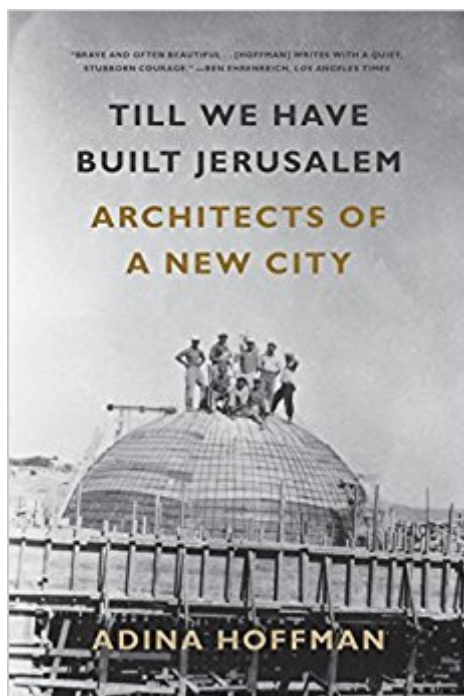


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# Till We Have Built Jerusalem: Architects Of A New City



## Synopsis

A biographical excavation of one of the world's great, troubled cities. A remarkable view of one of the world's most beloved and troubled cities, Adina Hoffman's *Till We Have Built Jerusalem* is a gripping and intimate journey into the very different lives of three architects who helped shape modern Jerusalem. The book unfolds as an excavation. It opens with the 1934 arrival in Jerusalem of the celebrated Berlin architect Erich Mendelsohn, a refugee from Hitler's Germany who must reckon with a complex new Middle Eastern reality. Next we meet Austen St. Barbe Harrison, Palestine's chief government architect from 1922 to 1937. Steeped in the traditions of Byzantine and Islamic building, this "most private of public servants" finds himself working under the often stifling and violent conditions of British rule. And in the riveting final section, Hoffman herself sets out through the battered streets of today's Jerusalem searching for traces of a possibly Greek, possibly Arab architect named Spyro Houris. Once a fixture on the local scene, Houris is now utterly forgotten, though his grand Armenian-tile-clad buildings still stand, a ghostly testimony to the cultural fluidity that has historically characterized Jerusalem at its best. A beautifully written rumination on memory and forgetting, place and displacement, *Till We Have Built Jerusalem* uncovers the ramifying layers of one great city's buried history as it asks what it means, everywhere, to be foreign and to belong.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"[A] scintillating study . . . Hoffman profiles three architects working in Palestine under British rule from 1918 to 1948 . . . The result is both vivid architectural criticism and an illuminating

meditation on why Jerusalem's divisions now seem intractable.

Publishers Weekly (starred review) "Adina Hoffman is that very rare writer who moves lightly across vast realms of knowledge, transmuting the most intransigent material into illuminating and affecting narratives. Here is a book about the making of a city that is as emotionally potent as it is intellectually bracing." Pankaj Mishra, author of *From the Ruins of Empire: The Revolt Against the West and the Remaking of Asia* "Adina Hoffman does for Jerusalem what great writers have done for Paris, London, and New York: with charm, skill, and originality, she weaves together a vivid social and architectural history of one of the fabled cities of the world." Vivian Gornick, author of *The Odd Woman and the City* "Part intellectual search, part urban history, Adina Hoffman's engrossing narrative reveals the multi-layered polyglot melting pot that was Jerusalem. I thoroughly enjoyed this book." Witold Rybczynski, author of *How Architecture Works* "A fascinating synthesis that manages to distill biography, history, politics, aesthetics, religion and psychology into one illuminating, lively, witty text. This is one of the finest books I've ever read on the difficult, fragile arts of architecture and city-making." Phillip Lopate, author of *Waterfront: A Walk Around Manhattan* "Adina Hoffman's moving exploration of three colorful, cosmopolitan, ethnically diverse architects who shaped Jerusalem beyond the Old City walls restores a sense of vibrant malleability to that city's stones. This poignant reminder of the place's heterogeneous past gives hope to all those who continue to build a more inclusive Jerusalem in their imaginations." George Prochnik, author of *The Impossible Exile* "[A] brave and often beautiful book . . . [Hoffman's] subjects may be three now largely obscure builders—a German Jew, an Englishman and an Arab—but *Till We Have Built Jerusalem* is very much a book about the present . . . [Hoffman] writes with a quiet, stubborn courage, scouring the archives not only to understand Israel and Palestine as they exist today but to resurrect another vision, long since clouded over, in which identities were not so violently policed. In the lost Jerusalem that Hoffman so skillfully and sorrowfully rebuilds, the permeability of boundaries—be they ethnic or aesthetic—was not a threat but a proud and defining characteristic of urban life." Ben Ehrenreich, *Los Angeles Times* "Lovely . . . A composite of biography, architectural and political history, and reportage, Hoffman's engaging book illustrates the intricate interplay between architecture, identity, and history in this ancient and troubled city." Nick Romeo, *The Christian Science Monitor* "A beautifully written and captivating history . . . in [Hoffman's] hands the search for Houris becomes a captivating detective story . . . *Till We Have Built Jerusalem* is a passionate, lyrical defense of a Jerusalem that could still be, and a prophecy of the grim future that awaits the city if it

continues on its current path. Our leaders would do well to heed her warning." *Haaretz* Samuel Thrope, *Haaretz* "A superb and sharp-eyed account . . . [Till We Have Built Jerusalem is] a work of richly detailed cultural and social criticism by an author with a deep command of history . . . None of the many books about Jerusalem is quite as charming and engaging, nor as surprising and satisfying, as Hoffman's marvelous examination of the Jerusalem streetscape through the eyes of three men who helped to build it." Jonathan Kirsch, *Jewish Journal* "In Till We Have Built Jerusalem, Adina Hoffman goes beyond writing history and biography to bring these [architects], their dreams and their work vividly and poignantly to life . . . She digs deep, but also casts her net outward to pull in dozens of fascinating supporting characters." Elin Schoen Brockman, *Hadassah* "Till We Have Built Jerusalem delivers a rich portrait of the twentieth-century evolution of the city, its history and architecture. Readers interested in those topics will find much of value in this deeply researched, thoughtful book." Ira Wolfman, *Jewish Book Council*

Adina Hoffman is the author of *House of Windows: Portraits from a Jerusalem Neighborhood* and *My Happiness Bears No Relation to Happiness: A Poet's Life in the Palestinian Century*. She is also the author, with Peter Cole, of *Sacred Trash: The Lost and Found World of the Cairo Geniza*, which received the American Library Association's award for the Jewish book of the year. The recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, she was awarded one of the inaugural Windham Campbell prizes in 2013. She divides her time between Jerusalem and New Haven.

I was lucky enough to receive a copy of this before its publication and was immediately drawn in by the deft and beautiful writing. I never imagined that a book about three of modern Jerusalem's architects could be so moving and illuminating. The book gave me an entirely new perspective on the city's history as well as its present. Hoffman's personal impressions of both are relayed with a light, masterful touch, but are nonetheless devastating. I'll read anything Adina Hoffman writes - she can clearly tackle any subject and make it riveting! Highly recommended especially for fans of writing about architecture, urban life, Jerusalem, and the Middle East.

Wonderfull for s visitor to Israel and espJerusalem--very timely

great book. I couldn't put it down

A passable history of early twentieth century Jerusalem in the key of Raj nostalgia. Palestinians have a notably minimal presence. Still some interesting things to be learned about the Mandate period, although nothing groundbreaking.

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