Episode Book

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East Jerusalem's Residency Trap: What 300,000 People Actually Want

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SYNOPSIS

East Jerusalem is home to over 300,000 Palestinians who hold permanent residency in Israel — a status that is not quite citizenship and not quite a permit. This episode unpacks the legal architecture behind that status: how the 1967 boundary expansion tripled the city's size, why a 2016 citizenship approval rate of 7 out of 1,081 applications matters, and how more than 3,000 people have been left stateless by residency revocations since 1995. Then we dig into the Washington Institute's 2022 poll of East Jerusalem Palestinians, where 48% said they would prefer Israeli citizenship — up from around 20% just two years earlier. What does that swing mean? Is it pragmatism, identity, or something more complicated? We explore the gap between the popular narrative and what the data actually show, and why the city functions at all.

TRANSCRIPT



Corn

What happens to a city when a third of the people living in it hold a status that isn't quite a passport and isn't quite a permit?



Corn

That's the question at the bottom of everything Daniel sent us this week, and I want to lay it out carefully, because the way you define this thing changes every number that follows.



Corn

Here's what Daniel wrote in. He wants to look at East Jerusalem, and he wants to define it first, deliberately, because he knows the term itself is contested. His definition: the part of the city east of the Green Line but inside the Jerusalem municipal boundary, including the neighborhoods that sit beyond the separation fence. That entity, he points out, existed as part of Jordan from 1948 to 1967. Today its residents hold permanent residency in Israel, and some have sought or accepted citizenship. He flags that Israel and the municipality run policies Palestinians regard as prejudicial, including unequal delivery of resources.



Corn

Then the questions. Who are East Jerusalem Palestinians? What do the data actually say about their self-identity? The popular picture among Jewish Israelis is that they see themselves as Palestinians who reject the legitimacy of the municipality and the State, full stop. Daniel says he's seen disturbing data on support for the October seventh atrocities among this population, and that given all this, the fact the city functions at all looks miraculous. But he also says polling doesn't always capture sentiment accurately, which is a fair flag. And then: is their identity closer to West Bank Palestinians or to Arab Israelis? And the part he thinks gets ignored, the interconnectedness with Area A and B under the Palestinian Authority. Can they travel back and forth? Where do most of them actually work?



Corn

So let's start with the definitional problem, because it turns out Daniel's own definition is already doing political work.



Herman

It is, and I think he half knows it.



Herman

Here's the thing. There are two East Jerusalems on the map, and they're wildly different sizes. The Jordanian one, 1948 to 1967, was about six square kilometers. The Old City and not much else. The Israeli one, after June 1967, is about seventy square kilometers.



Corn

Six to seventy.



Herman

What happened on the twenty seventh of June, 1967, was that Israel extended West Jerusalem's municipal boundaries eastward, absorbing that six square kilometer Jordanian sector plus roughly sixty four square kilometers of West Bank land belonging to twenty eight villages in the Bethlehem and Beit Jala area. The municipality tripled in size overnight. Jerusalem became the largest city in Israel by both territory and population.



Corn

Which means Daniel's definition, east of the Green Line but inside the municipal bounds, is the Israeli definition. It's the expanded one.



Herman

And the international community disputes precisely that expansion. The UN position has been that East Jerusalem is occupied territory, and the 2004 advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the separation barrier treated it that way. General Assembly Resolution 67/19 in 2012 affirmed East Jerusalem as part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The 2024 advisory opinion went further and said the Israeli presence in the territories is unlawful and should end.



Corn

So when Daniel says "let's define it as east of the Green Line but within the municipality," he's adopting the boundary that the annexation created. Which is fine for the sake of discussion, but he's picking a side of a border dispute just by drawing the map.



Herman

He is. And to be fair to him, he says so. He flags that the term is politically loaded. But there's a second layer he might not have clocked. The sixty four square kilometers that got absorbed in 1967 were mostly empty, from the Israeli planner's point of view, and it's worth quoting Meron Benvenisti, who was deputy mayor of Jerusalem at the time. He said the boundary was designed to incorporate a maximum of land with a minimum of Arabs.



Corn

That's a planner admitting the demographic math out loud.



Herman

Right out loud. So the geography isn't neutral, the boundary isn't neutral, and the population is what it is because somebody drew the line that way.



Corn

Let's do the quick historical anchor, then, because 1948 to 1967 is a real period, not just a gap. Under the 1947 partition plan, Jerusalem was supposed to be a corpus separatum. An international city run by the UN.



Herman

Never implemented. After the 1948 war the city was physically divided. West Jerusalem to Israel, East Jerusalem and the Old City to Jordan. Jordan annexed it in 1950, along with the rest of the West Bank. And here's the detail that surprises people: only two countries recognized Jordanian rule over it. The UK and Iraq. Nobody else recognized anybody's sovereignty over Jerusalem.



Corn

Jordan makes it their second capital in 1960. What was the population?



Herman

The Jordanian census of 1952 put the Arab population of East Jerusalem at forty six thousand seven hundred.



Corn

Forty six thousand. And today the Palestinian population of that expanded area is in the hundreds of thousands.



Herman

Well over three hundred thousand. Same name on the map, completely different creature.



Corn

So with that definitional groundwork laid, let's look at what actually happened to the people living in this space, because their legal status is where the story gets strange.



Herman

The status is the whole ballgame. After the 1967 census, Israel granted permanent residency to the Arab Jerusalemites who were present for it. Not citizenship. Residency. And if you weren't there for the census, for whatever reason, you lost the right to reside.



Corn

Present at a census that happened within weeks of a war.



Herman

Within weeks. So people who were traveling, studying abroad, visiting relatives, they came back to find they didn't live there anymore as far as the state was concerned.



Corn

Explain what residency actually gets you, because I think people hear "permanent residency" and assume it's basically the same as citizenship.



Herman

It's not, and the differences are specific. Residents can vote in municipal elections. They pay municipal taxes. Since a 1988 Supreme Court ruling they're entitled to social security and state health care, same as citizens. And that's real. That's a meaningful bundle of rights.



Corn

But.



Herman

But residency is not citizenship. It doesn't give you a passport. It can be revoked, and it has been, at scale, for thirty years. As of the end of 2005, about ninety three percent of the Arab population of East Jerusalem held permanent residency, and only about five percent held Israeli citizenship. Over ninety five percent still hold residency rather than citizenship today.



Corn

Why wouldn't you take the citizenship? If it's available.



Herman

It's technically available, and it's a hard road. You have to meet naturalization requirements, which include swearing allegiance to Israel and renouncing other citizenships. And for a lot of people that's the line they won't cross, for reasons of identity



Herman (continued)

and politics. So they stay residents.



Corn

What does the application pipeline actually look like?



Herman

This is where the numbers get stark. There's been a real increase in applications. In 2003 there were sixty nine applications. By 2018 there were over a thousand. But the approval rate is brutal. In 2016, out of one thousand eighty one requests, seven were approved.



Corn

Seven.



Herman

Seven. By 2018 it improved. Three hundred fifty three approvals out of one thousand twelve applicants. And the cumulative figure: of roughly fifteen thousand people who applied since 2003, only about six thousand had been approved by 2017. The stated impediments are things like insufficient Hebrew fluency, suspicion that you own property in the West Bank, or a security concern like having visited a jailed relative. So it's not just paperwork friction. It's a filtering process.



Corn

And then there's the other direction. People losing residency.



Herman

The quiet part. From 1995, Israel began revoking residency from people who couldn't prove their center of life was in Jerusalem. So you live abroad for a few years, you study, you work, you come back, and the state says your center of life was elsewhere. The policy was formally rescinded in 1999 under Natan Sharansky, then interior minister. But revocations continued. There were one thousand three hundred sixty three revocations in



Herman (continued)

2006, a sixfold increase over the year before. Since December 1995, the residency of more than three thousand individuals has simply expired. They hold neither citizenship nor residency. They're stateless in the practical sense.



Corn

Three thousand people that the paperwork unmade. That's a strange kind of limbo.



Herman

It's a category you don't really have a word for. And that's the baseline. Before we even get to identity, before the polling, the underlying legal architecture is: you can live here indefinitely, you can work, you get health care, but your status can evaporate if the state decides your life isn't centered here anymore.



Corn

That's the legal framework. Now let's look at what the data actually show about how people in East Jerusalem see themselves, and the findings are surprising. Take it away.



Herman

The single best snapshot is the Washington Institute poll, done by David Pollock in June 2022. Three hundred respondents, East Jerusalem Palestinians specifically, margin of error about six percent. And the headline number is the citizenship preference question. Forty eight percent said they would prefer Israeli citizenship. Forty three percent said Palestinian. Nine percent said Jordanian.



Corn

Hold on. The single largest preference is Israeli citizenship.



Herman

The largest, yes. And here's why that number matters so much. Between 2017 and early 2020, that Israel-preference figure was hovering around twenty percent. So this isn't a stable characteristic of the population. It moved from about twenty to about forty eight in roughly two years.



Corn

That's not a drift. That's a swing.



Herman

It's a swing. And compare it to the West Bank, same question. In the West Bank it's twenty five percent Israeli, sixty five percent Palestinian, ten percent Jordanian. So the West Bank still overwhelmingly prefers Palestinian. East Jerusalem is split right down the middle with a slight Israeli edge.



Corn

What else is in that poll? Because the citizenship question alone could be about pragmatism, not identity.



Herman

That's exactly the right instinct, and the rest of the poll bears it out. Sixty three percent of East Jerusalem respondents agreed that it would be better for them if they were part of Israel, rather than in Palestinian Authority or Hamas ruled lands. In the West Bank that number is twenty eight percent. Sixty two percent said Palestinians should focus on practical matters. Jobs, health care, education. Not big political plans or resistance options. Sixty two percent said Palestinians need to pay more attention to countering extremist Islamic trends in their own society. Sixty five percent said the conflict is mostly just for politicians or old people, and I just don't think about it very much.



Corn

That last one is the apathy finding. Two thirds just tune it out.



Herman

Two thirds. And sixty three percent said Palestinians should push harder to replace their own political leaders with more effective and less corrupt ones.



Corn

What about attitudes to violence and resistance?



Herman

Sixty one percent disagreed that Palestinians should launch a new intifada and make armed struggle the top priority. Sixty eight percent said attacks on Israeli civilians, including settlers, are bad. And fifty four percent agreed with the statement, I hope some day we can be friends with Israelis, since we are all human beings after all. In the West Bank, that last one is twenty six percent. So you've got double the warmth in East Jerusalem.



Corn

Going back to Daniel's question about whether their identity is closer to West Bank Palestinians or Arab Israelis. This data suggests neither, quite.



Herman

That's my read. They're a third thing. Permanent residents with Israeli social benefits but no citizenship, with a documented pull toward pragmatism. And that pull is not the same as the West Bank, and it's not the same as Arab Israelis inside the Green Line, who've had citizenship since 1948 and vote in national elections.



Corn

Now, the harder-edged responses. Because I want balance here, and the poll has them.



Herman

It does, and I'm glad you asked, because it would be dishonest to leave them out. Twenty three percent strongly and forty six percent somewhat worry that Israel wants to destroy Al-Aqsa and harm Islam. So that's a majority with real anxiety about the holy sites. Nineteen percent strongly and forty five percent somewhat agree we should demand Palestinian rule over all of Jerusalem, east and west.



Corn

And the one that I think matters most.



Herman

Forty one percent strongly and thirty three percent somewhat agree with the statement: when I think about the occupation, I get so angry that I wish all Israelis would disappear. Seventy four percent total agreement. On a deliberately inflammatory hypothetical.



Corn

So on one page you have half the population saying they'd take Israeli citizenship, and a quarter saying, in a heated hypothetical, that they wish the Israelis would vanish.



Herman

Both true. Same poll. And Pollock's own interpretation is worth hearing, because he's not naive about it. He says the moderate trend probably reflects their recent experience of access to Israeli health care, social welfare benefits, ability to travel, and jobs. Those are the advantages West Bankers don't have. He also notes the poll was taken soon after a tense Ramadan, and that Israel allowed tens of thousands of Palestinians to pray peacefully at Al-Aqsa that year. So the mood is partly about lived experience, partly about the moment.



Corn

Meaning the pragmatism is contingent on the arrangements.



Herman

Contingent is the right word. The 2011 poll by the Council on Foreign Relations, the Pechter poll, for comparison, had thirty nine percent preferring Israeli citizenship against thirty one percent preferring Palestinian. So the direction was already visible a decade earlier, it just hadn't swung this far.



Corn

Let me flag something about polling, because Daniel raised the reliability question and he's right to. Are there any obvious biases here?



Herman

Social desirability is the big one, and it cuts both ways. If you're asked by a Western pollster, you might under-report hardline views. If you're asked by a Palestinian pollster, you might over-report them, or the reverse. The Pollock poll has a small sample, three hundred, with a six point margin of error, so the individual numbers aren't precise to the decimal. But the direction of the trend is consistent across multiple polls over multiple years, and that's what you trust, not any single number.



Corn

And there's the Israelization trend that Haaretz documented back in 2012. Nir Hasson's reporting.



Herman

Increasing applications for Israeli ID cards, more students taking Israeli matriculation exams, more enrollment in Israeli universities, declining birthrate, more requests for building permits, rising youth volunteering for national service, and a survey showing that in a final agreement more East Jerusalem Palestinians would prefer to remain under Israeli rule. That's a pattern over more than a decade.



Corn

So the polling shows a more moderate picture than you might expect. But there's a critical caveat about the polling itself, and it's one Daniel flagged in his prompt. Let's get into the October seventh question directly.



Herman

This is important and I want to be careful here. The most-cited polling on support for October seventh is from the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, PCPSR. And the key methodological fact is: those polls sample the West Bank and Gaza. Not East Jerusalem.



Corn

So when somebody says the data show high support for October seventh among East Jerusalem Palestinians, that's a category error.



Herman

It usually is. The most recent PCPSR poll I have, number ninety six, ran in late October 2025, sample of twelve hundred, margin of error about three and a half percent. Support for Hamas's decision to launch the October seventh attack was fifty three percent overall. Fifty nine percent in the West Bank, forty four percent in Gaza.



Corn

And the trend line?



Herman

Declining. Seventy one percent in March 2024, sixty seven in June 2024, fifty four in September 2024, fifty in May 2025, fifty three in October 2025. So it peaked above seventy and has flattened in the low fifties. Still a majority in the West Bank, which is a grim number, but not the trajectory people assume.



Corn

Now the finding that really bothers me, and it's about perception rather than support.



Herman

Eighty six percent of Palestinians said Hamas did not commit the atrocities shown in international media. Only ten percent said it did. So the vast majority are not endorsing the massacre as a thing that happened. They're saying it didn't happen the way it was reported. That's a perception gap, not uniform enthusiasm.



Corn

That's almost a more disturbing result than the support number, because it means the information environment is so poisoned that the facts don't land.



Herman

Right. You can't poll people's policy preferences when they disagree about what reality is. Which supports Daniel's caveat that polling doesn't always capture sentiment accurately, and it's worth saying his instinct is sound. Where his instinct needs sharpening is the direction of the bias. The moderate data, the Pollock data, comes from East Jerusalem specifically. The hardline data, the PCPSR data, comes from the West Bank and Gaza, and gets misapplied to East Jerusalem. If East Jerusalem voting behavior at all tracks the Pollock poll, it's closer to the middle than the PCPSR figures suggest.



Corn

That's the polling picture. But the question Daniel raised about interconnectedness with the West Bank is where things get really complicated, because the barrier changed everything.



Herman

The separation barrier was built during the Second Intifada and it wraps around Jerusalem's eastern perimeter. What it did was separate East Jerusalem neighborhoods from West Bank suburbs that were also under Israeli jurisdiction. So it didn't just separate Israel from the West Bank. It separated one part of the Israeli-administered area from another part.



Corn

Meaning neighborhoods that used to be one continuous urban fabric got cut in two.



Herman

The International Crisis Group called East Jerusalem an orphan city in a 2012 report, hemmed in by the barrier on one side and by Jewish neighborhoods on the other. The barrier's route was challenged, and the Israeli Supreme Court ordered certain sections re-routed, but the basic cut stands.



Corn

How many people cross checkpoints on a normal day?



Herman

B'Tselem put it around one hundred forty thousand Palestinians crossing daily to work, get medical care, or visit people. Every single day. That's the scale of the interconnection, and also the scale of the friction.



Corn

But the interconnection is asymmetric. It's not a normal border where you go back and forth freely.



Herman

Not remotely. An East Jerusalem resident with residency documents generally can travel throughout Israel, and abroad with a permit, using a laissez-passer. A West Banker needs a permit to enter Jerusalem or Israel, and those permits are hard to get and can be revoked. So movement is easy in one direction and heavily gated in the other.



Corn

And the economic geography has shifted. Where do East Jerusalem Palestinians actually work?



Herman

This is the crux of the structural story. Historically, the East Jerusalem economy was oriented toward the West Bank. The barrier severed that. So East Jerusalemites increasingly work inside Israel proper and in West Jerusalem. Construction, hospitality, services, and increasingly in Israeli institutions, including health care and education. And the Pollock poll explicitly attributes the moderate trend to jobs and access to Israeli labor markets.



Corn

That's a huge structural point. The work permit itself is the moderating force.



Herman

The permit is the thing. East Jerusalemites hold residency and work permits that West Bank Palestinians simply don't have. That gives them legal access to the Israeli labor market and to wages that are multiples of West Bank wages. That's not ideology. That's the rent, the mortgage, the school fees. It shapes how people answer a pollster.



Corn

So the economy of East Jerusalem used to look east and now looks west.



Herman

And that has identity consequences. UNCTAD did the first comprehensive UN study of the East Jerusalem economy back in 2013, and found the occupation had caused the economy to shrink by half over twenty years relative to the West Bank and Gaza.



Corn

Shrink by half relative to the West Bank. So it's not that East Jerusalem is poorer than the West Bank, it's that it should have been far richer and the isolation stunted it.



Herman

Right. And that's a strange combination: relative deprivation against your own potential, offset by concrete advantages over your neighbors in the West Bank. You can be objectively poorer than you should be and still have a much better job than your cousin in Ramallah.



Corn

What about the fiscal picture and the services?



Herman

The numbers are stark. On poverty: seventy seven percent of non-Jewish households in Jerusalem were below the poverty line in 2010, against twenty four point four percent of Jewish households. By 2015, seventy five percent of Palestinians in the city, and eighty four percent of their children, lived below the poverty line. On the municipal budget: Palestinians are about thirty nine percent of Jerusalem's residents but receive about ten percent of the municipal budget.



Corn

And construction?



Herman

Since 1991, Palestinians have received only thirty percent of building permits, and only thirteen percent of municipal territory is zoned for Palestinian housing, versus fifty three percent for Jewish settlement. So you've got a population that can't build legally on the land it's zoned for.



Corn

Which produces the demolitions.



Herman

Nine hundred forty nine Palestinian homes destroyed since 2004, displacing over three thousand people. 2020 saw one hundred seventy demolitions, the second highest since the UN started recording in 2009. And something like twenty thousand Palestinian homes are currently under threat of demolition according to Peace Now. So the housing pressure is not incidental. It's built into the zoning.



Corn

There's a quote from the former UN special rapporteur, Richard Falk, calling the policies a form of ethnic cleansing, and an EU heads of mission report from 2009 saying Israel was actively pursuing illegal annexation. I register those positions. Do we need to weigh in?



Herman

I'll state the facts plainly. There's a serious dispute about whether the municipal policies are discriminatory resource allocation or something more systematic. You can hold the position that the distribution is deeply unequal, which the numbers support, without adopting the most loaded characterization. But you also can't pretend the numbers are neutral. A thirty nine to ten ratio in the municipal budget isn't an accident.



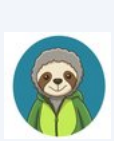
Corn

That's the economic picture. But the question Daniel raised about interconnectedness with the West Bank is where things get really complicated, because the barrier changed everything.



Herman

It did, and there's one more wrinkle. Oslo excluded East Jerusalem from the interim agreement entirely. It was reserved for final status negotiations. Which is why the Palestinian Authority can't legally operate there. Israel has shut down PLO and PA-linked offices and NGOs since 2001. So East Jerusalem isn't governed by the PA, isn't governed by the municipality in a normal way, and isn't governed by Israel on the same terms as Israeli citizens. It's administered.



Corn

Administered. That's the word.



Herman

It's a city with three overlapping and incompatible claims to authority, none of which fully wins.



Corn

So bring it back to Daniel's question about whether the city's functioning is miraculous. Is it?



Herman

I think the miracle, if we want to call it that, is the material stake. The residency, the work permit, the health care, the social security, the ability to travel. That stake is real, and it gives East Jerusalemites a reason to keep the city running even while they reject its political legitimacy. The polling says exactly that: pragmatic, focused on jobs and services, exhausted by the big questions.



Corn

But that stake is contingent. It's not a constitutional guarantee. It's an administrative arrangement.



Herman

Which is why Daniel's skepticism about polling and his suspicion that the whole thing is fragile are both sensible. The arrangements are asymmetric, contested, and can be renegotiated by any government on any given Tuesday. The city functions because a lot of people find it in their immediate material interest for it to function, and that's a different glue than consent.



Corn

Let me bring in Hilbert for a second, because I think this is exactly the kind of thing where the abstract data misses what it feels like on the ground.



Hilbert

It's true in the way that the aggregate hides everything.



Hilbert

I spent a while working a job that had me crossing the Green Line on a schedule. Not in any kind of official capacity, just logistics. Five in the morning, most days, back the same way. And the thing that the numbers don't catch is the rhythm of it. You learn the specific timing of the crossing the way you learn the timing of a train. The same soldier, the same crossing, one day waves you straight through. The next day, holds you for two hours. Same papers, same face, same everything. And you can't predict which day it's going to be, so you just build the two hours into the plan, every day, in case.



Corn

So the commute is three hours each way whether or not the delay happens.



Hilbert

Three hours, because you can't plan on two and a half. And there was a permit. A folded laminated card, with a color code on it that changed every few months. And I remember the way people compared the colors. Like baseball cards. Because the color decided whether you got to work that week or not. A man in the queue would show you his, you'd show him yours, and if the color was wrong you both knew what kind of week he was going to have.



Corn

The color of a laminated card deciding your week's wages.



Hilbert

It did. Now, on the pragmatism the numbers are showing. I don't disagree with any of it. The people I crossed with weren't thinking about national liberation at that hour of the morning. They were thinking about whether they'd make it to the site by seven, because if they didn't, they didn't get paid. That's what was on their minds. But I'd add something the polling can't capture. It's not moderation.



Corn

Say more.



Hilbert

It's tiredness. Deep tiredness. Just the particular bone-tiredness of a commute that takes three hours each way, six days a week, and never knowing if you'll get home in time for dinner. The polling calls it pragmatic and apolitical. I'd call it people who are too tired to be anything else. There's a difference between choosing the middle and being worn down to it.



Corn

That's a distinction the data flattens.



Hilbert

It flattens it because a survey has to put a word to a feeling, and "tired" isn't one of the options. Anyway. I've got levels to set on the back half of this recording, so carry on.



Herman

The color-coded permit thing. That's going to stay with me. A laminated card with a color on it becomes a defining feature of daily life. People sorting each other into tiers of access the way kids sort trading cards. It makes the abstract word "resident" suddenly very concrete. What that colored card means is, this person can reach their job and this one can't, and the only thing different is the laminate.



Corn

And the polling calls that pragmatism. Hilbert calls it exhaustion. Maybe both are true at once.



Herman

They're not contradictory. Pragmatism is what exhaustion looks like on a questionnaire.



Corn

Which brings me to something I want to sit with. If East Jerusalem Palestinians are increasingly pragmatic and economically oriented toward Israel, what does that mean for the future of Palestinian national aspirations?



Herman

It's the question Pollock's data forces, and it's uncomfortable for everyone. The formal Palestinian national position, going back to the 1988 declaration, is that East Jerusalem is the capital of a Palestinian state. But the people actually living there, at least by this polling, are less attached to that outcome than the leadership is. Which is not the same as endorsing Israel. It's more like ambivalence about who governs them, driven by which arrangement pays better and treats them better day to day.



Corn

The 2011 Pechter poll asked people whether they'd stay in their neighborhoods if they came under Palestinian rule, and forty percent said they'd leave.



Herman

Forty percent. Which tells you something about how people rate the two options in practice, whatever they say about principle.



Corn

Which trend wins over time? The pragmatism or the anger? Because both are documented.



Herman

I don't know, honestly, and I'd be suspicious of anyone who says they do. The anger is real and deep. Seventy four percent agreeing, even in a hypothetical, that they wish the Israelis would disappear. That's a reservoir that a few years of good jobs doesn't drain. And the pragmatism is contingent on the arrangements holding. If the permits tighten, if the residency revocations spike, if the demolitions accelerate, the material stake that produces the moderate numbers starts shrinking, and I'd expect the sentiment to move with it.



Corn

So the moderation is a function of the deal, not a settled conviction.



Herman

That's my read. Pollock's interpretation says the same thing in different words. It's about access to health care, welfare, travel, jobs. Take those away and you have a different population, or at least different answers.



Corn

And then the barrier itself. If it were ever removed, does the economic orientation snap back east?



Herman

That's the deepest question in the whole set. If the barrier came down, or if travel into the West Bank normalized, you might see the economic ties re-form toward Bethlehem, Ramallah, the West Bank cities. That would change the politics because it would change the work. But it's not obvious it snaps back. Twenty years of working in Israeli construction, Israeli hotels, Israeli hospitals, that's a generation that has built its skills and its networks westward. You can't undo that with a checkpoint removal. And there's a reason the barrier was built in the first place, which is that unimpeded movement wasn't compatible with security. So the counterfactual is uncertain.



Corn

One forward-looking thought to leave on, then. This city functions because a lot of people have a material stake in its functioning, and that stake is an administrative arrangement, not a shared belief. That's a strange foundation for anything, and it could hold for a long



Corn (continued)

time, or it could shift the moment the permits do.



Herman

And the most interesting thing is the polling tells you both halves honestly. The moderation and the anger. Neither one is fake.



Corn

That's our episode. Thanks to our producer, Hilbert Flumingtop. This has been My Weird Prompts, the human-AI collaboration podcast.



Herman

If you found this useful, leave us a review, it helps other listeners find the show. And if you've got a better read on the identity question than we do, we'd love to hear it.



Corn

Send it our way, or find everything at my weird prompts dot com. We'll be back soon.