

A vertical photograph of a sunset over a city. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a bright orange and yellow near the horizon. A thin crescent moon is visible in the upper blue portion of the sky. In the foreground, the silhouettes of trees and buildings are visible against the bright horizon. A prominent domed building, likely a state capitol, is centered in the lower half of the image. The overall mood is peaceful and hopeful.

CITY OF HOPE AND PEACE

By Devorah Garland

As a staunch, public advocate of multiculturalism, I eagerly sit down at my desk to research the possibility of coexistence in Jerusalem. Along with many North Americans, when I think about the fabled, holy city my mind fills with TV images: guns and violence; horrific carnage from suicide bombings; and the ongoing fight among Arabs and Jews over the same piece of land. How could two such diverse cultures find a way to coexist together peacefully?

Growing up Christian, I perceived Jerusalem—half a world away from me—as the setting for bible stories. But this ancient city was as essential to the Jewish culture of my childhood friends as the coming-of-age Bat Torah and Bar Mitzvah celebrations I attended in my youth. I grew up among the realities of their faith, aware of the devoted support given to this ancient place.

THE ORIGINS, OF THIS MOVEMENT TOWARD COEXISTENCE, ARE ROOTED IN THE MUNICIPAL CAREER OF TEDDY KOLLEK.

There are other images in my mind, from both televised and artistic sources. I picture the Keffiyeh headdress; it's anchored with an Agal (circlet), worn with romantic flowing robes by Arab sheiks. In a simpler form, this is the practical, desert dress of the modern Arab, and this too is Jerusalem—as are the casual blue jeans worn by youth worldwide.

What a collection of contrasts! As I continue to investigate, my fascination grows. I wish to visit this ancient place some day; but for now, I will write about it. I begin my research online—and am quickly astonished by my simplest effort. Rising out of the ruins of war are countless

clear indications of a thriving commitment to peaceful coexistence in Jerusalem. The more I search, the more I find.

This spirit of cooperation, which has evolved and strengthened during the 40 years since reunification, shows me the tolerant heart of Jerusalem. There are conferences and initiatives, social programs and even institutions, all promoting coexistence. The result of their efforts is woven throughout daily life.

My computer brings me story after story: arts, culture and sports events; a newspaper; medical care facilities; schools and youth outreach programs; they depict Arabs and Jews brought together to interact as peaceful neighbors. From within the walls of the Old City, and stemming outward to communities across the globe, this commitment is so ample

that a single article cannot capture them all.

The origins, of this movement toward coexistence, are rooted in the municipal career of Teddy Kollek. In his 2nd year as mayor of Jerusalem, he was handed a reunified city and faced with the challenge of governing the many disparate groups, resolving the poverty faced by most, and creating a sense of civic pride in people who he found to have no such commitment.

Kollek worked hard to develop Jerusalem into a geographically, municipally and socially unified city. His twenty-eight years as mayor were marked

by openness—his phone number and address have always been publicly listed—and tolerance, including ongoing efforts to bridge the gap between the diverse groups of Christians, Arabs, Kurds and Jews that comprise modern Jerusalem.

At the time of reunification, 70,000 Arabs came under his jurisdiction. He gave them equal rights, access to the city's holy places and, in consultation with the rabbis, control over one of Judaism's most revered sites: the Temple Mount. It was a highly symbolic, strategic gesture involving a place that Muslims, Jews and Christians alike believe is sacred.

An elevated plateau in the Old City quarter, Muslims call it 'Noble Sanctuary', the location of two major shrines. Both the Jewish and Islamic faiths know this area of Mount Moriah as the place where Abraham offered up his son in sacrifice. It is also one of the most contested religious sites in the world. Today, the Waqf (Muslim Council) manages this highly revered area that is said to be a key issue in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Kollek, a man known for his daily morning walks through the city, while he answered questions from all who approached him, demonstrated a fairness and open commitment which encouraged the development of social tolerance. In recognition of his major public works projects, the city dedicated to him the modern soccer arena he envisaged; it is called the Teddy Stadium. Although he was very reluctant to accept this accolade, his supporters were adamant; it was opened in 1992.

Through Kollek, Israel's capital, seat of government, and largest city began evolving into a vibrant community of culture and politics. Today, most of its major

institutions are behind the drive for coexistence. The Hadassah Medical Centre is a good example of this: taking care of the physical body in an atmosphere of complete tolerance, two city hospitals and outpatient clinics are the forum where doctors from both cultures demonstrate fair and equal treatment of all patients.

This institution—the flagship of the Women’s Zionist Organization of America—includes schools of medicine, dentistry, nursing, and pharmacology, all affiliated with Hebrew University. In 2005, it was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for its equal treatment policies, its ethnic and religious diversity of both patients and staff, and its efforts to build bridges to peace.

Tolerance is also the standard of Hebrew University. At two campuses, more than 24,000 students mingle together freely, Jewish and Arab alike, in the classroom, cafeteria, and common areas—

often encountering each other for the first time. It is against Israeli law to ask students what their ethnicity is; the spirit of this law thrives within its walls.

Du-Et, Israel’s only newspaper written and produced jointly by Jewish and Arab journalists, has a poignant goal: to create so many positive changes in Israel’s mainstream media that it will no longer be needed. It was founded in 2003 by the Jewish-Arab Press Club, part of the Jerusalem-based Citizens’ Accord Forum between Jews and Arabs in Israel. This group’s dedication, to bridging the gaps between Jews and Arabs with cooperative efforts, means Du-Et’s pages (printed in both Hebrew and Arabic) focus mainly on the social and cultural issues behind Jewish-Arab co-existence.

Kollek’s vision helped to establish the Jerusalem Foundation, formed in 1991 as a non-governmental, not-for-profit

advisory body. He committed it to the aesthetic and cultural development of the city; its mandate includes developing—and financing—a diverse programme of coexistence-centered initiatives.

Fundraising literature calls it “a singular partnership of friends from around the world, who together promote Jerusalem as both a prominent historic and cultural city and as an open, pluralistic, free and modern society.” The Jerusalem Foundation has become a formidable influence, providing financial support and guidance for many of the initiatives outlined in this article

THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE

Music, dance and the visual arts have an aesthetic, cross-cultural appeal that is ideal for communicating the language of coexistence. There are dozens of fascinating initiatives underway; of particular note, however, is The Museum on the Seam.



This unique, privately funded, contemporary art museum is located on the 'seam line'—the demarcation between religious and secular neighborhoods; the old city and the new; east and west; affluent and disadvantaged; and Arabs and Jews.

Established in 1999, art is depicted as a language with no boundaries, permitting free communication with all ages, religions and nationalities. This museum is devoted to exploring the stresses and tensions between and within groups in society; one of the most notable projects is Exhibition Coexistence, a giant, outdoor art show with panels measuring 3x5m. (9x15ft.).

Travelling to communities all over the globe, it is spreading a message of peace between cultures, religions and races in the universal language of visual art. Exhibition Coexistence is showing our global community how different groups—brought together by immigration, work, travel or war—can create peaceful forums for learning about each other. This is a crucial message. With few exceptions, the need for tolerant coexistence is not exclusive to Jerusalem; it is a worldwide imperative.

Psychological and social studies indicate that the seeds of tolerance are sown when different cultures have the opportunity to work together on an equal basis. In an ancient, 126 sq. km. (49 sq. mi.) portion of the Judean Mountains, the collision of politics, religions and cultures is necessarily fertile ground; Jerusalem's growth is a forum that is educating a universal audience.

Inviting that audience to participate is the goal of Mishkenot Sha'ananim, an ancient Jewish neighbourhood that is now restored and renovated into an international

cultural and conference centre. Here, the spirit of dialogue, tolerance and pluralism thrives: at conferences devoted to cultures of the Mediterranean region; at an international poetry festival; and in creative writing and poetry workshops.



DEVELOPING THE FUTURE

Youth-oriented programs create opportunities for permanent social change to root and grow along with Jerusalem's children as they mature into adult citizens. Below is just a sampling of the many initiatives that are nurturing Jerusalem's future as a peaceful community.

Mishkenot Sha'ananim is the home of the Jerusalem Music Centre where, in addition to developing music excellence, the curriculum includes communication and cooperation between all musicians, with an emphasis on cultural sensitivity and relevance, and a commitment to the community. This Centre reaches out to youth who, by their very nature, are still unformed and open to new ideas and attitudes.

It receives significant international support. Numerous world-class musicians have helped the Jerusalem Music Centre to bridge the distance between Israel and the rest of the music world, including

famed pianist Arthur Rubenstein, the charismatic American who helped establish the facility. Rubenstein provided tremendous support, for this Centre and for music programs throughout Israel, and initiated a world-class piano competition that continues today.

The Classical Arab Music Ensemble, less than two years old, is a melting pot of young musicians aged 20 to 30 years—Jews, Arabs and other nationalities—learning from each other while performing with a variety of authentic eastern instruments and western classic ones. This ensemble serves as an ambassador of coexistence and co-creation at home and abroad.

The 21-year-old Naggar School of Photography, Digital Media and New Music is using creative media to help young Jews and Arabs explore their community and cultures. In the Programme For Jewish And Arab Co-Existence, instructors and students from both cultures spend a year exploring identity and cultural tolerance through photography and writing. The Photography Workshop for Jewish and Arab Children with Special Needs involves religious and secular pupils from all over Jerusalem. The program Ha'azinu acquaints Arab and Jewish teenagers with the unique music, social and cultural heritage of both groups.

The Center for Middle Eastern Classical Music has, for 11 years, explored a period when the distinct sounds of Israeli and Arabian music both sprang from a common root. Arab and Jewish students encounter this common heritage, and each other, while learning to play ancient instruments.

AMAJORFORCEFORCOEXISTENCEISJERUSALEM'S DIVISION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF YOUTH.

A major force for coexistence is Jerusalem's Division for the Advancement of Youth. Arab and Jewish youth, 14 to 26 years of age, are brought together in diverse ways. There is a dance group; a café where youth from different backgrounds meet and socialize; and the Yam Yam (Sea Sea) project, where the city's land-locked youth learn marine and teamwork skills. The Crossroads Center offers outreach programs for at-risk, English-speaking youth (see sidebar). As well, leadership and social-work courses include both Palestinian and Israeli presenters, each speaking in their native tongue so all participants must know Hebrew and Arabic.

Excellent opportunities to foster coexistence are found in team sports, a natural outlet for youthful energies. Streetball, a yearly, two-day Jewish-Arab basketball tournament at Koret Liberty Bell Park, helps young athletes learn about each other through teamwork and the friendly sporting atmosphere; a shooting contest ensures younger children and siblings are included. The Beit Safafa Soccer School does its part with a joint Arab-Jewish children's soccer team that trains together three times a week. The program includes plenty of social activities.

The Jerusalem International YMCA's many laudable programs include: a swim team

that builds teamwork and tolerance with races, training camps and social occasions; basketball teams (including twice-yearly Peace Leagues for youth not in an ongoing league); squash; karate; and the Youth in Shape program with twice-weekly fitness/gymnastics for girls of all backgrounds. It's an impressive ros-

ter that takes place at the elaborate complex, itself a city landmark of elegant arches, domes and a 152-foot observation tower.

With its extensive hotel and conference facilities, the Jerusalem International YMCA is designed to be a center of cultural, athletic, social and intellectual life in Jerusalem. Dynamic programs, with co-cultural instructors, actively strive to foster interfaith, interracial and inter-group understanding. Other programs include a Youth Leaders Club and the Young Moderate Voices for Progress, both aimed at breaking down stereotypes and fostering co-cultural harmony. Young children have their own positive encounters at the Peace & Erna D. Leir Kindergartens where Muslim, Jewish and Christian cultures, languages and religions are respected and encountered daily.

The Max Rayne Hand in Hand School for Bilingual Education is another place where the very young learn and grow without identifiable barriers. Both teachers and pupils communicate in their native tongue—Arabic, Hebrew or English—and tolerance grows while the children learn each other's language. Their families receive the same positive messages through their participation at the school.

In Jerusalem, today, it is a bleak fact that Arabs and Jews still do not live together in the same

neighborhoods. Naturally, the animosity of generations will only be overcome in a slow, careful dance of recognition, understanding and acceptance, one step at a time. But there are plenty of opportunities for coexistence to be nurtured in the crossing of daily paths, if all the programs I've described—and more—continue to be encouraged throughout the city.

In these initiatives, a host of volunteers, instructors and facilitators all work together in creating a city of tolerance and mutual respect. They have plenty of international support: Hand in Hand Kindergarten is a Swiss project; the Hadasah Medical Center is nurtured by the Women's Zionist Organization of America; prominent international musicians help the Jerusalem Music Centre to flourish; Canadians encourage pluralism via the growing passion for hockey; from Germany, the Holtzbrinck family is involved in Museum on The Seam; and the list goes on.

As a noted advocate of multiculturalism I sit, halfway across the globe, contemplating the dream of a freely co-existent Jerusalem. I am also a mother; I focus instinctively on the children and the opportunities for nurturing tolerance in their innocent minds while they grow, learn and play together. My scholarly research into racism, and the successful initiatives that are mitigating it in my own community, give me an a-political, familial perspective—and I am therefore filled with hope.

I know that, all too soon, these youngsters will grow up; they will turn their early training into mature, adult attitudes. If Jerusalem continues along this municipally sanctioned path, it's just a matter of time. Jerusalem is hard at work, creating a future of peaceful coexistence for generations to come.