Three Paths to Zion

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis project pursues the strategies to create urban design interventions that preserve and encourage multi-religious harmony in the contested sacred topography of Jerusalem. First, I observed the environmental and social qualities of religious coexistence by studying a pilgrimage site in Jerusalem currently shared by groups from the three monotheistic faiths, the Masjid al-Nabi Da’ud (the Mosque of the Prophet David) on Jerusalem’s present-day Mt. Zion district, which is adjacent to the southern wall of the Old City. I then proposed to transform the neighborhood surrounding the pilgrimage complex by honoring the observed dynamics of coexistence, in an attempt to create a harmonious, multi-religious space in Jerusalem’s sacred landscape.

My intention is to create a pluralistic public sphere that serves to promote dialogue and reconciliation between the adherents of the three Abrahamic traditions. Such a place of religious harmony, to borrow the words of Louis Kahn, will present an urban environment that can serve as “a place of the example”. The new district will serve as the headquarters and residency of an institution for ecumenical dialogue called the Nathan Foundation for Monotheism, which will be run by a board made up of members of the three different traditions (including the current religious parities dwelling on Mt. Zion) and partner initially with the Open Society Institute and Soros Foundations Network.

In the spirit of the virtue of “hospitality”, traditionally associated with Abraham, the center of the Nathan Foundation will house venues for research, exhibition, celebration and worship for each of the three faiths. The new district will develop along a public promenade offering dramatic views of Jerusalem from one of its highest promontories. I will attempt to induce, in the pilgrim and inhabitant, a sense of wandering between cultures and faiths, an experience that will help reconstitute, with the aid of Jerusalem’s religious topography, something of that reflective journeying of Abraham through the cosmopolitan swath of the Fertile Crescent.

Thesis Supervisor: Julian Beinart
Title: Professor of Architecture
The Cenacle, Masjid al-Nabi Da’ud

Image source:
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to Zion
Three Paths
For my brother Victor

ואהבת לעך כמנך
Abbot Benedikt Lindemann, strolling before the Dormition Church on Mt. Zion

No other place in the world seems to be better suited to bring together Jews, Christians and Muslims in prayer and dialogue and for conferences and seminars whilst fully respecting all differences. The promotion of mutual trust and understanding helps to enhance peace. This area on the border between Israeli and Palestinian territory was used in the past as a “neutral” place for Jews, Christians and Muslims.

As Christians we are committed to peace. As Germans we saw the spirit of humanity overcome the spirit of inhumanity after the Shoa and desire to bring together once more Jews and Germans. As Benedictines we now want to make a special contribution towards peace to enable Israelis and Palestinians, as well as Jews, Christians and Muslims to overcome hate and violence in this region of conflicts...

—The Benedictine monks of the Abbey Hagia Maria Sion (the Dormition Abbey), describing their motivations to develop the “Beit Benedict Academy of Peace” on Mt. Zion.

Introduction
The viable coexistence of Jerusalem’s Jews, Muslims and Christians remains an intractable problem for many of the world’s leaders and best thinkers. The ethical discourse of coexistence appears as a haze in the double-speak and real-politick solutions of political strategists. It hardly bears mentioning that Jerusalem and its religious landscape was the key piece that broke the solubility of the last political proposition for peace between Israel and Palestine. The architect and urbanist attempting to introduce interventions in Jerusalem that can heal the wounds of conflict must struggle to apprehend the cultural and religious strategies (and consequences) of visionary politics. Can she propose design solutions for creating and sustaining pluralistic harmony?
Jerusalem is a city beloved by human beings and God, a place of sacred importance and a destination of religious pilgrimage for over one half of the world's population. It is a city with a heavenly counterpart and a paradisial destiny. To many, it remains the omphalos of the world, the place where the first man was formed and took his first breath. To millions it is the site where sin was atoned for, where death itself was slain, a place so holy that it is said that all of humanity's prayers ascend to heaven from Jerusalem. Here is where God's prophets have themselves ascended alive into heaven or have been martyred (in the case of Jesus, both happened). Jerusalem is the setting of many other such traditions important to the religious heritages of peoples around the globe, some of whom seem to be in eternal strife with one other. It is thus a city torn with conflict and is itself the originator of conflict. Perhaps this is why the book of Revelation makes the city the object of the last battle of humankind. God Himself covets Jerusalem and weeps over it.
It comes without saying that events that take place in Jerusalem, both for fortune or for ill, have dramatic consequences on the conflicts and destinies of peoples around the world, to an extent that has been unmatched by any other place in the world. When Catholic and Greek Orthodox worshippers began beating each other with candlesticks in Jerusalem’s Church of the Holy Sepulchre one day in 1852, for example, the result was the onset of the Crimean War.

So when one considers the bloody and contested history of Jerusalem, it comes as somewhat of a confounding surprise, a loosened gear falling off the crankshafts of history, when one discovers a place in Jerusalem where all three religions have been mingling together in the same sacred site in near-harmonious conditions for almost three centuries. Especially since that site is associated with the person most responsible for making Jerusalem what it became to so many of the world’s inhabitants, the conflicted and violent figure of King David. The Masjid al-Nabi Da’ud (the Mosque of the Prophet David) on Jerusalem’s present-day Mt. Zion, has been a site of religious pilgrimage for the world’s three Abrahamic faiths. Although other sites have been shared uneasily between members of the different traditions (such as the tomb of the patriarch Abraham himself in Hebron), it remains the only pilgrimage site in the world where all three monotheistic traditions have shared the same building.

Today the Nabi Da’ud complex remains a site of pilgrimage for mainly the Jews and the Christians. The presence of a Muslim family cemetery outside the walls of the complex, however, and the continued identity of the Cenacle\(^1\) (the “Upper Room”) as a mosque since its conversion as such in the sixteenth century (since recently refurbished in the mid-90’s), has assured a continued Islamic presence on the site. For the Jews and Muslims, the complex is important because it houses the traditional site of the Tomb of David. The site now houses a Jewish yeshiva and was once the site of three mosques, a soup kitchen and pilgrim hostel, and a Sufi convent (zawiya). For the Christians, the Cenacle, which is also the present-day Mosque on the second level, commemorates the Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples as well as the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Pentecost to inaugurate the Holy Church (Acts ch. 2).

\(^{1}\) From the Latin coenaculum, or cenaculum, meaning “dining room” (customarily located on a second floor).
How did this quirky multi-religious compound come to its present condition? The earliest part of the present-day complex was originally a Franciscan church and monastery (the first of the Franciscan order in the Holy Land). After a quarrel erupted between the Franciscans and the Jews over access to the tomb site, the complex was converted into a Muslim shrine by the sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, in a strategy to quell the conflict between Jerusalem’s Jews and Christians. While the Ottomans usually kept the tomb off-limits, they permitted both groups limited access to the second level. Although the Cenacle is a “mosque” in the physical sense (shown below), many Muslim locals (even the Muslim contractor in charge of its recent refurbishment) unconsciously referred to it as a “church”, indicating that in local Muslim perception, the Cenacle is meant to be shared with the Christians. It appears that the tradition of toleration that has spared the compound from religious contestation began with the introduction of the third powerful but relatively disinterested party.

However, the area of present-day Mount Zion may have a history of religious coexistence that goes very far back in history. The Masjid is currently located over what appears may have been a Roman-era Synagogue. In 1951, the Israeli archaeologist Jacob Pinkerfeld discovered a niche in the ancient northern wall behind the tomb of David whose height from the floor is similar to other niches from the same period that were used to
The 6th century Medaba Map of Jerusalem, showing that the area of present-day Mt. Zion was included within the Byzantine city walls. On the very right are the ancient church of Hagia Sion (4) and what is theorized to be the first Cenacle (5).


The Tomb of David


The 6th century Medaba Map of Jerusalem, showing that the area of present-day Mt. Zion was included within the Byzantine city walls. On the very right are the ancient church of Hagia Sion (4) and what is theorized to be the first Cenacle (5).

Jewish worship), his argumentation remains problematic due to the fact that Synagogues where usually oriented toward Jerusalem (in this case, the temple mount) only in the rough sense of the word. Hearkening to a statement written by Epiphanius (in late fourth century) that claimed that seven synagogues and a "Church of God" existed on Mt. Zion at the time of Hadrian's visit (ca. 131 CE), Jews argue that the complex was one of the seven synagogues, while Christians claim the latter. The graffiti fragments, therefore, offer the most compelling evidence. Curiously, the publishers of the findings in question turn out to be Franciscan scholars, a hint that modern claims of legitimacy to the site may ultimately be motivating the archaeological investigations. Ironically, the so-called Judeo-Christians in question were declared heretics by the early Church, since they rejected the orthodox view of Jesus' divinity. A modern-day Muslim will tell you that this would make them "Muslim", since they propagated the doctrine of Jesus, a Muslim prophet to Muslims, without accepting the Church's "heresy" of worshipping him as God. In fact, some scholars even theorize that Mohammad received his early religious instruction from such Jewish followers of Jesus. Unfortunately for Bargil Pixner and the Franciscans, they may just have made the best case for keeping the Masjid a Muslim holy site.

The identification of the site with the "Tomb of David" was actually begun by the Crusader Christians in the eleventh century, who located the tombs of David, Solomon and St. Stephen among the ruins of the Byzantine Church of Hagia Sion, due to the fact that they misidentified the hill as the location for the historical "Mt. Zion". Gradually, however, both the Jews and the Muslims began associating the site with the historical Tomb of David, whose exact location had been lost to Jewish memory since the early second-century Bar Kochbah rebellion (but most assuredly must have been located somewhere in the environs of the City of David below).
Mt. Zion's Religious Sites

*Arial View of Mt. Zion, showing the three pedestrian approaches to the Masjid al-Nabi Da'ud complex*

(Arial photograph purchased from the City Engineer's Office of the Jerusalem Municipality.)
The "House of Caiphas"
This Church in the St. Savior's Armenian Convent commemorates the spot where Jesus was tried by the family of the Jewish high priest. Here, the Armenians believe, St. Peter denied Christ three times. The site is typically not accessible for general visitation.

The Dormition Abbey
The Church and Abbey of Hagia Maria Sion was built in the 19th century by Kaiser Wilhelm II for German Benedictines, to commemorate the site where the Virgin is said to have rested before her ascension.

The Maqam al-Nabi Da'ud
Originally a 12th century Franciscan convent, then a Muslim visitation complex, and now largely a Jewish yeshiva and synagogue complex.

The Tomb of David (Lower Level)
Two synagogues now occupy the lower level of the Mosque, one housing the tomb of David.

The Cenacle (Upper Level)
Now a Mosque, it is a destination of Christian pilgrimage commemorating the last supper of Christ with his disciples.
If Pixner is correct and the complex was originally a "Judeo-Christian Synagogue", then it is quite a fitting start for the historically ambiguous religious identity of the site in an area that the Benedictine monks of the Dormition Abbey fittingly refer to as a "place between", a rootless condition reinforced by Mt. Zion's now anachronistic name. Perhaps its multi-religious character is the result of its relative unimportance and sleepy marginality, a fact that may have resulted from the decision of the Ottomans not to include it within the city walls. During 1948-1967, the area of Mt. Zion was located in the "no-man's land" between Israel and Jordan, and as a result the area suffered heavy gunfire. (We know of the niche in the northern wall because a mortar shell exposed it.) Including the significant Tomb of David, roughly a quarter of the site is composed of burial places for the Muslims, the Catholics, the Greek Orthodox, the Armenians and the Protestants. Although most people now associate Mt. Zion with the "Old City", the area (because of its graveyards) remains both physically and psychologically outside of the city walls. Separated from the Old City thus, and from the rest of Jerusalem by the steep and wide Hinnom Valley, the site's relative isolation and unique ecumenical composition (unlike the many of the other neighborhoods and areas of Jerusalem) has continued to contribute to its special identity as a "place between"—as close to a "neutral" place for the three religions to mingle as there is Jerusalem.

Today, however, the site commands one of the most impressive views of the city. Situated in one of the highest sections of the Old City, the tower of the Dormition Abbey is one of the most notable orienting markers on the city skyline, surpassed in prominence only by the towers on the Mount of Olives. If the hill cannot be the "true" Mt. Zion, perhaps it can succeed so in spirit, becoming a public sphere for bridging the city's ethnic divides. Directly west is the Israeli neighborhood of Yemin Moshe, directly south is the mixed neighborhood of Abu Tor, directly adjacent to the east is the Muslim Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan, and to the north, just within the city walls, is the Christian neighborhood of the Armenian Quarter. The architect will fall immediately in love with the potentials of the site.
Today’s “Mt. Zion” is located on the ridge extension south of the Old City. The Hinnom Valley surrounds the hill.
A Space for Pluralism
As a successful space of multi-religious coexistence, The Masjid al-Nabi Da’ud offers a tantalizing opportunity to create a realm of harmonious intra-religious fellowship in Jerusalem. Observing the dynamics of coexistence, the primary quality that stood out to me was the ambiguity of signification produced by the very form of the Nabi-Da’ud complex. First, there is an implicit ambiguity of claim to ownership induced by the need of Christian pilgrims to visit the Muslim space in order to commemorate two of the most significant events in Christian history, the institution of the Eucharist and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the body of believers to establish the Church. Because of these associations, it is absolutely startling that the site does not garner more attention among Christians than it now does.
It takes a seasoned tour-guide, in fact, to even locate the Cenacle for you among the maze of courts in the complex. I had to wander through the complex twice just to identify the Cenacle, and after that to find the entrance into it (as the entrance through the Synagogue below is now locked).

Very few Christian pilgrims visiting Jerusalem are thus even aware of the Cenacle. They are told of its very existence and traditional significance usually only when they dragged there by a guide. Even then, its significance does not always seem to register. Usually, they stand in the Mosque rather awkwardly, wondering what they should do. Although some did stop to pray directly before the brass olive tree inside the Masjid, most took a few photos and walked out immediately, finding the Tomb of David below a more noteworthy site. I asked every tour guide I knew or bumped into what the significance of the olive tree placed in the Masjid might be, and no one could provide an answer or even knew who placed it there. So, very interestingly, even this quasi-religious object had an ambiguous provenance. Its three branches held up three oil lamps, perhaps signifying...
the presence of all three faiths sharing the space...I could only
guess. Incidentally, I observed both Christians and Orthodox
Jews photographing themselves before it!

Since the Masjid overlaps with the Tomb of David complex directly
below, a constant stream of non-Jewish visitors passes through
what otherwise would be a fairly private complex of courts housing
a religious Yeshiva (a school for Jewish religious studies). The
interior and external form of the Masjid, therefore, creates an
ambiguous situation of claim for the Jews and Christians, both
within it and without. The presence of the third more or less
disinterested party, even in its musemized condition, guarantees
the religious harmony of the other two groups. Could we take
more advantage of such a remarkable situation?

Although the Cenacle is under the control of the Ministry of
Religious Affairs, which advocates a strict status quo approach
that keeps the Masjid in its musemized state, I believe that an
ecumenical institution represented by the three religious traditions
could better decide how to use the Masjid amongst themselves.
They would team up to enjoy the Masjid on a cooperative
arrangement, never allowing the present form of the site to
change physically or in claim. By establishing procedures all
three can mutually agree on, it will become possible to share the
space in such a way as to accommodate better the needs of all
groups to observe their respective rituals, without threatening the
rights of the others. If a group should feel "impinged upon", it will
reserve the right to veto a decision. If funded well by a charitable
organization such as the the Open Society Institute and Soros
Foundations Network (OSI), the institution can even relieve the
city of certain maintenance obligations, until the spin-off initiative
of the Nathan Foundation for Monotheism (explained below) is
economically self-sustaining. For example, the (Muslim) Dajani
family cemetery on the property has fallen under utter neglect.
The first ecumenical task of this new institution could simply be
to look after the property, playing a neighborly "Good Samaritan"
caretaking role, so long as the political situation prevents the
Dajani family (and the Islamic Waqf) from reclaiming full control of
the property (according to Yusuf Natshe of the Waqf, the Dajani
family is simply allowed to visit it, but not bury in it).

To serve in an initiatory, mediatory capacity, I also propose that the
OSI coordinate with the groups of Mt. Zion in such an important
dialogical quest and begin to "internationalize" thus this space of
coexistence in order to create a neighborhood for ecumenism in
Jerusalem. The effort, if proved successful, can then provide a
model to other ecumenical/pluralistic ventures around the world.
This new institution even has the potential to take up a leadership
role in worldwide efforts to establish a dialogue between the
normally adversarial religious groups (not just monotheistic ones), becoming thus the symbolic “world-headquarters” of ecumenism, as a sheer virtue of its special location in Jerusalem.

In designing a public space for such a foundation, I will attempt to extend the dynamics of the three-fold arrangement of the Nabi Da'ud complex into the rest of the area, directly west of the Masjid complex where the choice developable lots of the current parking lots are located. By placing the parking underground (a relatively inexpensive venture in Jerusalem), we can develop the crescent of land extending from the Mt. Zion gate and Old City Wall to the undeveloped Benedictine property on the south. I propose to call the new public complex “Kikar Natan haNavi”/“Maqam al-Nabi Nathan”/"The Place of the Prophet Nathan", after the prophet of God who kept David humble.

The Nathan Foundation for Monotheism ———

The Place of the Prophet Nathan will grace Mt. Zion as an iconoclastic beacon of ecumenical goodwill in Jerusalem. Somewhat like a Biblical Levitical city, it will carve out a subversive realm of unity in the sectarian landscape in Jerusalem, becoming a place of refuge and religious toleration, “the place of the exception”. The key piece of the new district will be the Nathan Foundation for Monotheism, which will be founded to establish dialogue between the members of the three Abrahamic faiths, research the means and methods multi-religious harmony can be advanced in Jerusalem and around the world, and promote the rights of persecuted religious minorities around the world. Some of its tasks will be to lobby governments, mobilize fact-finding missions, host conferences and world congresses (such as the recent World Congress of Imams and Rabbis for Peace held in Ifrane, Morocco last year), and to coordinate with and support such interest groups as the Cordoba Initiative. The moral described by Nathan’s parable of the poor man’s ewe, as told by the prophet to David (in 2 Samuel 12 of the Bible and reflected in Sura 38 of the Koran) will be the foundational principle of the Institute, viz., the righteousness of the powerful is to uphold the rights of those with little power or possessions.

The Nathan Foundation will be supported in part through endowments dedicated to the “peace of Jerusalem” by individuals or “sister cities and communities” around the world. Its board members will be composed of individuals of the three Abrahamic faiths. The Foundation will fearlessly undertake the ecumenical theological task of equipping its various members in dialogue to address the problems of religious intolerance in their communities and to challenge the legitimacy of inhumane conceptions of piety.
Lots to be Administered by the Nathan Foundation
Showing present buildings and ownership, Jerusalem Gush (Area) #26
ACTIVITIES

1. The Masjid al Nabi Da'ud (Mosque of the Prophet David)
   1a. The Cenacle or Room of the Last Supper (on second level)
   1b. The Tomb of David (on first level)
   1c. Sephardi Synagogue
   1d. Guard-room for Cenacle access (on second level)
   1e. Muslim cemetery
   1f. Assaf's Cave (a music bar)
   1g. Diaspora Yeshiva compound and residence area

The Nathan Foundation for Monotheism, nos. 2-18

2. Nathan Foundation Conference Center
   2a. Restaurant
   2b. Visitor's center and exhibition area
   2c. Auditorium and conference facilities

3. Information kiosk and vendor courtyard

4. Mediterranean-style courtyard with vendor stalls (Parking below)
   4a. Elevator to parking levels

5. Mosque

6. Synagogue (for all Jewish groups)

7. Auditorium and conference facilities

8. Nathan Foundation Library and Research Center

9. "Memorial chambers" to memorialize the victims of genocide across the world. One should be dedicated to the remembrance of the Armenian Genocide.

10. Undesignated religious study and/or celebration places (Friday night feasts during Ramadan, foot-washing ceremony on Holy Thursday, "Upper Rooms" with views of city, Jewish weddings, etc.).

11. Self Zawilja

12. Residences and Hostel/Guest houses (on upper levels are restaurants and venues for private roof-deck celebrations, Sukkot, etc).

13. Nathan Foundation Conference Center

14. Cafe

15. Studio and exhibition space for local artists

16. Undesignated religious meeting place

17. Catholic Church commemorating the Pentecost

18. Synagogue and Yeshiva for a currently unrepresented Jewish group on Mt. Zion

Other Properties, nos. 19-33

19. Catholic cemetery

20. St. Savio's Armenian Convent
   20a. House of Calaphas (Armenian Church)
   20b. St. Savior's Church ("under construction")
   20c. Armenian cemetery

21. The Dormition Abbey of Hagia Maria Sion (German Benedictine)
   21a. Church of the Dormition (the sleeping place of the Virgin)
   21b. Souvenir shop
   21c. Cafe

22. Greek Orthodox cemetery

23. Franciscan Convent

24. Diaspora Yeshiva

25. David Palumbo Art Museum and private residence

26. Center for Visual Studies (residence for visiting artists)

27. Greek Orthodox park

28. Escavated Mikvah

29. Greek Orthodox soccer field

30. Protestant cemetery

31. Protestant cemetery

32. Diaspora Yeshiva

33. Catholic cemeteries
   33a. Oscar Schindler Memorial (near his present gravesite)

The Nathan Foundation for Monotheism
Area of Administration and Maintenance

A SPACE FOR PLURALISM
In its embryonic stage, I propose to house the Nathan Foundation in the Beit Benedict Academy of Peace, to be built soon by the Benedictine monks of the Dormition Abbey in order to host scholars from different religious backgrounds for multi-religious cultural studies on Mt. Zion. The Nathan Foundation will attempt, however, to convince the State of Israel and the Jerusalem municipality to allow its internationally important cultural peacemaking project to expand unto the significant soil nearby under the control of the Jerusalem Development Authority. The Nathan Foundation will develop new museums, a new library and research center, and an auditorium and conference center, plus an art center, cafes, restaurants, venues of celebration, shops and so on. It will thus be sure to attract the kind of dependable tourism that the city seeks. The OSI will provide the investment funds needed for the development of the properties. I anticipate that in time the properties will be economically self-sustaining.

After the Nathan Foundation is allowed to develop on the nearby present-day parking lots, the educational facilities of the “Beit Benedict” can be expanded into the nearby neighborhood. The initial Beit Benedict premises can thus serve as other functions. In my proposal, I argue that the Old Beit Benedict can be converted into a “Church of the Pentecost” (no. 17 on the Activities maps, pp. 28-29) as well as and a Jewish Yeshiva and Synagogue (no. 18) for a Jewish group not represented now on Mt. Zion. I propose that the Dormition Abbey and the Diaspora Yeshiva create a property trust with the Nathan Foundation, giving them an interest in allowing the Foundation to develop on their properties. They will gain thus a commensurable representation on the Foundation’s board and a share in the economic benefits of the income generating activities of the Foundation’s greater complex (the properties now under the control of the Jerusalem Development Authority). The Benedictine monks of the Dormition Abbey and the Rabbis of the Diaspora Yeshiva can play an important role in the life and functions of the Nathan Foundation. Although it is idealistic, perhaps, on my part to believe that they will agree to give up control on the activities on their properties, they can nevertheless be asked to serve as courageous exemplars of good-will to those who can benefit from the Nathan Foundation’s use of their lots.

In my proposal, only five significant existing buildings are replaced, as shown at right, including one already on the way to redevelopment by the Development Authority. The Diaspora Yeshiva will be compensated for its replaced buildings through guaranteed use of the Nathan Foundation’s meeting places (nos. 2, 10, and 13) and/or perhaps exclusive use of one of the guest houses (no. 12). For the restaurant facility on the south-west of the complex, used today mainly for wedding receptions, I am
proposing to relocate to a better facility with a dramatic, roof-deck view of the city, when the new guest-house complex (with a roof-level promenade) is developed (no. 12). The present owners will thus be more than compensated for their old property.
The Process: Anticipating Ritual
Given the immediate context and the more or less neutral condition of the present Masjid al-Nabi Da’ud, how can the architect proceed in the task of augmenting the pluralistic conditions of the site without accidentally opening new wounds of conflict? Because evoking new religious associations can spark new rivalries, the architect must make every effort possible to understand how religious symbols function in the adhering community and gauge what their capacity for transformation is. In an environment of religious conflict, she must attempt to design for positive transformations of meaning and preempt possible conflicts by inserting mitigating constructs where she can. Transformations of religious associations that are rooted the physical environment take place in the dynamic evolution of rituals. Perhaps the architect can help introduce beneficial rituals and practices that encourage pluralistic virtues.
The architect can propose a ritual, but not actually create it, as ritual practices fundamentally develop from the transformations of meaning that occur within the subject she is designing for. If the subject is a religious community, the ritual develops out of the world-symbolizing constructs of its faith. The architect must therefore become an empathic agent as well as a seer. Nevertheless, the architect is advantaged in that she owns the power of suggestion, which although gives her the power of a sympathetic “priestess” or “auger”, in the context of an environment of cultural conflict, this power can make her quite a dangerous agent indeed.

The potential for immediately introducing and transforming religious meaning on the site of Mt. Zion is probably unparalleled in Jerusalem. Since the city is Jerusalem, Mt. Zion is therefore quite an important site in the world. Some dormant historical religious associations can be evinced on Mt. Zion, which after I identified them, suggested an evocative capacity for new religious appropriation and transformation, especially when gauged with respect to the traditions of the different groups in the area. A problematic aspect of introducing new meaning into multi-religious context immediately surfaced, however, for although traditions may not be shared or even exist, the history of the site shows that competitive mythologies can create new significations of meaning, and therefore develop into new conflicts. Thus, the architect must not only become an empathic observer (if not a participant) but an “empathic heretic”, stepping outside of one subject’s faith-constructs to gauge its potentially conflicting path with another’s.

Keeping in mind the tensions between mechanisms of “ambiguous ownership”, competitive mythologies, and the processes of sacred transference that created the religious environment on the present site, I had to identify the ways rituals could be introduced and/or employed beneficially towards a pluralistic end and invent rules to create mitigating strategies that encouraged a fruitful coexistence while avoiding conflictive relationships. Such an “anticipation of ritual” I identified with the actual “design process” of my task. I identified three areas in which “rituals” can develop beneficially in a multi-religious context, which I have termed “rituals in dialogue”, “rituals in recovery” (memory), and “rituals in shared topography”. I developed, then, corresponding strategies to handling them.
I Rituals in Dialogue

We did not consciously pursue it, but, in hindsight, the way my design process itself was conducted with my advisory team serves as a useful demonstration of a “ritual in dialogue”. Nearly every week (typically on a Tuesday) throughout the term, I gathered for an hour with Julian and one or both of my readers, John and Nasser, to discuss the project. Part of my process was even “ritualized” toward this end, as I sustained a working method of forming my proposals in plasticine, “carving” them from blocks placed on the site model, and we would discuss variations of these, adjusting the planning each time. What was most useful, however, was the rapport we developed among ourselves by meeting periodically. Our conversations on the rich and opinion-fraught topic of Jerusalem were of course wide-ranging, and we had the pleasure to discuss it from our own respective Jewish, Christian and Muslim cultural vantage points. I must say, this
review process was one of the most delightful exchanges that I was fortunate to be involved with at MIT. Not only was I enriched in my efforts by a vivid discussion on all manner of topics (such as the prowess in excellence that often develops by the need of minority communities to "assimilate"), but the dialogue between us became a small model of the very objective of the public sphere that I was ultimately designing. Although the secular academic culture we share probably makes us culturally much more alike than the different people groups who live in the Mt. Zion district, I do not believe that the insights, debates or new questions that arose from our discussions would have been possible without the diversity of our personal religious-cultural identities. In a true sense, I regard my work as the result of this collaborative effort. It would not have had the same integrity without it, and I can safely speak for all us, I think, that we would not have gained as much from it.

Jerusalem can certainly benefit from something of this dialogical approach, but can the designer(s) replicate it? The primary lesson that it does suggest to me is that my proposal (sadly) can only remain a suggestion of what really needs to happen at a greater participatory scale for real-life proposals for Jerusalem's environment. The architect or planner would best adopt a participatory approach in the creation of new environments, so that the different cultural stakeholders are given an integral role to play in the process itself, beginning with the theoretical suppositions driving a project. Perhaps the visionary can conceive of her role as an expert participant and consultant, a "philosophical agent" in the process and even (dare I suggest?) train herself in psychology and certain aspects of communicative theory, such as the discourse theory of the Frankfurt School or the ethnomethodology of the American Pragmatists. A basic exposure, nevertheless, to comparative religious studies and history should be a prerequisite to design-work in Jerusalem, especially whenever its religious topography comes into question (and when does it not?). I hope that this thesis can begin serving as that kind of a useful cue.

Design for Pluralism

Paradoxically, the writings of Jurgen Habermas suggest that the primary motivation for dialogical encounter between members of different faith traditions actually resides in their quest to strengthen their self-identity. Ecumenical discourse, he suggests, will even lead to dramatic self-revelations otherwise not possible. Says Habermas,

...I see the intense encounter with "strong" alternative
traditions as a chance to become more fully aware of one’s own roots... As long as participants inhabit the same discursive universe, there is no hermeneutic impulse to reflect on otherwise self-evident, unarticulated background motivations. This spur to reflection doesn’t prevent intercultural understanding; indeed it is what makes it possible in the first place. And all participants must get clear on the particularity of their own respective mental presuppositions before the discursive presuppositions, interpretations, and value orientations they hold in common can come to light.³

As a theological task of no inconsequence, thus, rigorous ecumenical dialogue even promises to function in modernity as a “prophetic” discourse. I am fortunate to understand Habermas on this point because such a process I actually had the pleasure of witnessing first hand during my time as a student in Jerusalem, while pursuing my M.A. studies in Second Temple Period Judaism and early Christianity. I was introduced there to a vivid dialogue occurring between Jews and Christians deliberating together on the development of the Rabbinic tradition and the Jewish origins of the Christian faith. The dialogue, far from devastating or cheapening what otherwise might seem as the incontrovertible truth-claims of the participants involved, actually spurred a mutual quest to understand the faith-constructs of the other dialogical partner better in order to understand the origins and development of their own tradition’s and thus progressively strengthen their own identities. The dialogue largely centered on the rich trove of early Rabbinic background material represented in the teachings of Jesus. This community of scholars, called the “Jerusalem School of Synoptic Gospel Research”, are not only transforming their understanding of their respective traditions, they are developing powerful new methods and theories that promise to radically impact scholastic understanding of their respective origins. These new trajectories would not have been possible without a fruitful encounter with the “strong” identity of the other. Certainly, they would not have developed with the same scholastic rigor that the exchanges inherently produced. The motivations for the participation, of course, were philological in character, spurred in large part by the recent studies on the Dead Sea Scrolls and a continuing trickle of archaeological discoveries, but they would not have occurred without a certain openness and enthusiasm for a revelatory interaction with the “Other”. Interestingly, scholasticism seems to produce the rigorous preconditions that Jurgen Habermas says are necessary for this kind of fruitful multi-cultural interchange.

The Christians involved in the Jerusalem School are even aware that they are participating in a scholastic undertaking with something of monumental consequences for their faith, especially in their development of a new theory for the sources of the gospel traditions. Their comparative approach, shaped in no small part by their Jewish colleagues, also helps shed light into such things as the poorly understood Jewish sociological underpinnings behind Jesus’ conception of the “Kingdom of God”, the heart of his teaching. The implications of such recoveries of meaning will not remain insignificant in the history of Christianity’s understanding of its founder, especially since an important aspect of Jesus’ use of the “Kingdom of God”, as the Jerusalem School explains, was dramatically focused on realizing the transcendental imperative of transforming the “here and now”. Jurgen Habermas, commenting on the theology of Johannes Baptist Metz (who argues in lines similar to the Jerusalem School), notes the tremendous consequences of such recoveries, since they lead to Christianity’s restoration of the “anamnestic reason” it lost, which occupied a central role in the religion of ancient Israel. The results of this loss, he agrees with Metz, resulted in a theology that became “insensitive to the outcry of suffering and the demand for universal justice”.

The sensitizing task of ecumenical dialogue is therefore the enormous challenge ahead of us. This theological and philosophical task is not really in the ken of the architect’s control. However, in designing a place for “pluralism” in Jerusalem, I recognized that the primary task for the designer was to actually design an environment conducive to strengthening religious self-identities, both as a foundational as well as a teleological endeavor. The challenge is to do so in a manner conducive to multi-cultural dialogue — where, in fact, the transformations in internal understanding can stem productively out of a dialogical encounter with the Other.

**Strategy: Stress the Religious Ethics of Coexistence**

In deliberating where to begin the challenge of creating architectural “ecumenism”, the religious associations of the site itself offered the first useful lead. Looking for the mention of the figure of David in the Quran, I discovered only one instance where he appears significantly (outside of being merely listed among the prophets). In Sura 38, the incident mentioned by the Prophet is a retelling of Nathan’s “Parable of the Poor Man’s Ewe”, through which Nathan convicted David over his sin regarding his marriage to Bathsheba (whose first husband, Uriah, David had made sure was killed in battle). The Quran only alludes to the sin, but does

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5 Ibid., 130.
21. Has the Story of the Disputants reached thee? Behold, they climbed over the wall of the private chamber;

22. When they entered the presence of David, and he was terrified of them, they said: “Fear not: we are two disputants, one of whom has wronged the other: Decide now between us with truth, and treat us not with injustice, but guide us to the even Path.

23. “This man is my brother: He has nine and ninety ewes, and I have (but) one: Yet he says, ‘commit her to my care,’ and is (moreover) harsh to me in speech.”

24. (David) said: “He has undoubtedly wronged thee in demanding thy (single) ewe to be added to his (flock of) ewes: truly many are the partners (in business) who wrong each other: Not so do those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, and how few are they?”...and David gathered that We had tried him: he asked forgiveness of his Lord, fell down, bowing (in prostration), and turned (to Allah in repentance).

25. So We forgave him this (lapse): he enjoyed, indeed, a Near Approach to Us, and a beautiful place of (Final) Return.

26. O David! We did indeed make thee a vicegerent on earth: so judge thou between men in truth (and justice): Nor follow thou the lusts (of thy heart), for they will mislead thee from the Path of Allah. For those who wander astray from the Path of Allah, is a Penalty Grievous, for that they forget the Day of Account.

The Holy Quran, from Sura 38 (Sad).

The verse in the middle panel of the window of the Masjid al-Nabi Da’ud comes from verse 26 of Sura 38:

“Judge thou between men in truth and justice.”

not mention it directly. Nor is the incident related to in parable form. In so doing the dispute is told as a real life case David adjudicated; hence, there is a shift in the emphasis of the moral in question (for we do not know David’s greater sin) to an ethical principle of social justice – a wealthy man with 99 ewes should not lay claim to his lesser’s sole ewe. For me, this is an ethic that can be sublimated as the social imperative of the powerful to honor the claims, rights and properties of the weak, without bias. The ethic has a further repercussion to the attitude with which the designer herself proceeds in the task of creating a truly pluralistic environment. With regards to the site, for example, some may argue that the Christians and the Jews appear to have the strongest claims to the property of the Nabi Da’ud complex, while the Muslims would appear to have the least claim (and, in fact, the least interest). But in the ethic, we must value claim of the lesser party just as well, even if it is the claim of a single Muslim family. For me, this meant that I gear the planning of my project to focus on reintroducing the now almost lacking presence of the Muslims back into the area.

Incidentally, my Muslim friend Ismael Obydat pointed out to me
that verse 26 of this Sura is actually depicted on the window of the Masjid, “so judge thou between men in truth (and justice)”. What a perfect way to celebrate the ethic! I decided to imitate this strategy in erecting a pillar at the crossroads near the Zion Gate, on which are to be inscribed this verse and other verses like it from the Holy Writings of all three faiths that stress the ethics of coexistence. I call it the “Golden Rule Pillar” (no. 3).

**A New Mosque [6] with a Medresse Courtyard [5], Sufi Zawiya [11], and Imam Residence [16]**

In order to observe the ethic of coexistence, the designer’s task must begin with reintroducing the now underrepresented Muslim presence in the religious complex. The visible Muslim representation, as the Masjid al-Nabi Da’ud demonstrates, can also serve a “neutralizing presence” between the Jews and Christians. I had to work hard to discover the greater Muslim significations of the site were in the past, and once finding them, attempt to posit ways that they could be reintroduced, although this task is clearly left best to Muslims to ponder. I did discover a few associations thanks to the work of my Palestinian friend Ismael. Ismael informed me that, according to members of the Dajani family (the historical caretakers of the old Nabi Da’ud complex), Muslims from the city would traditionally gather in the complex to celebrate an iftar (a fast-breaking meal) with the family, bringing with them upon such occasions sweet treats on the Friday nights of Ramadan. I also discovered a few Muslim traditions concerning the figure of David. According to a hadith (tradition from the Prophet) relayed by Ibn ‘Asakir, David is said to have received his Psalms on the sixth night of Ramadan, which is another rich Ramadan association that the site can offer to Muslims. Why not make the area a special place of destination for worshippers on that night? Ibn ‘Asakir also attaches this tradition to David:

> The Messenger of God (May God bless him and grant him peace) said, “The best fast is the fast of David, who used to fast one day and eat the next. The best prayer is the prayer of David, who used to sleep during the first half of the night, pray until the sixth hour, then go to sleep”.

In order to reintroduce a Muslim presence in the area and highlight these traditions and celebratory practices, I am proposing to create a new Mosque in the area (no. 6), complete with a Medresse style courtyard (no. 5) to accommodate large gatherings for Ramadan celebrations. The Mosque will be prominently situated near the Zion gate, in order to visibly complement the towering Dormition

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Abbey and a (new) National Synagogue (no. 7). I propose that the new Mosque be named something along the lines of “The Mosque of the Fasts of David” (perhaps dropping “of David”), in order to assign a special status to it as a place for Muslim visitation during the above-mentioned days pertaining to Ramadan, giving it (and its court) a celebratory and pious reason for visitation for all the Muslims in the surrounding neighborhoods (which have their own mosques already).

My friend Ismael points out that other designated “visitation” places for special Muslim feasts exist in Palestine. Among them is the Maqam al-Nabi Musa, commemorating the prophet Moses. Once a year, he says, Palestinian villagers used to journey together to the site, which is in a remote location in the Judean desert.
They would reach the site in caravans, each company entering the Maqam in a specific order, represented by their village’s flag. I propose to introduce such a visitation practice for the Maqam al-Nabi Da'ud for the sixth night of Ramadan, making it a special designated site of celebration in the Muslim world, commemorating the reception of David’s Book of Psalms. Such a designation would also remember the fasting and praying piety attributed by tradition to the figure David, and as such would make for an especially appropriate place for Sufi visitation, helping to restore the Sufi presence once special to Mt. Zion. I propose to give the Sufis, in fact, their own Zawiya on Mt. Zion (no. 11), complete with a small Mosque. I will also propose that a residence be provided for the Imam who is to represent the Dajani-family stakeholders of the Nathan Foundation (perhaps in the currently empty, existing historical property at no. 16).

Strategy: Design for Hospitality (Habitual Dialogue)

Father Basileus of the Dormition Abbey informed me that one of the purposes of their Beit Benedict Academy of Peace will be to host all people whose interest is to seek to enter into an ecumenical conversation with a member of another faith. No person regardless of their faith will be turned away, as he related to me, St. Benedict himself claimed, “Every man knocking at the door is like Christ himself standing at the door”. In order to create the good habits of neighborly dialogue, the architect is the agent who probably has the greatest advantage as an outsider, for although she may not consciously state it as such,
it is in fact the art she practices best and has the most control
over physically. There is an architecture of “solitude”, but we
define such programs as the exception, typically the architect
must design spaces that must accommodate the reception of
guests and the coming together of two or more people. Even in
spaces for solitude, she designs for a sort of communion, creating
relationships between distinct entities. In a program whose aim is
creating multi-cultural dialogue, she would best study consciously
the physical conditions involved in the art “hosting”, especially the
Middle-Eastern kind.

Abraham is the paradigmatic “host” by tradition, whom Jews,
Christians and Muslims have looked back to as the exemplar
par excellence of the virtue of hospitality. As is widely known,
Abraham hosts three heavenly visitors, including the “angel of the
Lord”, in the Bible. According to Louis Ginzberg (the compiler of
Legends of the Jews), Abraham is not simply lauded as the faithful
man who rejects polytheism, but is celebrated as “the model of a
beneficent, hospitable, and just man” in Jewish tradition (and
likewise by early Christian exegetes). The Jewish apocryphal
book the Testament of Abraham (ca. 1st century BCE) relates that
Abraham even managed to host the Angel of Death who came
to collect his soul. He was forewarned by the angel Michael,
whom he also hosted and thus delayed his death, enough for
him to convince God to let the angel show him all of His creation
– this time, the heavens return the “hosting” favor, and Abraham
is taken upon a flying chariot and given a Dante-like tour of the
earth and the heavens.

Despite all of the religious and political conflict of the Middle East,

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1 Louis Ginzberg,
“Abraham, Testament of”,
its inhabitants are renowned the world over for their legendary hospitality. If there is one utopian program that the designer can truly control on Mt. Zion, it would be to highlight the architectural-reliant language of hosting. Especially in the Middle East, the architectural requirement to provide spaces to host guests is an all-important necessity. Sufi zawiyas have a designated ceremonial chamber where a Sufi sage can greet his guests and acolytes. Likewise, we can look at a rich trove of religious practices that ceremonially celebrate the virtue of hosting. On the site itself, we have the Upper Room, which the gospels say Jesus and his disciples had occupied as guests in their observation of the Passover, and in which Jesus himself performed the hosting act of washing his disciples feet, declaring, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." In the Jewish Passover tradition, a chair must be set aside for an extra guest at the table, who may arrive unannounced. It is designated as "Elijah's chair" since one of those guests may just in fact turn out to be the prophet himself arriving to herald the advent of the Messianic Age.

The traditions and moral teachings of the religious inhabitants on Mt. Zion can encourage them to exhibit the neighborly virtue of hospitality. I concluded that my challenge was to tap into that dormant pool of obligatory goodwill. Indeed, one must ask, where else in the world do we have the three religions already sharing the same sacred ground in such neighborly proximity and in such "host-like" conditions? The Cenacle, with the Tomb of David underneath, is physically a mosque. At first it produces in a visitor a contextual aberration, since the Mosque doesn't really serve the purpose of its design; nonetheless, it accommodates and even facilitates the sacred interests of non-Muslims, as a virtue of its Muslim form, since it affords the other two religious groups the ability to coexist and avoid actualizing their claims of exclusive right to the site. A non-Muslim is always cognizant thus of his or her status as a guest. And yet, in the context of the Upper Room ceremonies, how fitting this is, since Jesus and his disciples also were observing the Jewish Passover as guests in Jerusalem, and this did not hinder their ability to worship. Moreover, to Christian worshippers observing their Holy Thursday ceremonies, the synagogue below can even serve as a physical reminder of the Jewish origins of the Eucharistic ceremony Christ instituted for his disciples.

The fact that the three faiths have coexisted in the hill for centuries in relatively peaceful conditions, despite all the typical tensions and back-door squabbles over the right to use the property, is truly a sign that for some reason Mt. Zion has been given the divine gift to play the host to the three groups. The site is outside of the city walls, directly facing one of its less important
Cooling Towers
yet historically strategic gates by the Armenian quarter, the city’s most neutral neighborhood in the otherwise religio-politically charged environment of the city. It has somehow remained immune from some of the contestations over Jerusalem’s stony, sacred landscape. The sleepy area (approximately a quarter of it covered by cemeteries) contrasts dramatically with the other sacred areas of the city, where internecine and (in moments of political flare-ups) intra-religious struggle is almost *de rigueur.*

In designing for hospitality, I took my cues from the squares, streets and court-yards of the Old City, configuring my entrances to match the Jerusalem style portals. I also consciously designed for steps, stoops and changes in level to be amenable to sitting in order to encourage neighborly relations between the different religious inhabitants.

**“Undesignated” Spaces for Meeting and Learning [10]**

In addition to the new church, synagogues and mosques, I propose to create a complex of undesignated meeting places, composed with a series of tower structures of an iconic, yet religiously ambiguous, character. The towers will give the Nathan Foundation an iconic presence on the skyline of Jerusalem as well as provide the more practical function of serving as cooling towers to help naturally ventilate the meeting spaces in the hot and dry summer. These meeting halls can serve as places of gathering for locals and pilgrims alike, and be coordinated under the procedures for space sharing that the members of the Nathan Foundation collectively agree on, providing an incentive thus for habitual dialogue. The complex will provide plenty of complementary back-up space in order to avoid conflicts over space, and rotate the use of rooms so that no one group gets “settled in”. Since the tower structures, with their decks and balconies, will give dramatic views of the city, they will be ideal for such celebrations as weddings and bar mitzvahs, Purim and Sukkot celebrations, Ramadan iftars, “Upper Room” observances for Christians observing Holy Thursday, and so on. The “Upper Room” observances can even be preceded by “foot-washing ceremonies” that can take place in the water-chambers at the bottom of the cooling towers, reintroducing a rite that once took place in the room beneath the Cenacle (and which is now the Synagogue of the Tomb of David).
The dialogue I discussed above between the Jews and Christians of the Jerusalem School is only possible because of the mutual enterprise both share to recover their own origins, and their own tradition's ancient memories. A similar excursion into recovery of the more recent past was undertaken by Susan Slyomovics in her book *The Object of Memory*, wherein she details her studies recording the oral history of Palestinians regarding their lives in the pre-1948 Arab village of Ein Hod. She began her journey comparatively, by noting the strong similarities between the oral histories of Palestinians of pre-1948 Ein Hod and the oral histories of Israelis who lived in pre-Holocaust Eastern Europe, as presented in their respective "memorial books". The study of memorial books has become extensively studied comparatively only recently, as she describes:
In the twentieth century, the uprooting and dispersal of entire populations by war, systematic persecution, or the redrawing of national frontiers have given rise to a genre of popular or folk literature that is properly characterized and designated the "memorial book". The custom of creating books to memorialize a village, town, or district and to document its destruction is found among many displaced groups – East European Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, Armenians after the 1915-20 massacres, German-speaking communities in Eastern Europe uprooted after World War II, Palestinians after the establishment of the State of Israel, and, more recently, Bosnians of any religion. Memorial books engage scholarly interest because each volume combines and codifies the best of folklore's many subjects: oral literature, folk history, vernacular architecture, community photography, and sociocultural anthropology.  

Strategy: Design for Collective, Cross-Cultural Recovery —

Cultural recollection, as an act of collective agreement, is a potent form ritual making. It is perhaps the most creative form of cultural transformation that architects participate in fully. The challenge in my case is to extend the collective recovery process of a particular people group so that it invites alongside the participation of outside cultures, who themselves are in the process of this form of recovery of self-identity and cultural preservation. This comparative, open dialogical process seems as difficult to create as it is evocative; nonetheless, I posit a couple ways this process might be found on Mt. Zion.

The Museum of Memorial Chambers [9]

To some extent, the practice of reclaiming the oral and documental histories of uprooted peoples is already present on or near a site. The Jewish Yeshiva runs a small Holocaust museum on the premises (no. 8) which displays, among other things, the burnt Torah Scrolls of Synagogues destroyed by the Nazis. The Armenians also run a similar museum in the Armenian Quarter, which displays the photographs of Armenian intellectuals and well-known personages who died in the Turkish genocide. Taking a cue from Slyomovics, I composed an area of tower-like "memorial chambers" (no. 9) which could display the photographs, drawings and oral histories of the various "uprooted" people groups in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Israel. Although each group would be responsible for the exhibitions of its own chamber (some of these shared perhaps on a rotating basis among outside groups), I propose that the Nathan Foundation run

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9 Monument at the entrance of the Holocaust Museum of the Diaspora Yeshiva.
the entire complex of chambers so that visitors of the respective people groups and tourists can visually enter into the process of comparatively studying one another's origins, displacements and traumas and perhaps seek the solace of dialogue and pursue the collective recovery of cultural histories in one another's presence. Along with a memorial chamber to commemorate the Armenian genocide, I propose that one memorial chamber be dedicated to presenting the drawings, records and oral histories of Palestinian refugees living in the West Bank and around the World. The Nathan Foundation can also undertake the greater scholastic task of coordinating research into the oral histories of uprooted populations around the world. Scholars can therefore travel to the Foundation to work on their various comparative studies. The Foundation can also dedicate part of its library to amassing collections of memorial books, both for the benefit of study as well as world-heritage.

Schindler's Way – The Via Mitigatoria
*From the Via Dolorosa (the Painful Way) to the Via Mitigatoria (the Soothing Way)*

The practice of cultural recollection is also present in Mt. Zion in the form of its many ethnic-religious cemeteries. I was surprised
to find out that many important historical personalities in the history of Israel/Palestine are buried on Mt. Zion, and although they are lesser known as sites of visitation, the cemeteries actually elicit much interest among local scholars of history. As a student on the campus of Jerusalem University College on Mt. Zion, I was surprised by the amount of Israeli visitors the Protestant Cemetery on the campus premises attracted. One such important personality buried on Mt. Zion is Oskar Schindler of Schindler’s List fame.

I propose to build a new monument on the cemetery property in which Schindler lies, in order to commemorate the righteous acts of Schindler near his gravesite by listing the names of the people he helped rescue. I will also serve as a visual terminator to the north-south axis of the street running through the Nathan Foundation’s “tower precinct” of memorial chambers and meeting halls. Thus, I propose to introduce and encourage a new visitation ritual to Schindler’s gravesite and commemorate the memory of a man who selflessly worked to reverse the horror and trauma of dislocation and genocide of a people not his own. In such a manner, I will try to avoid augmenting what Michael Sorkin snidely labels Jerusalem’s “sweepstakes of suffering” (the prime example being the Via Dolorosa, which commemorates Christ’s tormentous journey to the cross) and create instead a “Via Mitigatoria”, introducing a “sweepstakes of healing and reconciliation”. The visual axis through the landscape of memorial chambers will thus commemorate a man who spared others from a similar fate as Christ suffered. Incidentally, the axis is directionally tying Schindler’s grave to the Holy Sepulchre. Although, I admit, this item has a Christian-Jewish reconciliation focus in mind (and celebrating a “Christian” at that), perhaps it will induce a healthful rivalry of “conciliatory place-making” among the non-Christian members of Mt. Zion’s neighborhood. The search for contemporary or near contemporary saints outside of our respective faith-traditions, to me seems to promise to yield much fruit as form of participatory cross-cultural recovery.
The historic center of Jerusalem daily transcends its sectarian composition. Its physical fabric is a richly variegated and harmonious urban environment. Like the prolific, ancient Cenomanian reef that produced the limestone ridge upon which it is built, the ethnic enclaves of the city have produced a coral landscape of minarets, bell-towers, and glittering domes. Every generation lays a new encrustation of structures upon a previous layer of equally variegated religious formations, only to become the anchors for the new configurations of the succeeding generations. Memories themselves become calcified in stone, the living inhabitants, through their rituals, draw from them the sustenance that carries them into their respective paradisial futures. Along the way, rituals are birthed or transformed. The stones embody ancient memories, but they serve as moorings for rituals entirely novel in their own right, such as the custom
of placing of prayer notes on the fissures of the Western Wall. Although every group has its own exclusivist claim to paradise, they share together, nonetheless, this same animated sacred topography that sustains their quests. If the architect can draw attention to the pragmatic dynamics of this shared topography, and enact the principles of sharing the reef of the present, perhaps that is enough to “design for pluralism”. She can even argue that the flattened atoll of each tradition’s hereafter, in fact, depends upon it.

Perhaps one way of bringing about an appreciation for the shared sacred landscape is to shape the pedestrian’s experience of it by controlling her perception of it, especially in enabling her to perceive how those outside of her tradition utilize that same sacred geography. By bringing her gaze on others, she is then placed in a better vantage point to reflect on her own tradition, and in that empathic encounter find the constructs that enable her to understand her own identity better.

Having taken my cues from the Masjid al-Nabi Da’ud to discern the qualities of a multi-religious space, I wondered if in fact there were qualities about it that entreated the quest for “self-identity”. I did in fact observe in the Cenacle certain evocative actions that

*Prayer notes in the Western Wall.*
the ambiguity of signification sometimes produced in the pious Christian pilgrims. Since the enigmatic brass olive tree in the space seems to be the object of most interest to visitors in the space, prayers, when they were actually made in the Cenacle, were usually said in front of it. The woman shown at left even bowed slightly after saying her prayer, and after kissing her hand she patted the stone platform. I cannot recall a single precedent in Christian history where the image of a tree has served in the same capacity as an icon, cross or relic in order to focus prayer. Certainly, the brass tree (in a Muslim space!) is not intended to serve as such. Yet the lack of clear Christian signification in the Cenacle induced in this worshipper an autonomous act of creative adaptation of her environment. A lack of clear signification actually brings to one's awareness the need to actualize it, much as a communicative engagement with the Other brings thought constructs to awareness that would otherwise evade the Self.

--- Strategy: Implement Ambiguity for Creativity

Although I attempted to create formal ambiguity in religious signification for a piece of my project (the “tower precinct”), I found I could also create the “ambiguous” or de-familiarizing condition in the pedestrian’s experience moving through her environment. I did not focus on blurring distinctions, per se, so much as constantly shifting the gaze and focus of experience. I found I could do this effectively by simply engaging the pedestrian’s focus on the religious topography of Jerusalem.

“Abraham’s Journey”

Using the same tactic of orienting a view path through the new neighborhood as I did in aligning “Schindler’s Way” with the Oskar Schindler monument, I proceeded to design the neighborhood’s physical fabric by orienting similar paths to the other religious markers of Jerusalem’s topography. To design for a sense of “wandering” in the midst of the religions, I imagined the pedestrian moving through the neighborhood’s streets and roof-top promenades in such a way as to constantly shift her gaze from one strong axial path to another. This kind of environment is different from the Old City, where uninterrupted vistas and direct axes are rare. Since I use the tall landmarks, she is not disoriented in her greater movement through the site, but the constant shifting would be just enough to engage her curiosity and attention. As she walks on the promenade, for example, she faces the minaret of the Zawiya for a moment and then suddenly encounters the axis to the dome of the Synagogue to the south...five more steps
Situating view paths... to find the footprints
and she suddenly is aware of the axis to the Pentecost Church beside it, a new landmark she discovers. In the meantime, the elevated promenade enables her to witness the activities in the Zawiya’s court below, a situation very rarely ever encountered in the Old City, where interior courts are usually tucked away behind the tall walls.

I made the axes crisscross one another through the “tower complex” of the Nathan Foundation, where the most tension in the project is felt. The individual cooling towers are situated so that they frame the axes at the roof-top promenade level. The axes extend from the towers, minarets, archways, domes and spires of the surrounding neighborhood, and resolve themselves on the religious markers on the Jerusalem skyline – the Western Wall and Dome on the Rock, the Hulda gates on the southern wall of the temple mount, the towers and domes on the Mount of Olives and so on.

I went through several iterations of this process before I finalized the neighborhood configuration, as presented in the plans earlier (see “A Space for Pluralism”). First, I determined the orientations of the view axes, usually tying Muslim markers in the neighborhood to Muslim landmarks on the Jerusalem sky-line, Jewish to Jewish ones, Christian to Christian ones (e.g. the “Schindler’s Way” axis is oriented towards the Holy Sepulchre), but not faithfully, since these religious landmarks fortunately overlapped with one another when viewed from Mt. Zion’s vantage point, e.g. the Dome on the Rock is directly aligned over the Western Wall. For each iteration, I reconfigured the building plans and landscaping according to any rearranged axes, both for the street level and the roof-top promenade level (which is three stories above ground level in some places). I then placed plasticine blocks on the model and carved the visual axes through them and studied the results. The remaining material of the massing model represented either buildable space or space for trees and foliage. I landscaped the model to make sure that the trees (and the kinds planted) did not block the view paths.

By shifting the view paths of a pedestrian’s experience of her environment, I induce in her a sense of wandering among the religions, much like her forefather Abraham once did in his journeys around the Fertile Crescent. I attempt to heighten her awareness of her neighbor’s religion, and invoke in her a complementary inward journey to reflect on the assuring presence of her tradition. Yet, in the midst of her neighbors, she walks with same purpose and on the same paving stones as they…and finds, perhaps, in the solace with those not her kind, new dimensions to her communion with God.
(Above) The "Hulda Gate" View Axis, looking in towards the domed Synagogue

(Left) The "Hulda Gate" View Axis, looking from the Synagogue towards the Hulda Gate area of the Temple Mount (and the Russian Orthodox Church on the Mount of Olives).
Conclusion

Throughout the duration of my design activity on this project, I found my thoughts forever returning to a batch of correspondence I found between Louis Kahn and Jerusalem’s former mayor, Teddy Kollek, which I had the fortune to view in the Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania (while researching for a paper for Dianne Davis and Larry Vale’s seminar on urbanism and visionary politics). In 1969, after already having received the Hurvah Synagogue commission, Kollek had invited Kahn to direct the planning on the ridges south of the Old City. Kahn, having attended the first session of Jerusalem Committee in late June and early July of that summer, fortunately had to leave Jerusalem early on that occasion to travel to Dacca. Fortunate, because feeling the need to elaborate on his brief conversation with Kollek on the matter, he wrote to the mayor about his vivid personal vision for Jerusalem while on-board his flight to Istanbul (I have provided a copy of the transcription of his hand-written letter in the Appendix).

Kahn comments fearlessly about some of his architectural requirements, including the need to reject altogether stone-veneer architecture (if we are to take his Hurva proposal as a paradigm, he wanted the concrete to remain exposed even in the Old City). He also suggested planning with what he called “vista zoning” in order to celebrate as much as possible the views to the
Old City, an idea that directly influenced my approach in designing the arrangement of the Mt. Zion district to construct (especially for the pedestrian) unobstructed visual paths to the surrounding city. But his advice concludes in an arresting way:

One of the more important ideas, however, is to give thought to the creation of new institutions which should be offered to Jerusalem and should appear in South Jerusalem. Places of well being, glorifying body beauty as well as the beauty of the mind. I see the places for children, for boys, for young and those older and old as having their own clubs, their own rooms of meeting and places of happening, places of cross invitation, places associated with their gardens, for privacy their courts of entrances, play fields, etc.

I have been proposing for other developments, the establishment of schools of the talents, schools designed to draw out the natural talent of a person in contrast with present ways of examining people on an equal basis. A person does
not learn anything that is not already part of him from the start.

A man is born knowing what to do but is not born knowing how
to do it or how to express it. This he or she must learn. How
timely is now the need for schools which examine only within
the talent of the person. The would be good for Arabs and
Jews. Israel could be a place of the example.

To Kahn, Jerusalem was above all a place for educational
institutions, these first of all institutions, where individuals
achieve their heroic capacities by simply becoming the “would
be good” of themselves. What strikes me most about Kahn
as a personality, indeed, was his own unbounded trust in the
capacities of his heroic nature...But it was a principle he held
to be true to all. The Jerusalem I studied of twenty centuries
ago was indeed such a city of educational institutions of heroic
individuals. The temple may enabled Jerusalem to achieve her
greatness. But it was the Rabbis who taught and disputed in
her courts and Synagogues who made her legacy outlast her
stones. Those teachers continue to transform the world. Hillel,
Gamaliel, Jesus, Yohannan ben Zakkai, and Paul of Tarsus...
The gift these men had was an ability to reflect deeply on the
constructs of their faith and a foresight to sublimate them for
the travails and challenges of the next age. They had a certain
perspicuity of human nature that results only from a penetrating
empathic reflection of the Other. Like Kahn, they returned
ceaselessly to origins, but found them best applied in valuing the
worth God placed on the Other, His image. A gentile once asked
Hillel to teach him the entire Torah while he stood on one foot.
Hillel replied, “Whatever is hateful to yourself, do not do unto
another. That is the whole Torah.”
Dear Teddy,

I am taking this opportunity while riding to Dacca to clarify some thoughts which were too briefly projected to be understandable. I should have stayed another day but my scheduled visit to Dacca was too ridged and my ticket issued by Pakistan non-negotiable, (foreign exchange). Our meeting with Best, Yafeh was a bit ragged.

I was anxious to talk about what I have now briefly recorded in the following pages. (I wrote these pages before this opening note).

With quick sketches I intend to present to you and the other interested parties, an image of the character of South Jerusalem as it would appear to present Jerusalem.

This image of the layers of buildings, lines of movement and gardens will be governed by underlying practical and aesthetic rules on streets and parking, vistas and open spaces, and strategic points of city services.

I intend to convey ideas about Architecture which would give complete latitude to every architect’s personal way of expressing and still assure a harmony – poetic and symphonic. Offhand now, I see a composite order of concrete and stone which would respect each material for its power and beauty without disguise.

I am not sure that I can impress every architect with the inherent beauty of structural integrity but at least I know that the one who has Architecture in his bones will see his way of working.

Building purely in stone cannot be maintained financially any more. You know yourself how stone arches apparent to the eye as solid stones are only veneer behind crude castings of concrete. Vaults in stone holding floors are prohibitive – beautiful yes but out of the era of today.

This is why I sense a composite order of mixed stone and concrete not the way it is done surreptitiously, but in useful and understandable interaction.

When I saw the site and toured around it, I sensed an opportunity to place building along the layed contours of the sloping sites but have stepped vistas crossing for constant views of Old Jerusalem – a kind of vista zoning – This and I am sure I will think of many such ideas.

Louis Kahn’s Letter to Teddy Kollek, 4 July 1969
Box LIK 39, Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania
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A person does not learn anything that is not part of him from the start.

A man is born knowing what to do but is not born knowing how to do it or how to express it. This he or she must learn. How timely is now the need for schools which examine only within the talent of the person. The would be good for Arab and Jews. Israel could be a place of the example.

I know the idea does not apply only to S. Jerusalem but as well, I believe, to Jerusalem S. N. W. or E. as a whole even if only S. J. is being thought of.

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I must finish my brief notes now because the plane is about to land in Istanbul - After Istanbul going farther East I cannot be sure that the stamps on the envelope will not be licked off to buy a sweet. The world is so unbalanced Eastwise, 

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I want to say that my intention of working alone for a while and of course with the necessary help from Mr. Best is to get my thoughts together and convey them thru sketches and notes to inspire more thought and even better inspire belief in the overall objectives for South Jerusalem and hopefully stimulate thought about all of Jerusalem as a living place with new inspirational beginnings so demanded by everyone who loves it.

Yours Sincerely 
LOU

I hope I can drop off again to Jerusalem on my way back. It would be well to talk with others involved in the project besides yourself and come to a working agreement even if tentative so I can get to work and present something to you soon.


Kahn, Louis I. “The Room, the Street, and Human Agreement.” *A + U,* no. 1 (January 1973) 5-222.


