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Author Examines Complexities of the Holy Land from a Personal Perspective

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An Author Interview - Holy Land, Whose Land? Modern Dilemma, Ancient Roots by Dorothy Drummond

By Lisa M. Hendey

Taking on the daunting task of unraveling and understanding the complicated history and political atmosphere of the Middle East might seem unattainable to most. Author, academician and geographer Dorothy Drummond has accomplished this undertaking, and succeeded in pulling it all together into a book that is at once informative, unbiased and filled with hope. Holy Land, Whose Land? Modern Dilemma, Ancient Roots (Fairhurst Press, October 2004, paperback, 329 pages) is a comprehensive look into the traditions, history and beliefs of a conflict that has raged for countless years.

Drummond manages to inform her readers on the basics, providing historical perspective and an excellent compendium of geographic references. Perhaps more remarkable, however, is her ability to draw the reader into a topic that many choose to disregard as beyond understanding. Her inclusion of first person entries from her own travel journals invite the reader on a journey towards understanding and hope for the future of this troubled region.

Dorothy Drummond shared with me her experiences of traveling and writing about the Holy Land and her perspective on the future for this ever-changing part of the world.

Q: Can you tell us a bit about yourself and your family?

A: I am a mother of three daughters, grandmother of a five year old girl and a 10-month old boy. I am retired from teaching at Indiana State University. The book Holy Land, Whose Land? Modern Dilemma, Ancient Roots started as a journal I wrote to share with my family the experiences I had had in Holy Land travels. Neither my daughters and their husbands, nor the friends with whom I shared the journal,

would then let me off the hook. They insisted I try to publish the book. Preparing the book for its first publication date in 2002, and subsequently updating and expanding it for its revised second edition publication in July of this year, together with speaking in bookstores, libraries, and churches, has consumed most of my time in the past four years.

Q: Your book deals with issues that are at once timely, and yet steeped in history and timeless. What prompted you to take on the task of writing a "primer" about the complex history of the Holy Land?

A: I like your question. It forces me to justify my motives. When I was last in the Holy Land, in the spring of 2000, I asked myself two questions: "How did it happen that peace in this land holy to three faiths can only be maintained at the point of a gun?" and "How did it happen that two peoples can want the same small piece of real estate so desperately that they are bloodying themselves and involving the whole world in the controversy?" I found that, in spite of my extensive background in geography (I

taught geography at the university and have authored four world cultures texts) and history, and my deep interest and extensive travels in the Middle East, I could not readily connect enough dots to enable me to answer these questions. So as soon as I got home, I started reading, as broadly and yet as deeply as I could. The journal was composed only after I had finished this self-imposed task, which had led me literally from Abraham to Arafat. I know now that as I was writing my journal, even though at that time it was only for a few chosen readers, I was thinking always of how to make the complex understandable. That of course is the teacher in me.

Q: Would you please briefly summarize the book's three main sections?

A: Certainly. I would urge the reader to start with the Acknowledgement, Forward, and Prologue, for these sections lay out my motivations, and the directions I intend to take. The book, as you state, is divided into three parts.

The first part, called *The Present: Turmoil in the Holy Land*, starts with the creation of the modern state of Israel and concentrates especially on the current scene in Israel and Palestine, on the people, the politics, the leadership, the settlements, and the frustration and anger that motivates both terrorism and retribution.

The second part, termed *The Past: From Abraham to Arafat*, draws a clear connection of today's events with the past. It deals with Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the three religions with emotional claims on the Holy Land. It shows how the three are connected, where and why they have diverged, and how the geo-political events of the last two centuries reflect this divergence. At the end of Part II, I have included a chapter on "Sharon and Arafat: Antagonists at Seventy," showing how these two leaders, who were born in the same year less than 100 miles apart, grew up hating everything the other stood for. In a sense their story is the story of many Israelis and Palestinians, in microcosm.

In Part III, titled *Today: In the Vortex*, I paint with a broader brush, laying out the wider-world implications of the Holy Land conflict. I conclude on a somewhat hopeful note, showing that the drive for peace is strong. The three religions involved in the region share many common concerns, and this commonality is in itself a foundation on which peace can be structured. Most especially, all contain

mandates for peace.

Q: How do your years as a professional geographer color your perspectives of history and impact upon your writing?

A: I have never felt that geography and history should be mutually exclusive. The nature of place and the events that occur there are always interconnected. When writing or teaching about any part of the world I have always made its history an integral part of my story. So it was that when approaching the questions that I wanted to resolve about the Holy Land today, I had to turn to the past. At the same time, in developing the events that led up to the present, I needed to lay the geographical framework. I have done this partly in the text and partly through 34 supporting maps. I know it is unusual in a book of this length (about 280 pages of text) to have so many maps, but as a geographer I simply can't write about any subject without tying it to place.

Q: I know that you are a mother and grandmother. With this, and your professional expertise, how do you counsel parents who are attempting to raise children in an era filled with so much conflict and struggle?

A: Here the geographer in me comes to the fore. Children tend to personalize their worst fears, to think that war and terrorism happening elsewhere is also happening here and now and could happen to those they love. It's a good time to get out the globe, to show where events are actually occurring, and to reinforce that here and now "you are safe and your parents surround you with love and care." At the same time it is a good time to talk about issues of love and hate, of quarrels and demands, of conflicts and how they can be resolved. Let them tell you about conflicts they may have seen, or been involved in, on the playground. Why did these conflicts arise? Could they have been avoided? How? What are their consequences? Recall this conversation in the future when talk may revolve around 9/11, or the war in Iraq.

Q: It seems that the Middle East is an ever-evolving arena. How has this, your second edition of Holy Land, Whose Land? evolved from the first edition? Do you anticipate future editions?

A: Again an excellent question. It was clear from the beginning that there would have to be a second edition. Much has changed, but much also remains the same. There have been many additions to the glossary, which is now something of a mini-encyclopedia of the Holy Land. As far as the text is concerned, I have worked in changes throughout the text, rather than only noting them in an appendix, so that the second edition of the book is truly a revised one. Especially notable, now, are such developments as the coming withdrawal of settlements from the Gaza Strip, and the building of the Security Barrier. There are maps that document both Gaza Strip settlements and the present and intended extent of the Barrier. One thing that was not foreseen, of course, was the present probably mortal illness of Arafat, and its implications. Clearly a revised third edition will be needed.

Q: I was fascinated by the addition of your travelogues from your own personal journeys in the Holy Land and know that you have friends and associates there. When was your most recent trip to the Middle East and how were your travels?

A: My most recent trip to the Holy Land was in 2000, coincidentally at the same time the Pope was there. The Israelis had spared no efforts to guarantee security at that time, and I never felt during that trip that I was not totally safe. My personal experiences are so much a part of how I understand the Holy Land that I felt I had to include them in the book, but to help readers distinguish them from the ongoing narrative, I've placed them in italics.

Q: Dorothy, what hope do you hold out for the future of Israel and the surrounding Arab states? What message do you wish to spread through your writing?

A: Let's start with the second question. No complex problem can be solved before the roots of the problem are understood. As Americans, like it or not, we are involved in the Holy Land. Ben Laden says our support for Israel is at the root of his hatred for America. His tune has changed, of course; originally he hated America because during the Gulf War U.S. troops were on Saudi soil. But we must understand why Ben Laden has co-opted the Israeli/Palestinian issue and why it has come to loom so large not only among Arabs but through the Muslim world. I have met many people who say "It's all so complicated, I can't even try to understand it." That head-in-the-sand approach is dangerous. It is what I'm trying to remedy with what you have correctly termed "a primer."

As for the future of Israel and the surrounding Arab states, much depends on the outcome of Israeli/Palestinian peace negotiations, which with the impending death of Arafat may now have reached a critical state. Polls have established that the majority of both Israelis and Palestinians want peace. Certain problems must be resolved: the future of Jerusalem, which both parties insist be their

capital; the future of the West Bank settlements; the ability of the Palestinian government to stop terrorism. But if these mine fields can be negotiated successfully, and if Palestine can become a fully sovereign state, the future of both countries could actually be bright. I am optimistic.

For more information on Holy Land, Whose Land? Modern Dilemma, Ancient Roots visit <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0974823317/digitalcropper-20>

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A New Song to sing and Dance to!

By Frances Evelyn Mison

A New Song to sing and Dance to! by Frances Evelyn Mison

This is a song for everyone!
Holy Moly!

Holy Moly!
I want to tell you about God and the Devil!
If we choose to sin,
Then please don't grin!
Holy Moly!
Holy Moly!
My temperature is rising,
so I'm just flying!
And singing this song.
All night long!
Holy Moly!
Holy Moly!
Please sing along with me,
and touch your knees!
Please get up from your chairs,
and we'll all sing along!
Holy Moly!
Holy Moly!
Let your feet dance,
And the rest of us will clap!
Now let's all sing!
Holy Moly!
Holy Moly!

I am a female who is fifty one years young. Fifty is a good age for me! I have just had some of my poetry published. But I have'nt made any money yet!



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