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LEE I. LEVINE, ed. *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. New York: Continuum, 1999. Pp. xxvii + 516 pp.

The last decades of the twentieth century witnessed a great upsurge in the study of Jerusalem, as both a historical entity and a mental category. The volume under review, which can be seen as part of this upsurge, is the outcome of a conference held at Tantur, Jerusalem, in June 1996—a time of great optimism and hope, aroused by the Oslo breakthrough. The new optimism and energy are expressed in this volume. The conference was held under the auspices of four academic institutions and with the support of eleven others—American, Israeli, and Palestinian. Forty scholars, including some of the most renowned scholars in the field of Jerusalem research, convened at the Tantur Ecumenical Institute for Theological Research. Thirty-three of them are represented in this volume.

The articles are arranged in chronological order of their subjects, from biblical tradition to the modern period. The distribution of the articles over the different periods is a clear reflection of the state of the field. While Jerusalem in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages has been the subject of extensive learning and research, with diverse historical and literary aspects considered, the later periods have been neglected, as if Jerusalem has lost its appeal for those generations, and as a consequence also for scholars dealing with them.

Another angle revealed by the distribution of these articles is the religious one. Jerusalem is sacred to all three monotheistic religions, a fact that calls for comparative study of religious phenomena and spiritual experience. Nine articles in the volume deal with two or three religions; nine deal with Judaism (including biblical tradition), fourteen with Christianity, and only two with Islam. Moreover, the Moslems are completely absent from the articles dealing with later periods, despite the fact that they were strongly represented in Jerusalem during those years, in fact dominating the city for most of them.

As for the thematic aspect, several subjects are treated extensively: pilgrimage as a pattern of religious behavior and its manifestations in relation to Jerusalem; relationships between theological and political factors in shaping Jerusalem's centrality; the place of Jerusalem in Jewish and Christian liturgy; the gap between Jerusalem as symbol and Jerusalem as historical reality; the idea of heavenly Jerusalem and its bearing

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upon the earthly city; how the mental map of Jerusalem and the "real" map fuel one another.

Chronologically speaking, the most interesting periods are those of transition, when there was a shift or a major change in the political forces dominating the city. Each transition produced a new definition of Jerusalem's religious position and of the main reasons for its sanctity. These transitional periods receive emphasis in this book as well: eight articles out of the nine dealing with the Byzantine period concentrate on the fourth century, four articles out of the five dealing with the Early Middle Ages concentrate on the seventh. The first of these transitional periods witnessed the emergence of the new Christian Jerusalem, the second, the rise of the Moslem city. In both cases, the change of rulers did not totally erase the past, and Jerusalem's sanctity continued to be a superposition of layers—Christian over Jewish, Moslem over Christian, each adding to the sanctity of the city, modifying and enriching it. This process also generated constant competition over Jerusalem's "true" meaning and its "true" owner.

Those articles that deal with two or three religions from a comparative viewpoint are of special interest. Jerusalem aroused, and still arouses, deep feelings among Jews, Christians, and Moslems. It was believed to be sacred and central both geographically and ideologically, as the *omphalos*—the navel of the earth. As Philip Alexander shows, this term had both political and polemical significance, against both Greeks (in the Hasmonean period) and, later, Romans. Most significantly, the concept of Jerusalem as *omphalos* was accepted both by Rabbinic Judaism and by early Christianity. But it should be added that, like other common tenets, such as the sanctity of the Bible or the idea of the Chosen People, this common belief became an element in the bitter conflict for priority between the sister religions.

There were also times when Jerusalem was a neglected, marginal city. Oded Irshai sheds light on the process through which Jerusalem rose in the fourth century from being a peripheral city to one of the five leading patriarchates of the Christian world, in fact the most sacred of them all. In this process, the Jews (physically absent from Jerusalem but spiritually and emotionally present there) played an important role by shaping "the self-perception of the Jerusalem Christian community, whose entire history may be seen in terms of a long and enduring confrontation with its Jewish past" (p. 206). The polemic with Judaism concerned not only the past and the interpretation of historical events but also the future and the messianic expectations of both Christian and Jews.

Messianic expectations are also the subject of Günter Stemberger's

article, which analyzes seventh-century Jewish and Christian treatises that were written in an apocalyptic vein as a reaction to the "tumultuous upheaval and revolutionary changes" that shook the East, and especially the Holy Land, with Jerusalem at its center. Land and city changed hands repeatedly within a few decades, inspiring people's belief that they were living at the end of time.

The volume is dedicated to the memory of Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, an esteemed Israeli scholar of medieval Islam, who participated in the conference and passed away not long afterward. Her article, "Jerusalem and Mecca," compares the sanctity and meaning of these two famous holy cities. They are compared "in their original, 'natural' original surroundings" (p. 287), that is to say, by examining the sanctity of Jerusalem in Judaism and the sanctity of Mecca in Islam and trying to explain what the differences say about these two religions. If I were asked in what direction research into the history of Jerusalem should turn, I would point to this kind of comparison, which helps explain Jerusalem's unique status among the world's holy cities.

Similarly, Oleg Grabar's article, "Space and Holiness in Medieval Jerusalem," tries to identify the key components of the space and holiness of Jerusalem by outlining the process through which holy memories found spaces and these spaces acquired holiness. The uniqueness of Jerusalem, as Grabar writes, is "that most of the memories were Jewish, but that these Jewish memories became Christian, and Christian and Jewish memories became Muslim. Alone, of all the holy cities in the world, the space of Jerusalem could accommodate all these pious expressions in every one of their confessional garbs" (p. 285).

These are just a few examples of the richness of the volume and the originality of its papers. Scholars, no less than believers, impose their own mental map on Jerusalem, shaping it and changing it according to ideas and dreams. The strongest impression gained from reading this volume is, To each his or her Jerusalem.

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