⁷ The June 13, 1967, edition of the Post reported that “firm authority [had been] imposed in Hebron” because, according to S/A Ofer, the town “‘knows it has a debt to settle’ -- an allusion to the notorious anti-Jewish riots and massacre of Jews of Hebron in 1929.”¹⁰⁸ The Ministry of Religious Affairs asserted its control by closing the mosque “for urgent repairs” and by

¹⁰⁶ Jerusalem Post, 12 June 1967.

¹⁰⁷ Jerusalem Post, 13 June 1967, 6.

¹⁰⁸ p. 3.

prohibiting, as a fire hazard, the lighting of candles in the building.¹⁰⁹ The Minister of Religious Affairs, Mr. Zerah Warhaftig, visited Hebron on a Friday in June and discovered the destruction of the old Jewish Cemetery that had occurred during the Jordanian rule. "The gravestones have vanished and the area has been ploughed up and sown with wheat. The mass grave of those butchered in the pogrom of 1929 has also disappeared. Gravestones from the cemetery were used in building a wall which was held together with mortar containing human bones."¹¹⁰ A month later the religious affairs unit of the military government completed a survey of ancient Jewish tombs in the West Bank, locating in Hebron a plethora of tombs, including those of "The Patriarchs in Hebron; Ruth the Moabite and Jesse father of King David, near the Jewish Cemetery of Hebron; Athniel Ben Kenaz and his disciples and Abner, King Saul's Chief of Staff; and Ish-Boshet, Saul's son near the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron" as well as others in the West Bank, many of which are today also focuses of conflict. The Unit "recommended that the sites be repaired and prominently marked as a guide to tourists."¹¹¹ These repairs can be seen as a means of reconstructing and of asserting control over religious space.

One cannot assume that the response was merely political propaganda and that the enthusiasm was only felt among the Israeli leaders. Holy places in general became the objects of spontaneous mass pilgrimage and attention, as the country participated in an informal commemoration of their victory in the Six Day War. A sketch by a serviceman of the Tombs of Isaac and Rebecca in the Mosque, with IDF soldiers looking somewhat out of place with their boots and machine guns amidst the Islamic decorations, appeared in the June 13th edition of the Post, thus adding to the sense among the Israelis that this was a Jewish site.¹¹² Four days after the War ended, a Jewish wedding was held in the square outside the Mosque/

¹⁰⁹ Jerusalem Post, 19 June 1967.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹¹ Jerusalem Post, 24 July 1967, 4.

¹¹² p. 4.

Tomb,¹¹³ and a month later the "compound of the Tomb of the Patriarchs" (i.e. the Mosque) was closed to the Muslims for an afternoon, so that eight weddings of Israeli servicemen could be performed. The latter occasion was announced twice in the Post, "a large number of guests [were] expected to travel down,"¹¹⁴ and a photo of the ceremony was also printed afterwards.¹¹⁵ Soon tour guides were being "familiarized with West Bank sites," with "[p]articular emphasis. . .laid on the Christian, Moslem, and Jewish holy places in Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron."¹¹⁶ On June 26, 1967, "at least 1500 Israeli tourists visited the West Bank area. . .in organized bus tours and private cars. The main sites visited were the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, the Etzion Bloc and Rachel's Tomb."¹¹⁷ The attention formerly given Mt. Zion, which was quickly superseded by the Western Wall as the primary religious-national symbol, was also diverted to Hebron when in July the Alyn Society for Crippled Children, whose custom it was over the years to celebrate the children's bar-mitzvahs on Mt. Zion, "decided to take its class of 12-year-olds to the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron."¹¹⁸ Moreover, at a ceremony at Jabotinsky's grave on Mt. Hertzl, "Revisionist veterans brought handfuls of earth to the grave from various parts of the West Bank -- the Mount of Olives, the Jordan fords where Jabotinsky led the Jewish League 50 years ago, Rachel's Tomb and Hebron."¹¹⁹ A traditional blowing of the shofar, marking the beginning of the Jewish New Year, filled the mosque again with hundreds of Jewish celebrants in October of that year. Each of these public ceremonies/commemorations held in Hebron helped to more substantially integrate this site into the nationalist discourse.

¹¹³ Avisar, 506.

¹¹⁴ Jerusalem Post, 17 July 1967.

¹¹⁵ Jerusalem Post 21 July 1967; Avisar, 506.

¹¹⁶ Jerusalem Post, 20 June 1967, 6.

¹¹⁷ Jerusalem Post, 27 June 1967.

¹¹⁸ Jerusalem Post.

¹¹⁹ Jerusalem Post, 7 August 1967, 6.

This popular incorporation of the site into Jewish nationalist discourse helped concentrate even greater Israeli political attention to the Tomb/Mosque. One August 4, 1967, the bodies of those Jews who had died defending the Old City of Jerusalem were

“re-interred on Mt. Scopus. . . . Speaking over the open grave, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan said the abandonment of the Jewish Quarter in 1948 had been the saddest withdrawal of all. ‘We have returned to the heritage of the patriarchs, the land of the Judges. We have come back to Hebron, Shechem, Bethlehem, Anatot, Jericho, and the Jordan fords. We have not abandoned the dream of our fallen brethren,’ he said. . . .”¹²⁰

His language combines national militaristic discourse with religio-historical references. A week later, Dayan made another public statement which even placed the religio-historical above the strategic (or perhaps used the former to substantiate the latter), when he pronounced that there would be

“no return to 1948 borders. . . [since] with all the strategic importance to Israel of Sinai, the Golan Heights, and the Tiran Straits -- the mountain range west of the Jordan lies at the heart of Jewish history. . . . ‘If you have the Book of the Bible, and the People of the Book, then you also have the Land of the Bible -- of the Judges and of the Patriarchs in Jerusalem, Hebron, Jericho and thereabouts.’ There was no intention to prevent the Arabs from praying at the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron, but ‘on no account will we force ourselves to leave it.’ He added: ‘this may not be a political programme, but it is more important -- it is the fulfillment of a people’s ancestral dreams.’”¹²¹

As the Jewish nationalist discourse swelled around the shrine, statements were also propagated from Jordan concerning the site. Amman Radio issued complaints against the closing of the Mosque to the Muslims by the Israeli authorities, which the West Bank Military Government “categorically denied. . . , [saying instead that] there have been some interruptions in admittance, owing to the fact that two separate entrances to the building are being prepared -- one for Jews and one for Muslims, to both of whom the Tomb is sacred.”¹²² When on March 31, 1968, in the first instance of violence in occupied Hebron, a Druze Israeli policeman and an elderly Arab were shot in the town’s Casbah, some Hebronites

¹²⁰ Jerusalem Post, 6.

¹²¹ Jerusalem Post, 1.

¹²² Jerusalem Post, 26 July 1967, 6.

blamed the Jordanian authorities for attempting to politicize "Hebron the quiet." A former member of the Jordanian Parliament, Hay Fatin Tahboub, "ventured to guess that the motive for the murder might have been political. He told the Post that of all parties, Jordan was the most concerned to stir up trouble in Hebron, for the town has been reported in Amman to be fully cooperating with the Israeli authorities," and added that "Hebron has indeed been living in harmony with the Israelis for the past ten months." The Mayor of Hebron, Sheikh Ja'abari, "also expressed doubts as to whether any 'organization' aiming at serving 'the Palestine issue' had been involved in the incident." Indeed, the Post entitled the article: "Hebron: 'Trouble Made From Outside.'" Whereas the Israelis made frequent references to the events of 1929, to bolster their return to Hebron, "not one Arab interviewed in Hebron was ready to talk about their troubled feelings toward the Israelis: 'Do you mean that past of 1929? We were relieved of that black memory the minute the Israelis came in here in June,' said a Moslem religious official, recalling with great reluctance the massacre of the Jews of Hebron 40 years ago. 'We realized they have nothing against us,' he said." Even so, the reactions to the effective display of Israeli control could not have been all positive when, the morning following the incident, "over 1500 male residents of the quarter were ordered out of their homes to a muddy compound near the Tomb of the Patriarchs, for an identification parade."¹²³ As this incident illustrates, because the mosque is in the center of town and the plaza in front of it a natural public space, the religious site has repeatedly served as the backdrop for such political displays of force or power.

Though the decision of a group of Jewish settlers to resettle Hebron was made independently and previous to the above incident, it probably was at least in part a reaction to the accelerating Jewish and Palestinian nationalist discourse surrounding the site. On April 11, 1968, and, as the Post describes it,

"nearly 40 years after the Jewish community of Hebron was slaughtered in the 1929 Arab riots, a group banded together from all parts of Israel to make what it says is the first move to restoring the long history of Jewish settlement in the city. Though

¹²³ Jerusalem Post supplement, 5 April 1968, 8.

apparently without an official stamp of approval, it would be the first move for Jewish urban resettlement in the new territories. . . , in what before the war was know as the Hebron bad-lands. . . . A few days before, the groups celebrated the Passover *seder* in the rented hotel, certainly the first in Hebron for 40 years, as was the prayer service they held in the Ma'arat HaMachpelah, the tombs of the Patriarchs."

The return thus created political time out of religious time (i.e. Passover), and gave religious space an added political significance. "The Hebron plan had two objectives: to 'restore the Crown of the Tora' to the City of the Patriarchs by a first step of building the destroyed Hebron Yeshiva. ("On Monday we searched for the Jewish cemetery and found practically nothing left. We couldn't find a trace of the yeshiva')." ¹²⁴

Even at this early point the group already had a somewhat tenuous relationship with mainstream Israeli society and government. Many of the journalist's questions "were answered with a pointed 'That depends on the Government. . . . The aims of the group were above politics.'" The counterbalancing of Jews with the city's 40-50,000 Palestinians, Levinger explained, was "not in our hands -- what the Government permits we will do." Nevertheless, he continued, announcing, "We'll bring thousands of Jews, that will be fine." Emphasizing Hebron's Jewish past -- "[it] had always been one of the holy cities of Judaism. It had never been abandoned for centuries. There were times when more Jews lived in Hebron than in Jerusalem" -- the settlers pointed out to the Post that "[t]he pre-1929 congregation had been sustained by *haluka* -- contributions from abroad -- and had lived according to the funds received. 'We believe now that many Jews in the world would be happy to rebuild Hebron.' It could also be developed by the Government -- if not 'it will be a small Jewish *yishuv*.'" As if this claim to a historical Jewish presence and community support were not enough, "a settler added for extra weight that in any case Hebron was related to the declared policy on 'secure borders,'" thereby further legitimizing the group by linking its actions to political-territorial concerns. Thus, although the resettlement actions were not initially given official approval, the group was symbolically sanctioned by both Yigal Allon and Menachem Begin, both of whom

¹²⁴ Jerusalem Post, 8 April 1968.

visited and congratulated the members for their efforts. At the same time, although today mainstream Israeli society will deny any historical sympathy with the group, nevertheless the Post article was not very negative and the response of the Israeli public can hardly be called condemnatory. Reciprocally, "the group saw itself as the vanguard of thousands who would follow them to Hebron."¹²⁵

This relationship between the settlers and the government was promoted when, on May 20, 1968, the Israeli authorities transferred the Jewish settlers from the hotel to the military government building located on the outskirts of the city center. "[T]he settlers viewed the move as a form of official recognition or their right to remain in Hebron. The local Arab population viewed the move as the beginning of a colonisation process, not least because. . . the settlers commuted daily from the barracks to the city centre in order to visit and pray at the holy sites."¹²⁶ These privileges for prayer inside the building itself were granted the Jews by the military authorities on Yom Kippur 1968, an affront to Muslim dictates that no non-Muslims be allowed to worship within a mosque. The settlers quickly announced intentions to establish a synagogue next to the mosque, and the military government leased the "Masqubia" area adjacent to the mosque,¹²⁷ acts which the Palestinians saw as "constituting a sort of first step before appropriating the mosque entirely,"¹²⁸ although these did not come to fruition. The following month a hand grenade explosion wounded 47 Jewish visitors on the steps of the mosque, giving a rationale for the army to construct a new entrance road to the mosque.¹²⁹ Perhaps the first of the more radical reconstructions the site's physical layout occurred that same month, when "the southeastern gate to the mosque. . . was destroyed at the end of the holiday of Sukkot 1968"¹³⁰ Although the official reason given for this action was "in

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Falah, 250.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 250.

¹²⁸ Profanation et défiguration par les forces d'occupation israéliennes du Sanctuaire d'Ibrahim El Khalil 'Abraham', League of Arab States Permanent Delegation to Geneva, (Switzerland, 1975), 4.

¹²⁹ Falah, 251.

¹³⁰ Avisar, 491.

order to allow for a special entrance for Jewish visitors,"¹³¹ an equally compelling purpose was the removal of the seventh step, a long-standing symbol of Jewish shame and Muslim sovereignty at the site, as a means of reinterpreting the shrine's symbolism. The government also agreed that October to the establishment of Kiryat Arba.¹³² Speculation arose among the Palestinians as to whether Israel proposing to create "the nucleus of the Upper Town of Hebron'. . .or that the said constructions would become the first preparations for one of the [several] Jewish settlements, destined to encircle the Arab town."¹³³ It is significant that these several reconstructions occurred in conjunction with religious time, close to the autumn Jewish high holidays. Yet despite this government support, in April of 1969, the police clashed with the settlers "over the brandishment of an Israeli flag in a prayer hall in the mosque." There were some injuries to the settlers, and protests of "the flag incident" were published in the papers and presented before the Knesset.¹³⁴

In addition to these events, a series of public commemorations were held, advancing the fusion and reconstruction of religious and political time and space. On April 1, 1969, the Israelis once again temporarily reappropriated the religious space, holding a "'Ceremony in memory of Abraham our Father, the father of the monotheistic idea and of peace' . . .in the halls of the mosque, with Jewish, Arab, and Christian participants. On [that day,] the first anniversary of settlement, the settlers dedicated a synagogue and four classes of study for their children."¹³⁵ Five days later, the settlers opened an exhibit entitled "Hebron in the Past and Present," and a number of representatives from Israeli youth movements met, against the dictums of the government, in an abandoned Arab house in Hebron.¹³⁶ That August, a group commemorated the 40th anniversary of the pogrom at the old Jewish Cemetery in Hebron with "a memorial service to the murdered of Hebron in 1929." The attendees saw this ceremony as

¹³¹ Ibid., 491.

¹³² Falah, 251.

¹³³ Profanation, 7.

¹³⁴ Avisar, 508.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 508.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 508.

implementing the “renewed revival of the City of the Patriarchs of the Jewish nation”;¹³⁷ it was a fusion of sacred space and national agenda. About a month later, “for the first time in history, Israel ordered the closing of the mosque. . .for a duration of 24 hours.”¹³⁸

A process of historiographical reconstruction accompanied these commemorations and the concurrent physical reconstruction of religious place, political control, and presence. Every physical change or public commemoration became a part of the historiographic reconstruction, even as the actions demanded justification and therefore further reconstruction. Thus, although the materials for the myth were provided by the events of 1929, it was not until after the Six Day War that the myth was actually developed. As we have said before, during the period from 1948 to 1967, almost nothing was written on the history of Hebron, save a few encyclopedia entries. After 1967, it is telling that not only the total number of references to the site, but also the number intended for international reading, increased, as the need arose to justify to the outside (and non-Hebrew speaking) and non-religious public the Jewish presence in Hebron. The World WZO Department of Organization and Education in 1970 published a booklet by Gaalyah Cornfeld entitled “Sacred Jewish Sites,” which put forth to the international community the Jewish historical claims to holy sites throughout the West Bank. Interestingly, Cornfeld noted that the cenotaphs of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, and Leah, while covered by rich tapestries embroidered with Qur’anic verses, had also recently been marked with Hebrew identity cards.¹³⁹

The same year a text more than 500 pages long on the Jewish history of Hebron, entitled Sefer Hevron or The Book of Hebron, was published. The conflict and the need to justify the Jewish return to Hebron are apparent from the choice of events which shaped the chronology presented as an appendix to the book. The first historiographic period opens in

¹³⁷ Ibid., 508.

¹³⁸ Profanation, 3. According to another source, the mosque was not necessarily closed, but on three different days in September a group of settlers, “protected by the military, prayed from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., disrupting the Moslem noon prayer.” The Massacre in Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi Al-Sharif: Context and Aftermath, (Jerusalem: Palestine Human Rights Information Center, May 1994), 14.

¹³⁹ Cornfeld, 17.

1735 BCE, with “Abraham the Hebrew” coming to the Land of Canaan, and ends in 70 CE with the Roman conquest of Hebron and the selling of its Jewish residents as slaves. The next period, marking a primarily foreign dominance in Hebron, begins in 330 CE with the Byzantine conquest of Hebron and ends in 1537 CE, with a visit of a Jewish pilgrim to the city. The third historiographic period marks the beginning of the modern Jewish settlement in Hebron, when in 1540 CE “Rabbi Malkiel Ashkenazi settles in Hebron, buys ‘The Courtyard’ and builds the Avraham Avinu Synagogue.” This period ends with the Hebron Massacre of 1929. The next period begins with the investigation of the riots and closes in 1948 with the battles and defeat of the Gush Etzion Hagannah in the Hebron Hills. The fifth period opens with the establishment of the State of Israel, and the beginning of the 19 year period of Jordanian rule over Hebron. A mere seven dates from this period are included in the chronology, most of them in reference to IDF attacks on towns in the Hebron Hills area. The paucity of references is striking when compared to the 42 entries marking the period from June 1967 to August 1969. Starting with the “liberation” of Hebron by the IDF on June 8, 1967, the period continues to the time prior to the book’s publication, ending on August 1, 1969, with the previously noted commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the 1929 massacre.¹⁴⁰ Overall, the highlighted, definitive events are those that focus on Jewish beginning or ending points of Jewish presence in Hebron, an emphasis related to both the massacre of 1929 and the return to Hebron in 1967. Thus the Davidic reign, a key period in traditional histories of Hebron but relatively less related to the question of presence, is less definitive than the forced exodus of the Jews from Hebron by the Romans or the purchase of “The Courtyard” by Rabbi Ashkenazi. Finally, the Mosque is usually referred to in the text as “that [which] is over the Cave of Machpelah,” thus qualifying the structure in terms which support the Jewish biblical claim to the site.

In the 1970s the physical reconstruction, as well as the historiographical reconstruction, of Hebron increased. Both aspects were encouraged when on April 1, 1970,

¹⁴⁰ Avisar, 499-508.

“Golda Meir declared to the Knesset that Israel will remain forever in Judea, between Bethlehem and Hebron; she added that two settlements had been established since the War of 1967 and that a third settlement was under construction.” Arab and Palestinian parties saw this as “a sort of definitive declaration concerning the Israeli plans anticipated for the town of Hebron and gave a green light to the execution of work and of plans previously established.”¹⁴¹ A month later, Yigal Allon, the Minister of Immigration and acting vice Prime Minister, “declared that 250 living units would be available before the end of 1971, and that the government was proposing to construct new homes for a group of 140 Jewish settlers living at the time in Hebron. For his part, Zeif Cherif, Minister of Housing, declared that each minister planned to consecrate 0.4% of his budget towards the construction of some 250 living units. The 10th of December 1970, the Israeli Minister of Finances announced that the Israeli government had decided to adopt the sum of 30 million Israeli pounds (8.5 million dollars) for the execution of the housing projects in Hebron.”¹⁴² Although these developments provoked “considerable embarrassment and protest against such flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention” (Post 5/21/70, qtd. in Forrest 155) among both Israeli public and certain Israeli leaders, nevertheless they put in motion a settlement campaign which has only lost official support within the last few years.¹⁴³

Within the mosque itself changes were also made which reflected the Israeli presence and ultimate control of the site. Religious objects were introduced, religious space was encroached upon, and religious time was allocated by the Jewish settlers. For example,

“in order to gain a permanent foothold inside the mosque, the Jewish settlers initially demanded the introduction of an Ark of the Law, which contains the Torah scrolls. . . . Permission was granted in 1971 for its temporary use during hours of prayer. Later it was permanently located in the ‘Hall of Avraham’. . . . In this way, for the first

¹⁴¹ Profanation, 5.

¹⁴² Profanation, 9.

¹⁴³ “There’s a national consensus for our being here. Who built this place if not Labor?” said Hebron settler David Rubin in 1984. Yossi Klein Halevi, “The Roots of Jewish Terror,” Moment, April 1985, 27.

time, a section of the mosque received a limited yet highly significant feature of a synagogue.”¹⁴⁴

In 1975 a formal agreement allocated to the Jews the Hall of Abraham, the Hall of Jacob, the inner courtyard between the two, and adjacent small sections. The same year a group of settlers “climbed the walls of the Ibrahimi mosque at night and raised an Israeli flag.”¹⁴⁵ Although it was removed, these reconstructions led to greater settler demands, and in 1976 a group of settlers attacked the *Imam* and stole and desecrated some rare Qur'an scripts. As a result, Muslims protested outside the mosque, and a number burst into the building, expelled the Jewish worshippers and soldiers, and set Jewish scriptures and ceremonial objects on fire.¹⁴⁶ The military closed the building temporarily, opening it only after deciding to maintain a 24-hour presence and transforming the “Anbar” section of the mosque to a military post.¹⁴⁷ In a similar fashion the hours of permitted Jewish presence in the mosque were gradually expanded over this period.

The situation in Kiryat Arba and Hebron also interacted with its external environment. By 1973 settlers willing to establish new outposts were grouping themselves in Hebron, leading to the development of Elon Moreh by a group of Kiryat Arba yeshiva students. The next year Gush Emunim (“The Bloc of the Faithful”) was established, and soon became the “vanguard of the settlement movement.”¹⁴⁸ In 1975 Kiryat Arab received the dubious additions of Kahane and several of his cohorts, whose activities and speeches “exacerbate[d] the volatile relationship between Jews and Arabs.”¹⁴⁹ Kahane had by this time coined the terms “Hebronism” and “the mentality of Hebron.” He claimed that the latter was

“...the Arab mentality that calls for the annihilation of every Jew living in Israel. This is the reality of that 1929 summer day when men, women, and children were slaughtered and massacred in Hebron’s streets, houses, and Jewish stores. When Yeshiva students and their families, Ashkenazim and Sefaradim, were tortured and

¹⁴⁴ Michael Romann, Jewish Kiryat Arba versus Arab Hebron. (Jerusalem: West Bank Data Project, 1985), 56.

¹⁴⁵ The Massacre in Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi Al-Sharif: Context and Aftermath, 15.

¹⁴⁶ Romann, 58.

¹⁴⁷ The Massacre in Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi Al-Sharif: Context and Aftermath, 15-16.

¹⁴⁸ Robert Friedman, Zealots for Zion, (New York: Random House, 1992), xxxiv.

¹⁴⁹ Sprinzak, 81.

raped, although they were not Zionists. This is the reality of the disturbances of 1920, 1921, 1936-39, and 1947. 'Hebron,' in short, is the Arab plan which the Arabs are ready to repeat every day if they just could."¹⁵⁰

In reality it appears that the Palestinians were without a "plan" and somewhat slow to counter the Jewish reconstruction of space and time. Because they were not pushing for new worshipping rights or spatial gains but to maintain what had been in their possession, the Palestinian reinterpretation of the site was, before the outbreak of the Intifada, less dramatic and more reactionary than was that of the Jews. The Arab city mayor, Sheikh Ja'abari, and other local leaders did submit a petition in 1968 demanding the removal of the settlers.¹⁵¹ Two years later, Hebronite Palestinians held "a large conference in which the women of the town participated equally; it adopted decisions which denied the statements of Moshe Dayan, Minister of Defense, who pretended that the lands effectively confiscated by Israel (750 feddans) were serving military purposes."¹⁵² It appears that both petitions went relatively unheeded by the Israeli government. In 1975 the League of Arab States' Permanent Delegation to Geneva published in French a booklet called Profanation et défiguration par les forces d'occupation israéliennes du Sanctuaire d'Ibrahim El Khalil 'Abraham'. Addressed to the UN, it ended with selections from a statement by the Grand Imam and rector of Al-Azzar, Dr. Abdel Halim Mahmoud. As the booklet paraphrases, the rector announced that

"the Israel Minister of Defense commanded the Judaization of the Sanctuary of Abraham, its division between Muslims and Jews, the occupation of the greater part of the sanctuary by the Jews and its transformation into a place where ceremonies are held, where the consumption of alcohol will be permitted, where horns reverberate, where marriage and circumcision festivals will be celebrated, and where the faithful Muslims will no longer have the right to enter or to carry out their worship."¹⁵³

Palestinian attempts to thwart the settlers increased with the accelerating reconstruction of the mosque and encroaching construction of Kiryat Arba. In 1978 a petition from Palestinian land owners protesting the military seizure of 500 dunams of land adjacent to Kiryat Arba

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Sprinzak, 238.

¹⁵¹ Falah, 249.

¹⁵² Profanation, 9.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 18.

succeeded in halting new construction.¹⁵⁴ By the early '80s the settlement's Jews were complaining that only after the Jews built on the hills surrounding the town, did Arabs do the same three years later. "[S]ettlers attribute it to Arab provocation, a plot to uproot the Jews or at least hem them in. . . . [T]his is not paranoia; it is, in fact, happening. Separated only by a fence from Kiryat Arba's modest industrial area, is a new mosque, financed by the Saudis, that resembles a missile launcher. . . .triumphant over the buildings of the Jews. A new landscape rises here, competing towers of Babel. . . ."155

In any case, it was the Jewish settlement that received significant financial and military support from the Israeli state. In 1976, the government ordered the evacuation of an Arab "animal pen" for the uncovering of the ruins of the Avraham Avinu Synagogue. With the election of Likud in spring of 1977, a policy a massive settlement of the entire West Bank was instituted and "as earlier, the focus of the new situation was in Hebron."¹⁵⁶ The government began providing funds almost immediately for the settlement of Kiryat Arba, entitling each settler to a mortgage of 100,000 Israeli pounds if he did not own a home in the country; 65,000 pounds if he did. Each family moreover became entitled to a loan of 37,500 pounds which became a grant after remaining in the town for five years. "Build your home," a recruitment brochure encouraged, "soon there will be about 40 pieces of land given out." With a population of around 1500 at that point, the recruiters claimed that "this mosaic of houses and greenery will populate 100,000 persons."¹⁵⁷ Incentives were also made available to factories, which could receive grants and loans according to their size and the type of manufacturing. From their own words, the settlement recruiters appear to have been very conscious of the processes of construction and reconstruction they spearheaded. For them, "a story of the Land of Israel [was] in the process of being built. Every new house in Kiryat Arba, every new family, every baby that is born, and every flower and tree -- they are an additional step in the

¹⁵⁴ Romann, 14.

¹⁵⁵ Halevi, "Roots," 27.

¹⁵⁶ Sprinzak, 90.

¹⁵⁷ "The Likud government adopted in principle. the view that Kiriyat Arba should become a major city designed to 'engulf' Arab Hebron and match its population." Romann, 14.

realization of the vision of our prophet: '...and the waste and desolated and ruined cities are become fortified, and are inhabited.' (Ezekiel 36:35)" The faithful they reminded that "the rhythm of the fulfillment of the vision of generations depends also on you! Join the mission of building the Land! Build your home and your future in Kiryat Arba!"¹⁵⁸ Another recruitment brochure displayed a drawing on its front, of Kiryat Arba looking down over the Tomb, which was depicted with three rather than the actual two minarets. On top of the center minaret was added a menorah.¹⁵⁹

With increased intensity these designs were justified, in part with references to Abraham and David but in large by the recollection of the events of 1929. In the '70s it became even more apparent that "Biblical commandments were only one reason for the desire to settle in sacred Hebron. Another was the bitter memories of the 1929 Arab pogrom."¹⁶⁰ In 1976, a "Hebron Day" was organized for the 47th anniversary of the pogrom. Guided tours of Kiryat Arba and the former Jewish Quarter of Hebron were offered, and "an assembly of solidarity with the Jewish Community of Hebron" was conducted in the Jewish Cemetery in Hebron. The poster announcing the commemoration, headed with the words "Hebron 5689 [1929] -- Hebron 5736 [1976]," recalled the "two hours of slaughter and destruction, [in which] the most ancient Jewish community in Eretz Israel was destroyed and obliterated. The toil of generations invested in Hebron, in love and in longing, in prayers and in yearnings, was annihilated and razed to the foundation. In these two hours a terrible massacre was executed, and the Holy City, the City of the Patriarchs, became the City of Slaughter." The reference to Hebron as "the Holy City" effectively equates its importance to that of Jerusalem. The parallel to Jerusalem is further implied by the poster's photograph, which depicts an Orthodox Jew leaning on a gate in a pose reminiscent of worshippers at the Western Wall, with signs of the

¹⁵⁸ "Kiryat Arba is Hebron," Brochure:1 (Kiryat Arba: Directorate of Kiryat Arba, 1977).

¹⁵⁹ "Kiryat Arba is Hebron," Brochure:2 (Kiryat Arba: Directorate of Kiryat Arba, 1977). It is important to realize that, due especially to such economic incentives, many -- indeed almost half the population -- were attracted to Kiryat Arba "partially in response to the economic needs of cheap public housing" and not out of religious or ideological commitment. (Romann, 10.) Indeed, today fully half of the settlers state that their primary motives for moving to the West Bank were economic.

¹⁶⁰ Sprinzak, 90.

riot littering the streets behind him.¹⁶¹ The historical reconstruction process had by this time become so radical that, as Yossi Klein Halevi noted in an article published a few years later, “For the Hebron Jews, history now begins in 1929.” As an example he describes the promotional brochure of the school Talmud Torah Hebron, which

“opens to a picture. . . of a bruised child, orphaned in the massacre, eyes wide, and what appear to be white hairs wild on his balding scalp. Beside it is a picture of torn and singed Torah scrolls. Every child in Talmud Torah Hebron can recite the details of the massacre, knows of every Jewish symbol sullied here as brutally as anywhere in the Diaspora: the cemetery stones dug up and replaced with a tomato patch; the Avraham Avinu synagogue turned into a public latrine; the Jewish houses sacked, hollowed, their stone doorposts chiseled away to erase the indentations where the *mezuzot* had been ripped off, denying even the memory of desecration. . . . [T]hrough Hebron confirms Jewish right to *Eretz Israel* and the tenacity of Jewish settlement, it is now proof of our transience on the Land. . . .”¹⁶²

Thus with this heightened emphasis on the destruction and transience of the Jewish community in 1929, increased importance was attached to the question of “presence.” For example, in 1925 The Jewish Encyclopedia was willing to admit that “Jews did not inhabit Hebron after the destruction of the Temple, nor under the Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, or Crusaders.”¹⁶³ In contrast, the article on Hebron in the 1970’s edition of the Encyclopedia Judaica is very much centered on chronicling Jewish presence and settlement in Hebron, and claims that the 1929 “assault was well planned and its aim was well defined: the elimination of the Jewish settlement of Hebron. . . . The Jewish settlement of Hebron thus ended and only one inhabitant remained there until 1947.”¹⁶⁴ This emphasis does not seem to exist among earlier Jewish sources such as pilgrimage accounts, many of which simply leave do not mention whether or not a permanent Jewish community existed in Hebron at the time of their visit. Likewise, a recruitment brochure issued in 1977 emphasizes the presence of Jewish

¹⁶¹ “Hebron 1929 -- Hebron 1976,” Poster (Kiryat Arba: The Association for the Renewal of the Jewish Community in Hebron, 1976).

¹⁶² Halevi, “Roots,” 42, 44.

¹⁶³ p. 312.

¹⁶⁴ p. 235.

institutions before the riots, and implies their continuation in the developments of Kiryat Arba.

During

“an almost unbroken continuation of Jewish settlement. . . , [r]eligious and economic institutions and community life flourished in the spacious Jewish Quarter, [as did] synagogues (among them the Avraham Avinu Synagogue, rehabilitated in these days), Habad buildings, the Yeshiva of Hevron and others, the Hadassah hospital building that was opened to Jews and Arabs, a cemetery, banks, and hotels.”

A photo of a young boy wearing a T-shirt with the words “Kiryat Arba is Hevron” and a drawing of the Tomb illustrates a chronology of Hebron entitled “I was already here!” It mentions the purchase of the Cave of Machpelah by “Abraham the Hebrew” buys the Cave of Machpelah and the founding of a large Jewish neighborhood and construction of the Avraham Avinu Synagogue by Rabbi Malkiel Ashkenazi (but leaves out King David’s reign), as well as the establishment in 1925 of several communal and economic institutions and their destruction in 1929. The “liberation” of Hebron by the IDF, the 1968 Passover Seder in the Park (El Nahar El Khaled) Hotel, and the founding of Kiryat Arba are followed by the boy’s assertion: “Here is my home.” This emphasis on Jewish presence and on the public institutions that give evidence of such presence reflects the need of the settlement at that time to install its own set of institutions and justify its growing occupancy.

As more proof of the former Jewish presence in the town was sought and reconstructed,¹⁶⁵ the settlers’ attempts to arrogate formerly Jewish property within Hebron proper gained support. Indeed, “one of Levinger’s strongest legal arguments regarding the right to resettle Hebron was the existence of Jewish property in the Arab city, buildings like Beit Hadassah and Beit Romano,”¹⁶⁶ known to the Palestinians as the Dabouia Building and Usama Bin Munkez Preparatory School, respectively. Unsuccessful by official channels, in 1979 the settlers resorted to a tactic similar to that which had gained them Kiryat Arba a decade

¹⁶⁵ Rabbi Levinger would march through the streets of Hebron looking for tell-tale signs of Jewish property such as mezuzim on doorways of old buildings.

¹⁶⁶ Sprinzak, 90.

earlier, sending a group of women and children to occupy the Beit Hadassah building.¹⁶⁷ A poster commemorating the event displayed two photographs, one of a building ransacked in 1929 riots and the words “Judenrein! Jews Out!”, and the other of the participating women and children seated on the steps outside Beit Hadassah. The building’s occupation, the poster claimed, “laid the cornerstone of Jewish settlement in all Eretz Israel. In Hebron the path was paved!”¹⁶⁸ “Official recognition came only a few months later. Responding to . . . the murder in Hebron of a young yeshiva student, Yehoshua Saloma, Begin decided to punish the local Arabs by legitimizing the Jewish resettlement in the city: several families would be allowed to reside in Hebron and a small yeshiva would be established in Beit Hadassah.”¹⁶⁹

This reconstruction of physical space and its added conception as religious space (as a yeshiva) led to “a series of increasingly violent exchanges between Jews and Arabs.”¹⁷⁰ For example, in March 1980 “a group of Jewish students at the yeshivah in Hebron, singing and drinking at a Purim party, pissed on [an older Palestinian man], through the window of the yeshivah, as he walked on the street below.”¹⁷¹ Two months later, at the climax of a period of anti-Jewish violence in Hebron and throughout Judea and Samaria, a group of PLO activists murdered six yeshiva students just outside Beit Hadassah; partly in retaliation, a month later the Machteret Yehudit or Jewish Underground blew up the cars of two West Bank mayors in what became known as the “mayors affair.” Beit Hadassah, reported Yehuda Litani in 1980 and ‘81, became a focal point of settler violence, and “residents living near Beit Hadassah testified about stone-throwing, harassment of customers, threats of violence, theft of property, setting dogs on Palestinians, and more.”¹⁷² Beit Schneerson, the former home of one of Hebron’s leading Jewish families, was “redeemed” for Jewish occupation in 1981, and in the

¹⁶⁷ Previous to this occupation the settlers had at times organized daily religious ceremonies in Beit Hadassah, an act seen by Palestinians as a “demonstrat[ion of] their presence in the Haram Al Ibrahimi.” Falah, 252.

¹⁶⁸ “Judenrein! Jews Out!” Poster (Kiryat Arba: Committee of Women for the Sake of Hebron, 1979).

¹⁶⁹ Sprinzak, 91.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 91.

¹⁷¹ Leon Wieseltier, “Bloodlust Memories.” *The New Republic* 21 March 1994, 14.

¹⁷² “Impossible Coexistence: Human Rights in Hebron Since the Massacre at the Cave of the Patriarchs,” B’tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, Sept. 1995, 22.

fall, according to Kiryat Arba spokesman and resident Garry Cooperberg, the first circumcision ceremony was held in the Hall of Isaac on Succoth.¹⁷³ The same month, settlers tried to forcibly enter the cave itself, resulting in its subsequent closure to this time. The ensuing investigation “discovered that settlers had broken a stone with a Qur’anic verse written on it and scattered the pieces. This was part of a campaign of removing Islamic manifestations.”¹⁷⁴ This symbolic violence prefaced additional conflict, including the killing of a yeshiva student, Aharon Gross. This death “justified” an attack on Hebron’s Islamic College in July 1983 by members of the Jewish Underground, in which three students were killed and 33 wounded. After several members, including Levinger’s son-in-law, were apprehended, “posters supporting the underground members and bearing rows of their snapshots. . . [were hung] on the stone walls of the Moslem cemetery, and, nearby, on the high circular railing surrounding the six-pointed marble memorial to Aharon Gross.”¹⁷⁵ Also in response to Gross’s murder, the Usama Bin Munkez School, which contained some 700 students, was officially closed and occupied by the settlers in July 1983, who called it Beit Romano, after its first Jewish owner.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, the area of the Mosque known to Muslims as the *Qal’a* or fortress, which had been designated exclusively for Jewish prayer at some point after the occupation in 1967, was made into a yeshiva, in Palestinian eyes a “militant Jewish religious school, on November 2, 1983,”¹⁷⁷ thus entirely reconstructing its religious significance to both parties.

In 1984 the Jewish religio-nationalist discourse began again to stress the period of King David’s reign, increasingly describing Hebron as the cradle of the Jewish kingdom, the starting point of Jewish nation, and the first piece of Jewish property. This was sparked by the new conflict over Tel Rumeida, occupied primarily by the old Jewish cemetery and by Palestinian homes and orchards. A few settler families began squatting on the area, which they

¹⁷³ Personal interview, 1 August 1995.

¹⁷⁴ The Massacre in Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi Al-Sharif: Context and Aftermath, 13.

¹⁷⁵ Halevi, “Roots,” 25.

¹⁷⁶ Falah, 257.

¹⁷⁷ The Massacre in Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi Al-Sharif: Context and Aftermath, 12.

renamed Admot Yishai ("Lands of Jesse"). This action was "supported by the defense minister of the Likud government, Moshe Arens [and] within a few days the army provided the settlers with a water supply, sewage, electricity, and protection."¹⁷⁸ Although the settlement was protested by Labor leaders Peres and Rabin, following the desecration of Jewish holy texts in the city, the Israeli officials allowed the existing squatters to stay, but has to date forbidden further development and construction.¹⁷⁹ A dispute arose over a building on the Tel that the settlers claimed marked the Tomb of Jesse, the father of David, and which the Moslems used as a mosque, and in January 1985 the settlers took over this building. The Tel remained contested, therefore, and by 1985 had become a great rallying point for Gush Emunim.¹⁸⁰ This site as well as the other "redeemed" buildings were to be linked, according to the "Comprehensive Master Plan for the Kiryat Arba Area" produced by the Kiryat Arba management in 1984, in a territorial continuum that reached from Kiryat Arba to the mosque. The displacement the previous year of Hebron's acting Arab mayor, Mustafa Natsche,¹⁸¹ and his replacement by an Israeli, facilitated these reconstructions of control and of property. Palestinian perspective by this time definitely viewed the actions as a "process of Judaisation of Hebron" and saw the city as "one of the most intense focal points in the Arab-Israeli conflict. . . ."182

Beginning around 1985 the settlers accelerated their push for greater rights within the Tomb itself, in terms of both religious space and religious time. This was done by attacking the manifestations of Islam and of Muslim practices in the building, as well as by adding manifestations of Jewish presence to the building. Certain areas, such as the Anbar mosque

¹⁷⁸ "Tel Rumeida: No Sign of Evacuating the Settlers," Challenge no. 25, 13.

¹⁷⁹ Falah, 261; Website: <<http://www.virtual.co.il/communities/israel/hebron/anci.htm>>. According to a settler, the government continued to desire to remove the settlers from the Tel, but a protest of several thousand people during Passover convinced them to do otherwise. (David Wilder, Personal interview, 1 August 1995.) According to a Palestinian account, it was the formation of a national unity government in 1984 that prompted Peres to declare that he would respect the decisions of the previous government and sanctioned the settlement. "Tel Rumeida: No Sign of Evacuating the Settlers."

¹⁸⁰ Sprinzak, 149.

¹⁸¹ Natsche himself had been appointed, not elected, after the elected mayor Fahed Qawasmeh was deported in 1981. "The New Gaza: Interview with Abdel Alim Da'ana," Challenge no. 25 (May-June 1994): 9.

¹⁸² Falah, 257, 259.

which "is used as a restaurant for Jews during their feasts and celebrations", had already been taken over for exclusive Jewish use.¹⁸³ Yitzhak Rabin, as Defense Minister from 1985-86, made several compromises with the settlers regarding the other areas, deciding that:

"1) Muslims would pray only in the Hall of Isaac on Fridays until 4:00 p.m. when 2) the waqf employees would roll up the carpets (this not only neutralized the space making it no longer a mosque, but precluded the possibility that the Israelis coming to prayer for Shabbat would profane the mosque with their shoes); 3) the waqf employees would further put up screens or dividers to separate the southern and eastern sections where prayer rugs remained; 4) the edges of the rugs closest to the dividers would be folded up so that the soldiers who would separate the two congregations during prayer could walk to their posts with[out] treading on the rugs."¹⁸⁴

The removal of carpets was considered by the Muslim Waqf to be "a radical change for the Haram as a holy place."¹⁸⁵ In addition to removing the carpets, the settlers brought in religious furnishings of their own, "including cupboards full of religious books, trumpets, chairs, and a table used as a platform. In [the Hadra Ibrahimiyeh/Hall of Abraham] section of the mosque, circumcisions are carried out. Jewish worshippers usually hold loud celebrations which disturb and annoy Moslems at prayer. The star of David was drawn on the shrine of Ibrahim and the carpets were completely removed."¹⁸⁶ The settlers also imposed on Muslim religious time. For example, on the Muslim holiday of Id el-Fitr, the Tomb, "crowded with Muslim worshipers, was mobbed by settlers who had chosen precisely that day to arrive for morning prayers in far larger than usual numbers."¹⁸⁷ Political time was also invested with religious meaning, as in June 1985 when "scores of demonstrators from the settlements descended on Hebron for a pray-in protest" against the asymmetric prisoner exchange carried out by the government.¹⁸⁸ For the first time Jewish and Muslim prayer services were held at the same time, when in 1986 Jewish worshippers were given permission to hold prayer

¹⁸³ The Massacre in Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi Al-Sharif: Context and Aftermath, 11.

¹⁸⁴ Richard Hecht, Letter (email) to the author, 27 June 1995.

¹⁸⁵ The Massacre in Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi Al-Sharif: Context and Aftermath, 10.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Meron Benvenisti, 1986 Report: Demographic, Economic, Legal, Social and Political Developments in the West Bank, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), 67.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 73.

services in the mosque's largest room, the Hall of Isaac, on Friday nights.¹⁸⁹ To facilitate the Jewish presence, "the Army troops erected six-foot-high steel barricades in the hall. . . , leaving Moslems a small, segregated area behind the tombs for their prayers. . . . Mustafa Natsche, the deposed Arab mayor of Hebron. . . charged the [change] was part of a 'step-by-step campaign to force Moslems out of the Mosque of Abraham.'" ¹⁹⁰ At other times the Muslim call to prayer was temporarily disallowed, for the Jews also complained that the Muslims prayed loudly with the intent of disturbing Jewish worship.

Other symbols of Jewish presence helped to reconstruct the area outside the mosque, although these changes are difficult to date and may have occurred later than this period. At some point, Israeli settlers built a tourist site on the main street in front of the mosque. The words "Jewish Hebron Settlers Gift Shop" adorn the building's face in large letters.¹⁹¹ Moreover, the railing of the balcony to the "Hebron Israeli Gallery" breaks its pattern to show a menorah, situated between two minarets, standing attention over one of the entrances to the mosque.¹⁹² In the basement of Beit Hadassah, a "1929 Massacre Memorial Room" was established to the victims of the riots, containing shards of broken Jewish tombstones and a wall and ceiling painted soot-like gray to simulate the charred remains of Jewish homes burned during the massacre.¹⁹³ Jewish artists also contributed to the Judaization of the building, embellishing their representations of the mosque with traditional Jewish styles and symbols. For example, the artist Baruch Nachshon, who with his family had also been among the first to resettle Hebron, depicted this and other holy sites frequently in his works, and on occasion presented them to Israeli politicians. One piece, which was sent to Menachem Begin as he took office, depicts the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, and the Tomb of Joseph in Nablus, symbols of the strongest Jewish claims to historic Palestine, as

¹⁸⁹ Rabinovich, *Jerusalem Post*, 9 October 1992.

¹⁹⁰ Claiborne, *Washington Post*, 24 January 1986.

¹⁹¹ See photo in appendix.

¹⁹² The entrance is the one which since 1994 has been delegated solely for Muslim use. See photo in appendix.

¹⁹³ See photo, appendix.

these are the "three cities in Israel that were bought [as opposed to captured or settled] from their original landlords" by the Hebrew tribes.¹⁹⁴ Above Nachshon's depiction of these three sites is a Midrashic verse: "This is one of the three places that the nations (of the world) can never castigate the Jewish people and say 'you are occupying stolen territory'".¹⁹⁵ This is a significant change over the previously mentioned soldier's drawing made just after the capture of Hebron in 1967, with its implicit acknowledgment of the Muslim character of the shrine.

C. Intifada to 1994

The outbreak of the Palestinian Intifada in December 1987 came at a point when Jewish reconstruction of the Tomb was accelerating with little organized obstruction. The Intifada was occasioned in part by the rise and the increasing nationalization of radical Islamic groups (Hamas was founded at the beginning of the Intifada), for whom Hebron became a stronghold due to its traditional Islamic character. Early in the Intifada, the Muslim Brotherhood decided to open in Hebron a Muslim university, known first as the Islamic University and now called the Hebron Graduate School.¹⁹⁶ Moreover, because of their focus on religion, it is not surprising that the Islamic groups looked to Hebron and Jerusalem as symbols of legitimization. Yet the rise of radical Islam also affected the secular Palestinian groups. According to historian Ilfrach Zilberman, alongside the rise of Jewish fundamentalism and the activities of Gush Emunim in the early 1980s was a parallel process among the Muslims, "the awakening of radical Islam. . . . The Haram Ibrahimi is the focus of religious life [in Hebron]; radical groups tend to take over issues which are fleshing points. The Intifada erupted also because of problems at the Ma'arat Ha-Machpelah."¹⁹⁷ After Hebron's holy site entered the

¹⁹⁴ Menachem Bar-Shalom, Personal interview, 13 August 1995.

¹⁹⁵ See photo in appendix. The verse (Gen./Beresheet Rabba 79:7) is quoted today in "The Valley of Hebron" by Noam Arnon, who explains that "the three places: The Cave of Machpelah -- the earliest land purchase site, together with Shechem and Jerusalem, are the genuine [proof?] of continued Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel. These are the very locations where the nations of the world have attempted to claim: "You are occupying stolen property."

<gopher://gopher.jer1.co.il:70/00/comm/comm/is/hebron/cave1/cave.3>

¹⁹⁶ Ilan Pappes, Personal interview, 8 August 1995.

¹⁹⁷ Personal interview, 9 August 1995.

Islamicists' political discourse, the more secular PLO readily followed suit, becoming "more involved with religion as it saw that Islam provided a more potent incentive to political action than mere Arabism or Palestinianism."¹⁹⁸ Thus while "in the 1980s, it was very common for PLO rhetoric to omit Hebron, for Hebron was one of the religious cities of Palestine and had been historically a hot-bed of resistance to secular nationalism," there began to be "many cases where both the PLO and the Islamicists claim Hebron as the second city of Palestine, in very different discourses of course."¹⁹⁹ The result, according to the Palestinian journalist Khaleid Suleiman, was that the Intifada "asserted a Palestinian commitment to holy places. . . , aroused our consciousness and awareness vis-à-vis the [Hebron] shrine."²⁰⁰

In this manner the nationalization of the Palestinian consciousness reconstructed the significance of this and other religious shrines, making them "national symbols [which] were turned to and more accentuated and utilized in these times of uprising or heightened confrontation. . . . [T]he conflict over the propriety of the Mosque was intensified as many other disputes of property were at that time."²⁰¹ As a result, the Palestinians more than ever came to view the Israelis as planning to take over the entire mosque. Said Suleiman,

"We have come to be aware of the sinister tactics, the insidious designs, of the Israeli government and settlers vis-à-vis the holy places. First of all they want to arrogate these places, and then they want to expel us. So the arrogation of the Islamic shrines by the Jews is a first step, a precedent to the expulsion of us by them from this land. Because if al-Aqsa is not in our hands, if the Ibrahimi Mosque is not in our hands, why should we stay here? We might as well go to Jordan. This is the heart of our existence."²⁰²

As this statement implies, many Palestinians and many Palestinian political groups saw the settlers' efforts to increase control of the mosque as a direct assault on their nationalist cause. The fate of the Ibrahimi Mosque was linked to the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem. As the Jerusalem Post noted in October 1990,

¹⁹⁸ Jerusalem Post, 19 October 1990.

¹⁹⁹ Hecht, Letter.

²⁰⁰ Personal interview, 10 August 1995.

²⁰¹ Jeff Yaz, Personal interview, 2 August 1995.

²⁰² Personal interview.

"Palestinians, religious and secular, see the Haram al-Sharif as the symbolic cornerstone of their independence. . . . It seems likely that secular Palestinians. . . had begun to see [the Temple Mount Faithful] doing to the Temple Mount what Rabbi Moshe Levinger did in Hebron 22 years ago. . . . 'The Ibrahimi Mosque [Cave of Machpelah in Hebron] is now controlled by Israelis who pray there at will. The government followed Levinger into settling the West Bank,' said one Palestinian journalist. . . . 'The Haram al-Sharif looked like the next target to many.'"²⁰³

This threat caused the Palestinians and their political leaders to become "more attached to the Mosque . . . after they realized that the Jews wanted to seize it. . . . All Palestinian political groups wanted the Mosque to keep its Arab Moslem identity."²⁰⁴

This desire sparked Palestinian efforts to reconstruct the immediate vicinity of the Mosque as well. In 1988 a group of students from the Hebron University Graduates Union, "motivated by an acute awareness of the importance of the fabric of the old city to Palestinian Arab and Islamic *turath* [collective memory, culture, or heritage]," embarked on a rehabilitation project which included the "ambitious renovation of al-Shariha al-Sakaniya, a residential block in al-'Aqaba quarter only a few meters from the Haram al-Ibrahimi." They also set out to promote "a conscious awareness of the role of one's surroundings in identity formation" by mobilizing "the local population's highly developed nationalism, through demonstrating the relationship of built form to history and identity; and their religious sentiment, through appealing to the Islamic significance of the city. . . . Indeed, even for the most secular of individuals, *waqf* properties (*zawiyas*, fountains, clinics, public baths, and schools) provide a sacred geography."²⁰⁵ Thus at the end of 1992 many Palestinians described the city itself as "a battlefield. . . . They say that the Jews want to drive the Arabs from Hebron. They say they will stay and fight."²⁰⁶

For Israelis, on the other hand, the Intifada occasioned one of two principal reactions towards Hebron. Many secular and left-wing Israelis were "reminded Israelis that there are human beings there, there are peoples there. . . . The Intifada was really a turning point in the

²⁰³ Jerusalem Post, 19 October 1990.

²⁰⁴ Subject #27, Written interview.

²⁰⁵ Sellick, 79-81.

²⁰⁶ George Laumann, "A Saturday in Hebron," Challenge 3, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1992).

Israeli perception of the Occupied Territories in the West Bank -- and the turning point can be summed up as a recognition that the Palestinians who live there are not passive, immovable refugees but a proud nation engaged in a war of liberation.”²⁰⁷ Yet even as it increased the perceptions of the seriousness and the humanity of the Palestinians, the Intifada also made this part of the Israeli populace realize that Hebron was no longer “somewhere in the Himalayan Mountains. . . . The Tomb is part of the whole reality, part of the whole West Bank. It’s now near us, it’s within us, threatening, we don’t want it.”²⁰⁸ Thus the threat of the escalating violence caused many Israelis to view the site with “fear”²⁰⁹ and “alienation.”²¹⁰ While a few, such as Steve Reich and Beryl Korot-Reich who in the summer 1989 worked in Hebron with both Muslims and Jews on a musical video entitled “The Cave,” upheld Hebron as an “example of the possibility of coexistence in the most unpromising of circumstances,”²¹¹ most, including many religious Jews, stopped visiting the site. As an religiously observant settler from Beit-El said of the site, “[A]s of December 1987, when the Intifada officially broke out, it’s not something that, no matter how religiously observant you feel towards it, and its importance -- its 4000 year importance -- I’m not saying it’s suicidal, but it’s tempting fate, to make a family outing visiting the Tomb of the Patriarchs, and proving a point, and being machoistic about it.”²¹² For the majority of Israelis the Tomb did not become “a more religiously appropriate site for the Jews, or a more emotionally loaded site for the Jews [but rather] a testing arena, more than it had before, for Jewish power against Arab power.”²¹³

For a minority of nationalist religious Jews, this power struggle increased the site’s significance and the fear created was not of physical injury so much as it was of “losing the site and the living connection to the site. . . , the fear of losing access, of not being able to get to it .

²⁰⁷ Yaron Ezrahi, Personal interview, 6 August 1995.

²⁰⁸ Litani, Personal interview.

²⁰⁹ Shoshana Devora, Personal interview, 9 August 1995.

²¹⁰ Subject #1, Personal interview.

²¹¹ Rabinovich.

²¹² Subject #26, Written interview.

²¹³ Zvi Sobel, Personal interview, 8 August 1995.

... [F]or some people it's a real fear of not doing God's work: if this miraculous thing has happened in this century that we're back in the land, and this miraculous thing happened in the Six Day War that we're back at this site, now to lose it again, so soon afterwards, is like a failure."²¹⁴ Thus even the Beit El settler quoted above noted that since the Intifada "there probably have been more demonstrations. If anything, the religious veracity, importance, timeliness, of these two sites [Hebron and Rachel's Tomb], and especially Hebron, could be said to have become more important in our eyes because of the Intifada. In other words, you try to keep us away, and we'll run to these sites even more."²¹⁵ As this statement illustrates, their reaction was similar to that of the Palestinians, in that it brought about an increase in commitment to the site. Religio-nationalist Jews saw the generalized violence of the Intifada as a Palestinian attempt to arrogate control of the building. Garry Cooperberg, spokesman for the Kiryat Arba yeshiva, asserted that the mosque was used since the Intifada as "a source of inspiration for Arab terror."²¹⁶ A woman of Kiryat Arba claimed that while the Jewish perspective on the Tomb remained unchanged with the Intifada, the Muslims began looking at the shrine itself "as a battleground site. All mosques are considered a place to start a battle. They always go to pray in the mosques before they go out to battle."²¹⁷ Great effort was dedicated to increasing and publicizing the numbers of Jewish visitors to the site. As the author of a letter to the editor of the Jerusalem Post pointed out, "Visitors mean a presence, and a presence makes a statement: this belongs to us."²¹⁸ Thus as the Tomb/Mosque came to be perceived as an increasingly threatened and threatening place, "some Jews made a point of coming. They said they would not allow the Muslims to chase them out."²¹⁹

The increasing nationalization of Hebron thus not only accelerated Palestinian reconstructions of the shrine's significance but also increased the settlers' "concerted efforts to

²¹⁴ Devora, Personal interview.

²¹⁵ Subject #26, Written interview.

²¹⁶ Bar-Shalom, Personal interview.

²¹⁷ Subject #11, interview.

²¹⁸ Harvey Wolinetz, "Don't thank us for coming," (op-ed) Jerusalem Post, 24 January 1991, 4. .

²¹⁹ Halevi, Telephone interview.

move beyond this situation so that the Jews had equal religious rights in the tomb with that exercised by the Muslims.”²²⁰ In 1988 they received permission to pray on Friday mornings in the building.²²¹ Some of their undertakings were much more symbolically violent, however. In March 1989, for example, settlers proceeded from Tel Rumeida to the Tomb in “a reportedly provocative Purim march” and attempted to install a Torah ark in the building. Combining religious and nationalist violence as well as religious time and commemoration, the settlers carried one Palestinian flag with a noose around it and burned two others during the procession. Once reaching the site they clashed with the police and “repeatedly set upon an Arab who wanted to pray in the Muslim-Jewish holy shrine.”²²² A month later, the “State of Judea,” a creation proclaimed by Kach supporters the previous January, “issued three 30-agorot stamps. . .depict[ing] the Temple Mount, the Machpelah Cave in Hebron, and Joseph’s Tomb in Nablus.”²²³ In July of that year settlers

“burst into one of the halls at the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron, threw aside Moslem prayer rugs and danced until troops forced them out. . . . The clash occurred at dawn when 15 settlers burst into the main hall, Ohel Yitzhak, which is used by both Jews and Moslems under elaborate sharing arrangements. The hall had been closed to Jews for the Moslem feast of Id ed Adha, which ended [the day before], and prayer rugs were place all over it. . . . [T]he settlers rushed in, threw the prayer rugs into a pile as other danced and sang ‘the sons have returned to their boundaries’ and ‘Arabs out!’”²²⁴

In January of 1990, according to the Muslim *Aqwaf*, “the settlers damaged a Qur’an script, drew provocative graffiti cursing the Prophet Mohammed on the pages of the Qur’an and drew the star of David on other pages.”²²⁵ Two months later Purim celebrations once again became violent, when “West Bank settlers danced through the streets [in Hebron], burning Palestinian flags and waving the flag of the ‘State of Judea’. . . . Some of the settlers pushed aside paratroopers who blocked their way to the Cave of Machpelah, but the army eventually decided

²²⁰ Hecht, Letter.

²²¹ Wilder, Personal interview.

²²² Jerusalem Post, 22 March 1989.

²²³ Jerusalem Post, 7 April 1989.

²²⁴ Joshua Brilliant, “Settlers cause fracas at Machpelah Cave,” Jerusalem Post, 18 July 1989, 12.

²²⁵ The Massacre in Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi Al-Sharif: Context and Aftermath, 17.

to let the settlers in [for Minha services]. The IDF had blocked roads and closed the local vegetable market to allow the scores of settlers to proceed unhindered from Beit Hadassah to the cave.” In the mosque, soldiers kept guard over the Moslem prayer rugs.²²⁶ On April 19, 1991, “settlers set up flags on the mosque and hung light on the walls of the mosque to celebrate ‘Israeli Independence.’”²²⁷ On Yom Kippur Eve (Kol Nidrei) 1991, Rabbi Levinger chased Arabs out of the building, claiming later that they were deliberately disturbing the Jewish worshippers.²²⁸ These incidents all combined religious commemoration and time with symbolic violence and nationalist conflict.

The settlers continued to maintain a tense and somewhat erratic relationship with the army and the political leadership of Israel. In June 1989 the Jews of Hebron were visited and encouraged by Deputy Premier David Levy, who, at the dedication ceremony of buildings in the Avraham Avinu compound, told them they “were undertaking a ‘holy’ task by moving here. . . . No mission or role is greater than that. . . . The people of Israel should know you are here to fulfill a mission, a mitzvah, and not as law-breakers.”²²⁹ His cautions against increased settler violence were coldly received, however, and after the event “Rabbi Moshe Levinger told the Post the speech proved the government felt ‘its hands were not clean. They pushed us into this. The government is to blame for whatever the Arabs do and whatever the Jews do in retaliation.’”²³⁰ A week later leaflets, which claimed that “‘a leftist mafia’ controlled the army, and that Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Chief of General Staff Dan Shomron and O/C Central Command Amram Mitzna were ‘traitors,’” were posted around Kiryat Arba and distributed at the Tomb. Signed by “a clandestine group calling itself Dov --

²²⁶ Jerusalem Post, 12 March 1990.

²²⁷ The Massacre in Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi Al-Sharif: Context and Aftermath, 17.

²²⁸ Hebron-News 7/12/95. Four years later, Levinger was sentenced to seven months in jail. At that time he stated that the real prisoners were Peres and Rabin because “‘Peres is a prisoner of his own hallucinations of his sham peace with the PLO’ while Rabin is a prisoner of Peres in that Rabin promised to follow Peres’ peacemoves in exchanged for Peres’ promise not to run against Rabin in the primaries.”

²²⁹ Quoted in Jerusalem Post, 5 June 1989.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

the Hebrew acronym for 'Suppression of Traitors,'"²³¹ the placement of the leaflets again demonstrated the political capacities of the shrine and its use in anti-government rhetoric. Perhaps sensing the increasing alienation of the greater public from the shrine, the settlers appealed to the greater Israeli identity, calling the Machpelah site "the field in which Israel's founding families were buried,"²³² Facing proposals to "close down" Kiryat Arba, they invoked Holocaust imagery, asserting that "this is a euphemism for the 'transfer' [a term loaded with connotations from the Holocaust] of at least 6,000 Jews. . . . But -- have no fear. Kiryat Arba has grown wondrously during the intifada, we actually suffer from a severe shortage in housing facilities. In a few years we intend to double our number."²³³

But after the election of Labor government in 1992, and later with the approach of the signing of the Oslo Peace Accords, the failure of such plans caused an acceleration of the settlers' anti-government rhetoric. Even while pointing out that "[t]he Minister of the Interior, Aryeh Deri. . .has, of late, begun a new personal tradition of joining a large group of Breslav Hassidim as they pray at the Machpelah Cave in Hebron every Rosh Hodesh eve," spokesman Cooperberg in a letter to the editor of the Post castigated "the mentality of the Jewish leadership of this country." He noted that

"[o]n Friday, April 3, it was the eve of the month of Rosh Hodesh Nisan, the month heralding Jewish redemption. . . . Only this time. . .Id el-Fitr also fell on this day and thousands of Moslems descended upon the Machpelah building to celebrate. The government. . .forbid Jews from praying inside! So it was that a large minyan including Mr. Deri. . .conducted shaharit prayers at the degrading 'seventh step,' as hundreds of Arab[s]. . .contemptuously marched inside the building to celebrate in a Jew-free environment."²³⁴

Cooperberg's use of the powerful symbol of the seventh step is deceptive, as that stairway had been demolished in 1968. Yet the settlers found a sympathetic ear amongst opposition MKs in the Knesset, to whom they complained that the Palestinians "have grasped that Rabin does not

²³¹ Jerusalem Post, 13 June 1989.

²³² Shlomo Riskin, "'Earning' the Land," Jerusalem Post, 1 November 1991.

²³³ Elkayim Ha'Etzni, "Kiryat Arba," (letter), Jerusalem Post, 23 September 1990.

²³⁴ Jerusalem Post, 14 April 1992.

take the settlers seriously and has less regard for human lives if they are our lives.”²³⁵ An American supporter condemned the government for failing to recognize “the thousands of years of inextricable bond with linking the People of Israel with the Land of Israel. . . .”²³⁶

As the signing of the Oslo Accords became more and more inevitable, settler acts of both symbolic and material violence accelerated. Palestinian opposition groups likewise became more active, and the two systems of violence fed off one another. Thus, when on May 28, 1993, an Israeli settler on his way from the Kiryat Arba Yeshiva to the Tomb was stabbed to death not far from the shrine, “a comprehensive curfew was imposed on all of Hebron. . . . During the curfew, which was not lifted until June 3. . . , settlers and soldiers committed serious violations of human rights in Hebron. . . . The collective punishment of Palestinians in Hebron was particularly bitter because it occurred during Id al-Adha, the four-day Moslem Feast of the Sacrifice, which is traditionally celebrated by family visits and processions to cemeteries to honor those killed.”²³⁷ The curfew thus juxtaposed the violation of Muslim religious time and commemoration with material violence on both sides. In response to the killing, the rabbi of the Kiryat Arba Yeshiva, Eliezer Waldman, mounted a two-week long hunger strike at the site of the stabbing. His purpose, said his spokesman Cooperberg in another letter to the editor, was “not only to protest the murder. . . , but also to protest the defiance of our defense minister.” Cooperberg appealed to the public to join his anti-government stance: “Rabbi Waldman is sitting in the dust of Hebron on a hunger strike. Please help him return to his yeshiva by trying to show Rabin that Jewish lives are at stake here.”²³⁸ About the same time a dispute over the appearance of an anti-government advertisement broke out between Women for Israel’s Tomorrow, a right-wing women’s group, and the staff of the religious daily published by Shas. Although Shas pulled the ads, claiming the group had failed

²³⁵ Asher Wallfish, “Settlers voice security concerns in Knesset to Opposition MKs,” Jerusalem Post, 3 November 1992, 12.

²³⁶ Wilbur Gordon, “Travel to Territories,” Letter Jerusalem Post, 23 May 1993, 6.

²³⁷ “From the Field: A Monthly Report on Selected Human Rights Issues.” Palestinian Human Rights Information Center. June 1993.

²³⁸ Garry Cooperberg, “Security in Hebron,” Letter Jerusalem Post, 15 June 1993, 6.

to pay the full amount, “[o]ne ad ran Friday, showing Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin welcoming Libyan pilgrims with the words, ‘Israel discharges its responsibility to the worshipers of every faith,’ while knife-wielding Arabs lurk near signs reading ‘Western Wall’ and ‘Tomb of the Patriarchs.’”²³⁹ Thus the two primary contested religious shrines in Israel were used both visually and verbally to represent a specific anti-government discourse aimed against the peace negotiations.

The signing of the Oslo Accords in September 1993 brought about an even more radical increase in settler violence. As a human rights publication pointed out just weeks before the Goldstein massacre, “since the signing of the Oslo Agreement, settlers have decided to ‘take matters into their own hands’ by organizing large-scale, systematic attacks against Palestinians. . . . ‘Peace’ in Hebron has meant the deaths of more than ten Palestinians in the past five months. . . . Settler attacks in the crowded and tense marketplace have become ritualized, occurring regularly on the way to and from Sabbath prayer.”²⁴⁰ Baruch Goldstein himself was the subject of at least one letter of complaint sent by the Higher Islamic Council and the Islamic Waqf of Jerusalem to the office of the Israeli prime minister on October, 18 1993. It was written in regards to an attack by Jewish settlers of

“‘six of the guards of the Ibrahimi Mosque and 64-year-old worshipper on Friday night, the 8th of October 1993. As the call to the night prayer was being made, Baruch [Goldstein] attacked the *muezzin* and cut the call short. He also poured flammable materials on the carpet of the mosque on Thursday night, the 14th of October 1993. . . . We hope that we have never, nor will we ever accept any prayer in the Ibrahimi Mosque other than Muslim prayers. We hope that the authorities will put an end to these inflaming, hostile actions against freedom of worship and the Muslims’ full right to their mosque.”²⁴¹

But Goldstein was not the only perpetrator of settler violence. On December 3, “television pictures showed soldiers standing by as settlers, led by Rabbi Moshe Levinger, opened fire in

²³⁹ Keninon, *Jerusalem Post*, 9 June 1993.

²⁴⁰ Shira Katz, “Escalation of Violence in Hebron: ‘A Factory of Troubles,’” *News From Within*, February 1994, 5-7..

²⁴¹ “Unheeded Warning.” (Press release) Jerusalem Media and Communication Center. 28 February 1994, 1.

the crowded centre of the West Bank town of Hebron, injuring five Palestinians.”²⁴² And the same month a Palestinian murdered a father and son, Mordechai and Shalom Lapid, whose deaths some settlers say may’ve have brought Goldstein closer to the “breaking point.” Moreover during this period the Co-ordinating Committee of International NGOs reported that “right-wing Israeli groups, Gush Emunim, Kahane Hai and Kach, [were] involved in the establishment of private militias, trained in the United States and seen ‘practicing’ in Hebron, questioning and searching Palestinians and destroying street lights.”²⁴³ Such groups set up an elaborate alert system to warn and hide settlers sought for arrest. “Throughout February [1994], Kach activists. . . step[ped] up their terror campaign against the Arabs, to sabotage the peace process. Palestinian extremists retaliate[d]. Violence beg[at] violence.”²⁴⁴

Parallel to the increased material violence, the incorporation of the city and its shrine into political discourse once again accelerated. In response to the wave of settler violence, the Hebron Solidarity Committee was formed in November by Israeli and American activists committed “to struggling against IDF-settler violence and for the evacuation of Israeli forces and settlers from the whole of the Occupied Territories, including East Jerusalem.”²⁴⁵ “[T]hree anti-settlement marches were held in the West Bank. In Hebron 700 people tried to conduct a peaceful march to Beit Hagai settlement, but were turned back by the army.”²⁴⁶ Though qualitatively very different, like the settlers their discourse was highly critical of the government and army. Settlers continued to denounce the peace process. The Jerusalem Post ran an article entitled “Jews could be barred from Machpelah Cave under autonomy,” which stated that “under Palestinian self-rule Jews may no longer be allowed to pray in the Cave of Machpelah, but only be permitted to ascend to the seventh step on the outside wall, according to Israel Lippel, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin’s representative in the Religious Affairs

²⁴² “Settler Violence,” Coordinating Committee of International NGOs, 9 December 1993.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Micha X. Peled, Inside God’s Bunker, (Mill Valley, CA: Moving Images, 1994).

²⁴⁵ “News from Within,” February 1994.

²⁴⁶ “Forced Evacuation of Palestinians from the Hebron Area. Struggle Against Settlements Continues.” (Press release) Hebron Solidarity Committee. 17 January 1994.

Ministry.”²⁴⁷ This potent yet non-existent seventh step was conjured up repeatedly to castigate the Israeli government, as in this letter to the editor:

“[T]his government has totally surrendered the Machpelah and also Rachel’s Tomb, Tora holy sites if you will. . . . [N]o sovereign government has ever before treated its oldest holy site with such disdain. Moreover, the Machpelah, Rachel’s Tomb and Joseph’s Tomb all belong to the Jewish people, not to this government. This agreement, secretly negotiated with Moslem representatives, literally gives away treasures of the Jewish people. For 1,300 years, from the seventh century until 1967, the Arabs prohibited Jews from entering the Machpelah to pray at the grave of our matriarchs and patriarchs. Jews were forbidden to go beyond the outer seventh step. Have Messrs. Beilin, Peres and Rabin, secular Zionists though they be, no sense of Jewish history nor understanding and respect for Jewish shrines? Wo unto us who allow this surrender of holy Tora shrines to go into effect.”²⁴⁸

Not only does the writer invoke the image of the bygone seventh step, but he misstates the beginning of the Muslim ban against Jewish worship in the building by 600 years. The settlers, meanwhile, claimed that access to the Tomb would continue. Kiryat Arba Regional Council head Zvi Katzover said that “if a situation is created where Jews are forbidden from entering the cave, ‘then Arabs will also not be able to enter. We would prevent them from doing so.’”²⁴⁹ Such a threat seems less than idle with the hindsight of the Goldstein massacre in the mosque on February 25, 1994.

D. 1994 Massacre and Post-1994 Structure of Control

On Friday, February 25, 1994, a massacre of 29 Palestinians, the single most violent event in Hebron’s history since the riots of 1929, was carried out in the Ibrahimi Mosque by Dr. Baruch Goldstein of Kiryat Arba. Goldstein, dressed in full army uniform and carrying arms, arrived at the Mosque at dawn, only eight hours after his last visit to the site. He had been there the previous evening, when an altercation had broken out between Jewish settlers leaving a Purim celebration and Muslim worshippers waiting to begin their evening prayers. The juxtaposition of religious time apparently increased tensions and desires to assert

²⁴⁷ Shapiro, Jerusalem Post, 20 October 1993.

²⁴⁸ Lauterbach, Jerusalem Post, 20 October 1993

²⁴⁹ Keinon, Jerusalem Post, 21 October 1993.

sovereignty over the holy site, for Muslims were delayed outside for two hours that evening when the Jews failed or, according to Palestinian reports, “refused to leave at the time appointed for Muslims to enter for evening prayer.”²⁵⁰ After an extended wait outside, “the Muslims started shouting ‘Allahu Akbar’ [“God is Great”].”²⁵¹ Settler accounts claim that Muslims were actually shouting “Itbach el-Yahud!” [“Slaughter the Jews”],²⁵² and relate that “Goldstein was among the Jewish worshippers and attacked the Muslim worshippers. Goldstein was very furious after the incident.”²⁵³

The next morning, religious time was again juxtaposed, with an overlap of Purim and the third Friday of Ramadan. Around 5:15 a.m., Goldstein returned to the building, entering the Hall of Isaac where approximately 600-800 Muslim worshippers had just begun the recitation of “the *Sadja*, special prayers said especially at dawn on Fridays during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.” As the Muslim *Imam* “chanted ‘Allahu Akbar’ at the end of the first prayer, the worshippers . . . lowered themselves in the ritual *Ruqa*’: kneeling with heads bowed to the floor in devotion.” From the back of the hall, Goldstein opened fire, shooting more than 100 bullets before a group was finally able to overcome and kill him.²⁵⁴ The worshippers fled from the hall in panic. Almost immediately the Mosque was shut off by the Israeli Army, a closure which was to extend for almost nine months and lead to the most radical reconstruction of both the physical space and the political conflict at the site thus far.

The massacre sent tremors across Hebron, Israel, and much of the world. In Hebron, confusion and riots erupted outside the Mosque and throughout the city, and several more Palestinians were shot by IDF soldiers attempting to control the crowd. At least four people were killed by the army “in front of al-Ahli Hospital immediately after the massacre in the Mosque. These were relatives who came to inquire about their loved ones and to donate blood.

250 The Massacre in Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi Al-Sharif: Context and Aftermath, 2.

251 Michael Schwartz, “Tightening the Noose,” Challenge no. 25, 10.

252 Irwin Goldstein, in Baruch Hagever, Ben-Horin (ed), vi.

253 From Haaretz 2/27/94, quoted in The Massacre in Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi Al-Sharif: Context and Aftermath, 18.

254 The Massacre in Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi Al-Sharif: Context and Aftermath, 24.

Some were bringing the dead and wounded from the Ibrahimi Mosque.”²⁵⁵ Many Palestinians called this use of force the “second massacre.” A curfew was imposed over the Palestinian Hebronites (though not over the Jewish settlers) and several roadblocks were set up in the heart of Hebron’s Arab market. Even public burials and commemorations of the victims were severely restricted by the Israeli authorities for fear of increased violence. In the rest of the country, the Palestinian reaction was also quick and explosive, though many Jewish Israelis later expressed surprise that it was not even more violent. Throughout the country, Palestinians erupted into spontaneous riots, including one on the Temple Mount, where thousands of Muslims had gathered for prayer on Ramadan Friday.²⁵⁶ The “Unified Leadership of the Intifada issued a call to escalate the Intifada. . . , [including] a three day general strike in the Occupied Territories; one week of mourning and the raising of black mourning flags everywhere; mass demonstrations; and attacks on settlers.”²⁵⁷ The response of the PLO leadership was even more far-reaching, announcing “a three-day mourning period and general strike for all Palestinian communities throughout the Arab world. The PLO condemned the massacre in a statement issued world-wide, stating that Israel is responsible for the killing.”²⁵⁸ The outrage expressed by the Palestinian population inside Israel (the so-called “48 Palestinians”) was also an important phenomenon. In Jaffa, Haifa, and elsewhere, “immediate demonstrations were organized, which, in various areas, turned into violent clashes with the Israeli police forces. In the majority of cases, the demonstrations were spontaneous,

255 “The New Gaza”; also Al-Jubei, Personal interview, 3 August 1995.

256 “Right after the massacre, enraged Palestinian youths at Al Aqsa hurled stones down on Jewish worshippers below, forcing police to evacuate the area. As a result, the Israeli authorities preemptively kept Jews away from the [Western] wall [on Friday, March 11] for more than an hour during the Muslim prayers, a security measure defended by the Government but denounced by opponents as an unheard of capitulation to hooligans.” Many Jews reacted to this temporary halt to their presence at the Wall by making an even greater effort to visit it. Thus “Rabbi Yehuda Goetz, rabbi of the wall for 26 years, commented about the unaccustomed visitors. ‘All of the sudden, all sorts of people have become big religious figures who must pray at the wall,’ he told the newspaper *Ha’aretz*.” Clyde Haberman, “At the Western Wall, some pray and some protest,” *New York Times*, 12 March 1994.

257 Ziad Abbas, Nathan Krystall, and Michel Warshawsky, *Hebron Massacre: A Summary of Events*, (The Alternative Information Center: Jerusalem, 1994), 12.

258 Abbas et al, 11.

without the involvement of the local political parties.”²⁵⁹ For the first time since the early years of the Intifada, Palestinian political factions “united across the spectrum to declare the resumption of the armed struggle.”²⁶⁰

Public statements of condemnation and accusations of responsibility were also swift in coming, and though not as concordant as the calls for escalated struggle, almost universally they recognized the political nature of the attack on the religious site and the threat posed to the peace negotiations. Yasser Arafat attributed responsibility for the massacre to “the Israeli military, and said that the massacre represents a great danger not only to the peace process, but to all dimensions of Israeli and Palestinian coexistence.”²⁶¹ Another one of the PLO Executive Committee members, Suleiman Najab, “told Reuters Press Service that, ‘In light of the massacre, the PLO leadership must review in full the entire peace process and evaluate its benefits. . . . The massacre shows that the current negotiating process is a smoke screen for the occupation authorities and the settlers to continue their crimes. The Israeli government is responsible for the massacre.’” Yasser Abd Rabo, the Secretary of the Palestinian Democratic Federation (FIDA) and a member of the Palestinian negotiating team, stated that “‘this Zionist massacre was perpetrated with the support of the Israeli military for the aim of sabotaging the peace process.’” Palestinian opposition factions had an even wider spectrum of accusation, using the massacre to bolster their claims against the PLO leadership and the peace process in general, stating that the Hebron massacre was “the inevitable consequence of the Oslo Agreement.”²⁶² A group which called itself the Hebron Emergency Committee rejected “any [peace] agreement that does not dismantle Israeli settlements in Hebron and its vicinity as a first step toward dismantling Israeli settlements all over the occupied territories. We demand that the Ibrahimi Mosque is opened for prayer to Muslims, and that Hebron is declared a disaster

259 Abbas et al, 13.

260 Peled, Inside God's Bunker.

261 Abbas et al, 11.

262 Abbas et al, 12.

area.”²⁶³ These accusations and stipulations support the claim that “the bullets fired at the Ibrahimi Mosque were aimed at the peace process.”²⁶⁴

On the Israeli side, the Israeli political leadership, both right and left, immediately sought to distance themselves from Goldstein. Rabin called him a madman, papers labeled him a “crazy Jewish fanatic,”²⁶⁵ and Hebron was labeled “a place of poison. . . , [a place] for the fevered.”²⁶⁶ Goldstein's motive of putting an end to the peace process was likewise decried by the Rabin government and the opposition. Initially the settler leadership joined in condemning the massacre, although their sincerity was contested by the televised image of National Religious Party Knesset Member Hanan Porat “appearing at the [Kiryat Arba] town council scant hours after the murder, with a broad smile, wishing people a ‘happy Purim.’ It’s a religious obligation (*mitzvah*) to be joyful on Purim, he explain[ed].”²⁶⁷ The government quickly appointed the Shamgar Commission to investigate the massacre, and when the results were published four months later, they disputed any accusations of complicity between Goldstein and the government or the army. According to the report,

“the evidence presented to us indicates that [Dr. Baruch Goldstein] acted alone. . . . We do not believe that anyone can be blamed for not having foreseen the fact that a Jew would plan and carry out a massacre of Moslems in the Machpelah Cave. . . , particularly since intelligence reports warned of the opposite: an attack by Hamas. . . . It should be added that the arrangement permitting Kiryat Arba residents or other Jewish citizens to carry weapons into the Machpelah Cave is not what made it possible for Goldstein to commit the massacre. Goldstein did not rely on this permission; he wore his army uniform with the insignia of rank, creating the image of a reserve officer on active duty.”²⁶⁸

For many on the Israeli radical left, however, this freedom given the settlers and the army at the expense of the Palestinian residents was precisely the problem. Like the Palestinian groups, they also blamed the massacre on the Occupation and on the policies of the Rabin

²⁶³ Abdel Alim Da’ana, a researcher at Hebron Union Graduate University, qtd. in “The New Gaza.”

²⁶⁴ Jerusalem Times, 4 March 1994.

²⁶⁵ Haberman, “At the Western Wall, some pray and some protest.”

²⁶⁶ Leon Wieseltier, “Bloodlust Memories,” The New Republic, 21 March 1994, 13-14.

²⁶⁷ Abbas et al., 15; see also Israel Shahak, “The Background and Consequences of the Massacre in Hebron,” Middle East Policy 3, no. 2 (1994): 63-76.

²⁶⁸ Jerusalem Post, 27 June 1994.

government. They condemned the Israeli army, asserting that it "first deliberately destroyed all on-site evidence of the massacre by cleaning its aftereffects in haste, and only then proceeded to 'investigate' it as unprofessionally as possible." Because this clean-up was done on a Saturday, members of the Israeli left stated that "it can therefore be presumed that the scrubbing of the halls was elevated to a level of urgency sufficient to justify the violation of the Sabbath in the eyes of both the army and its rabbis."²⁶⁹ Within days of the massacre the newly formed and co-operative Hebron Solidarity Group and Alternative Information Center issued several protest statements, including one which linked

"the madness in the ideology of the extreme Israeli Right. . .to thousands of Israeli politicians. . . . The murderer, Goldstein, is the sole person being charged with the Hebron massacre. The following should join him: the soldiers who participated in the massacre in the mosque. . . ; the senior officer corps in Hebron. . .[since] a respectable portion of those killed during the massacre were felled by the bullets of Israeli soldiers; the chief of staff, the general commander of the IDF central command, and the minister of defense. . . ; and the entire Israeli government and the cabinet coalition. . . . They are all guilty. . . . The Rabin government must bear full responsibility for the massacre in Hebron, which has proven that with its current policies it is unable to defend the lives of the Palestinian residents."²⁷⁰

About ten days after the massacre, the Hebron Solidarity Committee (HSC) organized "a large street-theatre demonstration in the heart of West Jerusalem protesting government and army complicity with the massacre."²⁷¹ The HSC repeated this type of protest demonstration a month later in Hebron, joining thousands of Hebronite Palestinians in a protest march after which "widespread clashes broke out between residents and soldiers, who had blocked the marchers from reaching the Ibrahimi Mosque."²⁷² Finally, members of the radical left disputed the impartiality of the members of the Shamgar Commission, stating that "the composition of the committee. . .is an exact witness to its main function. . . . [T]he mandate

²⁶⁹ Shahak, 63.

²⁷⁰ "The Other Front," Alternative Information Center, 2 March 1994.

²⁷¹ Apartheid in Hebron: The True Face of Oslo, (Jerusalem: Hebron Solidarity Committee, March 1995), 13.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 14

of the commission. . .forbids it from investigating the political context of the massacre.”²⁷³

The Mosque and the massacre thus became new symbols invoked by the radical left to support their political arguments against the settlers, and the Occupation Authorities, and the Rabin government.

The Israeli radical right, including Jewish settlers in Kiryat Arba and Hebron, also pointed an accusatory finger at the government, although in a very different discourse. According to an announcement issued by the *Yesha* (Judea and Samaria) Rabbis Committee, “the government bears responsibility for this abominable situation.”²⁷⁴ Kiryat Arba leader Rabbi Levinger “staked his authority behind the proposal that the [Israeli] government should be condemned instead [of Goldstein], for putting Goldstein ‘under an unbearable mental pressure,’ which propelled him to action.”²⁷⁵ Within two weeks a version of the massacre began to emerge which accused Muslims of plotting a grand Ramadan massacre of the Jews and the government of knowing of it but failing to take steps to prevent it. According to the version, Goldstein, a doctor, had been alerted by the army to prepare medical supplies for an approaching catastrophe. In one letter to the editor, a Mr. Joe Alster wrote the following of the massacre:

“As a proud Jew who journeyed so far to be with his G-d in the Land of his people, Baruch was privileged to pray every day at the Cave of the Patriarchs (Machpelah) where our fathers and mothers are buried. His prayer was constantly interrupted by the wild and blood-curdling shouts of hundreds of Arabs, from the side designated for the Moslems, calling for death to Jews (Word has it that shortly before Purim, the army found a huge stockpile of weapons and leaflets announcing a pogrom against the Jews of Hebron, but the government and the leftist media were and still are silent on this matter). And so, Baruch responded with an act of Kiddush Hashem. . . . These self-hating Jewish ‘leaders -- and the world in concert -- are now blaming every incident on one Jew in Hebron.”²⁷⁶

²⁷³ Abbas et al, 18. “[I]n addition to two justices from the Supreme Court, Justices Shamgar and Goldberg; former Chief of Staff, Major-General Moshe Levi; Judge Zuabi’, in order to gain Arab ‘legitimacy;’ and in order to appease the angry left, President of the Open University, Professor Ya’ari, known for his moderate views.”

²⁷⁴ Quoted in Abbas et al, 15.

²⁷⁵ Shahak, 73.

²⁷⁶ Quoted in Baruch Hagever, Ben-Horin (ed), xiii-xiv.

In this way settler attempts to distance themselves from Goldstein's act were soon replaced by the commemoration and, among a very small minority, approbation of his deed. In Givat HaHarsina, a settlement not far from Kiryat Arba on the outskirts of Hebron, settlers "danced in front of Palestinians' homes in celebration of the mass murder, cursed the Prophet Muhammed, and promised more bloodshed."²⁷⁷ Journalists pointed out that

"within two days walls in West Jerusalem, especially the religious neighborhoods, were already covered by posters extolling Goldstein's 'virtues' and deploring that he didn't manage to kill more Arabs. Children of religious settlers coming to Jerusalem to demonstrate were sporting a button 'Dr. Goldstein cured Israel's ills.' Concerts of religious music and other entertainment events often spontaneously turned into demonstrations of tribute to him."²⁷⁸

Likewise the roadblocks erected in Hebron's market were soon sprayed with slogans such as "We are all Baruch Goldstein" and "Death to the Arabs." Kach activists created a T-shirt with a picture of Baruch Goldstein, "The man who tranquilized 30 Arabs."²⁷⁹

Goldstein's funeral and the creation of a memorial site to him are prime examples of the ways in which such acts of public commemoration can support political and, in this case, anti-government rhetoric. The funeral ceremony was held in Jerusalem, and while the crowd of approximately 1000 people waited for the funeral to begin, "long eulogies were delivered as substitute for political speeches. . . . Michael Ben Horin, who calls himself 'President of the State of Judea'. . . ended his speech with the promise: 'We promise you, the Holy Baruch, that your blood will ferment till this wicked government falls.' The audience applauded vigorously."²⁸⁰ Ironically, Goldstein's "funeral cortège was protected by heavy reinforcements of security forces" and his tomb was given "a permanent guard of honor provided by the army. . . . After Goldstein's coffin was brought [from Jerusalem] to Kiryat Arba under heavy military guard, a second run of eulogies was delivered in the halls of the

²⁷⁷"Hebron Solidarity Group Protests Rabin's Attempts to Avoid Evacuating the Settlers from Hebron," 18 March 1994.

²⁷⁸ Shahak, 65.

²⁷⁹ *Challenge* no 25, photo.

²⁸⁰Baum, Ilana and Zvi Singer. "Extremist Right Wing Leaders Praised Dr. Goldstein During His Funeral: 'A hero, a righteous martyr.'" *Yediot Ahronot*, 28 February 1994. Reprinted in *Hebron and After* (2 March 1994).

Hesder Yeshiva Nir, i.e., in a military institution.”²⁸¹ Kiryat Arba settlers began to erect a monument to Goldstein, hoping that “the ‘memorial of saint Goldstein’ will become a pilgrimage site for religious Jews.” Such actions represent an attempt to construct new holy space in Hebron. Perhaps in recognition of the symbolic power of such a site, the Israeli government began considering “a move to demolish the memorial, but pressures from settler circles and right-wing politicians forced the Rabin administration to reconsider such a move. One of those taking part in Goldstein memorial project. . . reportedly said that ‘the settlers will finish the memorial monument regardless of what the government thinks.’”²⁸²

This latitude towards and even support of the settlers on the part of the government contrasted starkly with the treatment given the Palestinians. The 24-hour curfew imposed on Hebron's Palestinians, which continued until March 27, subjected them to “additional terrorism and violence by Israeli occupation authorities and denied [them] even basic human rights.” According to Palestinian reports, twelve Palestinians were killed by army gunfire in the city in this period.²⁸³ Even when the curfew was lifted “the heart of Hebron, the area of the market and the Ibrahimi Mosque, remained under blockade, effectively cutting our city into two.”²⁸⁴ This measure severely affected both the commerce and the quality of life of the Hebronite Palestinians. One resident of Hebron declared that “Hebron is a different city now -- the streets are scenes of strong daily clashes; the youth of Hebron do not fear death anymore. . . . It is like a war. We have become the Gaza of the West Bank, if not more than that.”²⁸⁵ Although the massacre and the peace accords compelled the Israeli authorities to reappoint Mustafa Natsche Mayor of Hebron on April 3, many Hebronites rejected the new municipality as being “appointed from afar. Mustafa Abdel Nabi Natsche (who became deputy mayor after the elected mayor Fahed Qawasmeh was deported in 1981, and later murdered) was never elected. We will not accept rule by remote control from Tunis. . . . The appointment of the

²⁸¹ Shahak, 66+.

²⁸² *Palestine Times*, December 1994.

²⁸³ “Press release.” Palestinian Human Rights Information Center, 24 March 1994.

²⁸⁴ Abdel Alim Da’ana, “The New Gaza.”

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

municipality appears to be an attempt to cover up the policy of collective punishment imposed on Hebron.."286

These forms of collective punishment as well as the increased violence only served to increase the view of the army's complicity in the act, as well as the importance and the politicization of the Mosque in the eyes of Hebronite and other Palestinians. Hassan Tahboub, head of the Islamic *Waqf* in Jerusalem, "accused Israeli authorities of complicity in the slaughter perpetrated by Baruch Goldstein. 'To allow Baruch Goldstein to enter the mosque in military uniform, with IDF-issued weapons and ammunition -- enough for an entire army unit -- illustrates cooperation between him and the soldiers stationed at the mosque.'"287 Tahboub later asserted that he believed Goldstein and the soldiers "were scheming to make this very ugly crime, to make terror for the Muslims to avoid the place. But this made the Muslims more related with the mosque, and they are insisting to defend it until it should be cleared by the strangers."288 According to a more secular Palestinian, a member of the Palestinian peace delegation, another motive of Goldstein's was "to give a symbolic saying that that place, that holy place, is belonging to the Jewish people and not the Muslims. We know that the settlers tried a lot of times to stop Muslims reaching that holy place, with the hand of the Israeli army. . . . [T]hat Mosque is the soul of the Arab community of Hebron."289

Thus the general Palestinian opinion developed that the act was related to a widespread Israeli desire and attempt to expel Palestinians, a view that increased as proposals surfaced regarding the partition of the building between the two groups. With hindsight Palestinians asserted that "back in 1984 the intentions of the Tel Rumeida settlers were already clear: to evacuate the Palestinians from the heart of Hebron, and to build a continuous Jewish settlement all the way to the Ibrahimi Mosque."290 The journalist Suleiman echoed and inverted this opinion, claiming that "the settlers' ultimate goal is no less than the total expulsion of all

286 Ibid.

287 Quoted in Abbas et al.

288 Hassan Tahboub, Personal interview.

289 Al-Jubeih, interview.

290 "Tel Rumeida: No Sign of Evacuating the Settlers."

Palestinians from Hebron and the obliteration of its Arab and Muslim identity. . . . The Palestinians insist that nothing short of the total evacuation of the settlers from their midst would heal the wounds of the massacre."²⁹¹ He later elaborated, explaining that "the massacre convinced the Palestinians that two macabre prospects are awaiting them -- either they capitulate to the Israelis and become slaves like the children of Israel were in Egypt during the rule of the pharaohs, or extermination!"²⁹²

As during the threat of the Intifada, this threat served to increase resistance and conflict over the site. As Suleiman noted, "the massacre persuaded the Palestinians that they have to put up a resistance. . . . [M]ost of the so-called bus bomb attacks happened only after the massacre of the Ibrahimi Mosque. . . . [T]he phenomenon of suicidal bombings occurred after what happened in the mosque."²⁹³ This resistance was especially notable on the month-anniversaries of the massacre, when strike days were held, religio-political speeches were delivered in the mosques, and the tombs of the martyrs were visited and their pictures displayed.²⁹⁴ Tahboub explained that the speeches in the mosques especially warned worshippers of the threat to the Ibrahimi Mosque, and the necessity of freeing it from Israeli control. Thus one *Waqf* official explained that the attack in the Ibrahimi Mosque "awoke a certain awareness, a certain resistance. In the normal life, I can pray wherever I am. But when I feel threatened, then I should keep my duty on it."²⁹⁵

Thus in Palestinian eyes, their greatest fears were becoming reality when, in June 1994, the Shamgar Commission released its recommendation that

"it would be wise to prevent friction between Jews and Moslems, arising, among other reasons, from the fact that prayers are held alternately in the same places, and Jewish and Moslem worshipers come into contact with each other. . . . This at times has resulted in power struggles which should be prevented. . . [by] arrangements intended to create complete separation between Moslem and Jewish worshippers."²⁹⁶

²⁹¹ Suleiman, Khalid. "Narrowing horizon." Middle East International, 15 April 1994.

²⁹² Suleiman, Personal interview.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Personal and written interviews, Tahboub, Hamad, and Subject #27.

²⁹⁵ Salam, Personal interview, 2 August 1995.

²⁹⁶ Jerusalem Post, 27 June 1994.

Accordingly, the building was divided into two sides, with the Muslims retaining the Hall of Isaac and the Jawliya areas and the Jews receiving the Halls of Abraham and Jacob, the nave which connected the two, and the Anbar and Yusefiya areas. The arrangement gave the Muslims the largest room but only 45% of the actual floorspace; even had they retained greater area it is likely they would still have disputed the measure which they saw as being "done unilaterally. . . , under the threat of the gun."²⁹⁷ Indeed, while members of Israel's Chief Rabbinate and of the Knesset were allowed to inspect the arrangements before the reopening of the mosque, Muslim clergy and Palestinian political leaders were extended no such invitation and one, Dr. Nabil Sha'th of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), was expressly denied entry to the building.²⁹⁸ In the Palestinian perspective, "the Rabin government [had become] the first ever to turn a practicing Mosque into a synagogue forcefully."²⁹⁹

Thus even before the building was actually reopened both Muslim religious and Palestinian political leaders were appealing worldwide to stop the *de facto* partitioning by Israel of the Ibrahimi Mosque. At the end of August, "the Supreme Muslim Council in East Jerusalem issued a strongly worded statement rejecting the unilateral Israeli action inside the mosque and calling it illegitimate. The statement also appealed to 'the whole world to help us recover our rights and stop Israeli aggression.'"³⁰⁰ The head of Hebron's *Waqf*, Sheikh Natsche, argued, "This is and has been a Muslim mosque. No person from another religion has the right to turn it into a synagogue, to prevent Muslims from praying here. . . . We cannot accept that the people of another religion tell us how and where to pray -- this is a violation of our freedom of religion."³⁰¹ Protests from political leaders demonstrated the shrine's importance as a political and nationalist symbol as well as a religious one. The PNA sent a protest to the UN Security Council which stated that the partition measures were "a blatant violation against one of the most important Islamic sites. . . [and] threaten[ed] the peace

²⁹⁷ Suleiman, interview. See appendix for layout of building and security arrangements.

²⁹⁸ Suleiman, "Six months on." *Middle East International*, 9 September 1994.

²⁹⁹ Iyad Khalaile, "(Wrong) Lessons of the Hebron Massacre," *Challenge* no 28, October 1994, 22.

³⁰⁰ Suleiman, "Six Months On."

³⁰¹ Khalaile.

process and expose[d] the Israeli intentions toward this process."³⁰² PNA representative Sha'th claimed that the Israelis had "converted the Mosque into a ghetto."³⁰³ Mayor Natsche declared that the arrangement violated the Geneva Convention, and the Arab League castigated Israel for giving the larger part to the Jews.³⁰⁴ Jordan "'strongly denounced' what it characterized as Israel's 'move to divide the Ibrahimi Mosque' into two,"³⁰⁵ and "Egypt's permanent representative to the UN and head of the delegation of Arab countries to the UN, Nabil Arabi, sent a letter to UN General Secretary Butrus Ghali, expressing unanimous Arab condemnation of the Israeli [security] measures in the mosque. In the letter, Arabi stressed that Hebron and all its religious sites are an integral part of occupied Palestinian territory."³⁰⁶ This religious site thus became one of the unifying political issues among the Arab nations.

As it became the focal point of political and religious discourse, it was incorporated as a symbol and a means of legitimization into the political discourse of various Palestinian and Jewish groups. PNA minister Sha'th's decision to pay "a brief visit to Hebron in order to 'pray at the Ibrahimi mosque and to show solidarity with the town's suffering population'"³⁰⁷ was probably also undertaken with the intent of increasing political support in that town. At the time of the reopening of the building on November 7, 1994, several groups "stayed away purposefully to reinforce a Palestinian contention that changes made by Israel at the cave lack[ed] legitimacy."³⁰⁸ A few months later, "the Hamas affiliated Ibrahimi Mosque Bloc won

³⁰²JMCC, 4 September 1994.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴Hebron-News, 14 November 1994.

³⁰⁵ Hebron-News, 21 November 1994.

³⁰⁶ JMCC, 20 November 1994.

³⁰⁷ Suleiman, "Six Months On."

³⁰⁸ Haberman, New York Times, 8 November 1994; see also Hebron-News 16 November 1994. Despite the initial reservation, a few days later on the first Friday following the reopening, Palestinian reports claim that "nearly 1500 Muslims had to pray outside the perimeter of the mosque when the Israelis banned them from entering. . . . Israeli troops surrounded the crowd outside and dispersed them soon after the prayer to prevent any demonstration taking place. . . . The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) has also condemned the measures and accuses the Israeli authorities of plotting to turn the mosque into a synagogue. Hamas threatened that 'the response of our gallant Mujahideen and heroic people will be decisive and painful.' In a communique on this development, the movement added that, since it was first built by the Muslims 1200 years ago, it has never been anything but a mosque for Muslims and that the attempts to Judaize the building were unlawful and invalid." A. Aziz, "Israel Partitions Ibrahimi Mosque," Palestine Times, December 1994, 1-2.

all nine student council seats at Hebron University on January 4.”³⁰⁹ By the summer of 1995 it appeared that both Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood had adopted the massacre in Hebron “as a kind of turning point which becomes a religious date which strengthens their commitment to holding Islamic land. I don’t think that before that massacre they attached that much importance to the Tomb.”³¹⁰ Settlers especially sought increased legitimization from the Tomb, in order to counteract the calls for evacuation or abandonment by the Israeli army. Before the reopening of the shrine, Jewish settlers

“petitioned the courts to let them back in for Rosh ha-Shanah on the ground that they were being denied religious freedom. The judges, focused more on security concerns than civil-rights claims, said no. Other religious Jews have asked that the authorities at least allow a small group to enter during the holiday, a token gesture but an important nationalist statement for them, to affirm Israeli control. . . . ‘If they really wanted to open it, they could have done it in a week or two,’ said Israel Zeira, general manager of the Shavei Hebron Yeshiva, a few dozen yards from the shrine. ‘But this Government doesn’t understand the importance of the Cave of Machpelah to the Jewish people. To have no prayers there on Rosh ha-Shanah is a disgrace for the entire Jewish people.’”³¹¹

Zeira also asserted that “the calls for evacuation of Hebron and the serious talk of uprooting at least the seven families in the isolate Tel Rumeida neighborhood of Hebron ‘led to a reaction in the country and abroad and an unprecedented show of support for the community. All of the sudden you saw the ‘Hebron, Always and Forever’ bumper stickers. . . . The public stood by our side. Not because of the incident in the Machpelah Cave, but because of the government’s reaction to the incident, and the fear they would try to throw us out of here.’”³¹²

The division of the entire building into two parts and the political conflict surrounding this reconstruction of religious space and time sparked further reconstructions within the building. Shortly after the reopening of the cave, Kiryat Arba residents were able to view the Muslim half of the site, and complained of “the exceptional improvements to the Isaac Hall

³⁰⁹ “Update -- News from Hebron (Dec 1994 - March 1995),” Hebron Solidarity Committee.

³¹⁰ Pappes, Personal interview.

³¹¹ Haberman, *New York Times*, 5 September 1994.

³¹² From article in the *Jerusalem Post*, qtd in *Hebron-News*, 27 February 1995. See appendix for “Hebron, Always and Forever” sticker.

(Muslim side) as compared to the insignificant changes made in the two halls allocated to Jews, the Abraham and Isaac Halls. It was also noted by MK Shaul Yahalom that in blatant disregard of the Shamgar Commission Report's demand for a complete separation of Jews and Arabs in the Cave, the Arab office (*Waqf*) remains on the Jewish side of the Cave and its Arab occupants are allowed to freely stroll between the two sides of the Cave."³¹³ Around the same time, Jewish worshippers installed *mezuzot* in the areas delegated to them, causing one *Waqf* guard to claim that he would rather pray somewhere else.³¹⁴ Within a few more months the Jews were proposing to erect a canopy covering over the courtyard (the Nave) in their jurisdiction; the *Waqf* immediately opposed such a plan.³¹⁵ The keychain of Goldstein in front of the Tomb, with one minaret appearing to be toppling over, was also issued by the settlers during this time.³¹⁶ Additional reconstructions outside the site were begun on both sides. At the close of 1994, Likud leaders agreed with local settlers on plans to build a guest house near the Ibrahimi Mosque, although the plan was opposed by the Hebron municipality and the *Waqf*, who pointed out that it was "a clear indication that there is no Israeli intent to evacuate settlers from the city center."³¹⁷ Around the same time the settlers' Beit Schneerson "was renovated and rebuilt and additional stories were constructed by the Jewish Community of Hebron,"³¹⁸ and a year later renovation began on Beit Romano, home of Yeshivat Shavei Hebron.³¹⁹ Jewish construction and reconstruction was restricted to those neighborhoods already under Jewish control, as the Israeli government did not allow additional property to be purchased by the settlers. Settlers claim that "when these limitations are rescinded, thousands

³¹³ *Hebron-News*, 16 January 1995. This comment, of course, omits the obvious fact that Jewish soldiers remain on the Muslim side.

³¹⁴ "Hebron still under siege," *Jerusalem Times*, 23 December 1994.

³¹⁵ Wilder, Personal interview.

³¹⁶ See introduction. See also appendix.

³¹⁷ "Update from the city that welcomes you," (Press release) Hebron Solidarity Committee, November-December 1994; also Wilder, Personal interview.

³¹⁸ "Hebron, City of Our Forefathers, City of their Sons," Pamphlet, (Hebron: Jewish Community of Hebron, 1995).

³¹⁹ "Your Emissaries in the City of Our Forefathers," Website, The Jewish Community of Hebron, 1996. <<http://www.virtual.co.il/communities/israel/hebron>>.

of Jews will flock to the city of the Patriarchs, never again to leave Hebron desolate.”³²⁰

Despite their building activity and dissatisfaction with the status quo, when AP reports announced that “under direct orders from Arafat, Palestinian institutions, such as the Islamic Court, are being moved to within yards of the Jewish enclave in downtown Hebron. . . , Noam Arnon, a spokesman for the Jewish Community of Hebron said: ‘It’s a provocation to put PLO flags in different areas of Hebron, something that is against the status quo and against everything that we have arranged in Hebron.’”³²¹

Parallel to the physical reconstruction of the site and the surrounding area, a historiographical reconstruction increased, first of the account of Goldstein's acts and motives, and of the site's history itself. First, the division affected the way Palestinians interpreted the massacre; that is, their explanation of Goldstein's deeds shifted with the enforced change in their relationship to the shrine. In addition to the opinion that the act had been done with the intent of expelling the Muslims (a befitting reaction during the nine months in which they could not enter the mosque), Palestinians began to see the massacre as an attempt to Judaize the mosque. In light of the new reconstructions to the space and time allocation in the mosque, this interpretation became greatly validated and widely accepted. According to one resident and activist in Hebron, “the massacre proved that the Jews wanted to Judaize the mosque and then take control of Hebron city.” This realization of “the dangers that the mosque faces by the Israelis who are trying to Judaize the mosque” increased the importance and attachment attributed by the Muslims to the site.³²² As an article in a December 1994 issue of the Palestine Times asserted, “The people of Hebron. . . regard [the segregation measures] as part of the old scheme to turn the Ibrahimi Mosque into a Jewish synagogue, a scheme the occupation authorities embarked upon when they took control of the West Bank in 1967.”³²³ Thus the

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Hebron-News, 8 September 1995.

³²² Subject #27, Written interview.

³²³ Aziz, 2.

measure was linked to the other most significant political date in recent Palestinian history and historiography -- the occupation of the West Bank in 1967. As Suleiman said,

"[The Israelis] have partitioned the Mosque into two parts. One to the Jews -- the greater part -- and one to the Muslims. And Muslims will never accept this measure, on the part of the Israelis. . . . [I]t is connected with the Occupation. It's a symptom of the Occupation. When the Occupation goes, it will end. . . . [T]he Ibrahimi Mosque and the Al-Aqsa Mosque have acquired an added importance in the eyes of the Muslims, because of the persistent attempt on the part of the Jews to desecrate them, and to arrogate them, and to seize them step by step. We have become more aware of the dangers, the looming dangers, surrounding these places."³²⁴

The Jewish settlers also continued to reconstruct their account of the massacre. One year after the massacre the settlers' new on-line newsgroup, Hebron-News, devoted an entire issue to such account, and by the beginning of 1995 settlers had published a book in commemoration of Goldstein, in which they presented more fully developed versions of the situation surrounding his act. Titled "Baruch Hagever, which can be translated as 'Baruch, the Man,' but is a take-off on a verse from Psalms that reads, 'Blessed is the man [baruch hagever] who trusts in God,'" former Kach movement activists claimed that the book was a hot seller, selling 6,000 copies in less than 24 hours.³²⁵ According to this text and other settler accounts, not only had the army found leaflets calling for a pogrom, but the Tomb "was salted with flyers advising the Muslims to stock up on food in anticipation of the curfew that would surely follow after the massacre they intended."³²⁶ Moreover, according to this version the entire town including the Jewish population knew of the impending attack, because "for days before, loudspeakers on mosques in Hebron had been blaring forth their message of hate, 'Itbach el-Yahud!' ('Slaughter the Jews!') without any interference by the IDF. . . . By means of notices and wall inscriptions, Arab terrorists were urging the Hebron masses to store up lots of food for the long curfew that would inevitably follow a mid-Ramadan slaughter of Jews. A few days before Baruch's preemptive strike in the Ma'arat HaMachpelah (Cave of the

³²⁴ Personal interview.

³²⁵ Herb Keinon, "Book praising Baruch Goldstein a top seller, Kach says," North California Jewish Bulletin, 17 March 1995.

³²⁶ Herbert Sunshine, Letter, in Baruch Hagever, ed. Ben-Horin, ix-xiv.

Patriarchs). . . a high ranking IDF officer came and urged Baruch to prepare emergency operating facilities for an expected Purim attack upon Jews!"³²⁷ "Baruch Goldstein understood full well what was impending."³²⁸ Goldstein's massacre, then, is referred to euphemistically as "the February 25 Purim strike by Dr. Baruch Goldstein,"³²⁹ "Dr. Goldstein's Purim Tragedy", and "the incident."³³⁰ The early morning Muslim prayer meeting during which the massacre occurred, on the other hand, is called "a pre-dawn, slaughter-the-Jews pep-rally prayer session."³³¹ The versions typically end with a cry against the Rabin government: "Shurely (sic) the Army was aware, and most surely the Commander-in-Chief -- the evil Yitzhak Rabin -- knew, that Jews would die on Purim. A very likely possibility was that Rabin wanted the Jews of Hebron to be driven out, and politically too weak to accomplish this, he was willing to let the Arabs do his dirty work for him. If this is so, and this scenario does answer many questions, then Rabin is guilty of High Treason."³³²

Concurrent with the revision's emphasis on Goldstein's inversion of the "imminent" pogrom was a renewed emphasis on the pogrom of 1929. The two -- the real and the hypothesized pogroms -- were liken, as the settlers asserted that the "infamous war cry 'Itbach el-Yahud', foreboding what the Arabs had prepared for the next day"³³³ was "the very slogan of pogromists in 1929."³³⁴ The gopher-site recently set up by the Jewish Community of Hebron reconstructs the history of the 1929 riots even further, amplifying the role of the Mosque in the events and claiming that Muslim

"inciters began calling for a Jihad or Holy War against the infidels, i.e., the Jews, during Moslem Prayer services. They demanded the extermination of all Jews in Eretz Yisrael. The Mosque in Ma'arat HaMachpelah in Hebron was no exception. Arab worshipers left pray[er] services and began attacking Jewish homes. . . [and]

³²⁷ Irwin Goldstein, Letter, in Baruch Hagever, ed. Ben-Horin, iii-viii..

³²⁸ Hebron-News, 22 February 1995.

³²⁹ Hebron-News, 14 February 1995.

³³⁰ Hebron-News, 22 February 1995.

³³¹ Goldstein, in Baruch Hagever, v-vii.

³³² Sunshine, in Baruch Hagever, ix-xi.

³³³ Hebron-News, 22 February 1995.

³³⁴ Halevi, "Side by Side in Hatred," Jerusalem Report, 15 June 1995, 14.

Yeshivat Hebron. . . . Hebron, void of Jews, remained an open wound on the soul of the Jewish nation.”³³⁵

In October 1994, a book was published entitled Hebron Massacre: 1929. The book’s introduction states that “the events of 1929 in Hebron and other places in the Land teach us that we cannot abandon our security to the hands of foreigners. . . , and that the Arabs will exploit every opportunity in order to cut us from the Land of our birth and the Land of our lives. . . and they will lie about the events. We will remember the terrible events of the Hebron Massacre. . . and hold tight to the Jewish community in Hebron.” The passage implicitly confirms the Jewish claims to Hebron and attempts to discredit Arab accounts of events of conflict. About a year later, another book, Hebron: From Pogroms of 1929 to Events of 1994, was published. It used Kabbalistic numerology to hypothesize about the significance of the two events as steps in the redemption of the Land. More than ever before, 1929 became “urgently relevant. . . in a city consecrated to the graves of ancient ancestors. . . . Hebron’s Jews [saw] their own relentless militancy as a response not only to current Arab terrorism but also to 1929.” The curator of the 1929 memorial in Beit Hadassah, Shmuel Mushnick, said, “If the army withdraws from here, what happened then can happen again. . . . [In 1994] The Arabs were preparing to massacre us. . . [b]ut Goldstein stopped them.”³³⁶ In this way the settlers neutralized and commemorated Goldstein’s act, incorporating it into their nationalist mythological tale.

In addition to these specific historiographical revisions, the settlers in general began producing more and more historiography on the site, as a way of gathering additional political support. In addition to the previously mentioned on-line Hebron-News and book publications, Hebron Stories by Amnon Offer Ben-Simhon and Fighters for the Freedom of Israel in the War for Independence, both about Hebron, were published in 1995. The Jewish Community of Hebron created several new pamphlets and brochures and has in 1996 developed a

³³⁵Gopher site: <gopher://gopher.jer1.co.il:70/11/comm/comm/is/hebron>. The account contradicts the findings of the British investigative commission of 1930.

³³⁶ Halevi, “Side by Side in Hatred,” 14.

website.³³⁷ These publications stress the purchase of Hebron by Abraham (in the website text the word “purchase” is highlighted each time it is mentioned) and strive to link “Hebron: City of Our Forefathers” to the “City of their Sons.”³³⁸ They also emphasize Jewish and Israeli symbols of control, as in the booklet entitled “The Cave of Machpelah: The Roots of the Jewish People” which depicts a photograph of the Tomb flocked by several hundred Jews and a gigantic Israeli flag. Financial support is constantly called for, and recently a new campaign has begun which invites supporters to buy, for 400 shekels, a medallion in honor of Hebron. One side of the medallion depicts the Tomb and the words: “The Cave of Machpelah -- the first Jewish purchase in the Land of Israel.” The other side carries the “purchase scripture” from Genesis. One advertisement for the medal reads:

“With the Hebron Medallion, you are reaffirming the faith of our Forefather Abraham and his commitment to the Land of Israel when he purchased the Cave of the Machpelah and Hebron for 400 shekels. Your contribution. . . helps restore and develop the Jewish Community of Hebron -- City of our Forefathers. . . . Hebron -- The living link between the Jewish People and their Homeland, Israel.”³³⁹

Thus the medallion is yet another example of the representation of site in terms conducive to a specific political agenda, combined with the reinterpretation of the biblical text.

Another way in which support is being gathered by the settlers is through increasing the number and visibility of actual tours of Hebron and visits to the shrine. The “heritage tours,” as the settlers call them, “more importantly. . . demonstrate their right to enter into any part of this hostile town, knowing full well that for the Arabs, such tours are sheer provocation.” At times the visitors have paraded large Israeli flags with them on such tours.³⁴⁰ In addition, the

³³⁷ At the website the Jewish Community of Hebron states its purposes: “Your Emissaries in the City of Our Forefathers. Care and maintenance of the Cave of the Machpelah. Reclamation and maintenance of Jewish property in Hebron. ‘Visiting the City of your Forefathers’ Outreach Program. Shabbat, Holiday and weekday guest programs. Guided tours of the Cave of the Machpelah and Hebron. ‘Hebron: Past, Present and Forever’ Educational Productions.” <<http://www.virtual.co.il/communities/israel/hebron>>

³³⁸ The title of a brochure on Hebron published in 1995. The cover displays an old photograph of a young boy and old man studying Torah, dressed in Hassidic hats and garb, and a modern photo of a 2-year-old boy, in knit clothing and hat that resembles fuzzy Hassidic hat, with hand on stone with Star of David carved in it. In each of the sections of the brochure, there is one black and white photo from late 19th/early 20th century, juxtaposed next to three recent color photos. See appendix.

³³⁹ Website: <http://www.virtual.co.il/communities/israel/hebron/medalion.htm/>

³⁴⁰ Peled, *In God's Bunker*.

settler campaign especially encourages visits during Jewish religious or Israeli political time, which continues, as in the past, to be a highly volatile time in terms of political and nationalist confrontation. Thus in December 1994, "seven buses with over 350 men, women and children arrived in Hebron for Chanukah visit organized by the 'Women in Green' After some false starts and some 'minor vocal clashes' with the officers in charge, the determined group persuaded the army to relent and allow the group to go by bus to the Avraham Avinu area and Beit Hadassah."³⁴¹ A few weeks later "1,000 Skver Hassidim held a prayer service. . . at the Ma'arat HaMachpelah (Cave of the Patriarchs)" in what the Jerusalem Post described as part of efforts on the part of the Hebron Jewish community leadership "to strengthen the bond between Israel's Hassidic community and Hebron's Jews to make it more difficult for Israel's government to abandon Hebron's Jews or. . . to 'transfer' them elsewhere."³⁴² In the same vein, the settler leadership commemorated the 28th anniversary of the "liberation" of Hebron with a special tour of "Hebron: City of Our Fathers -- Heritage of their Descendants" sponsored by the Orthodox Union Israel Center. The tour visited all the contested sites in Hebron, including the Cave of the Patriarchs, the Avraham Avinu synagogue and neighborhood, the Old Jewish Quarter of Hebron, Admot Yishai and environs, Beit Hadassah complex and Hebron heritage exhibit, Kiryat Arba, and Mamre.³⁴³

As the peace negotiations have progressed, these religious commemorations have become increasingly politicized. During Passover 1995, for example, over 20,000 Jews visited Hebron "to pray at the Machpelah and show solidarity with the settlers"³⁴⁴ as part of a settler-organized "'Pesach in Hebron' program."³⁴⁵ Because of the government provision for ten religious holidays each per year wherein Muslims and Jews have sole access to the site, the Jewish worshippers for the first time since the massacre and the reopening of the shrine had complete access to the entire site. As "thousands of Jews crowded the streets of Hebron and

³⁴¹ Hebron-News, 5 December 1994.

³⁴² Hebron-News, 3 January 1995.

³⁴³ Hebron-News, 17 May 1995.

³⁴⁴ Halevi, "Side by Side in Hatred," 14.

³⁴⁵ Hebron-News, 8 June 1995.

celebrated with live music” the celebration was as much political as religious. Outside the cave anti-government T-shirts and stickers were sold and pamphlets distributed, while inside prayers were offered “that for many were also a bitter anti-Government protest.”³⁴⁶ A young Hassidic man greeted the chance to enter the shrine by shouting: “‘Happy holidays. . . . And may this Government collapse!’”³⁴⁷ The scene caused one journalist to report that “Passover week. . . has been seized by religious and political critics of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin as an opportunity to rally large crowds and, they hope, show that his peace policies lack popular support.”³⁴⁸ The celebration only deteriorated relations with the local Palestinians, however, who were placed under curfew for longer than a week. “Hebron’s Palestinian mayor, Mustafa Natsche, complained that his city has been turned into ‘one huge prison, and all this to help the settlers celebrate.’”³⁴⁹ In 1996, the IDF estimated that 15,000 people visited Hebron on Israeli Independence Day and 30,000 people visited Hebron during Passover. “The events in Hebron on Independence Day climaxed with a 3:00 p.m. rally that featured Hassidic singing and speakers from the [National Religious Party], Likud and Moledet who beseeched the Israeli government not to withdraw.”³⁵⁰ These commemorations proved instrumental in Peres’ decision to postpone the withdrawal of the IDF from parts of Hebron until after the elections.

Commemorative attention of the sort given the Tomb has also recently been showered on the shrines on Tel Rumeida. In June 1995, “during the Jewish holiday Shavuus, approximately 1500 Jews visited the graves of Yishai (Jesse, father of King David) and Ruth (great-grandmother of King David) both of which are located near the Jewish enclave of Tel Rumeida in Hebron. According to the report, thousands of Jews also visited the Cave of the Patriarchs.”³⁵¹ Settler accounts assert that a few months later “the Mosque adjacent to Tel Rumeida in Hebron issued cries from its loudspeakers on its minarets for Moslems to kill Jews

³⁴⁶ Hebron-News, 24 April 1995; Haberman, NYT, 19 April 1995.

³⁴⁷ Haberman, “In Hebron, many Israelis pray for change of government,” New York Times, 19 April 1995.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*; see also Hebron-News, 8 May 1995.

³⁵⁰ Hebron-News, 26 April 1996.

³⁵¹ Hebron-News, 8 June 1995.

with knives and to recapture the Tomb of the Patriarchs,”³⁵² at the same time that the Israeli government and the PLO were attempting to define Tel Rumeida and these sites “as in effect outside the Jewish Community of Hebron and within the archaeological auspices of the Palestinian Authority” in an effort to “‘encourage’ the Jewish Community of Hebron to disappear.”³⁵³ Then, following the November 1995 assassination of Prime Minister Rabin, the settlers alleged that religious Jews such as themselves were experiencing increased persecution from the government, and noted that “the tombs of Yishai and Ruth, which are located in Tel Rumeida, part of the Jewish enclave in Hebron that overlooks the whole city and is said to be the location of King David’s palace, were suddenly closed down. . .by the Israeli Army as part of the army’s shutdown of the synagogue that had recently been established there. The synagogue remains shut down because Hebron Arabs advised General Gabi Ofir that it was actually a mosque.”³⁵⁴ To combat this reconstruction of religious space, settlers renewed their claims that archeological digs on the Tel revealed that settlers there were “living on top of the castle of Dovid HaMelech -- one might say the cradle of Malchus Beis Dovid.”³⁵⁵ They also condemned the arrest of a Tel Rumeida settler, David Shirel, declaring that the real motive was that

“the police did not want Shirel to witness their ravaging of a holy site; they could not allow Shirel to interfere with their plan to ransack a holy place -- removing the weeping Torah from the Holy Ark and dumping holy books on the floor. They could not allow an intrusion in to the process of rendering Hevron, the Hevron of Avraham, Yitzchok and Ya’acov -- Judenrein.”³⁵⁶

The settlers have raised the symbolic significance of these relatively obscure shrines such that in May 1996, when Prime Minister Peres met with a delegation of Hassidic and other rabbis to discuss the planned withdrawal of the army from Hebron and pledged that the Western Wall, the Tomb of Rachel, and the Cave of the Patriarchs would remain under Jewish control for

³⁵² Hebron-News, 4 December 1995.

³⁵³ Hebron-News, 19 October 1995.

³⁵⁴ Hebron-News, 4 December 1995.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁶ M. Stones, qtd. in *ibid.*

eternity, one rabbi's reaction was as follows: "I asked him about holy sites in Hebron other than the Cave of the Patriarchs -- specifically the tombs of Yishai (Jesse), Ruth, and Otniel ben Kenaz. I am sorry to say but he had not heard of them."³⁵⁷ One might venture to say that the majority of Israelis have not heard of these small shrines, yet their symbolic significance to the settlers movement has grown greatly due to such attention and reconstruction.

Thus, the settler campaign for political and public support has led to the third major development vis-a-vis the shrine since the massacre of 1994, namely the increase of the use of the site as a religio-political focal point and even as an actual gathering place. The secular Israeli left and the Palestinian groups have also used the site itself for commemorative ceremonies, political protests, and symbolic reconstructions, though to a lesser extent than the settlers. On February 14, 1995, one year from the Goldstein massacre by the Muslim lunar calendar, hundreds of Palestinians attended funeral prayers for the victims of the massacre at the mosque. Throughout the entire West Bank even, a general strike was also observed and violent demonstrations broke out.³⁵⁸ On February 24, 1995, a Ramadan Friday, another political protest was held at the site, in which the Israeli radical left (the Hebron Solidarity Committee) joined local Palestinians in a demonstration commemorating the Hebron massacre. The HSC members and the Palestinians marched through the streets of Hebron near the Ibrahimi mosque and stood in silent vigil in the courtyard in front of the mosque." According to the HSC's account, they were required to disperse after only 5 minutes by the Border Police, and even after complying four members of the HSC were jailed.³⁵⁹ Settler accounts state that this same weekend, when the site was closed to Jews due to Ramadan celebrations, "Arabs took advantage of the fact that Jews were not present and that the army vacated the premises to vandalize Jewish property within the Ma'ara."³⁶⁰ Furthermore, settlers report that the HSC returned to the site on May 19, 1995, to again have members arrested after marching with

³⁵⁷ Arutz 7 News, 6 May 1996.

³⁵⁸ "Palestine Report," JMCC, 20 February 1995.

³⁵⁹ "Update -- News from Hebron, December [1994] - March [1995]," Hebron Solidarity Committee.

³⁶⁰ Hebron-News, 6 March 1995. I have no additional verification of this claim.

Palestinians through the settler enclaves of Hebron. Settler representative Noam Arnon "called the demonstrators 'aggressors'".³⁶¹

Parallel to these political uses of the shrine by the various groups in order to gain legitimacy, individual political leaders are also integrating the symbolic power of the site into their discourse in order to increase popular support. In March of 1995, for example, MK Ariel Sharon visited the Yeshivat Shavei Hevron Yeshiva, leaving the message that "while the Rabin government claims a lot of military manpower is being used to protect 450 settlers in Hebron, in fact the manpower protects over 3,000 years of Jewish history," and "promis[ing] that the next government will settle 5,000 Jews in Hebron."³⁶² In an op-ed article in the Jerusalem Post three months later, Sharon asked, "Should the Jews give up their right to live next to the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, where Jewish life has not stopped for 2,000 years? Every nation would guard such [holy] places with its life, using them to educate its people in love of country."³⁶³ Binyamin Netanyahu, the head of the Likud Party, stated in September 1995 that "the Jewish settlement in Hebron is here to stay, not temporarily, but for eternity."³⁶⁴ More recently, as part of his 1996 election campaign Netanyahu announced his plans to expand the Jewish community in Hebron, if elected, and to create "a contiguous Jewish presence from Tel Rumeida in Hebron to Kiryat Arba."³⁶⁵ Similarly, the National Religious Party's election platform calls for expansion of the Hebron settlements.³⁶⁶

Similarly both Yasser Arafat and Rabin and the Peres have been forced to pay attention to the shrine and its city, both in attempts to maintain legitimacy before certain groups and because of the intense political and symbolic power given the site. "With Hebron being a stronghold of Islamic fundamentalists" on the one hand, "PLO chairman Yasser Arafat [did] not want to be accused by Islamic rivals of being indifferent to the city being controlled by

³⁶¹ Hebron-News, 22 May 1995.

³⁶² Hebron-News, 4 April 1995.

³⁶³ Ariel Sharon, "Make the state's needs clear now," Op-ed Jerusalem Post, 21 July 1995.

³⁶⁴ Quoted in Hebron-News 8 September 1995.

³⁶⁵ Arutz 7 News, 5 May 1996.

³⁶⁶ Israel-Line, 13 May 1996.

Israel.”³⁶⁷ Thus Hebron has become one of the key bargaining weapons of both sides in today’s peace negotiations. In August 1995, Arafat listed “establishing a Palestinian Authority presence in Hebron” as his second priority, after the release of Palestinian prisoners. Peres, on the other hand, seems unsure of which action to take in regards to balancing the requests of the powerful settlers movement against the interests of Israel’s “silent majority.” By the spring of 1996 he had agreed to redeploying from Hebron, yet with continuous qualification. In February the withdrawal was tied to amending the Palestinian covenant³⁶⁸; once there were promises of this, “Peres conditioned the IDF’s redeployment from Hebron on whether Palestinian Police arrest Mahmoud Dief, the Hamas activist wanted for planning recent suicide bus attacks in Israel.”³⁶⁹ The next set of barriers to redeployment was the Passover holiday season; after its passing the Israelis spoke of pulling out of approximately 85% of the town within a month. The IDF would retain control of 15% of the town, an area centered on the Tomb and populated by 15,000 Palestinians and 500 Israelis. A 50-person international observer team would be stationed in the Israeli section of the city.³⁷⁰ The full implementation of this plan was recently postponed until after the results of the May 1996 elections. However, Peres has promised that “Israel will retain full authority over Kiryat Arba, the Tomb of the Patriarchs, and the Jewish neighborhoods in the center of Hebron. . . . ‘The Tomb of the Patriarchs will remain in our hands, unequivocally,’ Peres said.”³⁷¹ At the same time he has “released a statement that Israel is committed to IDF redeployment in Hebron. . . . ‘The Hebron redeployment is an Israeli commitment which must be fulfilled,’ [Peres] said.”³⁷² It remains to be seen what effects the election results will have on the control of Hebron and of the Tomb of the Patriarchs/Ibrahimi Mosque.

³⁶⁷ David Makovsky, “PA wants IDF to leave Arab areas of Hebron,” Jerusalem Post, 6 July 1995.

³⁶⁸ Israel-Line, 5 February 1996.

³⁶⁹ Israel-Line, 27 March 1996.

³⁷⁰ Israel-Line, 26 April 1996.

³⁷¹ Israel-Line, 2 May 1996.

³⁷² Israel-Line, 3 May 1996.

V. Conclusion

This thesis began by looking at some of the factors behind the importance of religious site to the process of political legitimization. I argued that sacred space and time are conducive to legitimization for several reasons. First, sacred space, by providing physical “evidence” of historical presence and influence at a site, lends a sense of credence and continuity to those historical myths which are necessary for group identity and subsequently legitimacy to form. The sacred space of the Tomb of the Patriarchs/Ibrahimi Mosque, as well as the other shrines in Hebron, have played this role. The settler references to archeological findings in the Cave of Machpelah, throughout the former Jewish Quarter, and on Tel Rumeida, are evidence of their participation in such a process. Moreover, the site itself offers a place for commemorative celebrations to occur, also important to the establishment of legitimacy and the passing down of historical myths. The data presented in the previous sections indicated the use of the Tomb area in commemorative myth-building processes.

The symbolic power and the means towards legitimization are thus inherent to the site as religious space. As such, the site will serve as a focal point and a tool for legitimization whether or not an intense nationalist or political conflict surrounds the site. In the case of the Tomb of the Patriarchs/Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, the shrine was symbolically significant long before the outbreak of nationalist conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Throughout the centuries, the site was the focal point of the town, and each conquering entity has used the arrogation of the site as a means of asserting their sovereignty and control. Thus King Herod, some suppose, built the shrine in order to increase his control over his subjects in Hebron, and likewise each conquering religious group built on to the shrine in order to reconstruct its symbolism and reinterpret their relation to it.

However, it goes without saying that the need for legitimization increases sharply during periods of beginnings, liminality, and/or conflict between two groups. The need to

assert a specific group identity increases, and the desire to reinforce a group's claims in a dispute lead naturally to accelerated historical reconstruction. It is in times like these that a religious site can become the focal point of intense and even violent confrontation between the two groups. The first hypothesis of this study was that nationalist and political conflict would both influence and perpetuate the interpretation and re-interpretation of a religious shrine's symbolic, temporal, and physical organization. This has been the case in Hebron, as this thesis has tried to show. In regards to the reinterpretations of the shrine's symbolic importance, it has been demonstrated that while the shrine has long held local significance, in the nationalist conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians and the increasing political conflict between the Israeli radical right and the Israeli government, groups have adopted the site as a symbol for their claims to legitimacy and sovereignty. Thus Miriam Levinger, one of the first leaders in the Hebron settler movement, has said that "The Arabs understand full well the importance of Hebron and the Cave of the Patriarchs in particular. They recognize Hebron's significance in the Arab-Jewish struggle. By controlling Hebron, the second holiest city in Judaism, they feel they are scoring a triumph over the Jews -- and they are right."³⁷³ Mrs. Levinger's statement gives less insight into the Palestinian mind than it does into the settler psyche. Increasingly over the past decade as the settlers movement has faced greater opposition from the Israeli government and public, the settlers have begun waging a campaign asserting that "Hebron is an inseparable, integral component of the State of Israel and the Jewish people,"³⁷⁴ "the front line in our struggle for Eretz Yisrael,"³⁷⁵ "the dawn of Jewish existence."³⁷⁶ A town with a historically minute Jewish population, the smallest of any of the four holy Jewish cities in Palestine -- in settler historiography Hebron now "stands alongside Jerusalem as a symbol of Jewish authenticity and meaning. . . . [The presence of the Jewish community in Hebron], albeit controversial is a vindication of the sacrifices made by the

³⁷³Quoted in Hebron-News, 28 November 1994.

³⁷⁴ Hebron-News, 20 September 1995.

³⁷⁵ Hebron-News, 31 January 1996.

³⁷⁶ Gopher site: <gopher://gopher.jer1.co.il:70/11/comm/comm/is/hebron>.

victims of Arab riots [in all places and times, it would seem], and. . .the testing ground for Arab's and Jews' resolve in backing their claims to their homeland, and for the future of the 'peace process.'"³⁷⁷ These comments reflect the influence that the nationalist conflict with the Palestinians (and especially the Hebron massacre of 1929), as well as the internal Israeli political struggle, have had on the symbolic importance attributed the shrine and the surrounding town.³⁷⁸

Similarly, date has been presented of a similar increase, due to the conflict, in the significance attributed the site by Palestinians. In addition to the Israeli-Palestinian and intra-Israeli conflict over the shrine, there are a number of instances stemming from the intra-Palestinian conflict in which various Palestinian groups have used the shrine to support their claims (such as the Hamas affiliated Ibrahimi Mosque Bloc which won all student government seats at the Hebron Union Graduate University). I lack substantial evidence, however, of considerable reconstruction of the site and its symbolism due to this sort of conflict.³⁷⁹ There is also somewhat more political unity among the Palestinians than among the Israelis in terms of the former group's nearly singular opposition to the Israeli occupation. Moreover, for Palestinians it is the radical restructuring of the Mosque after the Goldstein massacre, done according to Israeli initiative and by Israeli soldiers, that appears to have most significantly affected the way in which the site is conceived. Many Palestinians report now feeling an increased attachment to the Mosque, and acknowledge that violent attacks have increased since the 1994 massacre and the reconfiguration of religious time and space in the building. Their statements support the second hypothesis of this work, that the political and nationalist conflict arises within the context of the representation and the [re-]presentation of the meaning and

³⁷⁷ Moshe Dann, Letter in Jerusalem Post, reprinted in Hebron-News, 20 September 1995.

³⁷⁸ The city itself, and not simply the shrine, is the focus of much of the dispute. However, all sides almost invariably invoke the shrine to legitimize their claims which may indeed have little to do with religion.

³⁷⁹ This is not to state unequivocally that it is not occurring, only that it has not reached the proportions of the intra-Israeli political struggle, in which a great amount of literature has been produced not only for the Israeli public, but also for an international (English-speaking) public, from whom the groups (especially the Hebron settlers) receive and continue to elicit support. It is highly possible that such intra-Palestinian use of the site has developed, but that its targeted audience is the international Arabic-speaking or Muslim population, to whose resources my access is very limited.

symbolic significance of the contested religious site. But not only has physical violence been perpetrated by the reconstruction of the shrine. Symbolic violence has also, as when the Jews place mezuzot around the site, or when physical violence occurs at one of the frequent clashes during religious time which thereby adopts religio-political overtones.

These observations help to answer a third question posed at the start of this thesis, namely the nature of the reconstructions surrounding the shrine. Some of these have been physical, concrete modifications, such as the division of the shrine, the implementation of religious objects in the building, or the development of new settler neighborhoods; the changes have also occurred on an abstract and historiographical level. As most physical changes require a historiographical revision to support the abandonment of the status quo, these reconstructions are often interactive or concurrent. Moreover, the aims or purposes of the Jewish and the Palestinian reconstructions have been slightly different based on which historical events they have chosen to highlight in their collective memories. Because the pivotal event in the discourse of the Jews of Hebron is the massacre of 1929 and the subsequent elimination of a Jewish presence in the town, the settlers' aims and focus have always been more far-reaching than the Tomb itself. The Tomb is important for the settlers because of its potential to validate a renewed Jewish presence in Hebron. Thus in response to the recent talks of IDF redeployment from Hebron, the Jewish Community of Hebron focused on the threat to their claim to the city as a whole and not just to the shrine, demanding "that the Israeli government strengthen the city of Hebron by allowing immediate mass Jewish building and settlement throughout the city in order to make clear to all the nations of the world that Hebron is an integral part of the Land of Israel and the Jewish state."³⁸⁰ Although it is early to state unequivocally that the Goldstein massacre of 1994 will be the defining point in Hebron's Palestinian historiography, already the event has had great impact on the Palestinian collective conscious vis-à-vis the shrine and the town of Hebron. Just days after the event, the secular Palestinian paper, the Jerusalem Times, asserted that "this massacre will be part of our history,

³⁸⁰ Hebron-News, 14 August 1995.

which is already filled with tragedies and violence of all kinds."³⁸¹ The significance is even more singular for religious Palestinians, to whom the desecration of the mosque as a religious site is more offensive. Moreover, the quotation echoes the words of the previously read assertion that "the history of shrines. . . is the history of the nation."³⁸² It would not be surprising in light of the Palestinian experience with the 1994 massacre, within the mosque itself, if their reconstruction efforts will focus more singularly on the shrine itself.

One may wonder, then, if a study of Hebron is so site-specific as to be useless as a paradigm for a more generalized understanding of the role of religious space and time in political and nationalist conflict. I do not believe that that is the case. Among the members of the involved parties themselves, there is a recognition that Hebron serves as a model for other places in Israel and the West Bank. For the settlers, this is a kind of symbolic religio-historical role: just as the biblical account asserts that "Hebron precede[d] Jerusalem" as the first capital of King David, so settlers today declare that "without Hebron there is no Jerusalem. . . . If we renounce the city of the Patriarchs, if we cut off our roots, if we denounce our past, and our bonds. . . to the unification of past and present, then we are, for all intents and purposes, waiving our right to Jerusalem."³⁸³ Most Palestinians also draw parallels between Jerusalem and Hebron, though in a different discourse, for many fear that the Israelis are planning to arrogate the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque in a fashion similar to that which has been done to the Ibrahimi Mosque. The fears are not without any basis, since

"[Rabbi] Levinger's tactic in settling Hebron has remained the classic [settler] strategy. . . : (a) a surprise establishment of a temporary presence, ostensibly for worship purposes; (b) a rigid, highly publicized refusal to evacuate on religious grounds. . . ; (c) an agreement to compromise and leave provided a small yeshiva is established in the controversial site, or that the rest of the intruders be allowed to stay in a nearby military site; (d) the establishment, a few years later, of a permanent Jewish settlement at the site of the original initiative."³⁸⁴

³⁸¹ *Jerusalem Times*, 4 March 1994.

³⁸² Peter van der Veer, "Ayodhya and Somnath: Eternal Shrines, Contested Histories," 87.

³⁸³ Gopher site: <gopher://gopher.jer1.co.il:70/11/comm/comm/is/hebron>.

³⁸⁴ Sprinzak, 140.

Although the Israeli government today may have drawn lessons from these experiences, Palestinians recognize the pattern based on Hebron's model and may fear a Jewish takeover even as the peace process is promising them these areas.

Jerusalem and Hebron are not the only two holy sites in Israel to have become embroiled in the midst of the nationalist and political disputes. At Rachel's Tomb and the Tomb of the Prophet Samuel (Nebi Samwil) one can see the same processes taking place. Both have had substantial increases in visits and prayer protests since the massacre in Hebron and the development of the peace negotiations. I visited Nebi Samwil in early 1994, just a few weeks before the Goldstein massacre. At that time there was one worshipper and no army presence at the site. About a month after the Hebron massacre I returned to the site, to find a security check and several soldiers at the site. Four or five Muslim men sat nearby looking rather disgruntled with the change in situation. Finally I went to Nebi Samwil during the summer of 1995, in the middle of the settler activities on the hills surrounding Jerusalem and throughout the West Bank. The shrine was full of worshippers, both Jewish and Muslim, and the atmosphere was noticeably tense. Based on these very non-scientific observations, I would argue that worship there has increased among members of both parties as the site has become more and more connected to the issue of the return of West Bank areas to the Palestinians. Rachel's Tomb is more fully under Israeli control and its visitors are overwhelmingly Jewish, as only the surrounding cemetery is of religious importance to the Muslims. Nevertheless Hassan Tahboub asserted that the building had once been a mosque and that control of the site necessarily belonged to the Muslims. Thus the discourses beginning to surround these sites have the same character as those dominating Hebron.

Finally, we may also look back in history to catch a glimpse of what the future could entail for Hebron. In 1982 a settlement by the name of Yamit was evacuated by the army in agreement with the Camp David Accords. Hordes of settlers and supporters descended on the town in an attempt to thwart this evacuation. Historian Ehud Sprinzak recounts:

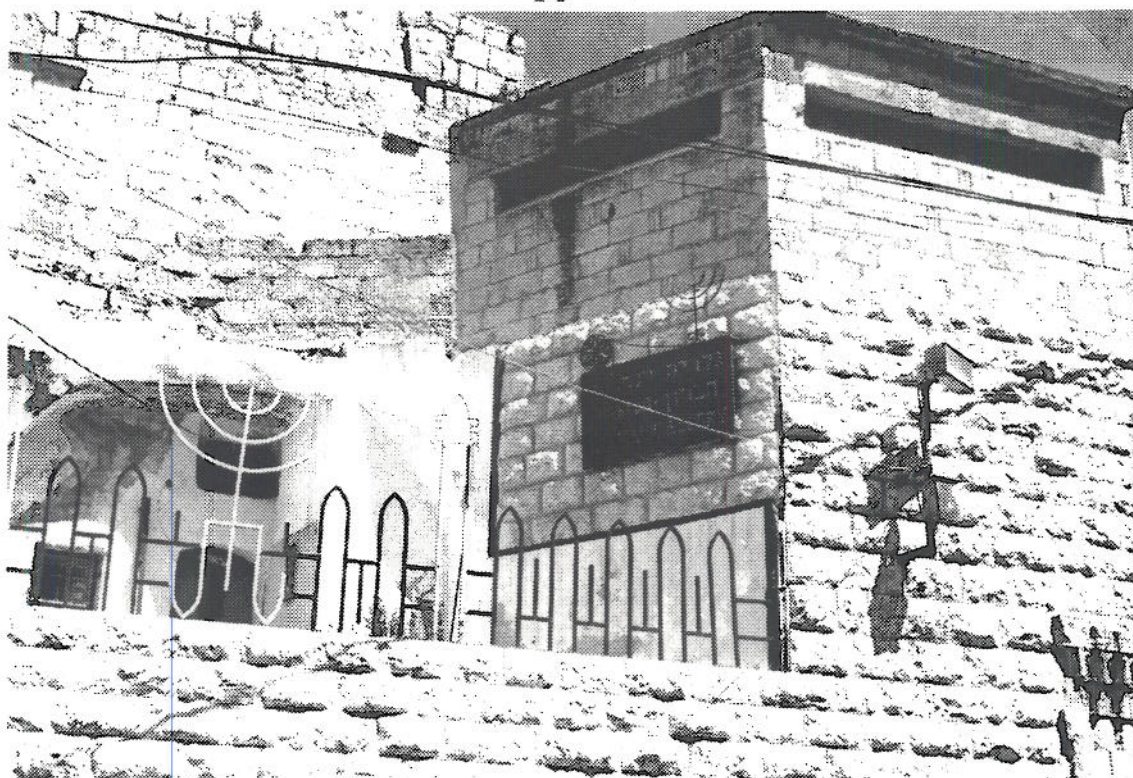
"[In] the last stage of the struggle. . .the conduct of religious ceremonies was especially intensified. Ecstatic prayer sessions were constantly held. Radical and

millenarian sermons, preached by the movement's rabbis, became the order of the day. The entire Yamit territory was named a 'holy land' and the settlers, a 'holy public.' Everything there became in fact holy: 'holy struggle,' 'holy purpose,' and 'holy movement.' . . . When Yamit was demolished by the Israeli army and the area evacuated. . . a new Israeli political subculture had come of age, the radical right. The secular and the religious members of the Movement to Halt the Retreat in Sinai staged a symbolic ceremony to enshrine the loss of Sinai. . . and swore never to forget the 'holy' Yamit. And they made a commitment to return one day."³⁸⁵

The comparison to Hebron is not completely analogous. At this time the Israeli army has been committed by Peres to a partial redeployment, with soldiers remaining at the Tomb and around the Jewish settlement pockets. Yet even an army redeployment (and not total evacuation) from Hebron could evoke an even more severe reaction, as Yamit had no previous historical connection or religious significance to the Jews. This is not true of Hebron, the elaboration of whose historical connections and religious significance have been the focus of concerted settler efforts for two decades now. If settler reactions to hold true to past experiences, then, the prospects for physical and symbolic violence are high should the government continue to redeploy from Hebron. To not do so, however, would be to allow the radical reconstruction processes in Hebron to expand even further, an equally dangerous situation.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 104-5.

Appendix



Top: Railing overlooking Muslim entrance to the Mosque/Tomb. The pattern is broken to depict the two minarets of the shrine, with a menorah standing between them. (Photograph by the author, July 1995.)

Bottom: Jewish Hebron Settlers Gift Shop, immediately in front of the shrine. The shop closed several years ago due to lack of support and visitors; since 1994, however, settlers with the support of the Likud party have begun to renovate the building and plan to open a guest house there. (Photograph by the author, July 1995.)

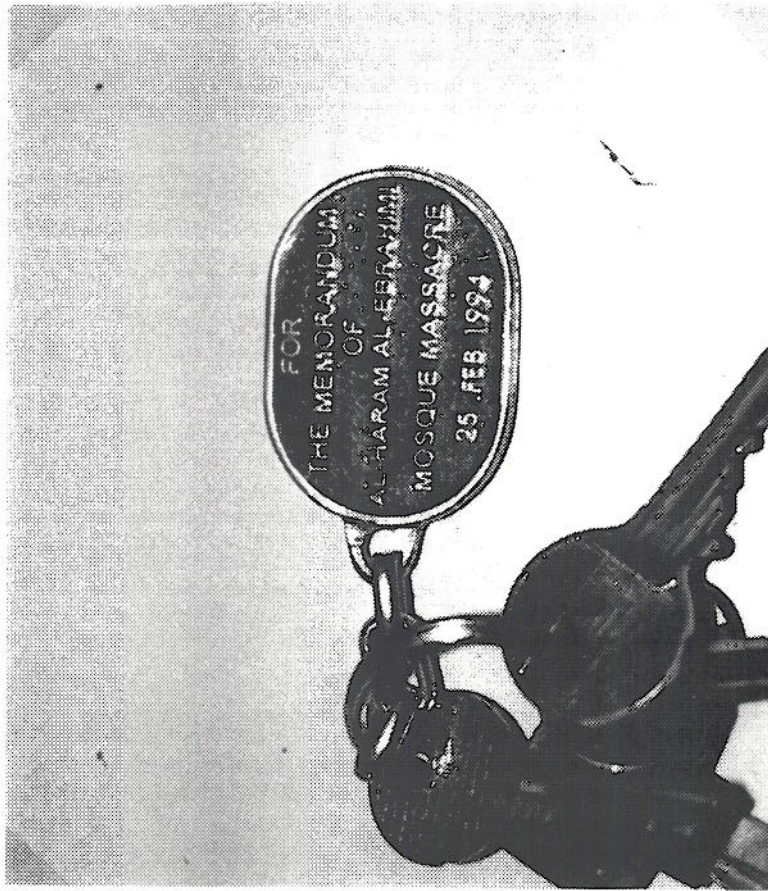


Top: Inside the 1929 Memorial Room in the basement of Beit Hadassah. The photographs depict Jewish homes and property destroyed during the massacre in 1929.

(Photograph by the author, August 1995.)

Bottom: Photograph of Baruch Nachshon's painting depicting the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, and the Tomb of Joseph in Nablus, symbols of the strongest Jewish claims to historic Palestine. The original was sent to Menachem Begin. (Photograph by the author, August 1995.)



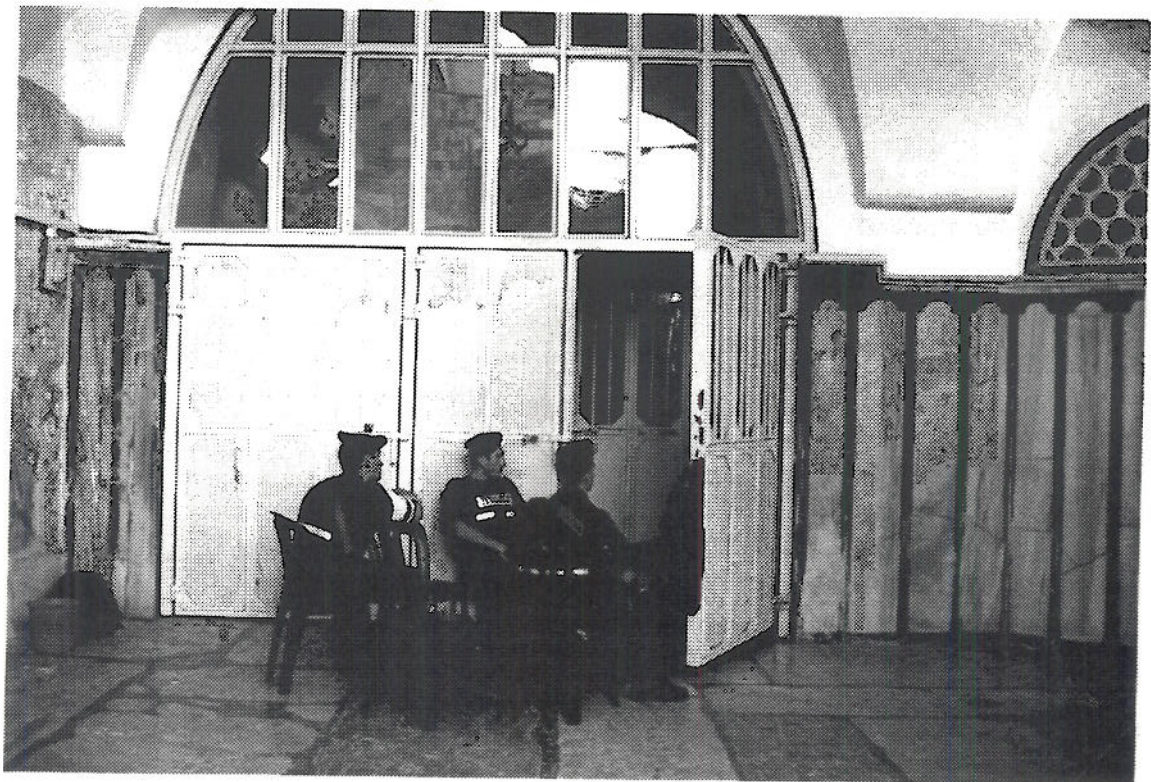


Keychains commemorating the Hebron Massacre of February 1994.

Above: Keychain issued by the Hebron Municipality. One side show the Mosque and the words "Hebron Municipality 1994." The other side reads: "For the memorandum of Al-Haram Al-Ebrahimi Mosque Massacre 25 Feb 1994." (Photograph by the author, August 1995.)

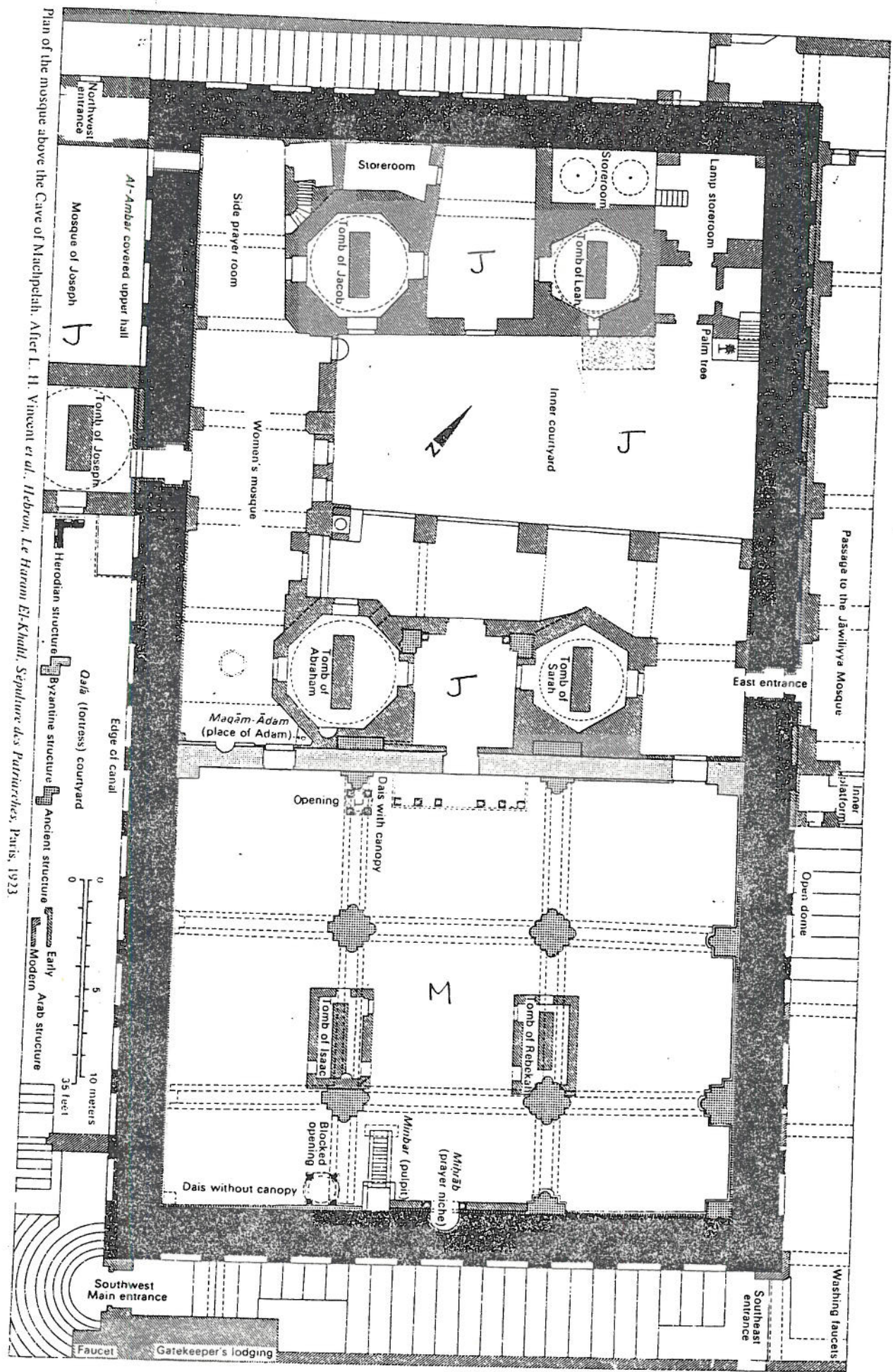
Left: Photo depicted on keychain produced by supporters of Baruch Goldstein. At the bottom it reads: "The saint, Dr. Baruch Goldstein, may God avenge his blood." On the newer version, the minaret on the left of the photo appears to be broken and toppling over. I was given the keychain by Joel Lerner, who was also active in the production of Baruch Hagever.



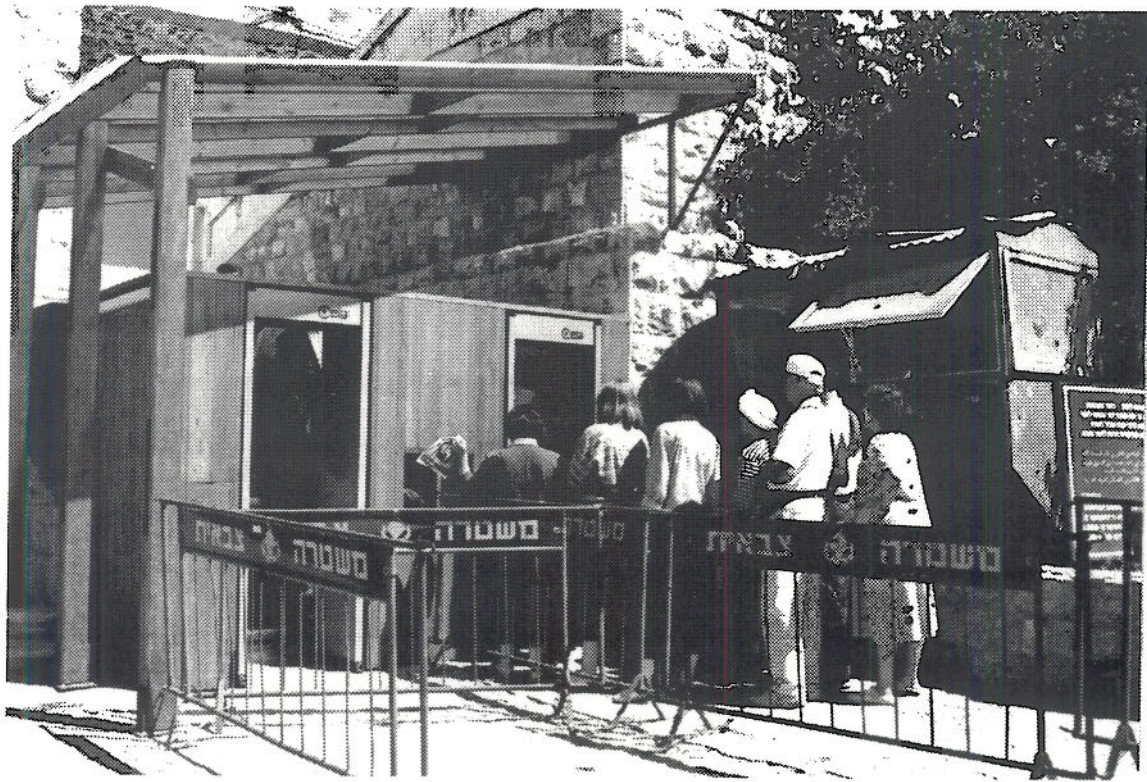


Top: The Tomb of the Patriarchs or Ibrahimi Mosque, Hebron. (Photograph by the author, July 1995.)

Bottom: Israeli Defense Force soldiers sit by the newly constructed barrier separating the Muslim and Jewish sides of the building. (Photograph by the author, August 1995.)



Plan of the mosque above the Cave of Machpelah. After L. H. Vincent *et al.*, *Hebron, Le Haram El-Khalil, Sepulture des Patriarches*, Paris, 1923.

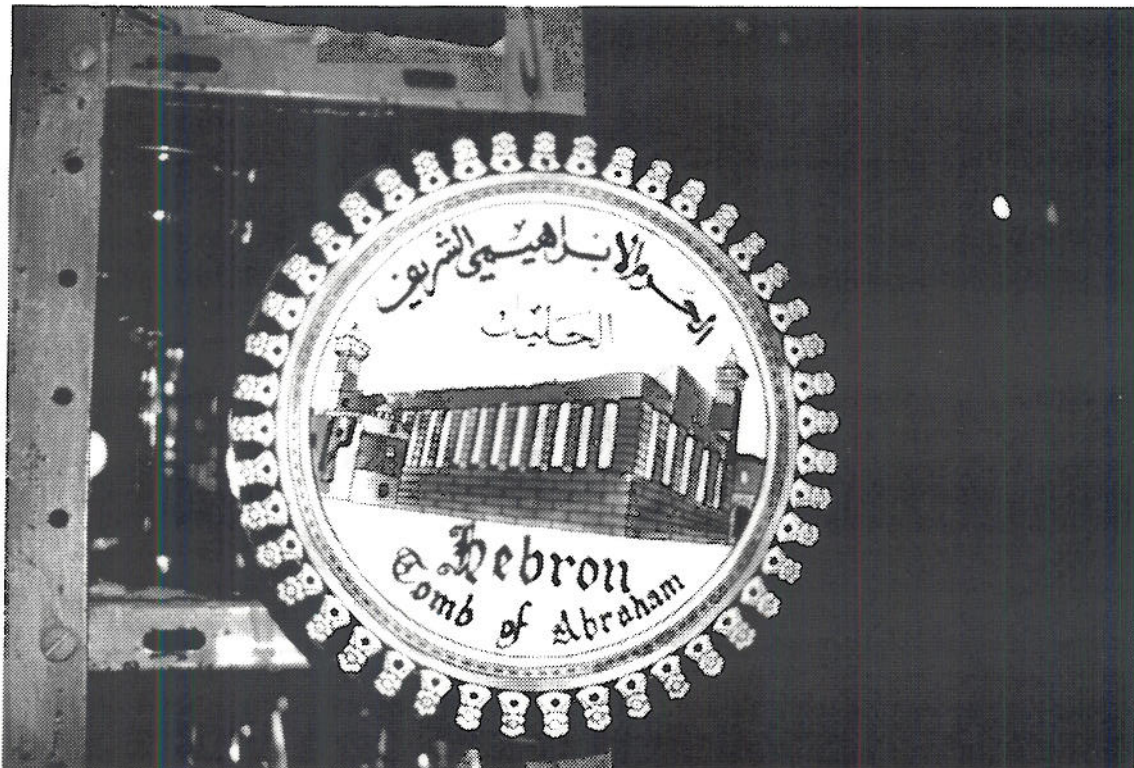


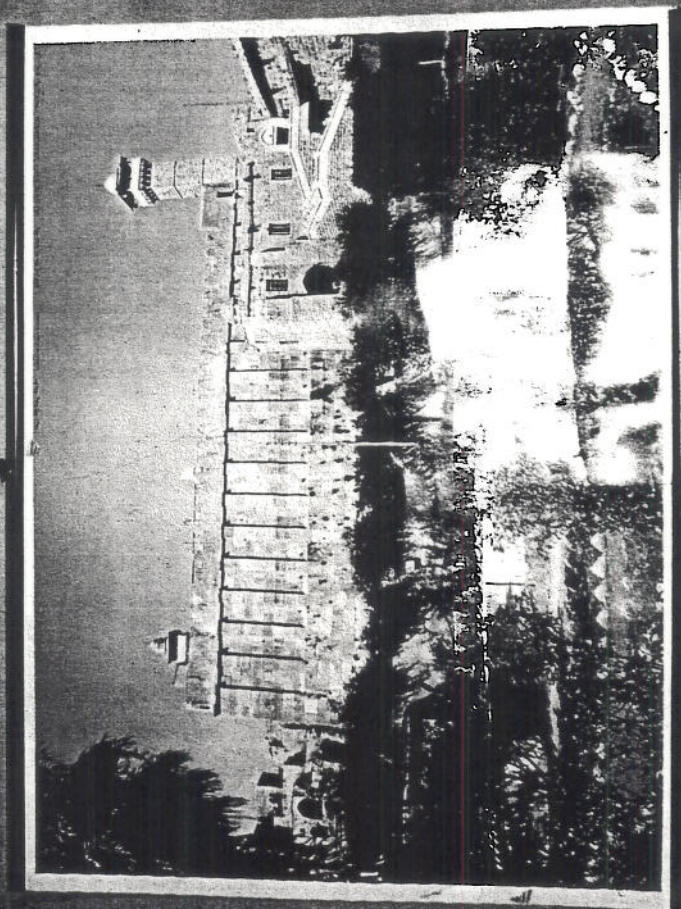
Since the site reopened in November 1994, both Jews (**top**) and Muslims (**bottom**) undergo two security checks before being allowed to enter the building. (Photograph by the author, July and August 1995.)



Top: Posters on a billboard in Kiryat Arba. The upper one depicts a number of Israeli and Palestinian leaders at a party celebrating the Peace Accords. From Rabin's hand drips blood onto the Tomb of the Patriarchs below. (Photograph by the author, August 1995.)

Bottom: One of Hebron's main industries is glassblowing and pottery. Here a ceramic decorative plate is shown with a depiction of the Ibrahimi Mosque or Tomb of Abraham. Muslims prefer the latter title over "Tomb of the Patriarchs", perhaps due to the fact that Jews and not Muslims claim Isaac and Jacob as their forefathers. (Photograph by the author, July 1995.)





وہابیہ مسجد
بہارہ

HEBRON

City of Our Forefathers



City of Their Sons

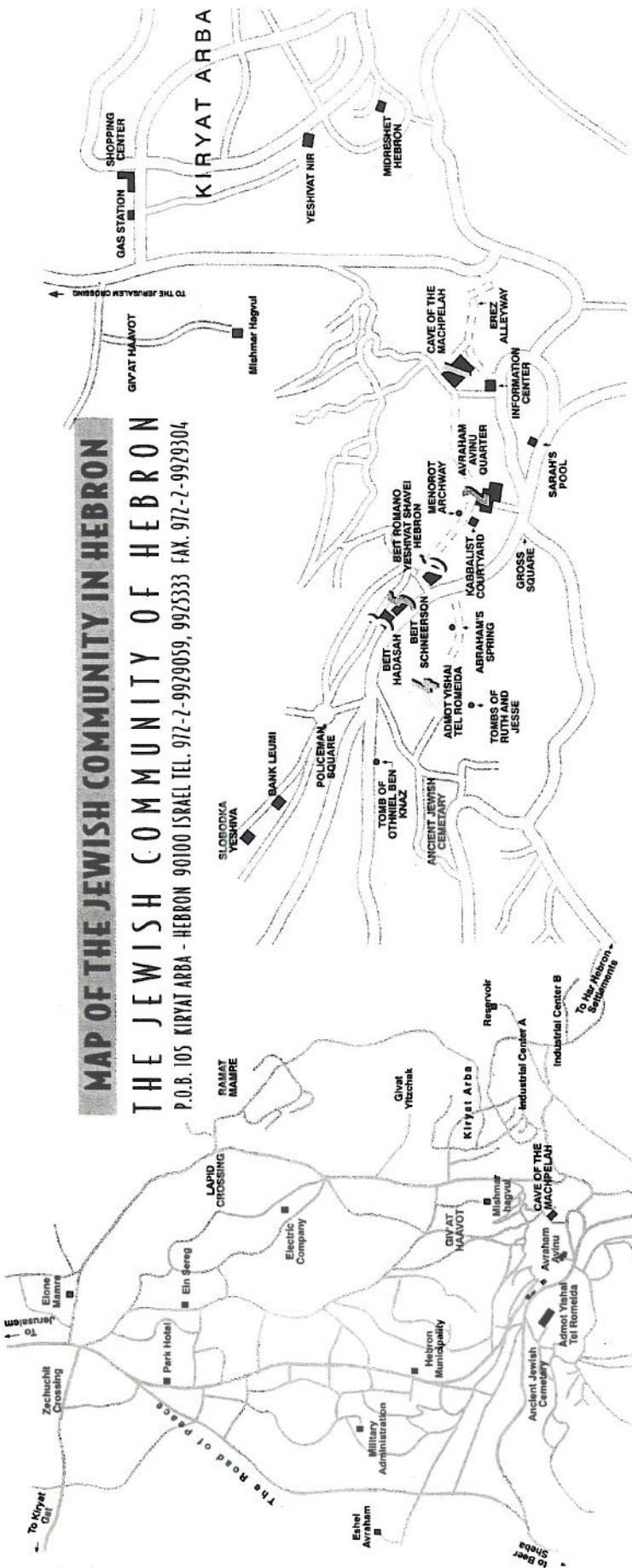


The New City... 3700 Years Old

MAP OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN HEBRON

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF HEBRON

P.O.B. 105 KIRYAT ARBA - HEBRON 90100 ISRAEL TEL. 972-2-9929059, 9925333 FAX. 972-2-9929304





Top Left: Posters on a billboard in Gilo, Jerusalem protesting the proposed withdrawal of IDF forces from Rachel's Tomb. Due to the great public outburst, the Israeli government decided to leave troops at the religious site. (Photograph by the author, July 1995.)

Top Right: Posters calling for a rally at Joseph's Tomb in Nablus. (Photograph by the author, Aug 1995)

Bottom: The purple and green sticker reads "Hebron: Always and Forever." (Photograph by the author, August 1995.)

Bibliography

Newspapers and Newsgroups

Alster, Joe. Letter to editor, 11 March 1994. Reprinted in Baruch Hagever. ed. Ben-Horin, xii-xiv.

Arutz 7 News. Bet-El Yeshiva Center Institutions. on-line news service:
<editor7@jer1.co.il>.

Aziz, A. "Israel Partitions Ibrahimi Mosque." Palestine Times, December 1994, 1-2.

Baum, Ilana and Zvi Singer. "Extremist Right Wing Leaders Praised Dr. Goldstein During His Funeral: 'A hero, a righteous martyr.'" Yediot Ahronot, 28 February 1994.
Reprinted in Hebron and After (2 March 1994).

Brilliant, Joshua. "IDF Foils Attempt by Costumed Settlers to Install Tora Ark in Machpelah Cave." Jerusalem Post, 22 March 1989, 12.

--. "Can't Use Judea Stamps." Jerusalem Post, 7 April 1989, 20.

--. "Levy and Eliyahu Appeal for Settler Restraint Draws Less Than Warm Reaction." Jerusalem Post, 6 June 1989, 2.

--. "Barred from entering Machpela Cave for 6 months. Settler held for attacking soldiers." Jerusalem Post, 13 June 1989, 12.

--. "Settlers cause fracas at Machpelah Cave." Jerusalem Post, 18 July 1989, 12.

--. "Settlers celebrate Purim with march through Hebron." Jerusalem Post, 12 March 1990, 2.

Claiborne, William. "Jews, Moslems tense over joint shrines." Washington Post, 24 January 1986, A21, col. 5.

Cody, Edward. "Feud over Temple Mount Resurfaces." Washington Post, 18 April 1989, A18, col. 1.

Cohen, Shalom. "Back to Hebron." Jerusalem Post, 18 April 1968, 3.

Cooperberg, Garry. "Praying in Hebron." Letter Jerusalem Post, 14 April 1992, 6.

--. "Security in Hebron." Letter Jerusalem Post, 15 June 1993, 6.

Crawford, Myles. "Settlers make a nuisance of themselves." The Jerusalem Times, 4 August 1995, 3.

Dubey, Suman. "Rioting in India claims lives, threatens rule: Hindus and Muslims clash over ruined mosque." Wall Street Journal, 8 December 1992, A11, col. 1.

Elon, Amos. "Jerusalem: The Future of the Past." New York Review of Books, 17 August 1989, 37.

Fisher, Dan. "Religious shrines pose security problems: Temple Mount: Jerusalem's most sensitive site." Los Angeles Times, 6 December 1984, 2, col. 1.

"Forced Evacuation of Palestinians from the Hebron Area. Struggle Against Settlements Continues." (Press release) Hebron Solidarity Committee. 17 January 1994.

Ford, Peter. "Share control tests Christian churches' mettle." Christian Science Monitor, 24 December 1990, 1, col. 1.

"From the Field: A Monthly Report on Selected Human Rights Issues." Palestinian Human Rights Information Center. June 1993.

Gargan, Edward A. "Where Buddha's path crosses the Hindu cosmos." New York Times, 3 July 1992.

Gordon, Wilbur. "Travel to Territories." Letter Jerusalem Post, 25 May 1993, 6.

Greenberg, Joel. "Stabbing of a settler fuels debate over Hebron." New York Times, 2 May 1996, A 3.

Haberman, Clyde. "At the Western Wall, some pray and some protest." New York Times, 12 March 1994.

--. "Divisiveness of Shrine Issue Forces Clinton to Drop Tour." New York Times, 28 October 1994, A20, col. 1.

--. "In Hebron, many Israelis pray for change of government." New York Times, 19 April 1995, A6.

--. "Jews and Muslims pray again at shrine, resentfully." New York Times, 8 November 1994, A10, col. 1.

--. "Where Arabs died at prayer, praying is banished." New York Times, 5 September 1994, B2, col. 1.

Ha'Etzni, Elkayim. "Kiryat Arba." Letter Jerusalem Post, 23 September 1990, 4.

Hazarika, Sanjoy. "Hindu Revivalist Challenge to Muslim Shrine Stirs Fears." New York Times, 15 October 1990.

--. "Simple shrine symbolizes Hindu-Muslim rift." New York Times, 10 March 1989, A7, col. 1.

Hebron and After (newsletter). American-Israeli Civil Liberties Coalition, Inc. XV, no. 1 (Summer 1994).

Hebron-News. The Jewish Community of Hebron. on-line news service: <hebron-news@shamash.nysernet.org>.

"Hebron Solidarity Committee." News From Within, February 1994.

"Hebron Still Under Siege." Jerusalem Times, 23 December 1994.

"Hebron survivor says, 'We will build a new Hebron.'" Palestine Post, 24 September 1929, 2,4.

"The Hebron Yeshiva." Palestine Post, 6 September 1929, 4.

Immanuel, Jon. "A Clash of Perceptions." Jerusalem Post, 19 October 1990, 7.

--. "Hebron: Two Inseparable peoples." Jerusalem Post, 3 August 1995.

Israel-Line. Israel Consulate-NY. on-line news service: <ask@israel-info.gov.il>.

Jacobs, Jessica. "Diplomats' visit returns spotlight to ailing Hebron." Jerusalem Times, 2 September 1994, 7+.

Katz, Shira. "Escalation of Violence in Hebron: 'A Factory of Troubles.'" News From Within. February 1994, 5-7.

Keinon, Herb. "Book praising Baruch Goldstein a top seller, Kach says." North California Jewish Bulletin, 17 March 1995.

--. "'Hebron Jews will defend themselves if IDF leaves.'" Jerusalem Post, 25 July 1995.

--. "Settlers: Access to Machpela will continue." Jerusalem Post, 21 October 1993, 2.

--. "Shas paper and women's group at odds over advert." Jerusalem Post, 9 June 1993, 14.

Lauterbach, Leon. "Return to the seventh step." (letter to ed) Jerusalem Post, 20 October 1993, 6.

Leavitt, June. "The Hebron Disease." New York Times, 14 October 1995.

Makovsky, David. "PA wants IDF to leave Arab areas of Hebron." Jerusalem Post, 6 July 1995, 1.

--. "Peres: Nothing final on extent of Israel's withdrawal from rural lands after '96." Jerusalem Post, 10 August 1995.

Makovsky and Lamia Lahoud. "Arafat: IDF must leave Arab Hebron." Jerusalem Post, 11 August 1995.

Majid Hamdan, Abdel. "A Berlin Wall in Hebron." Jerusalem Times, 6 May 1995.

"Muslim cleric calls for defiance of Israel's curbs on worship." New York Times, 21 April 1989, A6, col. 4.

"Muslims Holy Shrine Seized by Zionists." Palestine Times, September 1994, 1.

"Palestine Report." Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre 7, no. 36 (4 September 1994).

--. Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre, 20 November 1994.

--. Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre, 20 February 1995.

Palestine Times, December 1994.

Parks, Michael. "Israel suggests shared control of holy sites." Los Angeles Times, 20 July 1994, A1, col. 6.

"Press release." Palestinian Human Rights Information Center, 24 March 1994.

"Protests greet Israel-PLO accord." (AP) Corvallis Gazette Times, 29 Sept. 1995, C1.

"Punishing the Victims." (Press release) Hebron Solidarity Committee. 8 Nov. 1994.

Rabinovich, Abraham. "Tense Coexistence in the Tomb of the Patriarchs." Jerusalem Post, 9 October 1992, 8b.

Riskin, Shlomo. "'Earning' the Land." Jerusalem Post, 1 November 1991, 22.

Safadi, Anan. "Hebron: 'Trouble Made From Outside.'" Jerusalem Post (supplement), 5 April 1968, 8-9.

Schmemmann, Serge. "Israel and the P.L.O. stymied over how to protect settlers." New York Times, 9 September 1995, 1+.

"School Girls Assaulted at Hebron." Palestine Post, 8 April 1929, 3.

Shapiro, Haim. "Jews could be barred from Machpela Cave under autonomy." Jerusalem Post, 20 October 1993, 14.

Sharon, Ariel. "Make the state's needs clear now." Op-ed Jerusalem Post, 21 July 1995.

Shipler, David K. "Two Arabs are killed as Israeli attacks Dome of the Rock." New York Times, 12 April 1982, A1, col. 1.

"Text of joint statement initialed in Taba." Jerusalem Post, 13 August 1995.

"Unheeded Warning." (Press release) Jerusalem Media and Communication Center. 28 February 1994, 1.

"Update from the city that welcomes you." (Press release) Hebron Solidarity Committee. November-December 1994.

"Update -- News from Hebron." (Press release) Hebron Solidarity Committee. December 1994 - March 1995.

Waldmam, Peter. "The Next Hot Spot." Wall Street Journal, 18 May 18 1994, A1, col. 1.

Wallfish, Asher. "Settlers voice security concerns in Knesset to Opposition MKs." Jerusalem Post, 3 November 1992, 12.

Wolinetz, Harvey. "Don't thank us for coming." Letter Jerusalem Post, 24 January 1991, 4.

Magazines

"An age-old dispute." The Middle East issue 235 (June 1994): 13.

Baker, Barbara. "Christians fear Jewish takeover of Old City." Christianity Today 36, no. 1 (January 13, 1992).

Barghouti, Iyad. "Religion and Politics among the Students of Najah National University." Middle Eastern Studies 27, no. 2 (April 1991): 203-218.

"The battle of the dome." The Economist 323, no 7760 (23 May 1992): 45-46.

Challenge: A Magazine of Israeli-Palestinian Coexistence no. 25 (May-June 1994: Israel).

Chatterjee, Partha. "History and the Nationalization of Hinduism." Social Research 59, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 111-149.

Falah, Ghazi. "Recent Jewish Colonisation in Hebron." in The Impact of Gush Emunim. ed. David Newman (London: Croom and Helm, 1985), 246.

Halevi, Yossi Klein. "Mother Rachel's Tangled Legacy." Jerusalem Report, 16 December 1993, 16-18.

--. "The Roots of Jewish Terror." Moment. April 1985, 21-43.

--. "Side by Side in Hatred." Jerusalem Report, 15 June 1995, 12-14.

Hershkovits, Yud. "Israeli Teenagers React to the Hebron Massacre." Challenge no. 25, 19.

"Impossible Coexistence: Human Rights in Hebron Since the Massacre at the Cave of the Patriarchs." B'tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, September 1995.

Jones, Timothy K. "No Shalom in a Land Called Holy." Christianity Today 35, no. 10 (16 September 1991): 32-34.

Khalaile, Iyad. "(Wrong) Lessons of the Hebron Massacre." Challenge no. 28. (October 1994): 22.

Kramer, Martin. "Tragedy in Mecca." Orbis 32, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 231-247.

Langfur, Stephen. "The Ibrahimi Mosque." Challenge no 25, 16.

Laumann, George. "A Saturday in Hebron." Challenge 3, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1992).

Lerer, Yael. "A Collective Conscience Cleansing." Challenge no. 25, 17.

Miller, Nancy. "Patriarchal Burial Site Explored for First Time in 700 Years." Biblical Archaeology Review May/June 1985, 26-43.

"The New Gaza: Interview with Abdel Alim Da'ana." Challenge no. 25 (May-June 1994): 9+.

Schwartz, Michael. "Tightening the Noose." Challenge no. 25, 10-12.

- Sered, Susan Starr. "Rachel's Tomb: Societal Liminality and the Revitalization of a Shrine." Religion 19, no. 1 (January 1989): 27-40.
- Sellick, Patricia. "The Old City of Hebron: Can it be Saved?"
- Shahak, Israel. "The Background and Consequences of the Massacre in Hebron." Middle East Policy 3, no. 2 (1994): 63-76.
- Subtelny, Maria Eva. "The Cult of Holy Places: Religious Practices among Soviet Muslims." The Middle East Journal 43, no. 4 (Autumn 1989): 593-604.
- Suleiman, Khaleid. "Narrowing horizon." Middle East International, 15 April 1994.
- . "Six months on." Middle East International, 9 September 1994.
- "Tel Rumeida: No Sign of Evacuating the Settlers." Challenge no. 25, 13.
- "Tourist Number 32." Palestine and Near East Economic Magazine. ed. Evserov and Torokor. vol. vi, nos. 23-24 (Tel Aviv: Mischar W'Taasia Publishing and Exhibition Co. Ltd.).
- Van der Veer, Peter. "Ayodhya and Somnath: Eternal Shrines, Contested Histories." Social Research 59, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 85-109.
- Vatikiotis, P.J. "The Siege of the Walled City of Jerusalem: 14 May-15 December 1948." Middle Eastern Studies 31, no. 1 (January 1995): 139-145.
- Wieseltier, Leon. "Bloodlust Memories." The New Republic 210, no. 12, issue 4 (21 March 1994): 13-15.

Books

- Abbas, Ziad, Nathan Krystall, and Michel Warshawsky. Hebron Massacre: A Summary of Events. (Jerusalem: The Alternative Information Center, 1994).
- Al-Jubeih, Nazmi. Hebron (Al-Halil): Kontinuitat und Integrationskraft einer islamisch-arabischen Stadt. (Ph.D. Dissertation: Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen, 1991).
- Apartheid in Hebron: The True Face of Oslo. (Jerusalem: Hebron Solidarity Committee, March 1995).
- Avisar, Oded, ed. Sefer Hevron. (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 1970).
- Ben-Horin, Michael, ed. Baruch Hagever. (Jerusalem: Shalom al Israel, 1995).
- Benvenisti, Meron. 1986 Report: Demographic, Economic, Legal, Social and Political Developments in the West Bank. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986).
- Ben-Yehuda, Nachman. The Masada Myth. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).

- Bourbon, Fabio. The Holy Land: Lithographs and Diaries by David Roberts R.A. (Bnei Brak, Israel: Steimatzky, 1994).
- Chadwick, Jeffrey. Archeology of Biblical Hebron in the Bronze and Iron Ages. (Ph.D. Dissertation, 1992).
- Cornfeld, Gaaylah. Sacred Jewish Sites. (Tel Aviv: World WZO Department of Organization and Education, 1970).
- Davies, William. The Territorial Dimension of Judaism. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982).
- Friedlander, Roger and Richard Hecht. "The Politics of Sacred Place: Jerusalem's Temple Mount/*al-haram al-sharif*." in Sacred Places and Profane Spaces. ed. Jamie Scott and Paul Simpson-Housley, 21-61.
- Friedman, Robert. Zealots for Zion. (New York: Random House, 1992).
- Fulton, John. The Beautiful Land. Palestine. (New York: T. Whitaker, 1891).
- Knohl, Dov, ed. Siege in the Hills of Hebron: The Battle of the Etzion Bloc. (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1958).
- Lewis, Bernard. History -- Remembered, Recovered, Invented. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).
- The Massacre in Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi Al-Sharif: Context and Aftermath. (Jerusalem: Palestine Human Rights Information Center, May 1994).
- Matthews, Charles. Palestine, Mohammedan Holy Land. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949).
- Palestine Commission on the Disturbances of August, 1929. vol. 1 and 2 (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1930)
- Peters, F. E. The Distant Shrine. (New York: AMS Press, 1993).
- Pierotti, Ermette. Machpéla: ou Tombeau des patriarches à Hebron visité par Ermette Pierotti. (Lausanne, 1869).
- Porath, Yehoshua. The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab Nationalist Movement. (London: Cass, 1974).
- . The Palestinian Arab Nationalist Movement. (London, 1977).
- Profanation et défiguration par les forces d'occupation israéliennes du Sanctuaire d'Ibrahim El Khalil 'Abraham'. League of Arab States Permanent Delegation to Geneva. (Switzerland, 1975).
- Roberts, David R.A. The Holy Land: 123 Colored Facsimile Lithographs and the Journal from his Visit to the Holy Land. (New Jersey: Wellfleet Press).
- Romann, Michael. Jewish Kiryat Arba versus Arab Hebron. (Jerusalem: West Bank Data Project, 1985).

Sacred Places and Profane Spaces: Essays in the Geographics of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Jamie Scott and Paul Simpson-Housley, ed. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991).

Sprinzak, Ehud. The Ascendancy of Israel's Radical Right. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Tevah Hevron 689. Rehavam Zeevi, ed. (Jerusalem: Havatselet, 1994).

Zerubavel, Yael. Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

Other Written or Visual Sources

"Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi Al-Khalil: A Brief Guide." Booklet. Supreme Moslem Council. (Jerusalem: Moslem Orphanage Press, 1928) 4.

"The Cave of Machpelah: The Roots of the Jewish People." Booklet. (Kiryat Arba: Midreshet Hevron, ca. 1994).

"Committee for martyrs' relatives." Source and date uncertain, approximately March 1994.

"Continuing to Build Hebron. The City of the Patriarchs is Resurrected!" Poster. (Hebron: Restorers of the Jewish Settlement in Hebron, 1993).

Encyclopedia Judaica [n.d., approx. 1970 ed.] s.v. "Hebron." by Moshe Shapira.

Encyclopedia of Islam. (1978 ed.) s.v. "Al-Khalil." 954-961.

Goldstein, Irwin. Letter, in Baruch Hagever. ed. Ben-Horin, iii-viii.

Gopher site. <gopher://gopher.jer1.co.il:70/11/comm/comm/is/hebron>.

"Hebron, City of Our Forefathers, City of their Sons." Pamphlet. (Hebron: Jewish Community of Hebron, 1995).

"Hebron 5689 -- Hebron 5736." Poster. (Kiryat Arba: The Association for the Renewal of the Jewish Community in Hebron, 1976).

Hecht, Richard. Letter (email) to the author. 27 June 1995.

The Jewish Encyclopedia. 1925 ed. s.v. "Hebron."

"Judenrein! Jews Out!" Poster. (Kiryat Arba: Committee of Women for the Sake of Hebron, 1979).

"Kiryat Arba is Hebron!: 1" Brochure. (Kiryat Arba: Directorate of Kiryat Arba, 1977).

"Kiryat Arba is Hebron!: 2" Brochure. (Kiryat Arba: Directorate of Kiryat Arba, 1977).

"The Other Front." Alternative Information Center, no. 262 (2 March 1994).

A Pilgrim's Sketchbook of Mount Zion and the Holy Places of Israel. Mount Zion Committee. Jerusalem, n.d. approx. 1966.

Peled, Micha X., prod. Inside God's Bunker. Videocassette. Moving Images. 1994.

Sunshine, Herbert. Letter, in Baruch Hagever, ed. Ben-Horin, ix-xiv.

"Your Emissaries in the City of Our Forefathers." The Jewish Community of Hebron. <http://www.virtual.co.il/communities/israel/hebron>. 1996.

Interviews

The author completed 27 interviews but is only quoting from the following:

Al-Jubeh, Nazmi. Personal interview. 3 August 1995.

Bar-Shalom, Menachem. Personal interview. 13 August 1995.

Cooperberg, Garry. Personal and written interview. 1 August 1995.

Devora, Shoshana. Personal interview. 9 August 1995.

Ezrahi, Yaron. Personal interview. 6 August 1995.

Halevi, Yossi Klein. Telephone interview. 2 August 1995.

Hamad, Jamil. Personal interview. July 1995.

Litani, Yehuda. Personal interview. 11 August 1995.

Pappes, Ilan. Personal interview. 8 August 1995.

Salam, Sheikh. Personal interview. 2 August 1995.

Subject #1 (Jerusalem rabbi). Personal interview. 18 July 1995.

Subject #11 (Kiryat Arba resident). Personal interview. 1 August 1995.

Subject #27 (Palestinian Hebronite). Written interview. Fall 1995.

Suleiman, Khaleid. Personal interview. 10 August 1995.

Tahboub, Hassan. Personal interview. 2 August 1995.

Wilder, David. Personal interview and walking tour. 1 August 1995.

Yaz, Jeff. Personal interview. 2 August 1995.

Zilberman, Ilfrach. Personal interview. 9 August 1995.

Special thanks to:

- Professor Mark Mancall, for his help and patience as my advisor and first reader.
- Professors Joel Beinin, Aron Rodrigue, and Steve Zipperstein of Stanford University, and Richard Hecht of UC-Santa Barbara, for their academic support and their provision of contacts in Israel.
- The Undergraduate Research Opportunities Office and Department of Jewish Studies at Stanford University, and the Dorot Travel Grant Foundation, for the essential financial support of my research.
- Rabbi David Rosen of the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies and Reuven Kaminer of the Hebrew University, for their assistance in Jerusalem.
- Dalva de Olivera, for her apartment and her friendship during my summer in Jerusalem.
- Hannah Berman and Eylon Stroh, for aid in translation from Hebrew to English.
- Kausik Rajgopal, for his analytical mind, his emotional support, and his computer server that never shuts off. And for liking me even when I'm grouchy.
- Alice and Mark Rampton, my parents, for setting examples of excellence, humor, and love.