Understanding Jerusalem

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In Jerusalem, history is a serious matter. Jews and Muslims make historical claims to the city that have become the basis for assertions of communal rights and even claims of political sovereignty. The decision to mount the "Jerusalem 3000" effort in 1996 (with its inadvertent consequence of an outpouring of books about Jerusalem, many of them reviewed here) was as much an effort to use history to underscore Jewish political claims to Jerusalem as it was a celebration of the city's varied past.

THE BATTLE OVER ARCHAEOLOGY

For the Palestinians and their supporters, archaeology as well as history serves as a way to promote a nationalist ideology. Thus does the Palestinian minister of culture preside over bizarre theatrical ceremonies to the god Baal in the West Bank town of Sebastia, thereby asserting Palestinian links to their Canaanite "ancestors." In the same spirit, Keith Whitelam in The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History argues that Jewish archaeologists have tried to deny the Palestinian (read Canaanite, Jebusite, and Philistine) stake in the Holy Land by encouraging digs that assert Jewish links to Judea, Samaria, and Jerusalem, by dismissing Islamic ties to the Holy Land, and by denigrating the Bible as a historical source.

But this is sheer silliness. Who cares whether it was the Jebusites or Israelites who got there first? (In any event we know it was the former.) But given the inevitability of this issue, we should note that Herschel Shanks in Jerusalem: An Archeological Biography does an extraordinary job of exploring the archaeology of Jewish Jerusalem even as he uncovers the city's Jebusite, Herodian, Roman, and Christian strata. Unlike Whitelam, Shanks uses the Bible as a guide, for example, locating David's conquest of Jerusalem in concrete archaeological terms. Shanks has excellent photographs and his text usefully summarizes the current state of scholarly research. He skimps a bit on the Muslim aspects, as is the usual practice in an archaeological volume, but no one who reads Shanks can accept Whitelam's canards.
Nor can any reader of Karen Armstrong. In Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths,7 she clearly lays out the historic Jewish connection to Jerusalem even as she offers a sweeping narrative account of the religious traditions there from Baal and Yahweh to Christ and Allah. Her style is compelling and her scholarship impressive. The problem is that Armstrong (a former nun and author of A History of God), like so many Christians, is interested foremost in the heavenly Jerusalem and faults the earthly manifestation for failing to measure up. Thus she critiques King Solomon for his failure to pursue tsedek (justice), arguing that "social equity" is "essential to the healthy running of the Holy City." (In contrast, King David earns her approval for not throwing the Jebusites out of the city when he captured it.) And she continues in her critique of Jewish power by faulting the state of Israel for not providing "justice" to the Palestinians. Her history also largely ignores the modern Zionist story, for Armstrong sees the Zionists as a Western imposition, willfully ignorant and dismissive of the needs and claims of Jerusalem's Arab inhabitants. That may explain why her book spends so little time on twentieth-century Jerusalem -- for that is largely a Jewish story. She clearly wants Jews to rise above particularism (a polite term for Zionism) and strive for "some kind of condominium" that results in "the possibility of the sharing of the Holy City."8 Armstrong wants Israelis to remember that

The societies that have lasted the longest in the holy city have, generally, been the ones that were prepared for some kind of tolerance and coexistence in the Holy City. That, rather than a sterile and deadly struggle for sovereignty, must be the way to celebrate Jerusalem's sanctity today.9

In marked contrast, Sir Martin Gilbert feels no such compunctions. His Jerusalem in the Twentieth Century10 is a magisterial tale of hope triumphant. "If you will it," Herzl wrote in Der Judenstaat, "it is no dream." Gilbert tells how Jerusalem, the eternal capital of the Jewish people -- with a majority Jewish population since 1870 -- became the capital of the Jewish state. Following up on his earlier Jerusalem: Rebirth of a City,11 Gilbert weaves political history with insightful anecdotes of persons both great and small. He tells us how the Muslim authorities during the drought of 1902 invited the Jews to enter the Haram al-Sharif to pray for rain; how the German government in 1913 sought to make German the language of instruction in Jerusalem's schools; and how Hadassah hospital treated Israeli and Arab soldiers in common wards during the 1967 war.12 Unlike Armstrong, Gilbert's two volumes together (and particularly his second) reinforce former Jerusalem deputy mayor Meron Benvenisti's view that "the historical description of Jerusalem relevant to our needs . . . [began] with the mid-nineteenth century"13 and underscores the extent to which, for better or worse, the history of modern Jerusalem is largely a history of the growth of political Zionism. As such, he reinforces the standard Zionist view that when it comes to Israel, the Jews earned it by the labor of their hand and the ingenuity of their spirit.

SACRED SPACE

If history counts, religion does no less. And in truth, the history of Jerusalem (and here Armstrong is absolutely on point) is in some sense the history of Western religion. Turned around, no political solution to Jerusalem can ignore the connection between religion, history, and the city's politics. Stability will never be achieved unless the "sacred space" of all religions is respected. Yet the record offers little hope in this regard. One conqueror after another, upon taking Jerusalem, defiled holy places of the conquered, though some notable exceptions exist.14 Overall, Israel's conduct since 1967 vis-à-vis Christian and Muslim holy places has been exemplary. A waqf appointed by the Supreme Muslim Council...
controls the Islamic sites; Muslims from all countries (including Saudi Arabia and Libya) are allowed access to Al-Aqsa Mosque. Israeli officials go out of their way to ignore various infractions of Israeli law by Muslim authorities as regards the Holy Places. This policy contrasts with Jordan’s control over Jerusalem’s holy sites prior to 1967, when not even Israeli Arabs were allowed to visit the city, much less Israeli Jews, and Christian denominations could not acquire land or buildings in Jerusalem, nor could they build new churches.  

Religious disputes over rights-of-way and passage have had tragic consequences. Perhaps the most spectacular case was in 1853, when a dispute between Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox priests over a missing silver star placed at an altar of the Church of the Nativity in nearby Bethlehem became the pretext for the outbreak of the Crimean War that pitted France and Britain against Russia in 1854-56.  

On Yom Kippur eve in 1928, Jewish authorities put up a screen (mechitza) at the Western Wall to separate men and women during prayer services, then left it in place overnight. Muslim officials saw this as a violation of the historical status quo, prompting Jerusalem’s Mufti Amin al-Husayni to declare that the Jews aimed “to take possession of the Mosque of al-Aksa gradually.” This statement which was followed by a year’s worth of incidents that culminated in the Arab riots of August 1929.  

Religion, not geography, still holds the city in thrall. When in the spring of 1996 Israel demanded that the Palestinian Authority cease various of its political activities in Jerusalem (as required by the Oslo accords), the demand to shut the Palestinian Ministry of Religious Affairs created the most concern in Arab capitals. In September 1996, the opening of a new exit to an already functioning Hasmonean tunnel at the edge of the Temple Mount sparked days of rioting throughout the West Bank and Gaza, killing seventy. Muslim sensitivity to anything relating to the Haram is not new. Armstrong cites an incident in 1910 when the son of the Earl of Morley bribed his way onto the Haram and started to explore the cave under the rock in search of buried treasures in the underground vaults. Days of riots followed.  

Students of religion and history need to be on guard against the jumped-up use of both history and religion for political ends. One can only be disturbed by efforts by Jews as well as Muslims (and Christians) to sacralize new “holy sites” both in Jerusalem and the entire West Bank. History points up the extent to which the holiness of geographic space might reflect current needs. Thus, King David’s tomb on Mount Zion (known not to be David’s grave) received a religious boost when it was one of the few “holy sites” to remain in Israeli hands after 1948. And while Rav. Aha tells us in the Midrash that the shechina (God’s presence) never left the Western Wall, significant historical evidence suggests that until the sixteenth century, when Suleiman the Great issued a firman permitting the Jews to pray at the Western Wall and his architect designed a prayer enclosure there, the Mount of Olives and the Gate of Mercy (the Golden Gate), not the kotel, were the main sites of Jewish pilgrimage and prayer. In turn, the Mount of Olives lost in importance to Jews because of constant fears of attacks by Bedouins. Muslims too have changed their views as to what is holy. As scholar F.W. Peters puts it, “The Crusades made the Muslims newly aware of Jerusalem as a city holy to themselves as well as to Christians.” Similarly, the rise of Zionism and Israel’s reunification of Jerusalem in 1967 reinvigorated Arab sacralization of the city and all its parts. Hardly any Arab leader, we must remember, visited, let alone prayed, in Jerusalem during the Mandate or in the time of Jordanian control, 1948–67. As for Christianity, we know well how Constantine’s decision to tear down the Temple of Aphrodite and adorn Jerusalem with churches of magnificence spurred pilgrimage and
A LIVING CITY

Amidst the overarching symbols of history and adumbrations of the divine, we cannot forget that Jerusalem is also a city of the living that must contend with such mundane issues as housing, industry, and infrastructure. It is Israel's capital and the intellectual and economic center of the Palestinian hinterland on the West Bank. It includes 400,000 Jews and 150,000 Arabs joined at the hip, "living together separately," as the title of one book has it. Three recent books take up these issues from contending perspectives: Michael Dumper writes from the Palestinian point of view in The Politics of Jerusalem Since 1967, Ira Sharkansky from the Israeli in Governing Jerusalem: Again on the Government's Agenda, and Meron Benvenisti in City of Stone tries to split the difference.

Dumper, an English academic, has written a well-researched study of the city's political life since 1967 that challenges the Israeli authorities. While he accepts as given most Palestinian shibboleths regarding Jewish rights to Jerusalem (or lack thereof) in international law, his discussion of Palestinian infrastructural and municipal-planning issues are well reasoned.

Sharkansky, a scholar of public administration at the Hebrew University, raises similar practical issues in a less partisan spirit. Although Governing Jerusalem at times reads like a series of compressed lecture notes, its value lies particularly in his discussion of Jerusalem's municipal government structure, including issues of finance and planning. There are few places where town planning, a specialization freighted with notions of expertise, has a more honored tradition than in Jerusalem. However, as Benvenisti passionately (and I think persuasively) argues,

The planning and development of Jerusalem became . . . a Jewish national institution. Building homes is seen not merely as a way of satisfying people's needs but as a strategic component of a national struggle. Mundane matters such as building of roads and hospitals and the laying of water and electricity lines are charged with symbolic, almost spiritual meaning.

In this context, we must remember that since 1967 the chief demographic imperative in Jerusalem for the Jewish leadership has been to create and maintain a 70 percent Jewish majority in the united city. In addition, they seek a substantial Jewish presence in the former East Jerusalem; indeed, Jews are now a majority in eastern Jerusalem as well as western. This demographic imperative renders planning decisions about the city's growth inherently political; it also leads to steps often contrary to traditional planning principles. The initial building expansion after 1967 took place in Ramat Eshkol and French Hill to create a physical land-bridge to the Mt. Scopus enclave, where the old Hebrew University campus had been cut off from Israeli Jerusalem in 1948–67. By the 1980s, Roger Friedland and Richard Hecht note, "as a result of its rapid expansion, the city had run out of lands on which to build the Jewish city without further expropriation." Unable to build high-rises (due to building regulations designed to preserve the aesthetic character of the city), they had to expand outwards. The debate has been over whether to expand the city westward "back into Israel," or eastward "beyond the Green Line." Initially, the city moved westward to encompass the new suburbs of Ramot and Shilo but recent efforts have focused on building Jewish residences in eastern Jerusalem. In addition, the authorities may appropriate within Jerusalem's boundaries such (Jewish) West Bank bedroom suburbs as Maaleh Adumim.

Dumper suggests that the Palestinians have effectively won the demographic battle.
He holds that despite the Israeli government's having promoted Jewish settlement in Jerusalem, the greater Jerusalem area has for decades maintained a 50-50 demographic split. Expanding Jerusalem eastwards to fully encircle the city with Jewish settlements will, Dumper points out, also mean the absorption of more Palestinian Arabs, who would disrupt an already unstable and politically sensitive balance. Dumper is correct only if the present government does not follow through on announced plans for construction of Jewish housing in eastern Jerusalem (such as Har Homa). In any event, the linking of outlying Jewish bedroom suburbs in, for example, the Etzion bloc, could be accomplished without incorporating Arab villages. It all depends on whose hand draws the map.

Both Dumper and Sharkansky deal in detail with the issue of Israeli efforts at maintaining a demographic majority in Jerusalem by restricting Palestinian building permits in eastern Jerusalem. The minuet is by now routinized: Arabs apply for a building permit and are rejected because they don't meet the criteria of the master plan. Those rejected either leave Jerusalem to build new housing in Arab villages on the West Bank or go ahead and build illegally, opening themselves to the possibility of fines and demolition -- while freeing themselves from property-tax obligations as well as municipal-planning restrictions. In response, Sharkansky cites Jewish charges that Palestinian homes spread without planning for the orderly development of roads, sewers, drainage, and other public needs.

Sharkansky also points out, correctly, that Palestinians can have a say in the city administration by voting in Jerusalem municipal elections, and that they need not accept Israeli citizenship to do so. Yet they refuse to vote, claiming this would legitimate the Israeli occupation. In the 1993 election between Labor's Teddy Kollek and Likud's Ehud Olmert, where Palestinians faced what appears to be a very clear choice, the percentage of registered Palestinian voters came to 7 percent of the eligible population. A large Palestinian turnout would likely have saved Kollek and made the Palestinians, rather than the haredim (Jewish ultra-Orthodox), power-brokers in the city. One explanation for their aloofness may have to do with the fact that for many Palestinians, Kollek's beneficence was a myth. Benvenisti chronicles that as far back as 1967, Kollek's drive to create a united city meant that he often treated the Palestinians with disdain. And whatever he said for public consumption, only 6 percent of his 1992 budget was designated for Arab neighborhoods.

The reader of these volumes will be struck by two connected points -- the disparity of public services and the empirical fact of radical Arab and Jewish separation. Perhaps, following well-established Middle East patterns voluntary residential segregation is to be expected, but those striving to maintain a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty have to do a lot more to equalize the "shocking neglect" of eastern Jerusalem's public infrastructure. A November 1996 plan proposed by a Likud interministerial committee (and supported by Jerusalem's Mayor Ehud Olmert) calls for immediate and significant investment in sewers, roads, and schools to accomplish this.

On the Jewish side, population growth depends in large part on the economy and jobs -- a subject Sharkansky focuses on incisively. Jerusalem profits from substantial international support for charitable and philanthropic work, be it through the Hebrew University, the Jerusalem Foundation, or the Islamic waqf, to the point that foreign donors contribute the equivalent of 15 percent of the city's budget. But Jerusalem also suffers special liabilities. Like Washington, D.C., it is a city of government and academia, dependent in large measure on tourism and lacking an industrial base; in the latter case, this problem goes back to Davidic times. The city must bear the fact, Sharkansky suggests, that the national...
government controls its finances and can constrain much of the mayor's freedom in policy formation. The British were so concerned with maintaining the spiritual beauty of the city during the Mandate that they first prohibited the construction of any industrial buildings, then later allowed only those that could not be viewed from the Old City. Dumper suggests that "relative to other branches of the economy Jerusalem has declined as an industrial center relative to the other major cities in Israel." Only 10 percent of Jerusalem's workers are employed in industry as opposed to 44 percent in public and community services. Jerusalem's industrial base further suffered last year when the haredim nixed Intel's plans to spend $1 billion on a computer chip plant in Jerusalem, fearing it would block future expansion of their neighborhoods. As Jerusalem loses its industrial base what remains are its government and religious connections.

The Intel affair is one example of Jerusalem's layers of tension, not only between Arab and Jew but between secular and orthodox Israeli. In this regard, To Rule Jerusalem, by Friedland and Hecht, raises extremely interesting questions by dealing squarely with the tension between the haredim and secular Israel, as well as between Jews and Arabs. The former confrontation has ramifications for Israel no less momentous than the struggle between Palestinian and Jew, and most of all it is consequential for Jerusalem. The haredi community in Jerusalem, now about 250,000 in a city of 550,000, is growing demographically and gaining in political strength. As Friedland and Hecht point out:

The haredim strain to control their own, to expand the territorial boundaries of their community within the city. The conflict is intractable because the haredim seek to regulate the public, as well as the private, behavior of their Jewish neighbors. The haredim do not present themselves just as families who wish to have their private lives respected. They demand that Jews in Jerusalem -- all Jews -- obey particular standards of public behavior.

In a last-minute deal during the 1993 mayoral elections, the ultra-Orthodox withdrew their candidate and threw their support behind Likud candidate Olmert. In return, housing for the religious has increased and the budget for haredi schools has doubled. Secular Jews feel more and more uneasy in Jerusalem. During the Sabbath, additional streets near religious neighborhoods are shut to car traffic. For reasons of modesty, the Jerusalem City Council in July 1995 declined a full-scale replica of Michelangelo's David that the city of Florence offered to donate in honor of "Jerusalem 3000." Many secular youth are moving out of Jerusalem to the Tel Aviv area, where holiness is less omnipresent. Sixteen thousand Jews left Jerusalem in 1993, almost all of them secular or modern Orthodox. Even the Hebrew University, perhaps Israel's leading educational institution, suffered an 8 percent drop in applications last year -- most likely due to young people's feeling ill at ease in an increasingly haredi city.

For reasons of modesty, the Jerusalem City Council in July 1995 declined a full-scale replica of Michelangelo's David that the city of Florence offered to donate in honor of "Jerusalem 3000." As secular yuppies relocate to the coastal plain, the Holy City may lose some of its emotional centrality for nonreligious Jews. As Jerusalem becomes a haredi city and loses resonance as a symbol of national identity, secular Israel may well become less attached to it. Indeed, we already have a premonition of this in the recent poll finding that a slight majority of Israelis would support moving the capital to Tel Aviv. A breakdown in the national consensus about the centrality of Jerusalem cannot but have major consequences for the "final status" discussions about the city. If Jerusalem becomes alien ground for a majority of Israelis, they will likely prove more forthcoming to Palestinian demands for a piece...
of the Holy City. Those who care passionately about a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty may therefore take hope that the final-status negotiations are scheduled to conclude in 1999 -- before these trends grow more pervasive.

**QUO VADIS? What Next**

Surprisingly few books discussed here deal seriously with the central political question -- how to resolve Palestinian claims to share in the governance of the Holy City. Sharkansky would prefer "not to pursue a clear and final resolution of basic conflicts." Benvenisti views the problem as "organic in essence, endemic, and resistant to political solutions"; he seeks "process-oriented" approaches to manage the conflict, not resolve it. Armstrong urges "tolerance and coexistence." Dumper cites Palestinian claims of sovereignty under their (much contested) version of international law and strives mightily to show that if the politicians were to prescribe separation between western and eastern Jerusalem, water and electricity could be disentangled. (Sewage, however, would apparently still require joint control; is there a lesson here?)

Their caution is understandable, for these are treacherous waters. When a study by the Jerusalem Institute of Israel Affairs proposing options to resolve the status of Jerusalem leaked to the press in March 1996, a political furor resulted from the mere fact that an academic body had raised the option of some kind of Palestinian sovereignty in parts of eastern Jerusalem.

This furor notwithstanding, Yossi Beilin, the former deputy foreign minister, and Palestinian leader Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas) initialed a (never published) proposed draft agreement, or "nonpaper," on final-status issues prior to the 1996 election. Regarding Jerusalem, it appears to raise intriguing elements of compromise. It would:

Establish a Palestinian capital in Abu Dis (an Arab village just outside Jerusalem), where a future Palestinian parliament might be situated. Abu Dis would be renamed Al-Quds (Arabic for "Jerusalem");

Leave the Temple Mount as is, under de facto Palestinian control, while formally "suspending" Israeli sovereignty to reflect that reality. As a result, the Palestinian flag would be allowed to fly on the Mount;

Leave practical control over the entire city in Israeli hands;

Incorporate the near-in West Bank Jewish city of Maaleh Adumim into Israel's capital.

Beilin and Abu Mazen apparently did not agree on the matter of de jure sovereignty for eastern Jerusalem (some reports say the Old City) and agreed to continue practical control in Israeli hands, leaving the matter for later discussion.

Although the nonpaper accepts the core of Israeli policy in Jerusalem -- that the city must remain united and the capital of Israel -- the Netanyahu government has made clear that as drafted, the nonpaper was not acceptable, in part because other clauses in the nonpaper accept a Palestinian state and give it the bulk of the Jordan Valley. (Shimon Peres also rejected the document on being shown it.) Had the books reviewed here offered more detailed discussion of practical options, they would have been more useful. Dumper alone rises to the occasion, although his goal is as much to write a brief on alleged Israeli unfairness during the occupation as it is to set out a blueprint for future relations.
The most urgent need now is for concrete efforts at Arab-Jewish cooperation for mutual benefit; projects relating to tourism, industrial development, and pollution control are the best way to both explore the possibilities and create habits of joint action. As Friedland and Hecht make clear in To Rule Jerusalem, dealing with Greater Jerusalem as a metropolitan entity that encompasses the Palestinian hinterland as well as near-in Jewish settlements like Maaleh Adumin and Gush Etzion may provide the path for cooperation and the key to economic growth. The Palestinians’ need to prove that they can go it alone hampers this effort, however. Even matters like sewage, where Dumper concedes that joint action cannot be avoided, and where substantial foreign assistance is apparently available, have become increasingly mired in the daily pulse-taking of the peace process.

The recent effort of the Jerusalem Institute of Israel Affairs and the Arab Studies Society offers a positive example: they created a Jerusalem Arbitration Institute to arbitrate and mediate disputes between persons of the two communities. This allows the two sides to treat each other with respect and dignity, albeit on small and mundane matters. It is not surprising that intercommunal cooperation begins with activities that may not carry significant emotional and symbolic weight to both sides. In this regard, Sharkansky makes a strange comment about a decision of the Jerusalem and Bethlehem municipalities to join their sewer lines: "A newspaper reader could only wonder if integrated sewage would aid the peace process or retard the eventual separation of national communities." No, he can’t wonder; such a step resoundingly helps the peace process. One can only hope that the next crop of books on Jerusalem will be replete with examples of such joint undertakings.

In the end, however, focusing on the concrete small steps like sewage or commercial mediation will only work in an environment that understands all parties’ conceptions of the larger issues of religion and history and seeks to find accommodations that recognize the sanctity of each of these traditions. One failure of Armstrong and Benvenisti is that they spend so little time placing sacralization in a political and historical context. In Winston Churchill's words, "man is spirit," and it is the questions of history and religion so well traced by Armstrong, Shanks, and Gilbert that count most. This may be why Israel responded favorably to King Husayn’s suggestion to bring leaders of the three major monotheistic religions into the discussions on the future of Jerusalem. Yet reading these reviewed offerings on Jerusalem makes one painfully aware of the difficulties the effort to resolve religious and historical

1 Scholars generally agree that the 3000-year mark takes place not in 1996 but seven years later (it was likely that David remained in Hebron for the first years of his reign). Further, Jerusalem 3000 was already celebrated once before (to promote the 1953-54 tourist season) and for the religious, the relevant date according to biblical texts will be 2132.

History, however, was not the point of this party, as the subjective and symbolic nature of the date suggests. In truth, the long-time mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, expected 1996 to be his last year in office and Jerusalem 3000 to be a year-long goodbye party. But Kollek lost his position to Likud’s Ehud Olmert in 1993 and Olmert, in turn, saw Jerusalem 3000 as a chance to stress the city's Jewish roots.
The resulting extravaganza was not completely successful. The Palestinians stayed away, as did the haredim (ultra-Orthodox), who found the rock stars and theatrical productions insufficiently Jewish. The EU officially boycotted the events. Car bombings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv caused a 20 percent drop in tourism at a time when the celebration was heralded as a tourism savior.


2 The Jerusalem Post, Sept. 13, 1996.

3 London: Routledge, 1996. 281 pp. $59.95 Ironically, the foreword to the book by the high commissioner was written "under the shadow of the British withdrawal from Palestine."

Whitelam's biblical minimalism ignores two important pieces of extra-biblical evidence: (1) the 19th century discovery in Egypt of the Mernetaph stele, with its reference to Israel dated 1206BCE (Armstrong, Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths, p.23); and (2) the 1993 discovery in Israel of the 9th century Dan stele, which refers to the House (or dynasty) of David ('David' Found at Dan, "Biblical Archeology Review, Mar./Apr. 1994, p. 26.


8 Ibid., pp. 419, 420.


Gilbert, Jerusalem in the Twentieth Century, p. 21, 32, 279.

Meron Benvenisti, City of Stone, trans. by Maxine Kaufman Nunn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). 274 pp. $24.95. The Hebrew version of this book is titled Makom Haaiash or "Place of Fire.'
Until then, one should expect the tone in Jerusalem's papers to become increasingly hawkish and love for the Obama Administration increasingly "tough." Before the Presidency, Barack Obama's early statement, during a Democratic primary debate, that he would meet the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad without preconditions haunted him throughout the campaign. The status of Jerusalem is disputed in both international law and diplomatic practice, with both the Israelis and Palestinians claiming Jerusalem as their capital city. The dispute has been described as "one of the most intractable issues in the Israel-Palestine conflict", with conflicting claims to sovereignty over the city or parts of it, and access to its holy sites. The main dispute revolves around the legal status of East Jerusalem and especially the Old City of Jerusalem, while broader agreement Understanding Jerusalem English Lectures plus walking tours in honor of the 50th anniversary of the unification of Jerusalem. Schechter Editor. March, 2017. Events. In honor of the 50th anniversary of the reunification of
Jerusalem, we are offering a special course in English. The course will consist of 4 classroom lessons of 1 and 1/2 hours each plus 2 walking tours of about 3 hours each. Wednesdays at 15:30 (Lessons until 17:00, Walking tours until approximately 18:30).