

Under the framework of Christian Jewish nationalism: AL-AQSA Mosque's Destiny

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ABSTRACT

The fate of Palestine, Bayt al-Maqdis, and Al-Aqsa Mosque have become major subjects in the Deal of the Century (DtM), which presents a skewed political, historical, and theological narrative from a single point of view. This essay looks at Christian Zionists' predictions for the future of al-Aqsa Mosque as they are presented in the "deal." First and foremost, it is determined that the deal suggests a significant alteration to the current state of affairs at al-Aqsa Mosque by partitioning it temporally and reserving it exclusively for Jews and Christians on their respective festivals. Second, it establishes the framework for the spatial division—which is used at the Ibrahim Mosque in Hebron—that grants Jews exclusive access to certain areas of the al-Aqsa Mosque. The third phase, which is indicated but not stated clearly, is focused on the Zionist idea of building a "Jewish Temple" on top of the al-Aqsa Mosque site. This conclusion is derived from the expectation of Christ's Second Coming and the influence of Christian Zionism on American politics. Furthermore, the notion that Jesus Christ would approach the location—specifically, through the Golden Gate or an opened Bab al-Rahma—and include the entire area of al-Aqsa Mosque within the aim of the "Jewish Temple" design. Therefore, according to evangelical plans, the DtM suggests splitting up time and space and sharing the mosque as a starting point. If these plans are successfully carried out, the building of a "Jewish Temple" will accelerate with evangelical plans, the successful completion of which will see the construction of a 'Jewish Temple' to hasten the advent of the apocalypse. This endeavor reflects Christian Zionists' fervent efforts to reshape the world order by forcing the 'Hand of God', and bringing about their long-held desire for Armageddon through the instructive evangelical plans, the successful completion of which will see the construction of a 'Jewish Temple' to hasten the advent of the apocalypse.

Keywords: *Al-Aqsa Mosque; Deal of the Twenty-First Millennium; Second Coming; Evangelism; Armageddon; Jewish Temple.*

INTRODUCTION

Currently, Jerusalem is at the center of one of the most divisive conflicts in the world, with the al-Aqsa Mosque compound serving as the focal point of contention. Rival claims based on culture, history, and—most importantly—religion have centered around it. A matter of concern and discussion, given the present circumstances, is whether or not Al-Aqsa Mosque, which has been structurally intact for almost a millennium, will be able to continue existing in the future. It has been the goal of Jewish and Christian Zionists to demolish the al-Aqsa Mosque and build a "Jewish Temple" in its place. This theory has been promoted for some time by evangelicals, especially in the US. There are

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still ongoing repercussions from some of the most significant events that occurred during Donald Trump's presidency (from 2017 to 2021). These events have sparked heated discussions.

With the release of the "Deal of the Century" (henceforth, DoC), the Trump administration made headlines for its unwavering support of "Israel" and went above and beyond, doing things that no other president dared to do. With Trump in power, previously discussed issues about US support for "Israel" have gained greater attention, and the influence of Christian Zionism on US politics is becoming more apparent. The Department of Culture, as suggested by the Trump administration, undermines and questions the Muslim perspective while fully endorsing the Zionist one. Since "Israel" wrote the DtM, it remains relevant today, especially about the al-Aqsa Mosque. With the significant rights granted to "Israel," the relocation of the US Embassy, the recognition of the annexation of occupied territory, and the announcement of the Deal of the Century, Trump's presidency irrevocably altered American politics. In addition to recognizing "Israel's" sovereignty over Jerusalem and the al-Aqsa Mosque, the deal goes above and beyond to create a new reality and end the long-standing status quo. 'Israel' quickly took advantage of these developments and began establishing a new de facto situation around al-Aqsa Mosque. This cannot be seen as just political concessions made to "Israel"; rather, Trump was courting the hopes and desires of his evangelical supporters. The Israeli government, which is right-wing at the moment, is going too far in this regard. To objectively analyze what Christian Zionists envision for al-Aqsa Mosque and how the DtM supports these intentions, this study will methodically investigate the DtM within the framework established by Christian Zionist ideology. It also examines the possibility that the "peace and prosperity" that the DtM has promised may be interpreted as a proclamation of "war and destruction."

THE AL-AQSA MOSQUE'S SITE HOLDS RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE

A notable location that makes up one-sixth of the present-day ancient city of Jerusalem is the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Several countries have made rival claims to rule over the holy city, which is significant from a religious, political, and global standpoint. The most significant aspect of its significance is its religious significance. This region was named after several dominant civilizations that left their imprint and expressed their beliefs. Consequently, the holy city is also known by other names than Bayt al-Maqdis, such as UrSalim, Yebus, Aelia, al-Quds, and Jerusalem; each of these names has a distinct symbolic meaning for various individuals (El-Awaisi, 2019a). Many of the structures, monuments, and shrines that have been erected inside its historic walls over the ages to represent people's connections have endured to this day.

There are now several places and locations that are respected by Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the holy city of Bayt al-Maqdis. As a consequence of such sites, such as al-Aqsa Mosque (and within its Dome of the Rock and al-Buraq Wall) and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, many refer to it as "the holiest city in the world" (Berzak, 2014). Al-Aqsa Mosque is the most important, primarily because of its lengthy history and connections to the time of the early Prophets. Although modern archaeology only dates the site back to the Roman era, it has conflicting claims to theological and political rights over the site, even though this place has been sacred to the local population for millennia. Furthermore, as the Bible suggests, archaeologists largely agree that the Canaanites were the first people to dwell in this sacred city (El-Awaisi, 2019a: 20).

Although the country's initial occupants may have been the Canaanites or maybe the Natufians thousands of years ago, the location is most commonly linked to the Prophet Abraham, a well-known figure in the religions of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Hebrew tradition states that Jews who identify as Abraham's descendants think their ancestry ends with Isaac and disregard Ishmael; conversely, Christians assert that, as followers of Jesus, they are the legitimate heirs of Abraham. However, since Judaism began with Moses a millennium later, Abraham cannot be a Jew, nor can he be a Christian, as Christianity began with Jesus. Furthermore, when we take into consideration how the Qur'an clarifies this argument, it resolves this conflict by clarifying that the Prophet Abraham cannot belong to religions and revelations after him (Q 3:65), and what is imperative is following the message of submission to God (Islam) brought by Abraham (Q 3:67–68), and not the case of descent (Levenson, as cited in El-Awaisi, 2019a: 22).

After he led the Israelites out of Pharaoh's persecution in Egypt, Moses was revered by Jews as the leader of their ancestral homeland. The Jews believed that the Holy Land was their "Promised Land," and as a result, their view of it became increasingly significant. However, it is also well known from religious traditions that the Jews refused to enter this country even with Moses' advice, and they spent forty years lost in the desert. A few centuries later, they moved into the holy city under King David's command, and a 'temple' was established during King Solomon's reign.

Furthermore, Arnona the Jebusite sought to sell it to the present-day location of al-Masjid al-Aqsa (II Samuel 24:18–25). They said that it was on this hallowed spot that Abraham met Melchizedek, the Canaanite King of Jerusalem and priest of God Most High. As a result, the Biblical story indicates that this location was significant to the inhabitants even before the times of David and Abraham. It's interesting to note that Jews consider the Sinai Peninsula to be the starting point of Judaism, where Moses received the Ten Commandments from God. For this reason, it's unexpected that they would select Mount Zion in Jerusalem as their spiritual center rather than Mount Sinai (Armstrong, 1997).

As the site of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, the holy city of Bayt al-Maqdis is cherished by Christians (Armstrong, 1997). The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the holiest place in Christianity, is situated at the end of the Via Dolorosa and commemorates the location where Jesus is said to have been crucified, buried, and resurrected. The life and teachings of Jesus had a significant impact on how Christians thought about the city and themselves. The New Testament asserts that in the teachings and predictions of Jesus, while on the Mount of Olives, Jerusalem, and its 'temple' will be destroyed (Matthew 24:2). Al-Ratrout (2004) notes that although the Holy Land is seen as one of the most important places in Christianity, Christians have never considered the region that is now al-Masjid al-Aqsa to be particularly significant. Rather, it was believed to be the place where Jesus fulfilled his promise that "not one stone here will be left on another," and as such, it ought to be left abandoned. Furthermore, for Christians, Jesus's body became the new "temple" upon his crucifixion and ascension to the skies; this replaced the idea of an earthly temple and a heavenly Jerusalem.

However, Muslims believe that the significance of the al-Aqsa Mosque extends well beyond the life of Prophet Muhammad, dating back to the time of the first human, Prophet Adam. The al-Aqsa Mosque is thus not noteworthy simply owing to the episode of Isra and Miraj (Night Journey and Ascension), but also because it is the second mosque created on earth for the worship of God after the Ka'bah, besides being the initial Qiblah for Muslims and prior prophets.

Consequently, the holy cities of Bayt al-Maqdis and al-Aqsa Mosque, whose origins may be traced back to the beginning of creation, the time of the last Prophet Muhammad, and the Day of Judgment, became an essential component of Islam. The Quran states that al-Aqsa. The mosque is the source of the blessing (Barakah) and is the hub of the Land of Barakah, which has been bestowed upon it long before the journey of the Prophet Abraham (El-Awaisi, 2007). Once the second Muslim Caliph 'Umar captured Bayt al-Maqdis peacefully in 637, he proceeded to the site of al-Aqsa Mosque, purified it, and constructed a building within it. Before the entrance of Muslims in the seventh century, when they rebuilt the al-Aqsa Mosque, there was strong historical and archeological evidence indicating that the region had been abandoned for at least 500 years (Al-Ratrout, 2004).

Twice in the first and second centuries CE, the Romans destroyed the city and the location of the mosque, raising it to the surface. The remnant foundations belong to the second century CE, during the rebuilding under Emperor Hadrian (Al-Ratrout, 2013). The idea that the Buraq Wall is a remnant of a "Jewish Temple" is refuted by the fact that the Masjid site contains no archaeological remains from any earlier period. Jewish interest in this wall dates back to a very recent period, and it became a national and religious icon with the rise of Jewish Zionism and the beginning of the occupation. Jewish nationalists have held Zion to be the spiritual and political center of the Jewish people ever since the Zionist movement began in the 1880s (Ma'oz, 2014). Nonetheless, the size, form, and placement of the 'Jewish Temple' on the existing territory of al-Aqsa Mosque are contested amongst biblical scholars and even Israeli archaeologists, making the topic of the first and second 'Jewish Temples' appear more linked to mythology than archaeology (Al-Ratrout, 2004). The Zionists' theological deceit to support their demand to have the al-Aqsa Mosque demolished is predicated on the notion that King Solomon built a "temple" where the mosque currently stands.

This assertion remains unproven despite over 150 years of underground excavations at al-Aqsa Mosque and the surrounding region. This makes the Zionist claim that the Western Wall is a component of the temple incredibly incongruous, especially in light of the lack of concrete archaeological proof of the temple in the vicinity of the mosque's platform. Even until the late Ottoman era and the British intervention in the region, the supposed 'Wailing Wall' or the western al-Buraq Wall of al-Aqsa Mosque held little significance for the Jewish population. The Western Wall and the surrounding area belonged exclusively to the Muslims and are Waqf property, according to the findings of the international commission that the British government appointed to investigate claims to this wall during the 1929 Buraq Revolt. The League of Nations approved this determination in 1931 (International Commission, 1999). Finally, but just as importantly, to solve the puzzle of the ideological stories that guarantee the cooperation of Jewish and Christian Zionism and the partnership founded on shared interests, as represented in the DtM, it is also required

to examine the significance of the al-Aqsa Mosque location from the standpoint of Christian Zionism. Christian Zionism, sometimes referred to as "political philo-Semitism" or "Christian support for Zionism," places a high significance on the current site of al-Aqsa Mosque because it is believed that a "Jewish temple" will soon be erected there. According to Randall Price (2006), a modern Christian Zionist, the Torah commands the Jewish people to "restore the temple" as soon as they can do so and predicts that all of Israel will be rescued and returned to their ancestral country at the end of the Messianic Era. A virtuous descendant of David, the Messiah, will govern from Jerusalem at this time as well, and the temple will re-establish itself complete with its Levitical priesthood (based on Jeremiah 33:14–18, Exodus 25:8). It's interesting to see how many contemporary Israeli practices, like the annexation and colonization of Palestinian-owned land, are justified by Christian Zionists because they believe Jews to be God's chosen people, even though archaeological and historical narratives are evolving against current Jewish Zionist claims. It must be remembered that the notion of a Zionist client-state, founded to serve Western interests in the area, predates Jewish Zionism and was advocated by Christian Zionists (El-Awaisi, 2019b).

This, in particular, encouraged and made possible the return of Jews to Palestine. In addition to urging Western nations to back this, Christian Zionists more recently aggressively pushed for the relocation of their embassies to Jerusalem and the official acknowledgment of Jerusalem as the eternal, undivided capital of the Jewish people and "Israel." Some who read the Bible as prophesying the reconstruction of the "temple," the reinstatement of the priesthood, and the sacrificial system offer varying degrees of material and ethical support to Jewish "Temple Mount" organizations that strive toward these goals. Several Christian Zionist figures, including Doug Kreiger, Terry Reisenhoover, James DeLoach, and Peter Wagner, have been instrumental in securing significant American funding for radical Jewish organizations such as "Gush Emunim" and the "Temple Mount Faithful" (Sizer, 2006: 172). To Christian Zionists, any advocate for Israeli compromise with Islam or cohabitation with Palestinians is to identify with those destined to fight God and 'Israel' in the impending war of Armageddon; consequently, there is no chance for true peace between Jews and Muslims (Sizer, 2006: 8). For this reason, in the opinion of Christian Zionists, the 'Temple Mount' is "the most contested 35 acres on the planet" and the single most essential key to future prophecies (Lindsey, as stated in Sizer, 2006: 172).

Consequently, it is important to note that American politicians who were elected in part due to the support of evangelicals' opinions on national and international matters have taken up their posts. In this context, religious terminology predominates in the US political lexicon and religion—in the evangelical sense—is kept front and center almost exclusively. One such instance is the setting in which Bush utilized theological terms like "crusade" and "forces of evil" to describe military and political operations conducted by the US and its allies in the "Middle East" (Gündüz, 2018). Trump has joined the group of American presidents whose policies have been influenced by evangelicals, along with Reagan, Bush, and George W. Bush. Reagan anticipated that the War of Armageddon would break out during his presidency. As a result, the Trump administration is leading the charge in shaping American politics, which have been shaped by evangelicalism, in the effort to destroy the al-Aqsa Mosque to fulfill the goals of Christian Zionism and construct the privileged "Jewish Temple." As a result, after establishing the importance of al-Aqsa Mosque to different faiths and ideologies in the paper's introduction, this context is crucial to the evaluations that follow because it provides a framework for analyzing American politics, particularly the DtM, from a wide angle that is consistent with Christian Zionism's objectives.

Donald Trump's attitude toward ending the war and his deal with The:

With the help of Jewish and Christian Zionist lobbies, the Trump administration contributed significantly to the pro-Israeli policies that have never before been seen in US foreign policy toward the Palestinian-Israeli issue. The US has openly backed the creation of two nations and has long presented itself as a mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. The United States' pro-Israeli policies have only served to exacerbate tensions in this region, despite the apparent possibility that a resolution could be reached through intermediary states, ending the quest for dominance in the Holy Land based on their respective national, religious, and historical narratives.

As an example, the United States was the first nation to formally recognize "Israel" in 1948 (Ross, 2015); under John F. Kennedy, US foreign aid to "Israel" increased significantly beginning in the early 1960s, making "Israel" the largest recipient—surpassing Egypt by more than \$60 billion; and overall, the US has viewed "Israel" as both a friendly and strategic de facto ally amidst the turbulent "Middle East" (Cavari and Nyer, 2016). The Trump administration, which is well-known for making clear comments about US policy toward West Asia, has led to an increase in possible disagreements and arguments about US participation in a region that has seen violence for more than a century.

Throughout his campaigns, Trump made a point of portraying himself as less of a hawk when it came to foreign affairs than his rivals. However, some believe that his presidency's policies have harmed world peace and the liberal international order (Payne, 2017). Trump's "America First" policy, according to his detractors, weakened the liberal international order (Adri, 2020). In contrast to past American presidents, the Trump administration's efforts in West Asia to ensure political stability and the overt favors bestowed upon "Israel" have fanned the fires of war and deepened the situation in the area. In his campaign for president, Trump promised to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As soon as he took office, he put together a group to host peace negotiations.

Jared Kushner, his Jewish son-in-law, was named as his special envoy to carry out a peace proposal. In addition, he named Jason Greenblatt, his former lawyer, and David Friedman, the US ambassador to "Israel," to this "peace team." Both individuals are Jewish and have publicly backed illegal Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian land. In addition to these nominations, President Trump also named evangelical Mike Pence as vice president and Mike Pompeo as secretary of state. However, given their pro-Israeli attitude toward the dispute, it seemed unlikely that Trump's team would handle the situation impartially, raising doubts about the US's capacity to serve as an unbiased mediator (Wermenbol, 2019). As the first sitting US president to visit the Western Buraq Wall, Trump visited "Israel" on his maiden foreign trip in May 2017. On December 6, 2017, his administration announced that the US would move its embassy to "United Jerusalem," the capital of "Israel." Furthermore, the US officially opened its embassy in Jerusalem on May 14, 2018, despite widespread protest, on the 70th anniversary of the Palestinian Nakbah, often known as the "Great Catastrophe," and the day "Israel" was formed in 1948 (Abu Shammalah, 2019). On March 25, 2019, Trump recognized Israel's annexation of the occupied Golan area, reversing decades of US policy. In addition, as part of its "Middle East Peace Plan," the US proposed on June 20, 2019, to create a worldwide investment fund for the Palestinians and neighboring Arab governments. Furthermore, the US government canceled more than half of its scheduled financing to UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, after he threatened to suspend aid to the Palestinians in a series of tweets, citing their refusal to "talk peace" (Lieberman, 2019).

In addition, Trump made his most prominent and divisive move as president on January 28, 2020, when he finally unveiled the long-promised "Peace to Prosperity" plan for "Israel" and the Palestinians (Zanotti, 2019). Regarding the Palestinian issue, the Trump administration has always taken a strong stand and continuously backed policies that are exclusively beneficial to Israel (Payne, 2017). Given Obama's lack of an active "Israel" policy during the previous US administration, any hope that Trump would have taken a neutral stance, especially about policies towards the Holy Land, has been shattered by his incessant emphasis on the necessity of mending ties with "Israel" (Thompson, 2018). Dubbed "the Deal of the Century," the US proposal was first announced in its economic form in June 2019 in Manama, the capital of Bahrain. On January 28, 2020, Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu made the plan public at the White House. By disobeying the internationally binding decisions that the UN Security Council has previously adopted calling for "Israel" to withdraw from occupied territories like the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan, as well as the Oslo process that produced several agreements, this plan aims to legitimize Israel's illegal presence in the occupied territories (Yetim, 2020).

At this time, the "Deal of the Century" compels "Israel" to undertake this endeavor, even if the declaration of "Israel's" annexation of some parts of the occupied West Bank region is against all accords and international law. But Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who holds the United States responsible for the oppression of the Palestinian people, has denounced President Trump's peace plan for the "Middle East" as the "Slap of the Century" and instead reiterated his commitment to creating a state for the Palestinian people inside the 1967 borders, with "East Jerusalem" serving as its capital, by UN Security Council Resolution 242 (Sawafta & al-Mughrabi, 2020). The Department of Commerce made it quite evident what "Israel" desired from the US and what the Palestinians did not want. This is understandable given that Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and one of the plan's principal architects, is Jewish. He told the reporters, "I've been studying this for three years; I've read 25 books on it," in an attempt to defend the DtM. The Zionist narrative is presented in many of the books he is said to have read. These publications include works by Jonathan Schanzer, Vice President for Research at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (Middle East Eye, 2020; Pink, 2020), a pro-Zionist think tank affiliated with the Israeli lobby that is situated in the US.

Kushner recently shared his opinions in his book, *Breaking History: A White House Memoir*, where he talks about the influences on his beliefs (Kushner, 2022). He confirms the accuracy of some of his sources, saying, for example, that what he read in *Fight for Jerusalem: Radical Islam, the West, and the Future of the Holy City* came to mind. Dore Gold, a former employee of Ariel Sharon, wrote this book outlining the ultra-nationalist policies of the Israeli Likud party. The remaining members of Kushner's "small" team were mostly Jews with orthodox backgrounds, including

Avi Berkowitz, Jason Greenblatt, and David Friedman (Kampeas, 2019). Coptic Christian Dina Powell was also included because she knew Arabic; however, she left a few months later. Finally, Catholic Brian Hook was included because of his strong views on Iran, which were necessary when he met with Arab leaders to persuade them of the plan.³ Kushner brags about his team's Jewish heritage without ever trying to hide it. He mentions how he got to know Berkowitz during the 2011 Passover holiday and how Greenblatt served as both Trump's attorney and the campaign's point person for the Jewish community. Regarding Ambassador Friedman, Kushner knew that he was not only a staunch supporter of Israel but also had close ties to the right wing of the Jewish and evangelical communities, which Kushner considered a valuable asset for this endeavor (Kushner, 2022, 111).

During the unveiling of the Department of Commerce, Trump cautioned the Palestinians that this might be their last chance. He cited several reasons for this, starting with the fact that there will never be a team like this one: "We have a team of people that love the United States and they love Israel, and they're very, very smart and committed." He named Friedman, Greenblatt, Berkowitz, and Kushner as members of the team, but he left out Hook, whom Netanyahu did not mention in his speech (Trump & Netanyahu, 2020).

The group exhibits blatant prejudice given its histories, relationships, and public and financial support of "Israel." Furthermore, it is significant that Israel was officially involved in the deal's formulation, as Kushner brags in his essay, saying, "We had spent two years haggling over every line, and we had created a thoughtful plan that Bibi believed could work." At the DtM announcement, Trump said that just a few days before the launch, he had presented his vision for peace. Although Netanyahu was understandably concerned about how the plan might impact the upcoming election, Kushner notes that the two of them reviewed the final draft the night before it was made public (Kushner, 2022, 286-287). "Bibi was careful to make sure that not a single word of the plan would put any Israeli at risk." Their history, together with Israel's declared participation and even the last-minute modifications, is unmistakable evidence of bias and the presentation of Zionist goals. "It's a great plan for Israel," stated Netanyahu after the deal's introduction (Trump & Netanyahu, 2020). In this regard, it is important to consider the significance of al-Aqsa Mosque and the status changes that have been stated about this agreement.

Therefore, it is evident that the plan is more in line with a matter of coercion than peace. Examples of these include the suggestion that Jerusalem becomes part of "Israel" as a single, indivisible entity, plans to develop the site of al-Aqsa Mosque into a tourist attraction that welcomes visitors from many religious backgrounds, the denial of the Palestinian refugees' inalienable right to return to their homes, and support for annexation efforts. As a result, we may argue that it is a document that excludes Palestine and that it results from the meeting of two mutually beneficial alliances. In addition to the advancements "Israel" was making, it helped the Trump administration by uniting evangelical and Jewish lobbying groups in the US. To carry out its unlawful and occupation-based expansionist plans, "Israel" took advantage of the present national, regional, and international situation. This was demonstrated by Netanyahu's drive for more annexation of the West Bank in line with the revised DtM map to win over more concessions from the US at the plan's announcement.

This illustrates how the Zionist state would seek to gain more the more concessions it received. Given that Netanyahu was "giving a campaign speech" for the impending elections, Trump was even made to feel "dirty" by this most recent occurrence (Kushner, 2022, 292).

Al-Aqsa Mosque's Importance in the Transaction

Dubbed the "Deal of the Century," the White House's "Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People" plan focuses on resolving several contentious issues unilaterally, including those about borders and settlements, Palestinian refugees, Jerusalem, and holy sites, mainly the enclave around the al-Aqsa Mosque. This document is a direct result of Trump's pro-Israeli policies; it is noteworthy that in doing so, Trump recognized 'Israel's' complete sovereignty over Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Moreover, the DtM rejects a "sovereign" Palestine because it is seen as a danger to "Israel's" existence, which strengthens Israel's claims to the region as its alleged "ancient homeland" (White House, 2020, p. 8).

About the status of al-Aqsa Mosque, the Zionist Biblical term "Temple Mount" is used in the paper to refer to the complete mosque complex rather than just "al-Aqsa Mosque." This suggests that the location's importance as a house of worship for Muslims is being willfully overlooked. As the text makes clear in several places, the terminological choices serve as alternatives to overt reasons. Thus, it is evident that Trump's proposal, although adding the name

"Haram al-Sharif" subsequently, essentially adopts a Zionist viewpoint and gives priority to the "Temple Mount" above al-Aqsa Mosque."

In addition, the adherence to a certain vocabulary not only reinforces the Jewish-Zionist story regarding the current position of al-Aqsa Mosque, but it also disregards historical and archeological data derived from ongoing excavations surrounding the mosque complex. Three dozen holy places are included in the first part, "Jerusalem's Holy Sites." Of the hundreds of sites in the Old City, only one is mentioned: "the Muslim Holy Shrines." Seventeen are Christian, and thirteen are purportedly Jewish. In addition, it appears that new Jewish holy places were created in the city that had no sacred significance in Judaism before, in keeping with a new narrative promoted by right-wing governments and settlement organizations. "Central holy sites and peripheral sites or sites that are of varying importance to more than one religion" are not distinguished in the plan (Emek Shaveh, 2020).

The DtM's assertion that "the State of Israel has been a good custodian of Jerusalem since 1967" is one of several comments that blatantly display prejudice. Israel has maintained Jerusalem's security and openness during its stewardship (White House, 2020, p. 9). This claim doesn't appear to match the situation as it is in the field. Jews, Christians, and Muslims from all over the world were allowed to visit this sacred place before the Zionist takeover. Nonetheless, a clear disparity exists between the text's assertions and the actual practices. Access to the sacred places of over two billion Muslims is now limited in the Sacred Land. The conditions stated in the DtM state that "it is commendable that the State of Israel has protected the holy places of all people." Considering this impressive track record spanning over fifty years, we think this practice ought to continue, and all of Jerusalem's sacred places need to be governed by the same systems of governance that are in place today. It also begs the question of how "Israel" will maintain Jerusalem safe and open for all worshipers while it is the one violating its holiness. This is in addition to ignoring the actual situation, which includes the multiple restrictions placed by the Israeli government on Muslims and Christians to freely practice their religion at their sacred sites. In this context, serious allegations have also been made that the Israeli government will take on the role of custodian and administrator of the mosque, giving them complete control over the location. The DtM states this in its text because it wants to remove Muslim religious autonomy from the location and, as a result, end the status quo, which the document says should be maintained! It says:

The sacred places in Jerusalem need to be accessible to visitors of all religions and should stay open for peaceful worship. It is appropriate for people of all faiths to be able to pray on the Temple Mount, also known as Haram al-Sharif, as long as they do so with utmost respect for their respective religions and in consideration of religious holidays and prayer hours.

The status of al-Aqsa as a mosque is further complicated by this questionable assertion. As a result, it follows that on the days designated for each of the three religions, the mosque should also function as a synagogue for Jews and a church for Christians. Though it seems like Christians are included in the term "every faith," mainstream Christians have never aimed for this. Their inclusion in the discussion serves to obscure the obvious goal of converting the mosque into a house of worship for Jews. Other significant remarks on the al-Aqsa Mosque are evident in the sections of the DtM that describe the value of the mosque concerning Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. This section contains some very pointed statements about the land's significance for Judaism, including the fact that Jews have lived here for at least three millennia and that their history dates back to Abraham. It also describes how this land developed into a political hub during King David's reign.

The Ten Commandments' location in the "temple" and allusions to Moses and King Solomon in the Jewish story are also mentioned in the text. It states that while Jews pray at the Western Wall, which is a portion of the "Second Temple," their holiest place is the al-Aqsa Mosque, also known as the "Temple Mount" (White House, 2020, p. 15). This implies that they have a strong claim to the location and that a "Jewish Temple" must be built there. The value of the location for Muslims is downplayed, while its importance to Christians is not mentioned at all. The comprehensive justification provided by the DtM for the Jews' presence in the Holy Land and their backing of the al-Aqsa Mosque, while simultaneously disparaging the views of others, is a fascinating feature of how these claims are put forward. One of the best examples of the intentional use of language in the DtM to promote a certain story is "Mount Moriah," which is said to be the location of the Dome of the Rock and is thought to be the spot where Abraham intended to sacrifice his son Isaac. The assertions made by Christians and Jews regarding al-Aqsa and its Dome of the Rock, which maintain that it was formerly Mount Moriah, are visible in this instance and are founded on a wholly imaginary disagreement.

The paper goes on to assert that it became the Jewish people's politics during King David's reign, that a purported "First Temple on Mount Moriah" was erected, and that a "Second Temple was built atop the same mountain" until they were destroyed. The idea that the entire site of al-Aqsa and its Western Wall are remnants of the Second Temple is further supported by the following statement, which lays the foundation for this attempt: "Although Jews pray at the Western Wall, which was a retaining wall of the Second Temple, the Temple Mount itself is the holiest site in Judaism" (White House, 2020, p. 16). Therefore, the Buraq Wall claim serves as the starting point for any further substantial claims about the mosque's total property. It is clear that an attempt is being made to endorse Jewish rights in the area by using claims in the document that have no ground; on the contrary, they are opposed by archaeological evidence. This includes Biblical and Israeli archaeologists, many of whom question such arguments. Aren Maeir of Bar-Ilan University states: "If the scholars ask a hundred scholars (about the Jewish Temple), you will get a hundred and one opinions" (Maeir, as cited in al-Ratrout, 2012).

This may be seen in the several explanations and locations of the "temple" that have been proposed in the literature. Biblical scholar Ernest Martin even contends that the location of al-Aqsa was never a Jewish temple but rather a Roman fortification based on the scriptures (Martin, 2000). As previously mentioned, the DtM's assertions regarding mythology are not supported by any credible evidence, nor are there any historical or archeological discoveries to support them. The site is known to have no remnants of a "Jewish Temple," as even Israeli archaeologists have confirmed, and it was a barren area during the Roman era. According to Tuvia Sagiv, the ancient archaeological remains of al-Aqsa's foundation should be dated to the second century CE, to the Pagan Roman Emperor Hadrian, and not earlier than the time of Herod (Sagiv, as cited in al-Ratrout, 2012, 84). Furthermore, Jews did not even consider the Western Buraq Wall of al-Aqsa Mosque to be sacred or a place of devotion until the late Ottoman era. According to al-Jubeih (2003), the wall was used by Joha during the British occupation as his false nail to assert more control over the mosque. After Trump became the first sitting US president to visit the Western Wall, a new Zionist narrative emerged that elevated the wall to a national and religious icon (Cohen-Hattab & Bar, 2018; Ricca, 2010). This is distorted in the DtM.

On the other side, Christian Zionists accept the Bible literally and use it as their historical source, validating both the first and second "temples." Thus, the DtM supports the theory that the location of al-Aqsa was a temple and that its western wall is a remnant of the second "Jewish Temple" without requiring concrete evidence. This brings us to the perspective of Christian Zionism and the historical support it provided to the Jews after the alliance between Christian and Jewish Zionism. Stated differently, the goal of the Department of Culture (DtM), which was created as a byproduct of the pro-Israeli Trump administration, is not to establish peace and prosperity in the Holy Land as is being stated, but rather to create the conditions necessary for the realization of prophecies held by Jews and evangelicals. Moreover, Zionists disseminate the DtM's assertion that there are "nearly 700 separate references to Jerusalem in the Hebrew Bible." However, according to Armstrong (1997), the first five most sacred volumes of the Hebrew Bible, the Torah, do not, not even once, specifically name Jerusalem. The importance of Jerusalem to Jews is emphasized in this portion of the DtM, although it is specifically limited to the location of the al-Aqsa Mosque. Although the location of the al-Aqsa Mosque is not mentioned in the line that follows on the Christian significance, the phrase equally disparages Islam and Muslims. It is evident that Christians "longed to recover the holy city" ever since the Muslims captured it in 637, and the Crusades helped them fulfill this ambition! Furthermore, pilgrims had to deal with "dangers and challenges" during the Muslim era of the Middle Ages, and they weren't "granted legal rights to their holy sites" until the late Ottoman era. There is a "thriving Christian population" under "Israel" (White House, 2020, p. 15). For the first time in history, Christians and Jews coexist in harmony under the umbrella of Islam's inclusive ideology, yet these allusions subtly weaken the Islamic structure and customs (Armstrong, 1997). Upon examining the text below, which is connected to Islam, it becomes evident that any assertions made about the relevance of the subject to Muslims are not entirely consistent with the information found in Islamic sources; rather, they are misrepresented. As a result, to Muslims, the significance of al-Masjid Al-Aqsa is limited to one structure inside the enclave of the al-Aqsa Mosque and only to the time of the last prophet Muhammad, namely the events of Isra and Miraj and the purportedly subsequent Qiblah.

However, it is a distortion of historical and theological truth to limit the significance of al-Masjid Al-Aqsa to Muslims to a single event while disregarding its forerunners. Additionally, it makes use of Zionist and orientalist justifications to downplay the significance of al-Aqsa for Muslims, stating that the Umayyads established "Jerusalem as an alternative place of pilgrimage when Mecca [sic] was controlled by a rival caliphate.". Thus, it is said that certain

Muslim rulers made an effort to highlight Jerusalem's religious significance and that Salah al-Din's conquest "led to a revival of Islamic interest in Jerusalem," which is indicated to have been at some point but was never really present. It even goes so far as to denigrate its status as "the third holiest site in Islam" for Muslims today, while affirming that it is the "holiest site in Judaism." The DtM, therefore, paints a picture in which Muslims' significance in the al-Aqsa Mosque and, consequently, the holy city is diminished. It also suggests that the mosque's existence as a place of worship for Muslims impedes the building of the Jewish temple. Eventually, it becomes clear that these claims are insufficient to cast doubt on their significance for Muslims. The suggested future is therefore founded on such a framework after it is established that the location of al-Aqsa Mosque is, in the theological and historical sense, holiest to Jews, with little or no significance to Christians, and of uncertain holiness to Muslims. Regarding al-Aqsa Mosque's future sovereignty, the Department of Commerce makes it abundantly evident that the state of "Israel" will be in charge of the location.

"The State of Israel is to be commended for safeguarding the religious sites of all and maintaining a religious status quo, in contrast to many previous powers that had ruled Jerusalem and destroyed the holy sites of other faiths." The statement qualifies this further and further distorts facts and history. As reported to the UN Human Rights Council in 2022, Israel has violated human rights, disregarded international law and international humanitarian law, and imposed an apartheid reality on Palestine. Despite this, the DtM has commended and encouraged Israel for taking on this aggressive role. Since the Zionist state was founded, Israel has been acclaimed for its actions in the Holy Land, and this occupation should continue in defiance of international law. Further in the paper, it is claimed that other rulers before the Zionist domination "destroyed the holy sites of other faiths." However, historical records show that this is only an inflated allegation without context. Considering that the territory was ruled by Muslims from the seventh century until the Crusades, inclusion prevailed in the area for centuries before the twentieth century, showing that this view completely misrepresents historical facts. Churches are proof that the city experienced a cultural renaissance not only during the Islamic Ottoman era but also during the long periods under Islam (El-Awaisi, 2007; Abu Munshar, 2012). Places of worship were safeguarded from the time Caliph Umar issued his Assurance of Safety.

Despite the impression given in the wording of the DtM, historical sources show that the Crusades, the greatest genocide the Holy Land has ever witnessed, is currently being repeated eight centuries later by the Zionist enterprise, distorting history and fabricating a new, twisted narrative. But given such historical context, the absence of references in the text of the deal makes it challenging to assess the reliability of the information and take an objective political stance. The historical horrors committed since the start of the occupation are purposefully omitted from the deal's language. It makes no mention of how, as part of its Judaization drive, which started with Israel's announcement of its presence in the area, Israel destroyed the old Maghariba neighborhood shortly after taking control of the whole city in 1967 (Abu Shammalah, 2019). The mosques, homes, stores, and other waqf structures in the neighborhood (including Madrasah, Zawiyah, and Sufi lodges) that had been there for generations have all been demolished as a result of "Israel's" initial campaign of terror and bloodshed. The demolition of the al-Aqsa Mosque and the forced relocation of its people from the Maghariba neighborhood, which is next to the Western Buraq Wall, have been attributed to a wave of terrorism carried out by Israeli military soldiers (Abu Shammalah, 2019). According to the deal, Israel has brought political stability to Jerusalem and created security in the area, despite the city having seen conflicts for more than 50 years and killings within its sacred sites (such as the al-Aqsa murders in 1990 and the Ibrahimi Mosque massacres in 1994). The growing vandalism of Muslim sacred places is unmistakable proof that history has been twisted to fit the Zionist narrative. DtM statements suggest that the US government thinks all of the holy sites in Jerusalem should be administered similarly to how they are now. If so, the al-Aqsa Mosque is totally under Israel's control and will follow whatever course of action it determines for itself in terms of administrative power.

The text of the deal, while claiming that the status quo should be maintained, actually makes it quite clear that the status of what it terms the "Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif" would be entirely altered. This is because it does not allow Muslims to have a say in American decisions, and it upholds Israeli sovereignty over the al-Aqsa Mosque. In his memoir, Kushner emphasizes how crucial the al-Aqsa Mosque issue was to the "deal." Its creation was, predictably, one of the primary goals of the DtM since, in Kushner's own words, it addressed the "most contentious issue—the status of East Jerusalem and its crown jewel, the Temple Mount" (Kushner, 2022, 109). This was what previous "peace" attempts had failed to address. He continues by saying that during talks with various Arab leaders, this topic kept coming up. "Access to the al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount was the most crucial element of Israeli-Arab peace," he informed the late Sultan Qaboos of Oman during their meeting on February 23, 2019.

According to Kushner (2022), the Sultan conveyed his dissatisfaction due to the false narrative propagated by the Arab media for years, which claimed that Israel intended to destroy the mosque. The Palestinians "carry with them the burden of the Muslim world," the Sultan said, and he expressed his sympathy for them. Kushner's decision to center the "deal" around al-Aqsa Mosque was a turning moment at this time. He claims that this problem was being played out when he took off for Bahrain the next morning, especially about the identity of the person who designated the incompetent Abbas and his "band" to "represent the entire Arab world on the issue of the al-Aqsa Mosque." After two years of researching this conflict, he had a "eureka moment" and realized that, in addition to the territorial conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, the main "broader conflict between Israel and all Arabs about access to the al-Aqsa Mosque" would allow for progress (Kushner, 2022, 217–218). Before arriving in Bahrain, he asked his team to modify the "deal" so that the issue of al-Aqsa Mosque was moved from being a topic of negotiation with the Palestinians to become the focal point of the normalization agreements between Muslim countries and "Israel," paving the way for the "Abraham Accords" (Kushner, 2022, 219).

So, instead of this being a matter for negotiation, Kushner decided to resolve it as he and, understandably, Israel thought appropriate. In his memoirs, he makes his case several times. His and Israel's position and story are succinctly stated: "Israel would never agree to give up control of East Jerusalem after being denied access to the Temple Mount for decades" (Kushner, 2022, 110). Taking Israel's stance, the fact that Israel will maintain total control over al-Masjid al-Aqsa's future management suggests that the mission of demolishing and Judaizing will go on. Thus, it raises serious doubts about whether the al-Aqsa Mosque will remain a mosque, given that this document upholds Israel's sovereignty over the site and supports this decision. In addition, it presents the idea of allowing Jewish prayer on the site, which was proposed by the team during the drafting of the DtM.

Jason Greenblatt (2022) claims to have been the driving force behind this, saying in his recently released memoirs that he was responsible for this idea: "I also recommended that people of every faith, including Jews who were presently excluded, should be permitted to pray on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, in a manner fully respectful to their religion, taking into account the times of each religion's prayers and holidays, as well as other religious factors." The DtM from the Trump administration makes it clear that "Israel" would have full control of the Holy City, while the Palestinians would be confined to a few neighborhoods on the city's eastern outskirts, beyond the apartheid 8-meter-high wall. While an undivided Jerusalem becomes the sovereign capital of the Zionist state, this is because the same language was included in the DtM, albeit diluted to accommodate other religions. As a result, the survival of al-Aqsa Mosque is threatened by the major privileges granted to "Israel" in the DtM language. Therefore, the paper falsely claims that the Palestinians might pick one of the villages, such as Abu Dis, and "could be named Al Quds." Jerusalem remains the sovereign capital of the Zionist state! This offensive plan affirms the existence of a Jewish Jerusalem but, ironically, calls on Palestinians to choose a piece of land and call it al-Quds, thus severing their ties to the holy city and strengthening the Jewish link. It may be claimed that the DtM's material is based on a fictitious scenario intended to benefit "Israel," and that scenario ignores the great majority of any pertinent background. To escape the repercussions of choosing to reject it, the Palestinians would have to agree to this unilateral agreement. All things considered, the US proposal to "resolve" the problem merely makes matters worse, breaks international law over Jerusalem's status and sparks fresh debate about the al-Aqsa Mosque, a matter that is extremely important to billions of Muslims worldwide.

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