



# Till We Have Built Jerusalem: Architects of a New City

*Adina Hoffman*

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## **Till We Have Built Jerusalem: Architects of a New City** Adina Hoffman

A remarkable view of one of the world's most beloved and troubled cities, Adina Hoffman's *Till We Have Built Jerusalem* is a gripping and intimate journey into the very different lives of three architects who helped shape modern Jerusalem.

The book unfolds as an excavation and opens with the arrival in 1930s Jerusalem of the celebrated Berlin architect Erich Mendelsohn, a refugee from Hitler's Germany, who must reckon with a complex new Middle Eastern reality. Next we meet Austen St. Barbe Harrison, Palestine's chief government architect from 1922-1937. Steeped in the traditions of Byzantine and Islamic building, this "most private of public servants" finds himself working under the often stifling and violent conditions of British rule. And in the riveting final section, Hoffman herself sets out through the battered streets of today's Jerusalem searching for traces of a possibly Greek, possibly Arab architect named Spyro Houris. Once a fixture on the local scene, Houris is now utterly forgotten, though his grand, Armenian-tile-clad buildings still stand, a ghostly testimony to the cultural fluidity that has historically characterized Jerusalem at its best.

A beautifully written rumination on memory and forgetting, place and displacement, *Till We Have Built Jerusalem* uncovers ramifying layers of one great city's buried history as it asks what it means, everywhere, to be foreign and to belong.

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