

SPECIAL COMMITTEE: TEMPLE MOUNT

As a holy place for three religions – and at this point in time most notoriously Judaism and Islam – the Temple Mount is a potential flashpoint for Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with both sides trying to exert sovereignty over the area. Extremist Jewish movements desire to build a Temple over a destroyed mosque; some Muslim groups want Jews banned from stepping on the Temple Mount. The situation is currently governed by a ‘status quo’ agreement which is detailed below. But there are those who want to change the status quo, and many of them can be found in the Likud party itself. PM Netanyahu has tried managing the situation by stating that the status quo will not change, and by temporarily banning all members of Knesset – from any party and any religion – from approaching the Temple Mount.

But voices for change are growing louder. What should the Knesset do to ensure that tension over the Temple Mount does not lead to violence in East Jerusalem and beyond, that it does not throw the fragile relationship between peoples in chaos?

<http://972mag.com/israels-chief-rabbi-urges-building-jewish-temple-on-temple-mountharam-al-sharif/119972/>

By [Michael Schaeffer Omer-Man](#)

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Israel's chief rabbi urges building Jewish temple on Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif

The turnaround by Israel's rabbinical leadership, which in the past has acted as a sane counterweight to messianic Third Temple activists, is a worrying sign. Netanyahu has regularly dismissed suggestions that Israel wants to alter the status quo on the Temple Mount as 'incitement.'

One of the biggest drivers of violence in Jerusalem in recent years has been Palestinian and Muslim fears that Israel is altering, or at least that it intends to, the status quo on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif — the holy esplanade which once housed the Jewish temple and today is the site of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the years has taken to describing the articulation of such fears as incitement. Indeed, rumors and fears surrounding Al-Aqsa Mosque have been behind numerous outbreaks of violence, [including the 1929 Hebron Massacre](#), but that doesn't mean those fears are baseless. At the very least, they are constantly stroked by Israeli officials and organizations with close ties to the government expressing messianic views.

(I published an extensive list of such provocations [here](#) late last year. They range from the acting foreign minister advocating raising an Israeli flag on the Temple Mount to government ministers publicly advocating for the construction of a Third Temple.)

This week saw yet another provocative statement from an unexpected source: Israel's chief rabbi.

Israel's Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi David Lau told the Knesset Channel (Israel's equivalent to CSPAN) earlier this week that he would like to see a Third Temple built, and expressed his

belief that the Muslim holy sites located on Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount need not be demolished in order to make room for it.

Asked directly by journalist Nehama Douek whether he would want to see the Jewish Temple rebuilt in the same spot where it was previously located, Rabbi Lau answered, “yes.”

“In that place, by the way, in the same place where it was, there’s room for Jews, there’s room for Christians, there’s room for Muslims, there’s room for everybody,” Rabbi Lau continued. “It won’t take up the entire Temple Mount — take a look at its measurements.”

Rabbi Lau’s argument that there’s room for all three monotheistic religions on the Temple Mount will hardly assuage the fear that messianic Jews plan to destroy one of Islam’s holiest sites. For those who fear such a disaster, any minor change that Israel makes in the Western Wall Plaza below is enough to stoke paranoia, and the extensive archeological tunneling Israeli groups are performing in the area add another layer of fear regarding a monopolistic view of history and religious attachment.

A poll from March 2016 found that [over half of Palestinians believe](#) Israel intends to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock and replace them with a Jewish temple. The same poll found that one in five Palestinians believe Israel plans to divide the esplanade, a situation similar to what Rabbi Lau laid out.

One reason that Rabbi Lau’s public declaration was so surprising, however, is the role that Israel’s chief rabbinate has always played as a sane counter-weight to religious nationalist groups that advocate visiting and praying on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, in addition to making preparations for a Third Temple. Chief rabbis have always argued that it is forbidden for Jews to enter the Temple Mount complex for religious reasons, specifically in order to inadvertently walk over areas that laypeople were forbidden from entering.

What his statement does indicate, however, is that the views of groups like the Temple Mount Movement and Temple Mount Faithful are becoming more and more mainstream in Israeli society.

Another [poll late last year found](#) that 38.5 percent of Jewish Israelis think the status quo forbidding Jewish prayer in the complex should be canceled. One of the most prominent Temple Mount activists in Israel was just made a member of Knesset for Benjamin Netanyahu’s ruling Likud party, government ministers [publicly associate themselves](#) with messianic Third Temple movements, and those movements [hold public rehearsals](#) for sacrifices to be performed when the Temple is built.

“The dangerous coalescence of the rise in temple movements, along with growing mainstream support, threatens a delicate administration of the holy sites in Jerusalem,” Betty Herschman [wrote in these pages](#), adding that, “their growing success effectively relies on our own nurturing of such visions. Failure to recognize and challenge this deception could lead to the enflaming of one of the world’s most combustible hotspots.”

<http://972mag.com/temple-mount-activists-practice-sacrifice-in-east-jerusalem/118763/>

By [Activestills](#)

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Temple Mount activists 'practice' sacrifice in East Jerusalem

The practice run, ahead of what some groups believe will be the construction of a Third Temple, was co-ordinated by dozens of groups from the Temple Mount Movement — including those who call for the destruction of Muslim holy sites.

Text by Tali Janner-Klausner

A crowd of hundreds came to watch the fifth and largest *tirgul korban pesach* – an annual re-enactment, or “practice run” of the paschal lamb sacrifice that was the central ritual of the harvest festival of Passover during ancient times. The ceremony took place on Mt Scopus overlooking the Old City, in a *Dati Leumi* (religious Zionist) Yeshiva in Beit Orot, which is a Jewish settlement in the Palestinian neighborhood of at-Tur.

In the afternoon there was a panel discussion with several high-profile rabbis, as well as lectures covering in detail the practical aspects of recreating the ritual life of the Temple – for example, the challenge of sourcing the correct dyes for priestly robes. Outside children stroked the sheep and goats and teenage boys built an oven by the stage. A young man played the harp opposite a stand selling popcorn, hotdogs and candy-floss and some children ran around with a Lehava stickers on their clothing.

The ceremony was preceded by dramatic speeches and festive musical performances. Biblical passages describing each stage were read out as the *Cohanim* – men said to be descended from the priestly tribe – washed their feet and hands before pouring the blood of the animal onto the makeshift altar, accompanied by blasts of silver trumpets. Afterwards, the cooked meat was shared out among the attendees; the Passover offering of ancient times was unusual in being consumed by all of the people, not only by the priestly caste.

The practice run was co-ordinated by dozens of groups from the Temple Mount Movement, with a broad range of religious backgrounds and political strategies represented. There are those that call for the violent destruction of Muslim sites of worship; others work within the remit of Israeli law and deploy a civil and religious rights rhetoric to expand Jewish prayer access to the the Temple Mount (Haram al-Sharif). However the distinctions between these camps are not always clear cut.

Alongside Religious Zionists there were many Haredim or Hardalim (*Haredi Dati Leumi*) as well as less stringent *masorti*, ‘traditional’ Jews. Youth movements and student organizations were present, such as Students for Har Habayit; these play a significant role in spreading the culture of the Temple movement throughout the year. There were also many individuals and families who are not activists but curious supporters looking for an interactive and educational day out with their children.

This reflects the growth and broadened appeal of the Temple movement in recent years. What had been a fringe and mostly settler movement now attracts a younger generation, as well as Rabbis and politicians from the Israeli mainstream-right including Mickey Zohar of Likud. The movement is growing despite longstanding Rabbinic rulings prohibiting Jews to enter the Temple Mount or to attempt to bring about the building of a third Temple by secular means. Temple activists are defiant in the face of

political opposition to increasing the conflict around the Haram al-Sharif/ Temple Mount; like Evangelical Christian Zionists, they see war as a necessary or even welcome precursor to the coming of the Messiah.

This vision understandably leaves many Jews cold, and for pragmatic and historical reasons as well. Judaism has for two thousand years been decentralized and focused on the study of texts; many feel that Jewish practice has come a long way since the Jerusalem Temple cult centered on animal sacrifices practiced by a hereditary caste of priests. However, for devotees of the movement, the symbols which recall the sacrifice – the shank bone on the seder plate and the eating of the *afikoman*, broken matzah, after the Passover meal – are insufficient replacements for the real thing.

The more casual attendees could relate to both perspectives. Many who came with families or from mainstream yeshivot were equivocal, motivated by curiosity and a desire to reinvigorate Jewish life and educate their children about historical practices. Alongside the excitement and hype was a sense that many present did not know quite what to think of the spectacle taking place, let alone about how a Third Temple would be built or how to relate to the more violent parts of the movement. However, even if many of those attending the ceremony didn't see it as such, this was as much a political demonstration for the Jewish-supremacist right wing as was the protest in Tel Aviv supporting the army's murder of Palestinians in Hebron.

This tension between the sacred and the mundane was present amongst the organizers too. On the one hand, ecstatic speakers cried out that although this was just a practice, we could look forward to the real thing on the Temple Mount, "not next year, but next week," and denounced the Israeli government as just the latest in the long list of the oppressors of the Jewish people who have prevented the actualization of the Temple.

On the other hand, another speaker, Arie King, welcomed the financial support the event received from the Jerusalem municipality and hoped that next year the event could take place with a municipality logo on its publicity. Attendees were also reassured that the event was taking place according to strict health and safety regulations and with the supervision of relevant veterinary authorities. A mixed approach to the *geulah* (liberation), to say the least.

Perhaps what united all attendees was a longing for the imagined glory of Biblical past or Messianic future to relieve them from the weight of the present – of which news of the bus explosion, coming just after the throat of the sheep was cut, was a grim reminder.

<http://972mag.com/the-fraud-that-is-the-temple-mount-movement/98250/>

By [Larry Derfner](#)

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The fraud that is the Temple Mount movement

Following the murder attempt on Yehuda Glick, the claim is being made – and getting a more sympathetic hearing than usual – that he and his colleagues have been leading a civil rights movement for Jews. Don't believe it.

Ten years ago I interviewed Likud Knesset member Moshe Feiglin in his office in the West Bank settlement Karnei Shomron. On his wall was a framed aerial photograph of the Temple Mount – but the Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock didn't appear. In their place stood an illustrated, rebuilt Jewish Temple. I've heard that this photo and others like it are big sellers in Jerusalem.

[Feiglin was at the Wednesday night conference](#) in Jerusalem's Menachem Begin Heritage Center where Temple Mount activist Yehuda Glick was shot and critically wounded by a Palestinian. Also present was Yehuda Etzion, who was imprisoned in the early 1980s for leading a plot within the "Jewish Terror Underground" to blow up the Dome of the Rock. Feiglin wasn't the only extreme anti-Arab Likud MK at the gathering; Miri Regev and others were there too. The conference was titled "Israel Returns to the Temple Mount."

Following the murder attempt on Glick, the claim is being made – and getting a more sympathetic hearing than usual ([here](#) and [here](#)) – that he and his colleagues have been leading a "civil rights" movement for Jews, one whose aim is simply to gain for Jews the same right Muslims have to pray on the Temple Mount, which Muslims worship as the Noble Sanctuary (Haram al-Sharif in Arabic). I heard Housing Minister Uri Ariel fuming on the radio about the injustice of the Israeli-enforced status quo on the Mount (which allows Jews to visit with police permission, but bars them from praying so as not to incite Muslim fears of a Jewish takeover, and in line with rabbinical rulings). The radio interviewer was at a loss to challenge him; no doubt Ariel convinced many listeners that he and the other Temple Mount activists are a bunch of Martin Luther Kings.

This is a great fraud. I'm sure there are some Jews who really only want to be allowed to pray on the Mount without having any intention of bothering the Muslims and their holy places, who genuinely want religious coexistence up there. But they are incidental to the movement. The Temple Mount movement is and always has been a movement not for religious equality, but for Jewish religious domination and contempt for Muslims and Islam. That's what Feiglin's about, that's what Etzion is obviously all about, and anybody who thinks Miri Regev and Yariv Levin and these other nonstop Arab-bashers in the Knesset who want to let Jews pray freely on the Temple Mount are looking for peaceful coexistence, dream on.

The best known of the Temple Mount NGOs, the Temple Mount Faithful, headed by Gershon Salomon, makes no bones about its intentions. On its website, the first of the group's "[Long Term Objectives](#)" is: Liberating the Temple Mount from Arab (Islamic) occupation. The Dome of the Rock and the Al Aqsa mosque were placed on this Jewish or biblical holy site as a specific sign of Islamic conquest and domination. The Temple Mount can never be consecrated to the Name of G-d without removing these pagan shrines. It has been suggested that they be removed, transferred to, and rebuilt at Mecca. Glick appears to be a somewhat different story. Despite many media reports, he is not an activist in the Temple Mount Faithful, or at any rate not mainly in the Temple Mount Faithful; he heads an organization called the [Temple Mount Heritage Foundation](#), and formerly led the [Temple Mount Institute](#). Both of these groups express the hope of rebuilding the Temple alongside the Muslim holy sites, not in their place. But here is a [brief video Glick made](#) for the Temple Institute in which he makes

what sounds like a veiled threat of what will happen to the Dome of the Rock if Muslim religious leaders do not cooperate peacefully with this project:

The decision of what will happen to that building, which today represents the Muslim religion – if the Muslim religious leadership decides to choose a path of peace, that building can remain and be part of the house of prayer for all nations, and it can be used as a center of monotheistic religions. If, unfortunately, the Muslim leadership continues the path they are leading today – [Islamic Movement leader] Ra'ed Salah and other Muslim leaders today – it will bring to a very dangerous ... *[here Glick pauses, searching for words, then continues in a barely audible voice]* to a great threat to the world and to the peace of the world.

I'm calling upon the leadership of the Muslim religion: join, cooperate with those who want peace. Join with those who believe that the Temple Mount belongs to all those who believe in God, and then the Dome of the Rock, built by Abdel Malek, will be part of the house of prayer of all nations, the holy temple.

Glick did not deserve to be shot. From all reports, he is not a man of violence at all; he could be described as the friendly face of the Temple Mount movement. But he works alongside men of the most violent possible intent. He is the window-dressing of a movement with a psychotic, apocalyptic goal, one that goes back to the Six Day War conquest of the Mount when IDF Chief [Rabbi Shlomo Goren, later to become Israel's chief rabbi, implored Moshe Dayan to destroy the Dome of the Rock.](#)

Again, I'm sure there are Jews who honestly just want to be allowed to pray on the Mount, nothing more, and who see this as an issue of religious equality. I would ask them if they favor introducing the same sort of religious equality for Muslims at the Western Wall, which Muslims worship as the Buraq Wall, the site where Mohammed mounted his winged horse Buraq and ascended to heaven:

Should Muslims, accompanied by Muslim police, be allowed to conduct Muslim prayer in the Western Wall plaza?

For that matter, should the police of a Muslim country be allowed to station themselves in the Western Wall plaza as the enforcer of law and order? Should the police of a Muslim country be allowed to decide which Jews can come pray at the Western Wall and which cannot?

That would be the mirror image of the current, Israeli-enforced status quo for Muslims on the Noble Sanctuary, which Jews worship as the Temple Mount. That status quo is not a violation of Jews' civil rights, but a violation of Muslims' religious rights and Palestinians' national rights. That status quo is bad enough as it is; Glick, Feiglin, Etzion, Ariel, Regev and the movement they represent would make it out-and-out catastrophic.

<http://972mag.com/why-the-status-quo-on-the-temple-mountain-isnt-sustainable/98162/>

By [+972 Blog](#) Published October 29, 2014

Why the status quo on the Temple Mount isn't sustainable

Israel's tightening grip on the Temple Mount — and reactions to it — cannot be disconnected from the wider political reality. Tensions on the Temple Mount lead to unrest in the streets of East Jerusalem, many argue, not the other way around.

By Yonathan Mizrahi

With the [escalating violence and tensions in Jerusalem](#) in recent months, the Temple Mount has become a major item on the social and political agenda. Aspirations of apparent extremists to change the status quo on the Temple Mount / Haram al-Sharif are raising concern among many Israelis, the Arab world, and the international community — which seeks to maintain the status quo there; that is, to maintain the autonomy of the Muslim Waqf in managing the complex, while allowing Jews to visit the Mount on certain occasions.

Some argue that [the tension in East Jerusalem](#) is tied to the question of sovereignty over the Temple Mount: that is, tension on the Mount leads to unrest in the streets, not vice versa.

If we examine the history of the Temple Mount over the past 2,000 years, we see that its rulers have changed many times, and each sovereign altered the situation on the ground. In the first century CE, the Jewish temple was destroyed, but already in the second century CE, the Romans had built a pagan temple in its place.

When Christianity became the official religion of the Byzantine Empire in the fourth century, the Temple Mount became a waste area — seemingly out of disrespect for its status, yet the Christians' need to turn the mount into a place outside of the boundaries of the city attests to their desire to redefine it.

The Arab conquest restored the mount's religious centrality, and from the end of the seventh century, structures of prayer and commemoration were built there. The most recognized are the Aqsa Mosque and the memorial building that later became a mosque — the Dome of the Rock. In addition to these, the Temple Mount / Haram al-Sharif contains collonades, *madrasas* (Islamic seminaries) and domes, and other structures that make it what it is today – the sacred precinct of Islam.

But even during Muslim rule, the picture on the mount was not uniform, and changes took place according to the political situation. The Umayyad leaders (seventh century) strengthened the sanctity of the place, while the rulers of the House of Abbas (eighth century) reduced its value.

Crusaders in the 12th century turned the Aqsa Mosque into a church and identified it as one of the holy sites of Christianity. Immediately after Jerusalem reverted to Muslim rule during Mamluk reign in the 13th century, the mount underwent rapid development and religious structures were once again built to reinforce its importance in Islam. Even in the years when the mount was under British control (the Mandate period), changes were made to the status quo.

When Israel decided to [manage the political conflict rather than resolve it](#), and to strengthen its control over East Jerusalem, it likewise sought to manage the situation on the Temple Mount. Management does not mean freezing the situation. Yet when the faithful Israeli public sees that Israel is deepening its hold on East Jerusalem, it will likewise require a change in the status quo in the holy place.

The yearning of millions of Jews for the Temple cannot be solved by managing the conflict or maintaining the status quo, but only by a political solution to the conflict as a whole. Otherwise, Israel will change the situation on the Temple Mount, as it continues to change the situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

When one takes into account the status of the Temple Mount in Judaism, the military and political power of Israel in the region, and the unwillingness of many Israelis recognize the importance of the site in Islam in general and to the Palestinians in particular, it becomes evident that Israel's tightening grip on the Temple Mount is a result of the wider political reality.

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<http://972mag.com/how-likud-became-the-almightys-contractor-at-the-temple-mount/98402/>

By [+972 Blog](#)

|Published November 4, 2014

How Likud became the Almighty's contractor at the Temple Mount

For Israel's ruling party, Zionism was first and foremost about settlements and security rather than religious salvation. The growing interest in the Temple Mount, however, reflects a complete transformation of Israeli politics as we know it. Welcome to the end times.

By Tomer Persico

The attempted assassination of Temple Mount activist Yehuda Glick, to whom I wish a speedy recovery, comes at the height of a growing trend among the Israeli public. It is a trend that finds clear expression amongst the ruling Likud party, and one that Glick was a leading advocate of. In recent years the [Temple Mount movements](#) have acted intensively to increase the number of visits by Jews, while concurrently raising awareness about the situation at the Mount. This situation includes a de-facto ban on public Jewish prayer, and an increase in violence (mostly verbal) by Palestinian Muslims toward Jewish visitors. Among the most prominent achievements of the Temple Mount proponents has been obtaining the explicit support of nearly half of Likud's Knesset members for their struggle.

The Likud movement has always had a fondness for national myths, but even among its members, Zionism was first and foremost about settlements and security rather than religious salvation. The growing interest in the Temple Mount among Likud members embodies the change that has taken place in Israeli political discourse – one that if not properly understood, will render our view of the [current tensions and violence](#) in Jerusalem incomplete. At that very same convention where Glick (who ran for Knesset on the Likud ticket two years ago) was shot, under the title “Israel Returns to the Temple Mount,” Chair of the Interior Committee of the Knesset, [MK Miri Regev](#), and the [Deputy Speaker of the Knesset Moshe Feiglin](#), both of Likud, called for a return of Jews en masse to the Mount. Regev tied “our right to pray on the Mount” together with “our right to the land,” demonstrating in clear fashion the mythical coating that covers the new Likudnik nationalism.

This is but the peak of a multi-year process, during which the ruling party has turned from a traditional-secular party professing a security-based rejection of territorial compromise into an ethnic-nationalist party, which places a mythological concept at the center of its agenda. This mythic narrative is based on the belief that the Temple Mount constitutes a metaphysical focal point for the People of Israel, a sort of divine power socket – the connection that charges the nation with force and vitality. [Back in 2012 Yuli Edelstein](#), now the [Speaker of the Knesset](#), stated that “My job is to deal with the daily process, connecting and building the People of Israel, which leads to the Temple.” Influential MK Ze’ev Elkin, meanwhile, explained that “It is important to remove it [the Temple Mount] from the purview of the wild-eyed religious. We must explain to broad swaths of the people that without this place, our national liberty is incomplete.”

Make no mistake – this is not about untrammled longing for the ancient ritual of burning sacrifices in the temple. Nor is it about observing the biblical commandments or upholding Halakhic stricture that matter to these members of Knesset (even the religious ones among them). The Temple Mount serves Regev, Feiglin, Edelstein and Elkin as a national flag around which to rally. The location of the temple to them is nothing more than a capstone in the national struggle against the Palestinians, and sovereignty over the Mount becomes a totem embodying sovereignty over the entire country. [This is why Elkin speaks of “our national liberty”](#); [this is why Tzipi Hotovely said on another occasion that “The construction of the temple in its place on Temple Mount should symbolize the renewal of the sovereignty of the People of Israel in its Land.”](#)

It was only this past February that chairman of the coalition Yariv Levin waxed poetic regarding the importance of the mountain at the center of Jerusalem:

No living organism can function without a heart. It seems to me that when Jews for so many years sat in exile and prayed for a return to Zion, they did not mean Tel Aviv, but Jerusalem. They did not dream of returning to the Knesset building and the Prime Minister's office, but to someplace else – to the Temple Mount.

But when Jews sat in exile and prayed for Zion and Jerusalem, they continued to sit in exile and pray; only when they dreamed of Tel Aviv and the Knesset did they rise up and build a state. Secular Zionism invested its blood and sweat into building state infrastructure, rather than into religious rites and sacred sites. It is no coincidence that Moshe Dayan handed control of the Temple Mount to the Muslim Waqf immediately following the Six-Day War. He believed the place to be diametrically opposed to the Zionist spirit upon which he was raised and in which he believed.

But what is noteworthy in Levin's words is neither the historical inaccuracy, nor even the organic view of the nation (as though a state where one third of the children live below the poverty line needs a "heart" in the form of a temple on a mountain). What should cause unease, if not outright concern, is the mythical messianism promoted by Levin *et al* through political means. The Temple Mount becomes a pawn to be used in the struggle with the Palestinians, and the discussion over prayer rights for Jews, while justified in and of its own, becomes a political hatchet. Perhaps this is what Yeshayahu Leibowitz meant when he spoke out against the "prostitution of religion for national interests."

Gershom Scholem once said that "the salvation of the People of Israel to which I aspire as a Zionist is not at all identical to the religious salvation for which I hope in the future. I am unwilling, as a Zionist, to satisfy the 'political' demands or yearnings which take place in an utterly religious a-political field, in the domain of the end times apocalyptic." Shalom understood full well the danger in basing a political discourse upon a religious one. A danger to religion, as it may be prostituted into a political tool, and danger to the state, as it is very difficult to act in a judicious manner out of messianic fervor.

Religion and politics have been entwined since the dawn of time, but in the last few centuries the Western world has chosen to separate the estates in order to promote a democratic and tolerant public sphere. What we are witnessing, before our very eyes, is an attempt to re-couple the religious myth with the political-diplomatic sphere. The political discourse is undergoing a transformation: It is adopting mythological aspects, reestablishing itself not on the foundation of security but on that of salvation tales, and is coated in religious folklore and messianic shmaltz. Whether it is out of naïve faith, or precluding any possibility of political compromise, one hears talk of the Jewish prayer, diaspora, and an age-old yearning. Before you can say "a national home for the Jewish people," the government of Israel has been turned into an agent of the messiah and a contractor of the almighty. Welcome to the end times.

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<http://972mag.com/the-incitement-netanyahu-doesnt-want-to-talk-about/113321/>

By [Michael Schaeffer Omer-Man](#) Published October 28, 2015

The incitement Netanyahu doesn't want to talk about

The Israeli prime minister casts blame on Arab MKs and long-dead clerics but won't talk about the messianic incitement coming from his own government. And forget about a discussion on the occupation's role in inciting violence.

Member of Knesset [Basel Ghattas entered the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount](#) on Monday in direct contradiction of instructions from Benjamin Netanyahu. The Israeli prime minister [barred all MKs from entering the compound](#) earlier this month in hopes of preventing provocations that are fanning the flames of violence that swept through Israel and Palestine over the past month.

The provocations Netanyahu was hoping to prevent, however, were not those made by Palestinian members of Knesset. With all due respect to Mr. Ghattas, he is far from a household name among either Israelis or Palestinians, and he does not hold enough sway to influence or provoke anything significant enough that might demand the prime minister's attention.

The provocations Israel's prime minister was hoping to prevent when he barred lawmakers from ascending the holy esplanade are those being made by ministers and officials in his own government. In one such provocation just this week, which Netanyahu wasn't able to prevent, [was when his own acting foreign minister, Tzipi Hotovely, said in a television interview that she dreams of seeing the Israeli flag fly over the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, calling the site the "center of Israeli sovereignty."](#)

Hotovely's statement followed weeks upon weeks in which Netanyahu reassured the world that his government has no desire or plans to alter the fragile status quo at Al-Aqsa Mosque. In response, the prime minister was forced to release a late-night statement reassuring that the government's policy has not changed, and that he "expects all members of the Government to act accordingly." He did *not* mention Hotovely by name. He did *not* suggest she might be reprimanded, let alone dismissed from her position overseeing Israel's foreign relations.

In comparison, Netanyahu reprimanded MK Ghattas by name and accusing him of seeking solely to "inflame the situation" by visiting Al-Aqsa. This will probably piss off a few people: Basel Ghattas probably did, as Netanyahu accused him, set out to create a provocation or at least score a few headlines Wednesday morning.

According to the "status quo," the arrangements and power-sharing agreements that have been in place on the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount for nearly 50 years, there shouldn't be any problem with Ghattas doing what he did Wednesday. His provocation was directed at Netanyahu, whose successive governments have [repeatedly limited Muslims' access to the Aqsa Mosque in recent years](#). It was directed at Netanyahu's ministers and members of his party who publicly support shattering that "status quo" in ways as eclectic as demanding Jewish prayer in the compound to drawing up plans for building a "Third Temple" on top of it.

If the prime minister's priority was truly to extinguish or prevent the ignition of Al-Aqsa and Jerusalem in general, one might question his choices over the past few years. For instance, he might have thought twice about appointing [Tzipi Hotovely to the top post in the Foreign Ministry after watching this video of her from last year, in which she stands on the Temple Mount, in front of the Dome of the Rock, and declares: "We must change the status quo. The Temple Mount must go back to being a place for Jewish prayer."](#)

Or maybe he would have reconsidered allowing Agriculture Minister [Uri Ariel](#), who discusses building a “Third Temple” on top of Al-Aqsa, into his government. Two years ago Ariel, who was construction minister at the time, [told an archeological conference held in an illegal settlement](#): “We’ve built many little, little temples. But we need to build a real Temple on the Temple Mount.”

If assuaging Muslim fears over Israeli plans to change the “status quo” on the Temple Mount was really Netanyahu’s top priority, he might have said something critical about [Culture Minister Miri Regev](#), who [last year attended a conference](#) entitled “Israel Returns to the Temple Mount,” outside which “Temple Mount Faithful” founder [Yehuda Glick](#) (himself a Knesset candidate on the Likud slate) was shot and nearly killed. Also in attendance at the conference were then-Likud MK [Moshe Feiglin](#) and [Yehuda Etzion](#), who was convicted of plotting to blow up the Dome of the Rock.

Benjamin Netanyahu knows very well how problematic the cast of characters that comprise his government are. He also knows he has no other choice but to keep them at his side. They are not only his political partners: they represent his political base. So because he can’t get rid of them, the only thing left to do is deflect attention with accusations of incitement — incitement by Arab members of Knesset, Palestinian leaders who have [little and waning influence over the current violence](#), [religious leaders who have been dead for over 40 years](#), and even [neo-Ottoman autocrats](#).

Nothing about the members of Netanyahu’s own government who dream — out loud — of flying an Israeli flag over one of Islam’s holiest sites or building messianic temples on its ruins. Nothing about the occupation, which Netanyahu just admitted — [again](#) — isn’t going to end anytime soon. (He also said it [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).) Nothing about [why most of the violence in recent weeks is taking place in Jerusalem and Hebron](#), the only two cities that have Jewish settlers *inside* Palestinian neighborhoods. Nothing.

There is no justification for violence against civilians — ever. Not when it is perpetrated by democratically elected governments with remote controlled airplanes and not when it is perpetrated by teenagers who believe they are defending their nation or even their god. There is also good reason to try and understand both ends of that spectrum of unacceptable violence. Doing so, hopefully, can help us prevent more innocent lives being stolen by altering the conditions that nurture violence. Deflecting attention from that vital context, by blaming the violence solely on Palestinian incitement, ensures that we will live to see bloodier days yet.

<http://forward.com/news/israel/343594/yehuda-glick-brings-extreme-vision-of-temple-mount-to-the-knesset-with-an-a/>

Yehuda Glick Brings Extreme Vision of Temple Mount to the Knesset — With an Affable Touch

Naomi Zeveloff June 27, 2016 [Getty Images](#)

On May 24, Israel's parliament welcomed its first-ever member to survive an assassination attempt before he even stepped foot into office.

Yehuda Glick was shot and wounded for his leading role in groups devoted to rebuilding the Jewish Holy Temple in Jerusalem at a sensitive site sacred to Jews, Muslims and Christians worldwide.

In a secular body devoted to more conventional activities, like security and defense, social welfare and economic progress—not to mention the never-ending debate over Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands—that kind of background might be expected to marginalize the newly minted, 50-year-old lawmaker.

But Glick, an affable grandfather of six with a bushy red beard and a rushed gait, does not come from some marginal religious faction. A member of the ruling Likud party, Glick stepped into his Knesset seat after the abrupt and acrimonious resignation of Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon from the Israeli Cabinet in May. Ya'alon's simultaneous departure from his Knesset seat suddenly made the Brooklyn-born Glick, who was next in line on the Likud party's list of candidates, an Israeli lawmaker.

For many, this shift exemplified the very trend that Ya'alon warned of in his angry, widely noted resignation speech. "To my great regret," Ya'alon said then, "extremist and dangerous elements have overrun Israel as well as the Likud party, shaking up our home and threatening harm to those in it."

But Ya'alon's Knesset successor, it turns out, is no simple man to pigeonhole. Among other things, he [strongly supported Ya'alon](#) when the latter came under attack for condemning the Israeli Army medic who shot and killed a prone and wounded Palestinian assailant in Hebron in March, provoking an international outcry. Glick himself criticized the medic's conduct in a written statement, even as many of his constituents justified the killing.

Still, Israeli police have reportedly singled out Glick as an extreme threat to the combusive status quo in Israel and the Palestinian Territories.

Sitting on a beige couch in his new basement-floor Knesset office — sparse but for a neon-hued panoramic photograph of the famous site where Glick hopes to see a rebuilt Temple — the new lawmaker said that there was no one more surprised than he to suddenly find himself in the Knesset.

"I didn't have any plans to become a member of Knesset, it just happened to me, some kind of historical accident," he said, still with a slight Brooklyn accent. "So I said, 'God, you sent me here and I am taking upon myself the appointment, and I pray to you that you should accompany me every moment.'"

Glick owes his reputation as a radical to his leadership of a controversial movement for Jewish prayer at Jerusalem's Holy Esplanade. To Jews, this sacred site is known as the Temple

Mount. For Jewish believers it's the spot where Abraham was set to sacrifice his son Isaac at God's command, until God stopped him. It's the site, they believe, where King Solomon's first Temple stood and was later rebuilt, and it's where the Third Temple will be built with the coming of the Messiah—or, perhaps earlier, if Glick and his supporters have their way. To Muslims this same space is the Noble Sanctuary, or Haram al-Sharif, the spot visited by the Prophet Muhammad on his night journey to Jerusalem, and from which he ascended to heaven on Buraq, a glorious white steed.

After the 1967 Six Day War, when Israel's military seized the Temple Mount, Moshe Dayan, who then was the Israeli chief of staff, laid down the policy that Glick now challenges: Muslim religious authorities would retain exclusive control of the Temple Mount, as they had since 637, save for a period during the Crusades. For Israel it was a pragmatic way to show Arabs and the larger Muslim world that its conquest was not a religious one, and to avoid igniting a larger conflagration.

Since then, only Muslims have been allowed to pray at the Holy Esplanade, the site of the Al Aqsa mosque. Israel's chief rabbis and most Orthodox authorities support the ban out of concern that Jews who ascend the Temple Mount could unknowingly trample on the holiest spots on the site.

Israeli police, meanwhile, maintain this rule for security reasons, believing that Jewish prayer foments Palestinian fears of a Jewish takeover of the Temple Mount — and could lead to a violent eruption that could spread across the Middle East. Indeed, many of the Palestinian attacks against Israelis since October can be traced to tensions over the Holy Esplanade. Now, some Jewish Israelis, led by Glick, are protesting this prohibition.

Glick is “playing with fire,” said Yedidia Stern, head of the religion and state project at the Israel Democracy Institute. “He is putting a match next to a huge amount of TNT and hoping nothing will happen. A little mistake can change the whole geopolitical situation in the area.”

In 2014, Glick learned firsthand the deadly consequences of his game when an alleged member of the terrorist group Islamic Jihad shot him point-blank four times in the stomach. “I'm very sorry, but you're an enemy of Al Aqsa,” his assailant reportedly said to him. “I have to.” Since then, Glick has carried a Glock pistol at all times. Upon entering the Knesset, he was assigned an armed guard.

It was after Glick recovered from his gun wound, albeit with half a lung and part of his stomach missing, that he was elected to the Likud party. At number 33 on the Likud list, it seemed unlikely then that he would ever make it into the Knesset.

Ironically, Glick's entrance into Israel's parliament now means that he can no longer ascend the Temple Mount. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu banned Knesset Members from the site — Jews and Arabs alike — to calm tensions. Glick had been barred from the site several times previously, including, after [he was charged](#), with having pushed an Arab woman there, who broke her arm during the fall. A Jerusalem court later cleared Glick of wrongdoing.

Glick visited the Temple Mount for the last time — at least for now — hours before he was sworn in in May. Later that same day, at a meeting with Netanyahu, the prime minister chided Glick. “That is the last time you do that to me,” the new lawmaker recalled being told. “From now on, you are a soldier” for the Likud, Netanyahu said.

As a Knesset member, Glick has also had to give up his role as the director of the Temple Mount Heritage Foundation, the not-for-profit organization he founded that is an umbrella group for other Temple Mount advocacy groups.

But Glick wasn't worried about his new constraints: "I was not involved in a movement trying to promote the ability of Yehuda Glick to go up to the Temple Mount," he said. "I was involved in a movement which was getting more and more Jews and non-Muslims to go on the Temple Mount, and I am continuing from here."

Glick said that in the Knesset, his office will be known as the "office of Jerusalem of peace," from which he will advocate for interfaith dialogue between Jews and non-Jews. Glick often speaks highly of Muslims, noting that a devout Muslim doctor saved his life after another Muslim tried to end it.

But Glick's vision of peace is coexistence under Jewish control. Palestinians, he said, have "missed the train" for their own state. He instead advocates subsuming the occupied West Bank — where he lives with his wife and children in the Jewish settlement of Otniel — into Israel. In this vision, West Bank Palestinians would become citizens of Jewish Israel, gaining the right to serve in the Israeli Knesset but ceding their hopes for independence.

His proposal, he said, does not include Gaza and its 1.5 million Palestinians "at this time." This would enable his expanded version of Israel to maintain a Jewish majority, albeit a smaller one — about 63% of the population compared to almost 75% now. Moreover, Israel would pay Palestinians to emigrate, he added, abetting a quiet outflow of the West Bank's Arab population that he claimed was already taking place. "The project in [J]udea and Samaria will be gradual," his spokesman wrote in an email, using biblical names for the West Bank region, and in addition, "Only those who are not part of any terrorist activity for 10 years will receive citizenship."

Glick was vague on just how he would continue to advocate for Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount during his Knesset tenure. In any event, if he were to advance legislation on that issue, Netanyahu would likely block it, said Tomer Persico, a fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute. "The prime minister right now doesn't want any of that coming on the table and becoming a subject of discussion."

Even so, Glick's Knesset seat now gives him a bigger platform from which to spread his ideas about Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount. Once thought of as the domain of right-wing nationalists, the Temple Mount prayer issue has evolved under Glick into a cause wrapped in the mantle of civil rights. In Glick's discourse, Jews and Muslims deserve the chance to worship equally on the site. By framing his immediate goal as one of equal prayer, a seemingly liberal concept, Glick has widened the appeal of what was once a fringe movement.

Observers say that Glick's focus on civil rights isn't just an act to win over Temple Mount skeptics. He has taken some surprisingly liberal positions in recent months. Besides criticizing the army medic's killing of the wounded Palestinian in Hebron, Glick has spoken warmly of Reform and Conservative Jews — even as he has denigrated the Western Wall just outside the Temple Mount, where these groups are fighting with more traditionalist Jews for equal prayer rights. Glick views that site as a poor substitute for the spirituality of the Temple Mount itself.

Glick is a "combination of nationalist and liberal," said Yair Sheleg, another religion and state expert at Israel Democracy Institute.

But Glick's emphasis on equal prayer must be viewed in the context of the broader Temple Mount movement. For many years, that movement has asserted its goal plainly: erecting a third Jewish Temple atop the Temple Mount, one that would replace at least some of the Muslim structures there. It's a goal that just got a boost from Israel's chief rabbi, David Lau,

who [said on Israeli television](#) that a Jewish temple could be built atop the site without damaging Muslim shrines. (It's unclear how his opinion squares with his ban on Jewish prayer there.)

Some observers view Glick's fight for equal prayer as strategic: Once enough Israeli Jews sign on, it will be more difficult for the government to block efforts to build the Third Temple.

Glick does not disavow his movement's long-standing goal. Asked how equal prayer relates to bringing about the Third Temple, he said that he is "ready to promote that step." He called the Third Temple a "house of prayer for all nations." At the same time, he was vague about what Muslim structures could remain when the Third Temple was constructed. Perhaps the Al Aqsa mosque could stay in place, he suggested, but "maybe the Dome of the Rock" — one of the structures most sacred to Muslims — "will become part of the next temple."

"[Glick] believes that if Jews are able to pray there, they will want to, and from a situation of today, where you have several dozen Jews wanting to go there, you will maybe have hundreds daily and on holidays thousands. They will have a spiritual experience, and there will be lots of excitement and attraction," said Aviv Tatarsky, a researcher at the Ir Amim organization, which has been critical of the Temple Mount movement. "You can go to this next step [of building the Third Temple.] So it is not some mystical or religious belief. It is very political."

Glick's penchant for keeping company with some of the Temple Mount movement's most violent leaders does not help allay such concerns. He counts as a close ally Yehuda Etzion, who was jailed for five years for a plot to blow up the Dome of the Rock. Glick said he is glad that Etzion didn't succeed in his efforts, but he called his friend a "dreamer" who "wants to see a better world."

Glick warned that if Muslims object to Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount, they could risk it all. "I am afraid, unfortunately, that the Muslims, with their objections to any kind of Jewish visits to the Temple Mount, are going to cause damage," he said. "If they are going to try to promote war on the Temple Mount, I'm not sure if they know the consequences of that."

While Tatarsky disagrees with Glick's ideology, he has no qualms with the man personally. He's a "charismatic and funny person with a very friendly personality," said Tatarsky, who has met Glick on several occasions. Indeed, Glick's charm has contributed to the success of his movement. And apparently it's genuine.

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/knesset-members-to-return-to-temple-mount/>

Knesset members to resume Temple Mount visits

After eight-month ban, police propose allowing Muslim lawmakers to return in early July, Jewish MKs the following week

BY [TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF](#) June 13, 2016, 11:16 pm

An eight-month ban on political leaders visiting the Temple Mount is likely to be lifted by the end of June.

The Knesset Ethics Committee is set to vote Tuesday on ending the restriction it imposed on lawmakers last October amid escalating violence over the flashpoint Jerusalem holy site, including Palestinian terror attacks against Israelis and violent confrontations between security forces and Palestinians in the West Bank.

The move also follows a declaration last month by several MKs from the Arab Joint List that they would visit the Temple Mount during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which began June 6, whether or not the ban remained in force.

The announcement led to a meeting two weeks ago in Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein's office, attended by Israel Police Commissioner Roni Alsheich and Jerusalem Police chief Yoram Halevy, at which the police officials said they no longer opposed such visits, citing an updated intelligence assessment indicating that politicians' visits to the holy sites on the Mount were not likely to result in renewed violence.

In a compromise proposed by police, Muslim lawmakers would be allowed to renew their visits to the site in the last week of Ramadan — corresponding to the first week of July — and Jewish lawmakers would be allowed to renew their visits the following week.

A Knesset official told the Walla news site that the continued lifting of the ban would depend on police assessments of the potential fallout from such visits.

The news was welcomed Monday by Likud MK Yehudah Glick, a controversial activist who has campaigned for allowing Jewish prayer on the Mount. Under a status quo agreement in force since Israel captured the Mount — Judaism's holiest site and the third holiest place in Islam — in the 1967 Six Day War, Jews are allowed to visit but not pray there.

On Twitter, Glick said he “calls on all parties to join together to transform the place into a world center for peace, reconciliation and coexistence.”