1 *Introduction: A Tourist at Home*

This book examines the work of three different women's movements – two Jewish Israeli and one Muslim Palestinian – in and around Jerusalem's Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif and the Western Wall. While my research entailed participating in and observing some of the groups' activities, this book is not an ethnography in a traditional sense. The time I spent in the city as a researcher for this project was limited to one-month and two-month visits; the summers of 2015 and 2016 as well as December 2015. I accompanied women activists to the sites where their efforts were focused, and some to their homes.[1] Alongside conversations with activists and observations, I collected materials from the groups – mainly religious texts used in ritual and in teaching, and advocacy materials. I reviewed a large number of videos put up by the groups as well as their online publications. I collected media coverage and court rulings covering the three movements. There were important and immediate power differentials in our relations and among the different movements. Several of the Palestinian women activists I spoke with were banned from entering the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif premises, their movement had been declared illegal, and they could not undertake their religious and religious–political activities at the sacred site. The Jewish women's movements I studied faced other very real challenges, but none as extensive as those that Palestinian activists experienced.

Even though my time in the city was limited, Jerusalem and its complicated realities are part of my biography – I grew up in satellite localities for which the city was the urban center (Tzora, Beit Shemesh). I went to middle school and high school in the city, my father was born and raised there, my grandparents lived there, and my parents finally returned some years ago, living in the house where my father grew up. But Jerusalem's sacred sites were completely absent from my personal experience of the city. When I was in school in the 1990s, spending most of my days in Jerusalem, I never went to the Old City. I did not

have much interest in those parts, and I think my parents discouraged it, both for political reasons – they tried to avoid going into occupied territories – and for safety reasons – staying away from stone throwing or stabbing or fiery protest, or whatever occupied people resorted to in order not to be completely unseen and forgotten. The only Jerusalem I knew was the unabashedly secular one. I went to movies and malls, I hung out with my friends at the McDonald's at the city center after school, we walked up and down the dirty alleyways that smelled of urine between Kikar Zion (Zion Square) and Kikar HaKhatulot (Cats' Square) on Friday nights. To me Jerusalem always felt dirty, poor, and depressing, and made me want to leave.

For my father, however, as for many others, Jerusalem meant much more. I asked him about the city when working on this book, and he said that he saw himself as part of the city's landscape. His biography was so entwined with it that he felt part of Jerusalem and that Jerusalem was a part of him. While it was not at all a religious connection, to him the city nevertheless was personally special and important. For this book, I tried to see in Jerusalem what he saw and what so many others see; I tried to experience the Jerusalem of my interlocutors as they do, but I always fell short. I always felt foreign, and as I started to walk through the Old City and spend time in its sacred sites, I felt like a tourist. Interestingly, others in the city – Israeli Jews, Muslim and Christian Palestinians – usually assumed I was a tourist, speaking to me in English or trying to guess where I was from until I explained that I was from here.

Just as I never saw sacredness growing up, I also hardly ever saw Palestinians in Jerusalem. Life was so segregated that my school had no Arab students, and there were rarely opportunities to meet Palestinian Jerusalemites my age. A girlfriend of mine who worked at a supermarket briefly dated an Arab co-worker, but there was no question of making the relationship serious or long term; that wasn't even contemplated. It was only when I left to study abroad that I met Palestinians and made friends, and when I returned for research I got to know Palestinians in the city through my work. But the city remains as socially segregated as it was when I was growing up. Even though Palestinians make up almost 40 percent of the city's residents, outside the public spaces of hospitals, higher education institutions, and shopping areas, the few Jewish and Palestinian Jerusalemites who may want to meet and socialize have to intentionally create opportunities and

shared spaces. Despite Israel's relentless proclamations of a "unified Jerusalem," the city remains divided by design. Palestinian residents do not enjoy equal civil rights: they are non-citizens; their schools are underfunded; their neighborhoods are underserved; they are over-policed and dealt with as a security problem; they do not receive adequate building permits and their houses often face demolition orders; their residency is under constant threat of being stripped away; and they are evicted from their homes to make room for Jewish settlers.[2]

As a Jewish Israeli, when I walk in the Old City or travel through East Jerusalem I am a part of this reality, no matter how much I feel like a tourist. My religion and nationality give me the privilege to go almost anywhere, to move unencumbered by the police or soldiers through contested spaces, to pursue this research in a way that a Palestinian from Jerusalem would find much more difficult. I am able to speak with radical right-wing settlers in a way that a Palestinian scholar may not be, and I am able to speak with Palestinian Murabitat – women activists for al-Aqsa – whose phones, Facebook accounts, and emails are monitored by the security services, without the risk of being suspected a "terrorist" by those who surveil them. Though I might feel like an outsider, a visitor looking in with a great deal of bewilderment at the attachments and struggles of Muslims and Jews, Palestinians and Israelis over the sacred sites of Jerusalem, I always benefit from the status of being, by accident of birth, a member of the occupying rather than the occupied collectivity.

That is inescapable when I pursue my research in Jerusalem and in Israel/Palestine. But in this respect, being a tourist at home made me conduct myself as a visitor would. Instead of comfortable familiarity I continually felt discomfort, never felt at home or as if I belonged, or had any claim to the space. This hardly mitigated the enormous imbalance of access and privilege between myself and others. It is also not to say that Israeli Jews have no claims here or that this cannot be their home. It is simply to say that in the current condition of occupation and denial of equal civil rights in the city and in Israel/Palestine at large, in the permanent limbo of a so-called temporary occupation, there is scarcely a way of being non-complicit with the structures of inequality.[3] Experiencing this field as a tourist, or as a provisionally invited visitor – since "tourist" also conjures a fraught relationship – helped me, at least, not feel at home.

Later, while finishing up writing this book, I read an essay by Edward Said in which he quotes a twelfth-century monk from Saxony named Hugo of St. Victor in reference to one's relationship to place, and particularly to "home" or "homeland." The quotation reads:

> The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land. The tender soul has fixed his love on one spot in the world; the strong man has extended his love to all places; the perfect man has extinguished his.[4]

On the one hand, these lines can imply that my lack of attachment to Jerusalem is a methodological advantage, and perhaps even an ethical stance. Yet on the other, invoking them also seems problematic because they entail a hierarchy in which detachment is better than attachment; in which my perspective is somehow preferable to those of my interlocutors, who are so connected to a place that some of them may be willing to even give their lives for it if that became necessary. I want to acknowledge this tension that perhaps still pervades this book. The shifts and (im)balances between my perspective and those of my interlocutors reflect my distance and inability to fully comprehend the sentiments that motivate them; they reflect my status, in many aspects, as a tourist at home.

Introduction

In 1929, dubbed "Year Zero" of the Arab–Israeli conflict,[5] violence between the Arab population of Mandatory Palestine and Jewish residents and immigrants swept the land. In Jerusalem, the catalyst for tensions around the Western Wall area was the installation of a screen beside the Wall to separate Jewish male and female worshipers, which the Jewish community had repeatedly attempted since the turn of the century.[6] Historians writing about these events have observed that attempts to install a screen, meant on the face of it simply to separate Jewish women from Jewish men in prayer in accordance with a particular Orthodox practice, implicitly conveyed (whether intentionally or not), and indeed were perceived by the Arabs, as an attempt to assert control and dominance over the shared, and contested, Jewish–Muslim space.[7] Regardless of actual political sovereignty, which at the time was in the hands of the British Mandate, both parties

to the contestation seemed to have assumed that the group that gets to dictate the gendered division of space would also be the group that gets to symbolically claim ownership of that space.

Today gendered separation at the site of the Western Wall (Kotel in Hebrew) is at the heart of another conflict. Jewish women of Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and secular streams, organized under the title of Women of the Wall (WOW, or Neshot HaKotel in Hebrew), have since 1988 been contesting the limitation on what women are allowed to do at the area to which they are confined. They demand to read from a Torah scroll and lead public prayer, and have over the years been repeatedly arrested by the police and criticized by the Orthodox administration of the site. Their liberal feminist struggle, which is putatively about religious freedom, gender equality, and access, however, is completely silent on the fact that the site is also sacred to Muslims, that the plaza before the Wall was constructed through the 1967 expropriation and demolishing of the Muslim Magharib neighborhood that stood at the place, and that Muslim Palestinians are denied the right to access and worship freely at the site, which they call al-Buraq Wall.[8] Other women espousing more conservative Jewish or Muslim religious politics take a vastly different approach to the feminism of Women of the Wall. Pious Palestinian Muslim women activists for al-Aqsa, called Murabitat, deny any claim by Jews to worship at any part of the Sacred Esplanade, from the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif area to the Western Wall. These are strictly Muslim religious sites, they argue, and Jewish religious claims to hold them sacred are a fraud. Women for the Temple, an Orthodox Jewish movement that seeks to hasten the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple on Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif and engages in ascent[9] to the site and in advocacy, expresses an ambivalent view of Women of the Wall. Some argue that though WOW's feminist challenge of certain Orthodox gendered traditions is misguided, WOW's emotional bond and connection to the holy site and their presence there help strengthen the "centrality" of the whole area of the Sacred Esplanade and the Old City of Jerusalem by raising Jewish consciousness about its importance. This aligns well, they believe, with the assertion of Jewish sovereignty in Jerusalem. Others, however, criticize not WOW's feminism but rather their focus on the Western Wall, which some Temple activists see as a space devoid of central religious significance in comparison to Temple Mount. They see the Western Wall as a synagogue like any

other and are dismayed by Jewish acquiescence to worship at the site in lieu of Temple Mount, which has been left for exclusive Muslim worship.

Even the brief description above gives a sense of the deep engagement of women in the contestation over sacred space in Jerusalem that has been central to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and of the layered gendered dynamics and debates over this space. Given this fact, it is surprising that so little discussion about the gendered nature of Jerusalem's contested sacred space has been included in the voluminous literature on this topic. There are countless excellent books about Jerusalem and the interreligious conflict over the city's sacred sites. None, however, has fully explored the evolving gendered debates on and women's roles in the multilayered contestation around the Sacred Esplanade. Yet women have moved to the center stage of the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif conflict over the last two decades. The focus of this book is on the strategies devised and put into practice by women activists in their contestation of sacred space, and in particular the role that gender plays in this work. I examine how activists' efforts within their intra-communal context have an effect, intended or not, in inter-communal contexts of the Israeli–Palestinian/Jewish–Muslim contestation.

This book trains our gaze on these developments and processes, drawing attention to the fact that, first, there has been little systematic investigation into the roles of Jewish women in Temple Mount activism. Even the excellent seminal work on Temple Mount zealots looks mainly at male actors.[10] The same is true of Muslim activism for al-Aqsa, where little work has focused on the growing visibility of the Murabitat or the evolving role that the deployment of gender has played in Muslim contestation over the site.[11] The feminist Women of the Wall has received more attention in scholarly articles, and at least two books in English have been written solely about the group, as well as one in Hebrew.[12] These books and the academic literature more broadly, however, have not squarely placed WOW within the context of the inter-communal conflict. The literature often centers more on the formal political–legal aspects of WOW's struggle rather than employing a critical feminist lens. The coverage has mainly focused on intra-Jewish debates. Indeed, feminist scholars have written quite extensively about the gender politics of intra-Jewish contestations of restrictive Orthodox practices that feminist activists such as WOW have been

waging.[13] But while many of these studies are superb, they suffer from an understandable blind spot. Being sympathetic to feminist politics, they tend to privilege feminist initiatives and overlook non-feminist and even anti-feminist activism by Orthodox women in this context.[14] Furthermore, the preoccupation with one form of access – that of Jewish women to their place of worship – does not acknowledge the issue of intersectionality,[15] where the interests and struggles of one group of feminist women (Jewish women) is made possible only via the exclusion of other women, and men (Muslim Palestinians), from this same place.

The scant attention to these multilayered gendered dynamics in the inter-communal conflict in Jerusalem is surprising for two reasons. First, contested sacred sites are almost universally gendered. Their sacredness is often entangled in a gendered division of roles, practices, bodily presentations, and space. The contours and makeup of such divisions are not universal, but their various permutations, including those that seek to break down strict gender roles and practices, are inherently gendered. As Doreen Massey explains, when we think of space we must bear in mind that "particular ways of thinking about space and place are tied up with, both directly and indirectly, particular social constructions of gender."[16] Second, the discourse and practice of all the political and religious actors involved in contestation are, again, highly gendered. To paraphrase Verta Taylor, whether or not women actually participate in such contestations – and they often do – "gender dualist metaphors supply the cultural symbols" that all actors in these conflicts "use to identify their commonalities, draw boundaries between themselves and their opponents, and legitimate and motivate collective action."[17]

This book, then, explores three contemporary women's movements in and around Jerusalem's Sacred Esplanade: Women for the Temple, a messianic Jewish Orthodox women's movement for access to Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif; Murabitat, pious Muslim women activists for the defense of al-Aqsa Mosque from Jewish claims; and Women of the Wall (WOW), a Jewish feminist organization mobilized against restrictive gender regulations at the Western Wall. Using these cases, the book demonstrates how attention to gender and to women's engagement in conflict over central sacred places is essential for understanding the intra-communal processes that make contested sacred sites appear increasingly

"indivisible" for parties in the inter-communal context. More broadly, the book argues that a gender analysis of contested sacred places enriches and sharpens both our description of the "choreographies" of such sites and our analytical understanding of the contemporary dynamics of conflict in these sites; in particular the processes that give rise to the problem of "indivisibility."

Situating the Argument: The Site and the Literature

Jerusalem's "Sacred Esplanade"[18] has been a constant feature in the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, witnessing ebbs and flows in tensions around it. Perhaps more than any other contested sacred place, this site, which encompasses the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif and its surroundings including the Western Wall, has inspired inexhaustible academic and popular fascination. The site has served as a central case for studying the spatial dimensions of the interactions between religion and politics largely because of its religious significance to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.[19] The Temple Mount is considered Judaism's holiest site. According to Jewish tradition, it is the site where Abraham bound his son Isaac for sacrifice, and it is believed to be the site of the First and Second Jewish Temples. For Muslims, after Mecca and Medina, Jerusalem and Temple Mount or al-Haram al-Sharif/al-Aqsa is the third-holiest place in Islam. It has been associated with the site of the Temple of Solomon in Muslim traditions, and Jerusalem was, before Mecca, the first direction for Muslim prayer. The site is where according to tradition Muhammad arrived on his night journey from Mecca and from which he ascended to heaven to meet with the prophets who came before him. It has served as a Muslim holy place and a mosque from the seventh century, when Muslims first captured the city, until the present (with an interruption during the Crusades). Below the Mount stands the Western Wall. Since at least the sixteenth century, when the Ottoman rulers of the Holy Land cleared up and designated a part of the supporting wall buttressing the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount for Jewish prayer, the Western Wall has been a center for Jewish religious ritual. Over the centuries it has been the place where Jews have prayed, considering it to be the closest place to the site of their destroyed Temple. Muslim traditions also consider the Western Wall to be holy, and identify it with the site where the prophet tied

al-Buraq, the winged creature that carried him from Mecca to Jerusalem.

In modern history, the space has changed hands from the Ottomans, to the British Mandate, to Jordan, to Israel. In the 1967 Six Day War Israel conquered East Jerusalem and the Old City of Jerusalem, as well as the West Bank, from Jordan, which had controlled this territory since 1948. Israel eventually annexed Jerusalem but, reluctant to extend citizenship to the Palestinian Arab population of the city, granted them residence permits instead.[20] This means that they can live and work in Jerusalem, but they do not have certain basic civil rights such as the right to vote or be elected to the Israeli parliament. Because of the sensitivity of Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif, Israel quickly handed back the management of the site to the Islamic Waqf (the Islamic endowment administration) and established the "status quo."[21] The Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif area would be a de facto place of worship exclusively for Muslims, while Jews and others could visit as tourists. Below the Mount the Palestinian Magharib neighborhood was demolished and a plaza was constructed in its place next to the Western Wall area which became an exclusive site for Jewish collective worship. This modus-vivendi division was generally accepted by religious and political authorities on both sides. Israel's Chief Rabbinate announced that according to longstanding Orthodox traditions it was halachically forbidden for Jews to ascend to and pray at Temple Mount. The administration of the Western Wall was given to ultra-Orthodox rabbis, who established permanent gender segregation at the Wall – a feature that did not exist before. Since the year 2000 and the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada, tensions over the site have become central to the discourse of religious and political actors. The area has been one of the thorniest issues in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and has had a revival of sorts with the increasingly religious language that has continued to dominate the pronouncements of both parties to the conflict.

Contested sacred sites such as this one, over which different communities assert claims to exclusivity, draw our attention to the interaction between and imbrication of religion and politics in and over space. Religious Studies scholars, historians, geographers, anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists have extensively theorized the ways in which space functions to produce new or renewed religious (and religious–political) identities in conflict and vice versa – the ways

such identity-processes transform the meaning and significance of space. Scholars have inquired how sites that are holy to different religious communities come to be seen as "indivisible" by these communities. They have offered extensive accounts of the processes and the actors that construct a sacred place as one that cannot and should not be shared, divided, or ceded. Yet the gendered dimensions of inter-communal disputes over sacred space in Jerusalem as well as in other holy places around the world, and women's roles in these site-specific conflicts, have remained under-studied. An implicit, and at times explicit, association of women with peacefulness and tolerance in the political sphere and syncretic practices or more tolerant spirituality in the religious sphere has obscured the fact that women are often key actors in inter-communal contestation of holy places. Furthermore, even when women are not actively involved in contestation, gendered language, dynamics, and politics play a crucial role.

We can divide the current literature on shared or contested sacred places into two approaches. One is largely based in political science and strives for generalizable theory. The second is interdisciplinary, spanning the humanities and the social sciences, and is more descriptive, aiming to chart the "choreography" of shared/contested sacred sites.[22] The latter, by its nature, includes greater attention to some gendered aspects of religious sites and to women's religious practice, while the former often sidesteps it. In comparative politics, contestations over sacred sites have been examined through the prism of the problem of "indivisibility." Integrating insight from economics and political science but adapting it to the unique nature of sacred sites, Ron Hassner offers the following three-part definition of indivisibility of holy sites: (a) "the [conflicting] parties must hold that the issue cannot be parceled out or subdivided without significantly diminishing its subjective value (coherence)"; (b) "the parties must mean the same thing when they refer to the issue they are bargaining over (boundaries)"; and (c) "the parties must believe that the issue cannot be substituted for or exchanged for something of equal value (uniqueness)."[23] This is a useful definition to apply to many sacred sites over which conflict between communities is ongoing.

Much of the literature in political science has attempted to investigate the reasons why certain goods come to be seen as indivisible. One strand of the literature has understood indivisibility as stemming from particular characteristics or histories of certain goods that