

The Old City of Jerusalem Is Getting a New 'Old' Look

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLESpecial to The New York Times

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An Arab workman matching new stone to old in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, being restored.

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE
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JERUSALEM, May 5—One of the most dramatic restoration projects in the history of cities is forging ahead in the ancient walled area of Jerusalem. The reconstruction of the Jewish quarter of the Old City, lost to the Jews in the 1948 war, is one of the Israeli Government's priority projects.

The Jewish quarter, which consists of about 25 acres on the eastern side of the Old City, was confiscated by the Israelis on their entrance into the Jordanian-held sector immediately after the six-day war in 1967.

Right now it consists of about equal areas of the jumbled, picturesque building accretions of hundreds of years and the rubble of destruction. In the future it will be a meticulously restored historic enclave for 500 to 700 families and commercial enterprises, or 2,000 to 3,000 people.

Religious Symbolism

The rebuilding and reoccupation of the Jewish quarter has particular significance for the Israelis, for it represents more than the consolidation of geographic gains by settling Jews in the eastern part of the occupied Jordanian territory. It re-establishes a Jewish community in its ancient and traditional location within the Old City walls and thus carries a high degree of religious symbolism.

The restoration is being administered by a Government company, an independent agency set up like an authority or development corporation. Most of its funds are from the national Government.

The City of Jerusalem owns a 26 per cent share of the company, which gives it veto



Reconstruction and removal of rubble in the Jewish Quarter, about 25 acres on the eastern side of the Old City. In background is the Mount of Olive

power over plans. This year's budget is about \$5-million; the work is substantially more expensive than new construction would be.

As preservation, the project is being carried out on the most sophisticated planning and design levels by a staff of fewer than 20 Israeli architects, engineers and administrators.

At least a fifth of the Arab population that took over the quarter when the Israelis lost it have left or been removed. Relocation is by compensation or cash payment. Crowded into what may be the world's most historic slum

sometimes living 10 in a cavelike room, many are still in the area as the work goes on around them.

The think of new stone being cut bounces across narrow streets. Donkeys carry materials and bulldozers clear paths. In one restored building that serves as the site office, architects, working surrounded by building models and drawings, piece together old photographs to study the area's former state. On-the-spot design decisions are made as rubble is removed and old structures are revealed.

One of the most important

decisions has been the opening of a new route through the Jewish quarter to the Western or Wailing Wall. This, too, helps establish the Jews' religious claims and functions in the Old City.

In clearing the way, the bulldozer has stopped at ancient walls and arches, which will be kept as open, vaulted spaces to house traditional markets or modern shops. Through them a pedestrian way will lead past a rediscovered Crusader church to steps to the Wailing Wall, now fronted by a huge, open plaza.

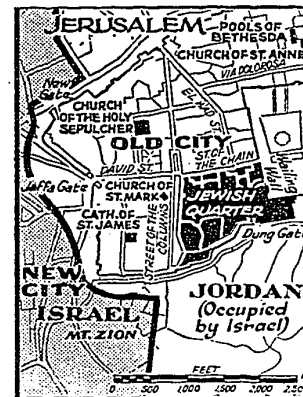
The project has four overlapping parts, to be carried out over a 20-year period: restoration of existing buildings, creation of open spaces, reconstruction on the basis of previous building patterns and the addition of new construction when necessary.

Roads Being Created

The two-year first phase has consisted of carting tons of rubble, working out a general plan and restoring a few key buildings. Roads and pedestrian routes are being created. Many will connect to existing narrow streets and alleys, where stone walls can be touched on either side and old arches sprout grass and flowers overhead.

The shape of this section of the city, dating from Roman times, will remain unchanged. Some open plazas will be added to connect the roads. A vehicular entrance under the old wall, with underground parking, is envisioned.

New housing will be put in destroyed areas and built on top of some of the restored structures. The new houses will not be copies of the old ones but will be sensitively



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key in design and material
to their scale and style.

Restoration is largely being done in impromptu fashion. One warren of single-room homes has just been rehabilitated as a structure of connected modern rooms. They are small, domed and vaulted milky spaces, stone-floored squares topped by white-plastered, arched roofs—the traditional Arab construction that leads to sunny courtyards and stairs and roofs like a series of miniature Byzantine building blocks.

This structure will serve as a hostel until families can be moved in.

Trenches are being dug to put all modern services — sewage, electricity, telephone and water — underground. At present the Old City is served by overhead wires and a sewage system from Ottoman times.

The next two-year stage will see the construction of 80 to 100 dwellings — either rebuilt and adapted to modern needs or of totally new construction — and the last phases of general planning

It will also see the completion of work on one of the most remarkable of the area's rediscoveries: four connected 16th-century Sephardic synagogues one level below the street, with their shells perfectly preserved and with touches of delicate carved detail.

Two years ago they were buried in debris. Now the ruins are filled with wooden scaffolding as Arab workmen match new stone to old. Funds for this project are said to be from a prominent New York real-estate man.

A controversy is developing around another proposal — a new synagogue to replace the old Hurva, or main synagogue, of the quarter now in ruins.

A monumental plan has been prepared by the American architect Louis Kahn. The debate centers on whether the immense scale of his undeniably handsome design is suitable environmentally to the Old City, could be a third temple which is what some Israelis seem to want, or it could be a catastrophe. It will dwarf and diminish the Old City, that the preservation project so properly cherishes.

Today, Arab music wa
from a workman's radio.
the Sephardic synagogu
under reconstruction. On th
Street of the Jews, shops an
businesses, from welding
sandal-making, fill sma
dark caves of ancient pla
tered stone.

A one-eyed Ali Baba sells ices to children in a steep alley bounded by deserted shuttered vaults. Small birds flick in and out of the ruin. The contrast of sun and shadow is strong. The contrasts will be even greater in the renewed old quarter.