A conference, "The Right Of Return: Palestinian Refugees and Prospects for a Durable Peace," was held at Boston University in April. Among the speakers was Israeli Professor Ilan Pappe who declared: "In the Oslo accords, the refugee issue is in a sub- clause; it is nearly invisible, which is just the way Israel wants it. The final stage of the Oslo process is now at hand, and the parameters of discussion have all been dictated solely by Israel, and Israel absolutely rejects the Palestinians right of return. Only a handful of 1967 refugees will have a nominal chance of repatriation into the area under the control of the Palestinian National Authority, and then only if Israel approves of them." He argued that, "The 'peace process' will only produce more bloodshed unless restorative justice is attempted. If restorative justice was possible in South Africa...why should it not be possible in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations."

Also in April, a U.N.-sponsored conference on the question of Palestinian refugees was held in Paris. Uri Avnery, an Israeli peace activist and founder in 1983 of the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, proposed that Israel acknowledge its responsibility and accept the Right of Return in principle. "Most of the refugees opting for repatriation," he said, "should be settled in the State of Palestine, which must include all the territory of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, while those opting instead for compensation must receive generous payments for their lost property, as well as for loss of opportunity and education." Beyond this, Avnery also proposed a limited return of refugees to Israel proper. Another Israeli participant, Knesset Member Yossi Katz (Labor) proposed the return of 100,000 refugees to Israel as the final settlement.

Writing in *The Other Israel* (May 2000), the journal of the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Adam Keller declares: "It is time for Israelis to face at last what has been avoided for decades: the question of the refugees—the plight of the people whose suffering is the direct result of the creation of the state...In theory, who should better understand them than a people who base their entire claim to the land on centuries of steadfast longing, people who in their schools and nurseries teach the verse 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem...' An Israel whose democratically elected government can offer the Palestinians no more than isolated and already overcrowded enclaves will definitely live to face the Right of Return in all its unmitigated fierceness."

In February, a symposium was held in New York on the question of Palestinian refugees sponsored by Americans for Peace Now. While Israeli and Palestinian spokesmen were far apart in their proposals, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, a columnist for *Moment* magazine, who attended the meeting, expressed the hope that the maximalist positions each side presented were "part of a bargaining strategy."

Writing in *Moment* (May 2000), she provided this assessment: "Eventually, the Palestinians must accept that complete return is impossible. That while it may be their right to return to the territories, opening the floodgates of a fledgling state to 3.5 million refugees is not to their advantage, economically or politically...And that while some may be theoretically entitled to return to their 1948 homes inside Israel, it's more important to use that right as a bargaining chip than to stand pat on the issue and scuttle the whole deal...If the Jewish people could come to terms with Germany ten years after the Holocaust...the Palestinian people can also find the will to compromise...By the same token, Israel must eventually accept that as the Oslo agreement dictates, the return of some displaced Palestinians is inevitable—not to their homes, perhaps, but to their homeland. If this strikes you as pie in the sky, bear in mind that David Ben-Gurion was ready to take back 100,000 refugees into a much smaller Israel. And if we don't start talking compromise on refugees, we might as well say kaddish for the peace process." ●

Sh'ma Presents A Range Of Views About The Future Of Jerusalem

A special expanded issue of *Sh'ma* (May 2000), a journal published by the Committee of Jewish Family and Life, provides a range of voices about the question of Jerusalem's future, which it calls "one of the most complex and difficult issues before us."

Prof. Jerome E. Segal, director of the Jerusalem Project at the University of Maryland's School of Public Affairs and president of the Jewish Peace Lobby, writes that, "The core of the Jerusalem issue is the question of sovereignty over East Jerusalem's three regions: the historic walled city; the downtown areas surrounding the Old City that constitute the remainder of what had been East Jerusalem when the city was under Jordanian control...and the vast, heterogeneous area of the West Bank that Israel added to East Jerusalem after unifying the pre-existing city during the 1967 war, This last area, 'the eastern enlargement,' is roughly nine times the size of pre-1967 East Jerusalem."

Dr. Segal points out that, "Fortunately, Israelis and Palestinians do not, in general, view the same parts of the city as most important, A substantial number of Israeli Jews are prepared to give Palestinians sovereignty over the more remote areas of East Jerusalem and also to affirm the idea of a smaller Yerushalayim as long as it includes West Jerusalem...These differential attachments form the underlying basis for the two-cities approach: Yerushalayim and Al Quds...There can be two cities, but they must overlap in the Old City...Just because the Old City is a distinct entity, already surrounded by substantial walls, with only a few gates that allow entry and exit, it can feasibly be part of both cities and both states...The American Jewish community can play a role in bringing this about. In particular, we should undertake an historic Jewish-Islamic dialogue."

Expressing a different view, Carolyn Greene, Associate Executive Director of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, argues that, "Any final settlement for Jerusalem will involve painful compromises on both sides...The only practical approach is maintaining a unified city with a single administration under Israeli control, while striving to create productive working relationships between Jerusalem's Jews and Arabs. This is the best way to ensure Jerusalem's future security, sanctity and openness, and the perpetuation of its historic links with Jews the world over."

Joseph Alpher, former director of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University, states that, "The current guiding principle of Israeli peacemaking with Palestinians is separation. The only way to apply this principle in Jerusalem is, indeed, to divide the city along Jewish-Arab demographic lines. A small but growing number of Israelis on both the Left and the Right appear to recognize this. This is also the PLO proposal, which includes a provision for a special status to be applied to the Old City."

Daoud Kuttab, a Palestinian journalist who is director of the Institute of Modern Media at Al Quds University in Jerusalem, writes: "The history of the city of Jerusalem is full of tragedy and pain. One conqueror after another has taken the city, only to lose it to someone else. Defeat has met each ruler attempting to govern the city in an exclusive way...I am convinced that the only viable solutions to Jerusalem is a shared one between the peoples of the city and the faithful...We need to politicize and de-emotionalize the city...the conflict over Jerusalem will not and should not be solved on the basis of a zero sum game. Any solution reached now will be humiliating to one side and therefore will not be signed, nor implemented if signed under duress. A very vague agreement on principles could be signed at present with a long transitional period in which the peoples of the city can themselves begin the process of reconciliation and search for a lasting solution." ●