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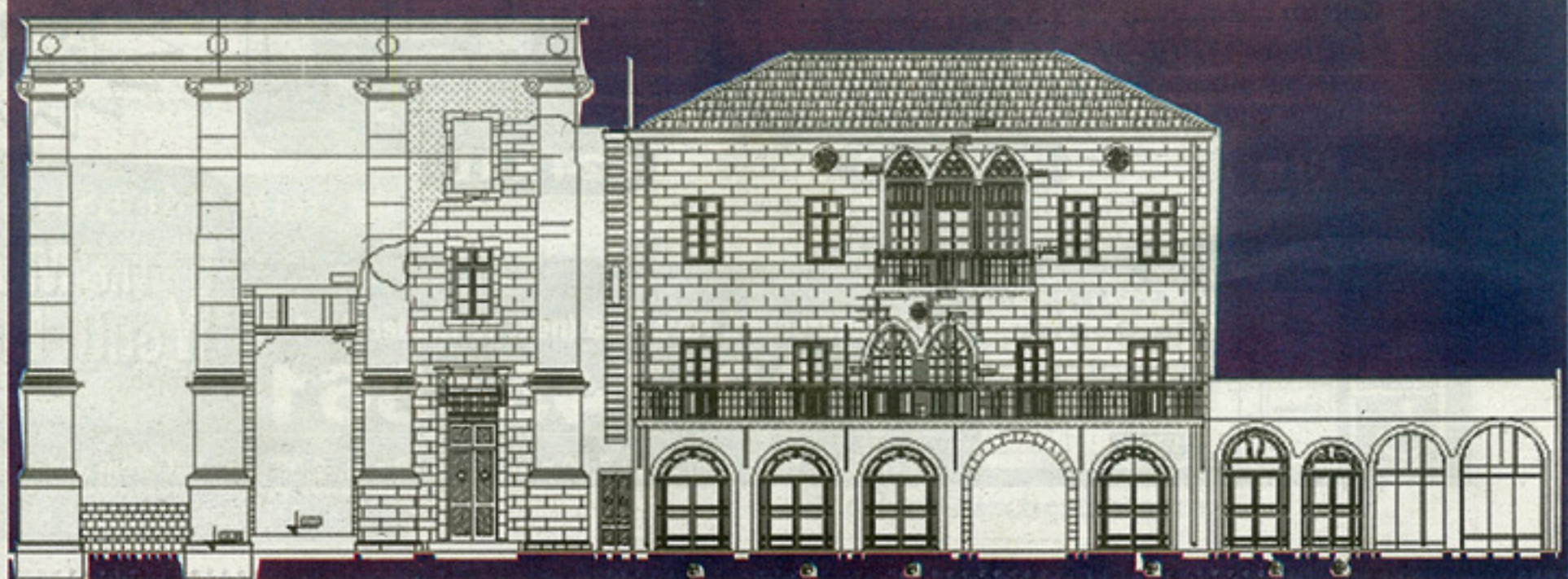
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The Divide**

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Restoring Jaffa

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Restoring History: The ancient city of Jaffa

•By SIGAL KONIG

THE famous clock tower at the entrance to Jaffa hasn't chimed since Israel's Independence War of 1948. A metaphor? Perhaps, but finally, after decades of neglect and sporadic restoration, the city's spiritual and cultural values are finally being acknowledged. The old streets of Jaffa are finally being restored to the way they were, more than 100 years ago.

The man in charge of this project is Israeli architect Eyal Ziv, who has taken on the responsibility of recapturing the historical authenticity of these mid-19th-early 20th century venues. "The main objective of this project," says Ziv, "is to connect the cultural center of modern Jaffa with its historic counterpart, the old port city of Jaffa."

By doing so, Ziv hopes to create a cultural landmark that will join such places in Israel as Caesarea, Masada and Beit Shean. "We don't have enough living memorials of the old places in the Holy Land," explains Ziv. "All we really have are bits and pieces of history. This is why it's so important to preserve these remnants of the past. By restoring this small but significant area of the city, this project will bring back to life the history of our ancestors who lived on these very same streets."

This historic trail is to begin at the clock

tower at the entrance of the city and continue through the the three main roads that intersect at the Jerusalem Gate. The bustling market area coupled with the current restoration will hopefully create a vibrant cultural center full of shops and cafes, all within a Mediterranean, Middle Eastern setting that was once inhabited by Jews, Muslims and Christians alike. It's expected that the restoration will become a tourist attraction and so help stimulate the tourism industry that has experienced a decline due to the volatile political situation in Israel.

Historically, Jaffa was considered the only passageway into Israel from the Mediterranean Sea. All the immigrants who made aliyah entered through the Jaffa port, arrived at the Jerusalem Gate, and continued East before finally setting foot on the holy streets of Jerusalem.

"There are three roads that intersect at the Jerusalem Gate, known today as Beit Eshel Street, and originate in the central square of the city," explains Ziv. "The first one (Beit Eshel) leads to the holy city of Jerusalem and used to attract the more religiously pious immigrants seeking a more spiritual direction to their lives. The link between the two cities is interesting since Jaffa Gate is situated in Jerusalem and conversely, Jerusalem Gate is in Jaffa.

"The second road (today Raziel Street) leading to Nablus, attracted the entrepreneurial and business minds of the time, venturing to Jerusalem seeking fortune and profit. The last road is the one



Renovations on Beit Eshel St. and (right) artist's rendition of the completed project

leading to Gaza (Yefet Street) and was considered the international passageway to Jerusalem – the road that connected Israel to Egypt and to the international community."

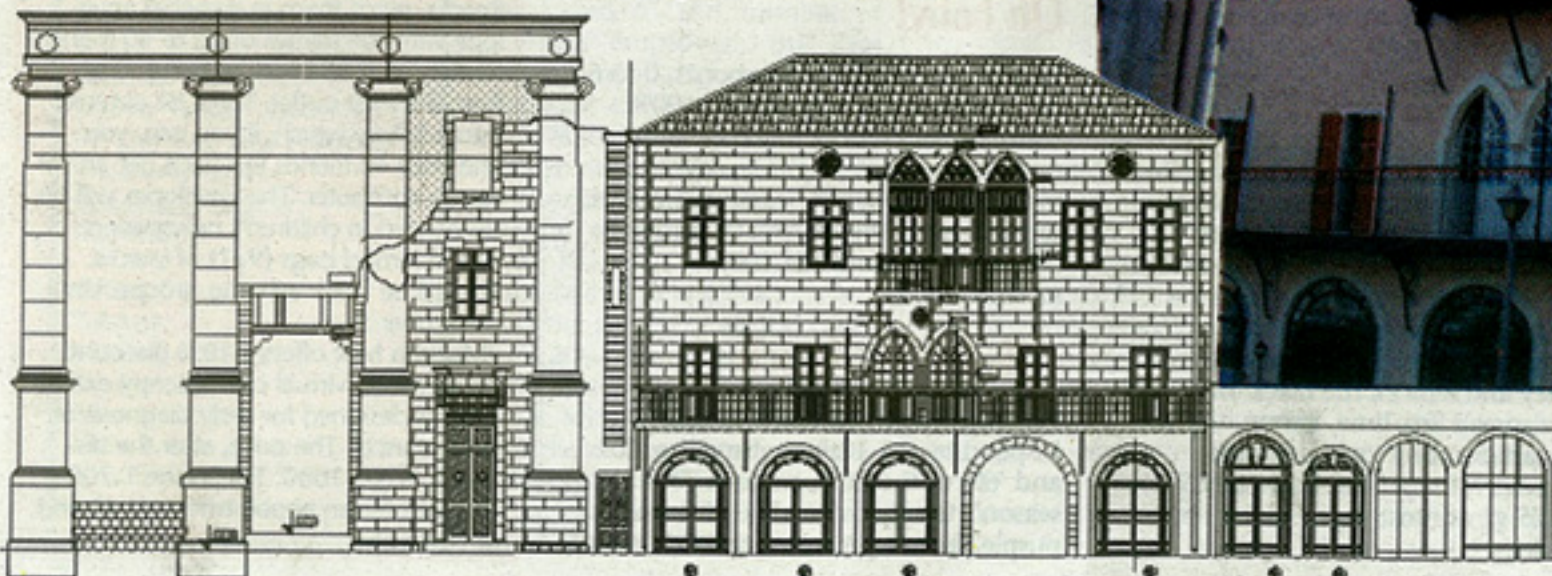
Many of the older immigrants wanted to come to Jerusalem just to have the chance to be buried on the Mount of Olives. They would descend onto Bet Eshel Street, pray at the local houses of prayer, fill their baskets with water in preparation for the journey, and set off for the Holy City.

"Jaffa Old City was previously restored in the late 1960s but the areas surrounding it were left untouched and in poor condition," says Ziv. The last time the actual road to Jerusalem was restored was

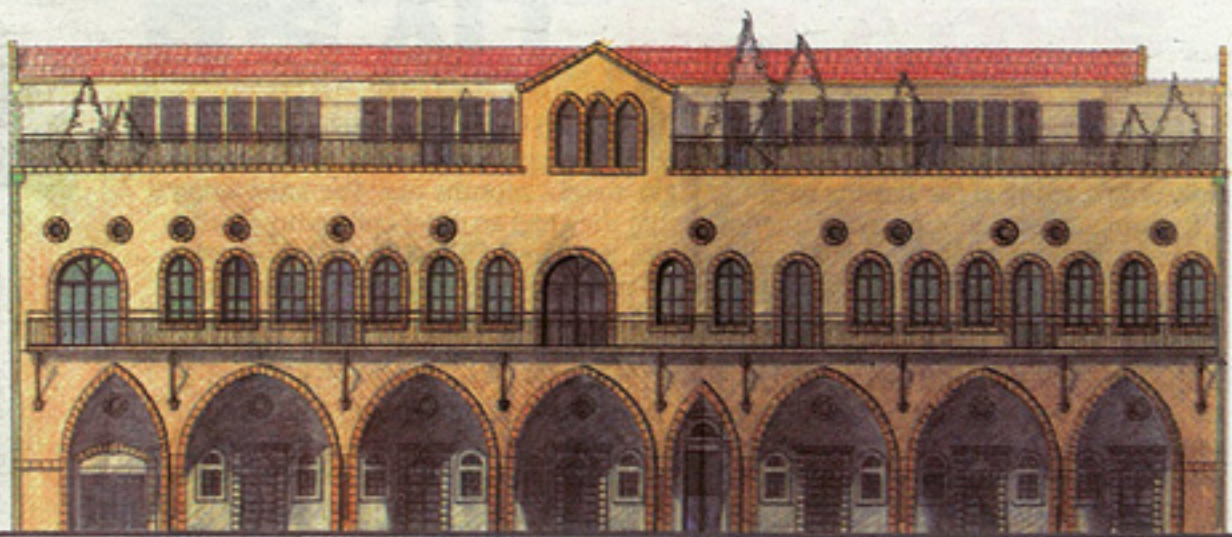
in 1896 in celebration of Kaiser William II's visit from Germany. Restoring the area also includes fixing up "Beit Hasaraya," the Turkish government building built in 1898, and the Turkish prison house, situated directly in front of the government building on the western side of the city.

"The Turks purposely built these two buildings in front of one other to signify their strength and dominance over the area," says Ziv. The clock tower, which stands between the two buildings, was built in 1906 commemorating the 30-year rule of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, who ruled Turkey from 1866.

The restoration project will take some years to complete. Construction workers



(Left) Architect's rendering for Government House and (above) the newly renovated house on Clock Square (Raziel Street)



are tirelessly working, rebuilding and cementing the roads, helping to restore history. "In essence, this combined effort of architects, engineers, builders and construction workers is ultimately what will help this project reach success," says Ziv. "We're bringing back the physical environment of the 19th-20th centuries for the people and with the people, not against them- so that they can be proud of their city."

The city of Tel Aviv and Mayor Ron Huldai are sponsoring this project, along with the internal municipality of Jaffa and its general manager Dror Amir and

the Ministry of Tourism. The estimated cost of the project is NIS 10 million, paid for by both the ministry and the municipality. The project began about three years ago and is expected to continue for an additional two years.

The narrow streets of Jaffa, surrounded by twisting alleyways and barricaded paths are waiting patiently to be restored. Next to the clock tower, the white-washed Jerusalem limestone buildings have already been refurbished. As the months go by, historic Jaffa, like Sleeping Beauty, will be kissed into laughter and life.

The oldest port in the world

Jonah set sail from it. Cedars for both Temples were brought to it from Lebanon. Egypt's most famous Pharaoh conquered it and Napoleon hospitalized his wounded soldiers there.

The city is Jaffa, and it has been a working port for all of its 4,000-odd years.

Legend has it that the city was named for Noah's son, Jafet, who built it after the Flood. History says it was probably the Canaanites who built it and called it Jaffa or 'Beautiful.' The tribe of Dan is said to have settled there briefly after the conquest of Canaan by the Hebrews.

It's been conquered and reconquered throughout its history because of its convenient access to the sea. That Pharaoh was Thutmose III who subdued Jaffa in 1468 BCE – in fact, excavations in this multi-layered human habitat have revealed the inscribed name of Ramses II, another famous Egyptian. Alexander the Great put his seal on the city in the 4th century BCE, the Maccabees and the Syriac Greeks fought over it in the 1st century BCE and Roman Vespasian leveled it in 68 CE.

Jaffa flourished until the Middle Ages, but thereafter gradually declined into a sleepy fishing village until, already part of the Ottoman empire since the early-16th century, it began its revival in the mid-17th century into a commercial and passenger port once again. *Helen Kaye*



Beit Eshel from the air



Government House c.1906



Jaffa's clocktower today and (below right) c.1906

