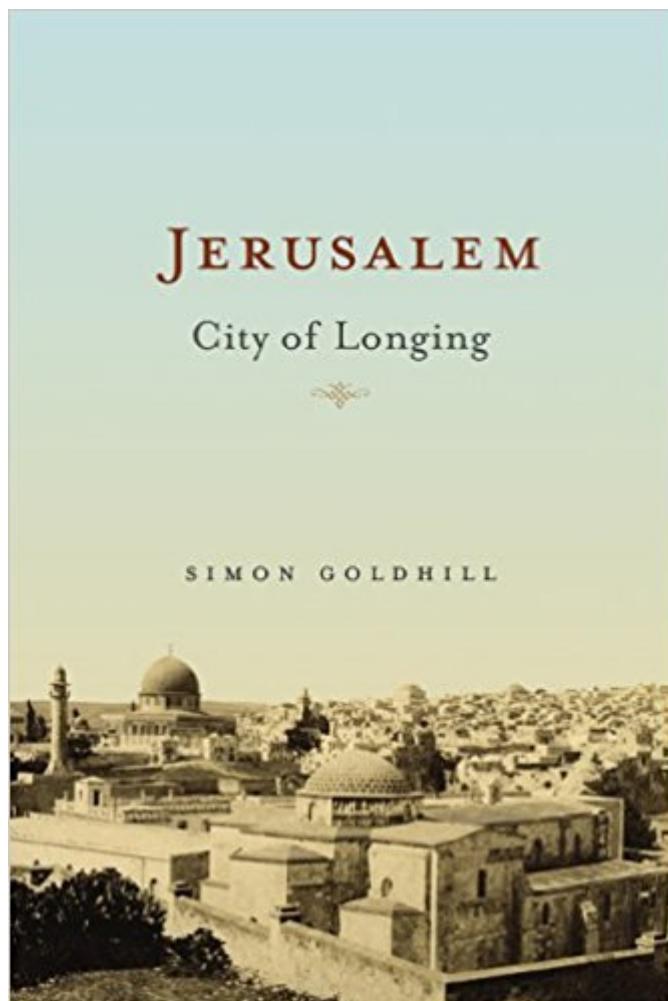


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Jerusalem: City Of Longing



Synopsis

Jerusalem is the site of some of the most famous religious monuments in the world, from the Dome of the Rock to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to the Western Wall of the Temple. Since the nineteenth century, the city has been a premier tourist destination, not least because of the countless religious pilgrims from the three Abrahamic faiths. But Jerusalem is more than a tourist site— it is a city where every square mile is layered with historical significance, religious intensity, and extraordinary stories. It is a city rebuilt by each ruling Empire in its own way: the Jews, the Romans, the Christians, the Muslims, and for the past sixty years, the modern Israelis. What makes Jerusalem so unique is the heady mix, in one place, of centuries of passion and scandal, kingdom-threatening wars and petty squabbles, architectural magnificence and bizarre relics, spiritual longing and political cruelty. It is a history marked by three great forces: religion, war, and monumentality. In this book, Simon Goldhill takes on this peculiar archaeology of human imagination, hope, and disaster to provide a tour through the history of this most image-filled and ideology-laden city—from the bedrock of the Old City to the towering roofs of the Holy Sepulchre. Along the way, we discover through layers of buried and exposed memories—the long history, the forgotten stories, and the lesser-known aspects of contemporary politics that continue to make Jerusalem one of the most embattled cities in the world.

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Customer Reviews

Goldhill, professor of Greek at Cambridge (The Temple of Jerusalem), provides an illuminating archeological, architectural and historical guide to Jerusalem's most important holy and secular sites

from biblical times to the present. He loves the city, but doesn't romanticize either its past or its present, and a theme throughout is that the city of peace has always been a place of contention. Judaism, Christianity and Islam all vie for supremacy in the city, but many claims to authenticity are false, says Goldhill. He debunks, for example, Israeli archeologist Eilat Mazar's claim to have discovered King David's palace. Ironies abound in a city where the Abrahamic faiths are not only embattled but also intermingled; the key to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre has long been held by a Muslim family. As Goldhill explores Jerusalem during the Victorian period, which he claims laid the groundwork for much of the modern city, the impact of British mandatory rule, and the city today, he faces head-on the difficulty of telling the history of a place where every fact is contested by conflicting nationalist narratives. This is a highly knowledgeable and beautifully written look at both the heavenly and the earthly Jerusalem. (May) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

The historical range of responses to Jerusalem, from lofty piety to base aggression toward the holy city—religious sites, can be found in this fond yet palpably ambivalent archaeological and architectural guide. Goldhill offers it not for the see-and-flee tourist but also for visitors ruminating over the city's contested history. Recommending an orienting walk atop the wall of the Old City, Goldhill sequentially leads the reader into the three focal destinations for religious pilgrims: the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for Christians; the Western Wall/Temple Mount for Jews; and the Haram al-Sharif/Dome of the Rock complex for Muslims. Respectfully explaining the spiritual significance of these and other shrines around Jerusalem, significance acquired through either scripture or the veneration of centuries, is a forte of Goldhill. Yet coursing through his discussions of the relevant archaeology is the irony that stones seen by the saintly should have witnessed conquest and desecration. Such is Jerusalem's dilemma, one posed with tact in Goldhill's informative book, replete with insights to move or irritate any religious or political persuasion. --Gilbert Taylor

A wonderful little book prepared as a guided tour through the major historical sites in Jerusalem, ranging from the Church of the Holy Sepulcher to the Knesset. Chronological if only by way of starting at the oldest center of the old city and working forward. But each step is so deeply layered in time. The book is first and foremost a chronicle of the folly of humanity as embodied by the idiotic wars between the various brands of clergy, and the more bloody affairs related to racial and ethnic riots. So much of it based on ignorance escalating into endless rounds of reprisal. You can see so

many preposterous legends fabricated out of nothing and being transformed into venerable truths. The story of Mohammad's midnight ascension from Jerusalem apparently fabricated after the fact, with some assuming that he must have risen from the rock at Jerusalem, and others saying it's not possible because no city could be more holy than Karbala if he ascended to heaven from anywhere, it had to be there. The heroes of the story are the Victorian Englishmen such as Warren, Storrs, and Ashbee. The list of improvements made under the British is substantial -- sanitation, water supplies, education, and medical care. In fact, part of the aura of the city seems to stem from the value that outsiders put upon the place as well as the improvements that were made to the infrastructure. So this is not a complete history, but presents so many hallowed shrines in a very interesting light. I liked the quote of some anonymous nun that even if the Lithostratus Pavement Stones were late Roman and therefore never trodden by Jesus, they were still holy by way of the many centuries of prayer said over them. That pretty much tells the story of this particular book.

The reason for my low rating is to warn readers that they shouldn't purchase the Kindle edition of this book. It makes constant reference to illustrations and photographs that are not included in the kindle edition, which severely detracts from the usefulness and pleasure of the book. I will probably purchase a paper edition, however, because Goldhill's text is an excellent and insightful survey of Jerusalem.

I've visited Jerusalem a number of times and always came away feeling dizzy from the experience. The jumble of traditions, layers of history and intensity of religious fervor gave me a headache and a vague sense of disgust. Simon Goldhill's take on Jerusalem--a city he obviously knows well and loves deeply--has given me a new appreciation for the complexities of this most vexed city. Obviously erudite, Goldhill's narrative style is engaging, his touch 'light'. I'll return to Jerusalem, now that I've read this book, and will take it along as my 'vade mecum'.

Not your typical "guidebook"--Way more interesting and valuable! More like having a personal, knowledgeable, caring, good-humored walk through of this city's life to near present day with a real human being.

This is one of the best books to read before you go to Jerusalem, and after. I don't like the author's lighthearted style -- Jerusalem isn't a lighthearted place. But it provides a lot of background that will

help you understand what you're looking at.

The descriptive part is interesting but the kindle version lacks the illustrations. However, the scary part was the hidden political message sent out in every single part of the book or was it unintentional by the University of Cambridge professor. I personally despised the most the devious and despicable approach of the author to legitimize the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem in the minds of the pure readers in addition to his disgraceful way to campaign for the demolishing of Christian and Muslim Arab houses in the old city of Jerusalem around the Holy Sepulcher "low grade jumble" to help tourists get better photographing views just like the King's College Chapel in Cambridge. As an Arab Jerusalemite of both birth and descent yet forbidden by the Israelis from entering the city, I try to read any book about the holy city, the family house there is similar to the Alami family house described by the author. Although not a historian nor an anthropologist myself, but it doesn't take a genius to distinct the blood of Christian and Muslim Palestinians from Arabian Peninsula Arabs, they are perhaps the decedents of original inhabitants of the land, a mix of Canaanites, Philistines that came from Greek islands, or even Israelites that came from Babylon and Arabians that came from the Peninsula. The civilization of Muslim Palestinians didn't just accidentally appear in the land at the time of the Islamic military campaigns, but it was actually the time these original inhabitants of the land adopted Islam for a religion. Many have tried to capitalize on the fact that Judaism is older than Christianity and Islam trying to justify the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem. The city doesn't belong to any religion, it belongs to the Palestinian Jews, Christians & Muslims that have always lived there before the religion. In the introduction the author claims avoiding taking sides and trying to equally insult all parties unearthing the facts about the city. Its ironic how he claims that when the several church authorities have disputes, they revert to Israeli officials for ruling, while these sects have spent the past 40 years fighting to free their country from the Israeli aggressors and get the international community to have Israel abide by UN resolution 242 which requests Israel to pull out of the occupied land, needless also to mention the Christian Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and the Western world. The most offensive story for me was how a Jew up until 1967 (the date Israel occupied the West Bank and East Jerusalem) was nearly lynched when entering into the Parvis of the Holy Sepulcher, it is funny because last summer while accompanying a group of Hollywood actors on a humanitarian mission in the Middle East, I was banned from entering the Buraq Wall (wailing wall). The group of Americans then decided to skip visiting that part of the city. The writer claims that Muslims restricted access to the Islamic holy sites to Muslims only for hundreds of years, I just want him to know that it took the Embassies of

three countries almost a month to get me (a Muslim Jerusalemite and Refugee in Jordan) a permit to visit my birthplace for 3 days between 5AM-10PM, if I was to be caught there outside this time, I would be jailed and penalized. I wonder and invite Dr. Goldhill to try and guess with me, if I was Jewish of any nationality be it Russian or Ethiopian, what would it have taken for me to visit. At the end, I ask you to imagine how future historians many years from now will view the west bank racist separation wall built by Israel compared to the magnificent wall of Jerusalem described pleasantly by all visitors and historians which was built by Muslims and throughout the Islamic eras contained within the city its Muslim, Christian, Armenian and Jewish quarters you described in your book.

It is a beautiful book that I took on my trip to Jerusalem. The details offered up many tips on things to look for. I recommend reading it at some time before, during, or after, it's up to you.

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