

# Jerusalem Letter

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Daniel J. Elazar, Editor and Publisher • David Clayman, Executive Editor

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### SHARING THE LAND: THE ONLY REALISTIC OPTION

Yehuda Ben Meir

The next step in the Israel-Arab peace process is not only a continuation of what has happened until now, but also represents a totally new step, dealing with new issues. It is very hard to predict exactly how the autonomy negotiations will develop in the future, but we in the Middle East expect progress in the next year in two different areas. In the first area, Egypt-Israel relationships, I would say that development has been prescribed at least for the next three years along the lines set forth in the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. Whether matters will develop as they are supposed to is another question. But we know that there is a clear delineation of the movement toward normalization between Israel and Egypt. The peace treaty includes in its annexes dates and timetables for normalization. The process may or may not be quickened, but there is a timetable.

The second dimension which lies ahead of us is the negotiation with regard to autonomy for the inhabitants of the administered territories which began on May 25 in Beersheva. These negotiations are based to a certain degree on the Camp David Agreement. Technically they are based on the letter attached to the peace treaty, the joint letter signed by Israel and Egypt. It commits the parties to begin the negotiations referred to in the Camp David Agreement one month after the ratification of the treaty, and they began exactly one month to the day. The goal is to engage in negotiations continuously, in good faith, to conclude them within a year, and, after they are concluded, to hold elections as expeditiously as possible. There is no timetable given for the elections after the agreement. First of all, it is clear that the elections are to be held after agreement is reached on all the outstanding issues. This is stated clearly in the letter. No timetable is given for these elections except for the term "as expeditiously as possible." The only explicit requirement is that one month after elections are held the elected body will begin to function.

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So we have a year of negotiations, whose aim is to implement the arrangements regarding what we in Hebrew call Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip, in the English text called the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Arrangements regarding these areas are to be made as laid out in Camp David.

I do not want to go into the question, which is of course a genuine question, as to what relationships there are between the Israel-Egypt peace treaty and elections in the territories. I do not claim for one minute that there is no relationship; what I want to say is that in the best opinion which I think exists there is no legal relationship between the two. There is not one word in the treaty of peace signed between Egypt and Israel which in any way links them. This does not mean that politically there is no linkage. Only time will tell to what degree the implementation of the various parts of the peace treaty may be linked to the question of negotiations on the second issue.

Turning to the second issue, the autonomy plan, what is the position of the National Religious Party and of the government as a whole on autonomy? What are we trying to achieve, and how do we view the main questions of autonomy?

I think that the problem of Judea, Samaria and Gaza is unique. The Jerusalem Institute has inventoried the various examples of different solutions to questions of autonomy. Each example is nevertheless unique. In my opinion, the question of the Arab Palestinians living in Judea, Samaria and Gaza is a unique question, because of the unique relationship existing in this area. Therefore, it must have a unique solution. There may be a specific example that is comparable to which we can turn but, even if there is no precedent, I do not see this as in any way a drawback which cannot be overcome. Precedent is the great enemy of advancement and of innovation. One simply has to be able to apply human skills to try to find the unique solution.

I am sure everyone is aware of the central problem of Judea, Samaria and Gaza, the relationship that Israel has to this area, versus the fact that there are in it 1,050,000 Arabs who do not want to be part of a Jewish state. Therefore, as I see it, there are four possible solutions. The Arab solution is that all this area ought to be returned to the Arabs. In my opinion, Israel cannot, should not, and will not agree to a solution which involves the restoration of the borders of June 1967, and the complete cutting off of these areas from Israel and the Jewish people. We oppose this for historical reasons, for security reasons, and for many other reasons.

In my opinion, this is a correct and just stand. I think it reflects the consensus of the vast majority of Israelis who are not ready

to accept the Arab proposal of total withdrawal of Israel from all these areas. I certainly would do everything I can not to have it accepted, because I feel it undermines the very future and security and rights of the people of Israel and the Jewish people.

Another solution, the opposite of the first, is to incorporate Judea, Samaria and Gaza as part of Israel and to give Israeli citizenship to all those inhabitants who want it. In my opinion, this solution is not viable politically. Again I do not want to go into the merits of the case. I think it would be the most just solution, if we could work in our world on the basis of absolute justice, and I am ready to explain why I think so. But I am convinced that it is not a politically viable solution. I do not think that we can achieve an agreement with the Arab states surrounding us on this basis, and I do not think we can reach a modus vivendi with countries such as the United States with which we have to live. That is why, to the best of my knowledge, no government and no significant political party -- including the NRP and the Likud -- ever suggested in its platform the unilateral annexation of Judea and Samaria.

In the national unity government of 1967, of which Mr. Begin was a member, he did not suggest the annexation of Judea and Samaria. On the contrary, the only annexation was that of East Jerusalem to West Jerusalem, and it was unanimously approved by the Cabinet. There were those who suggested that the area of Jerusalem be enlarged to include Bethlehem. (By the way, the Arabs in Bethlehem were the ones who requested to be included in the annexation at that time.) Mr. Begin in my opinion correctly, was opposed to it, because, he said, if we do so, we will already have made it clear that we do not have any claims to the rest of Judea and Samaria. If we just annex East Jerusalem, it is clear that we are just reuniting Jerusalem as a city and the question of Judea and Samaria will be left for negotiation. Begin also realized that total annexation is nonviable. Thus, we are left with two possible compromise solutions.

One is the solution which the Labor Alignment has championed from the beginning, a territorial partition of Judea and Samaria along the lines of the Allon Plan. Those areas which have great security importance and which also are not heavily populated by the Arabs will be annexed to Israel. Other parts will become part and parcel of an Arab political entity whose character will be determined in the negotiations. This is one possibility.

In my opinion, this proposal has several merits, but I do not feel at the moment that it is politically acceptable. So far we have not found any country in the Arab world, including Egypt with whom we now have a peace treaty, which has been willing in any way to accept this solution. If any Arab leader would be ready to discuss it ser-

iously, I think there is room for Israel to examine it as a possibility. But at the moment I do not think it is a viable solution, nor do I think it is the best one.

The fourth possibility is what is called a political solution in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. It is not based on partition of land, but rather on a division of authority, a division of rights and of functions within the territories. A political solution first of all involves two things in a negative sense and a number of things in a positive sense. In the negative sense, when I say a political solution through division, it clearly means that Israel will not exercise sole sovereignty over Judea, Samaria and Gaza. If Israel did exercise sovereignty, there would not be a proper division of functions. Nor will any Arab entity, independent or part of another Arab entity, exercise sole sovereignty over the area. This is clearly what a political division means. It can have no other meaning. If one side is going to exercise full sovereignty over this area, there would not be a political division or a political solution.

The essence of the fourth solution, then, is that neither side exercises full and complete sovereignty over this area, but we have some type of joint sovereignty in which we have a division of functions. Now, in my opinion, if there will be good will on all sides, I think we can arrange such a solution. This is the essence of the government's position on autonomy, which I think is a just and correct one. Whether it will be accepted or not is another question.

At the moment, we are dealing with a transitional solution. The Camp David Agreement stipulates no effective guidelines for the permanent solution. In my opinion, however, the permanent solution has to be some further development of the interim solution. The principle, now or five years from now, has to be that both communities -- the Arab community and the Jewish community living in Judea, Samaria and Gaza -- with Israel having a vital interest in the territories for reasons of security and Jewish settlement rights -- have to divide their functions between themselves.

The Arab population of Judea and Samaria will enjoy full and complete rights to run its own life in every way and to be solely responsible for the development of its own society. The Jewish population in Judea and Samaria will enjoy, of course, its own right to develop its own life and be responsible for its own future with Israel guaranteeing that this division will be viable.

Anyone who is clearly objective has to admit that Israel is the only power at the moment which is in a position to guarantee this solution, at least for the foreseeable future. Not only would the Palestinians be unable to guarantee it, but neither would Jordan. I do not think, for instance, that Jordan would even be able to sustain

a solution whereby Judea and Samaria would be part of Jordan. That, in my opinion, is why King Hussein is not at all interested in joining negotiations, because he has nothing to gain. Even if tomorrow Israel would give him Samaria and Judea on a golden platter, he probably could not hold onto them more than two or three days at the best. The price he would have to pay would be far too great. Therefore, to repeat, the only factor which can guarantee such a joint solution is Israel.

This, in summary, then, is the essence of the autonomy plan: that through free elections and institutions the Arabs living in Judea, Samaria and Gaza will be in charge of their day-to-day lives, whereas, side by side, with them, the Jews will have the right and the ability to live in settlements and be responsible for running their own lives. The ultimate responsibility, which mainly involves the security question, will lie with Israel. Israel will have the ability through its forces to guarantee this solution and to divide the functions, the responsibilities, and the authority between the two communities in the area. I do not think that the Palestinians, even those who want such an arrangement -- and there may be some who would -- are capable of upholding it; the Jewish community in Judea and Samaria is also not capable of upholding it. Nor is any foreign power, Arab or otherwise, capable of upholding it. The political reality is that the only power which can do it is Israel. This, the security issue, is what is behind Israel's position regarding the source of authority for the autonomy plan. For a few years, Israel must guarantee that this solution be given a chance to prove itself, and afterwards, if it works, then we will see what will happen.

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Dr. Ben Meir is chairman of the National Religious Party faction in the Knesset, and was a participant in the 1979 Paterson Conference on Federal Solutions to Current Political Problems sponsored by the Jerusalem Institute for Federal Studies.