



## *Women and the Holy City*

Jerusalem's Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif is the holiest place in the world for Jews, the third-holiest place for Muslims and a constant feature in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Yet the gendered dimensions of inter-communal disputes over sacred space in Jerusalem, as well as in other holy places around the world, have been largely neglected, as have women's roles in these site-specific conflicts. An implicit association of women with peaceful politics and syncretic religious practices has obscured the fact that women are often key actors in inter-communal contestation of holy places. This study looks to three contemporary women's movements in and around Jerusalem's Sacred Esplanade: Women for the Temple, a Jewish Orthodox movement for access to Temple Mount; the Murabitat, Muslim women activists devoted to the protection of al-Aqsa Mosque from Jewish claims; and Women of the Wall, a Jewish feminist mobilization against restrictive gender regulations at the Western Wall. Lihi Ben Shitrit demonstrates how attention to gender and to women's engagement in conflict over sacred places is essential for understanding what makes contested sacred sites increasingly "indivisible" for parties in the inter-communal context.

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# Women and the Holy City

The Struggle over Jerusalem's Sacred Space

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CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment  
978-1-108-70718-3 — Women and the Holy City  
Lihi Ben Shitrit  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

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CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India  
103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,  
a department of the University of Cambridge.

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Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108707183](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108707183)

DOI: 10.1017/9781108751391

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First published 2021

First paperback edition 2024

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

ISBN 978-1-108-48547-0 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-70718-3 Paperback

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## *Acknowledgments*

This research would not have been possible without the willingness of activists to speak with me and share their profound experiences of Jerusalem's sacred space. I hope that they will find the book interesting and perhaps even useful in their thinking about gender, women, and activism in contested sacred sites. In particular, I hope that the juxtaposition of their own struggles with those of women from other, very different, movements in and around Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif and the Western Wall may open up opportunities for even new ways of imagining this space of contestation.

While researching and writing this book, I benefited from the generosity of intellectual interlocutors who have offered comments, critiques, and advice that significantly improved the work. In 2017 I was fortunate to be a fellow at the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, where faculty and fellows provided the most helpful feedback and the perfect intellectual environment to work on this topic. In particular, I would like to thank Steven Weitzman for his continued support, as well as Lois Dubin, Meirav Jones, Yuval Jobani, Julie Cooper, Sam Brody, Orr Scharf, Rebecca Kobrin, and Cara Rock-Singer. The cohort of fellows at the Katz Center expanded my engagement with Judaic Studies and helped me broaden my horizons beyond the political, and into the theological and spiritual experience of my interlocutors as well as the deep well of tradition they were drawing upon as well as challenging.

In 2018–2019 a fellowship with the Middle East Initiative (MEI) at Harvard Kennedy School brought me back to political science, to the broader MENA region, and to Muslim and Arab contexts. I am immensely grateful to Tarek Masoud for supporting this research and being freshly excited about it every time I presented or discussed it – even when it was the fifth or seventh time he had to hear about it. My colleagues at MEI Lama Mourad and Kim Guiler provided extensive feedback but also friendship, personal support, and distraction in our

shared office for the year. Other fellows, faculty members and staff at MEI and the larger Harvard community were tremendously helpful at different stages of this project. I want to especially thank Yuree Noh, Lilly Frost, Alex Stark, Hind Ahmed Zaki, Bruce Rutherford, Jonas Bergan Draege, Abrar Ebel, Salma Waheedi, Susan Kahn, Chris Mawhorter, Maura James, Julia Martin, and Hilary Rantisi.

I presented parts of this work at several conferences and workshops and was grateful for the engagement and thoughtfulness of participants. In particular, participants at the POMEPS workshop on Women and Gender in Middle East Politics in 2016 at George Washington University, and the MEI workshop on Feminisms in the MENA Region in 2019 at Harvard Kennedy School were instrumental in sharpening my writing on the subject of Israel/Palestine in the context of contemporary Middle East politics. In addition, I was overwhelmed by the generosity of other scholars who took the time to read, think, re-think, and push me to think harder and more critically about my subject of inquiry. Among these, I am extremely grateful to Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, Sherine Hafez, Anwar Ben Badis, Ali Abu Al-Awar, Mahmoud Jaraba, Yuval Jobani, Ron Hassner, Yitzhak Reiter, Motti Inbari, Marwa Shalaby, and Tanya Zion-Waldoks.

At the School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA) at the University of Georgia – my home institution – I was lucky to have a tremendously supportive department, whose every member has been nothing but encouraging. I would like to thank all of my colleagues there, and in particular Maryann Gallagher, Cas Mudde, Markus Crepaz, and Amada Murdie. Also at the University of Georgia, I worked with the most brilliant and inspiring research assistants over different stages of this project: Michael Momayezi, Shahrzad Roshan Zamir, Jenica Moore, Austin Doctor, Stephanie Stewart, and Jon Christian. In Athens, Georgia, Viviana Depaz has been a great friend and help beyond measure, and Nina Kuznetsova also provided superb assistance at a critical time. Alongside the institutional support from SPIA, this research benefited from support by the Sarah Moss Fellowship at UGA and the wonderful American Council of Learned Societies/Luce Foundation's Religion, Journalism and International Affairs Fellowship.

Finally, at Cambridge University Press, Maria Marsh and Dan Brown were enthusiastic about the project from the start, and patient as life took different turns and slowed down the writing process. Atifa

## *Acknowledgments*

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Jiwa and Natasha Whelan were also always a pleasure to work with, and Mary Starkey provided superb editing. I want to thank the team at CUP and the anonymous reviewers of the manuscript for their faith in this project and their very helpful feedback. A part of the chapter on Women for the Temple has been published as a journal article in *Politics & Religion* (2007), titled “Gender and the (In)Divisibility of Contested Sacred Places: The Case of Women for the Temple.” I thank the journal and Cambridge University Press for permission to reproduce the materials here.

My family is where I first brainstorm research directions. My mother, Deganit Ben Shitrit, has such a wealth of knowledge on Judaism, gender, and history that she serves as my unofficial academic adviser, human encyclopedia, and first reviewer. She has read multiple versions of this work and has spent hours helping me think through my materials. My father, Haim Ben Shitrit, gave me a new perspective on Jerusalem, and my siblings – Eshchar, Yahav, and Ruth – and my grandparents Albert and Yaeli, constantly teach me, each in their own way, how to live creatively, compassionately, and with meaning. Gulshan and Sharat Sikri, my parents-in-law, are my home away from home in India and I am deeply thankful for their unconditional love.

Above all, my husband Rohan and my son Osian are my best teammates and collaborators. It was because of Rohan that I became interested in Jerusalem. His sharp eye – and camera – captured aspects of the place and space that I never noticed and raised layers of questions that being a native of the city I never thought to ask. But most importantly, his intellectual generosity, curiosity, and honesty make me constantly set higher standards for myself. Osian joined us in 2017 and joyfully changed our lives, but Rohan made sure that the change would not mean that I can no longer write almost every day. Thank you, my loves.



## *Note on Language*

I use a highly simplified transliteration format for Arabic and Hebrew, given that this book draws on interviews and texts in a mixture of Hebrew, colloquial Arabic of various Palestinian dialects, and Modern Standard Arabic. The transliteration does not include distinctions between long and short vowels, or hard and soft letters.