

Exile and Return: Jewish Pilgrimage

'Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the Lord empty. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee.'

DEUTERONOMY 16:16-17

Unlike the religions and religious practices of pagan antiquity, ancient Judaism was distinctive in its belief in a single God. The Jewish God was accessible not only through altars, oracles and prophecies, but – perhaps above all – through texts. He made his presence manifest to the prophets, but also wrote his creed on the tablets of stone which Moses received at Sinai. Those tablets, preserved and revered in the Ark of the Covenant, were perhaps the single most sacred object in Judaism. In the kingdom established by David, the Ark was brought to Jerusalem, the royal city, and housed in a special temple built by David's son, Solomon. In this way Judaism would form a deeply influential paradigm for the later Middle Eastern religions Islam and Christianity, both of which traced their descent from Israel. For the Judaism of David and Solomon's Temple brought together the kinds of pilgrimage practices recognisable from Graeco-Roman and Canaanite religions (such as the rituals described by the author of the *Syrian Goddess*) with monotheism and a theology enshrined in texts.

As in other world religions (notably Islam), the sacred texts of Judaism prescribe the act of pilgrimage as one of the obligations of the believer. One of the injunctions given Moses at Sinai specifically refers to the people of God appearing before the Lord three times a year.¹ In this way, even before Judaism had a specific place in which to establish the dwelling of the Lord, it had a prescriptive injunction for the performance of pilgrimage. The activity of pilgrimage was conceived as an approach to the presence of God, which was embodied not in any holy scriptures but in the specific text which God himself had written on Sinai and which was kept in the Ark. This was a profound departure from other ancient religious practice, certainly from that of the Greeks.

However, just as Judaism began as the nomadic religion of a group of tribes who (after Moses) carried the Ark of the Covenant with them as they travelled, so its later history has been a story of displacement from

the Promised Land. The earliest Judaism had no fixed religious domain, but – according to Jewish myth – an original nomadism was converted into an enforced wandering. The Exodus from Egypt (which preceded the arrival in the Promised Land as it is presented in the Bible) is a sacred journey to the land of milk and honey. In the sixth century BC, after Solomon's Temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586, the Jews were exiled to Babylon. After the first century, following the destruction of the last Temple by Titus in AD 70, the Jews were exiled again in a Diaspora lasting nearly twenty centuries. During these periods of exile – much longer in total than the periods in which Jews occupied Palestine – it has often proved extremely difficult for Jews to visit the Holy Land. If pilgrimage is an act of returning the displaced self to a sacred centre, then the history of Judaism has been a virtually continuous displacement.

The motifs of exile and return have become central to Jewish tradition, experience and identity. Biblical narratives of wandering have become incorporated into Jewish ritual in such key festivals as Passover (celebrating the beginning of the Exodus) or Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles, which, according to some interpretations, recalls the temporary dwellings of the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai). Exile and the lamentation for the lost centre became a fundamental theme of Jewish poetic writing. As it is memorably put in Psalm 137:1–6, which refers to the condition of the Jews after the destruction of the First Temple in the sixth century BC:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. . . . How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth: if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

Exile became associated with iniquity. In the lamentations of Jeremiah, this evoked a repeated image:

Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is removed: all that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness: yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward. (1:8)

The Lord hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary, he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces. . . . (2:7)

The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion. . . . (4:22)

In turn, the return to Zion became associated with redemption. Particularly in Isaiah, the restoration of Jerusalem was used as a metaphor for the restoration of the people.

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all the kings thy glory. . . . (Isaiah 62:1–2)

Even the conquerors of Israel were envisaged as participating in the restored city and its faith:

The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they

shall call thee, The City of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. . . . Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.

(Isaiah 60:14,18)

In these prophecies, we see the association of three crucial concepts: redemption, return and a universalising attempt to bring other nations into the orbit of the Temple's powers. Return to the sacred centre is perceived as an act not merely of movement but also of restitution in moral and spiritual terms.

A DISPLACED PEOPLE

In the years after the destruction of the Temple by Titus, Jews remained in Palestine and may even have continued pilgrimage to the shattered remains of Jerusalem. A story associated with Rabbi Akiba, the great Talmudic scholar of the late first and early second century AD, tells of him gazing at the ruined Temple and seeing a glimmer of hope in its future restoration:

Therefore do I smile. The Prophets foretold both the destruction of Jerusalem and its restoration to glory. Now I have seen the first prophecy come to pass, and I know that the second will also be fulfilled.²

However, such hopes – which culminated in the rebellion of Bar Kochba in the mid second century AD – were dashed when Hadrian crushed the insurrection and utterly destroyed the remains of Jerusalem in AD 135. He refounded the town as the Roman colony of Aelia Capitolina and built a temple of Jupiter on the site of Solomon's Temple. Until the fourth century AD, Jews were forbidden even to enter this Roman city.

In the centuries of Christian and Islamic dominion, Jews were allowed to settle in Jerusalem and to visit Palestine from the diaspora communities abroad. However, we possess very little evidence of Jewish pilgrimage in this period. A particularly interesting account from the Middle Ages is provided by Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, who travelled to Palestine from his home in Spain in the 1160s. His journey took him via Italy, Greece, Constantinople and the Middle East to the Holy Land and then onwards to Baghdad and Persia before his return via Egypt, Sicily and Germany. Benjamin's main aim was to visit the Jewish communities scattered through the Christian and Islamic dominions. However, he also had a particular interest in Jewish sacred sites and objects in the countries he visited. Here, for instance, are his comments on a major pilgrimage church in Rome:

Another remarkable object is San Giovanni in Porta Latina in which place of worship there are two copper pillars constructed by King Solomon of blessed memory, whose name, 'Solomon, son of David', is engraved upon each. The Jews in Rome told Benjamin that every year, about the time of the ninth of Ab, these pillars sweat so much that the water runs down from them. You see also there the cave in which Titus, the son of Vespasian, hid the vessels of the Temple, which he brought from Jerusalem; and in another cave on the banks of the Tiber, you find the sepulchres of those holy men of blessed memory, the ten martyrs of the kingdom.³

Here we find fascinating testimony to a diaspora Jewish tradition of martyred saints in Rome. Further, instead of seeing Rome full of Christian memorabilia, Benjamin (and his Jewish guides) interpret the monuments they see in Jewish terms. Rome becomes the burial ground for the dismembered fragments of the Temple – both of the Temple destroyed by Titus and also of its Solomonic predecessor. The significance of the ninth of Ab was not only that it commemorated the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple, but it was also the date when Jewish pilgrims were allowed to visit the Temple site from the fourth century AD.⁴ To lament this tragedy, the pillars of Solomon in a Christian church in Rome produced a miracle for the Jews of the city.

When he comes to Palestine, Benjamin consistently scripturalises the Holy Land, associating contemporary towns with their Biblical origins. While this process is in many ways analogous to what Christian pilgrims did, Benjamin's scriptural base is of course the Old Testament in the days of Jewish monarchy rather than the New Testament's geography of Christ's ministry. On arrival, Benjamin comments:

It is one day hence to Acre, the Acco of scripture, on the confines of the Tribe of Asher. It is the frontier town of Palestine; and, in consequence of its situation, on the shore of the Mediterranean and of its large port, it is the principal place of disembarkation of all pilgrims who visit Jerusalem by sea.⁵

He locates the sites specifically associated with the great prophets of the Old Testament:

Mount Carmel. Under the mountain are many Jewish sepulchres, and near the summit is the cavern of Elijah, upon whom be peace. Two Christians have built a place of worship near this site, which they call St Elias. On the summit of the hill you may still trace the site of the altar which was rebuilt by Elijah of blessed memory, in the time of king Ahab, and the circumference of which is about four yards.⁶

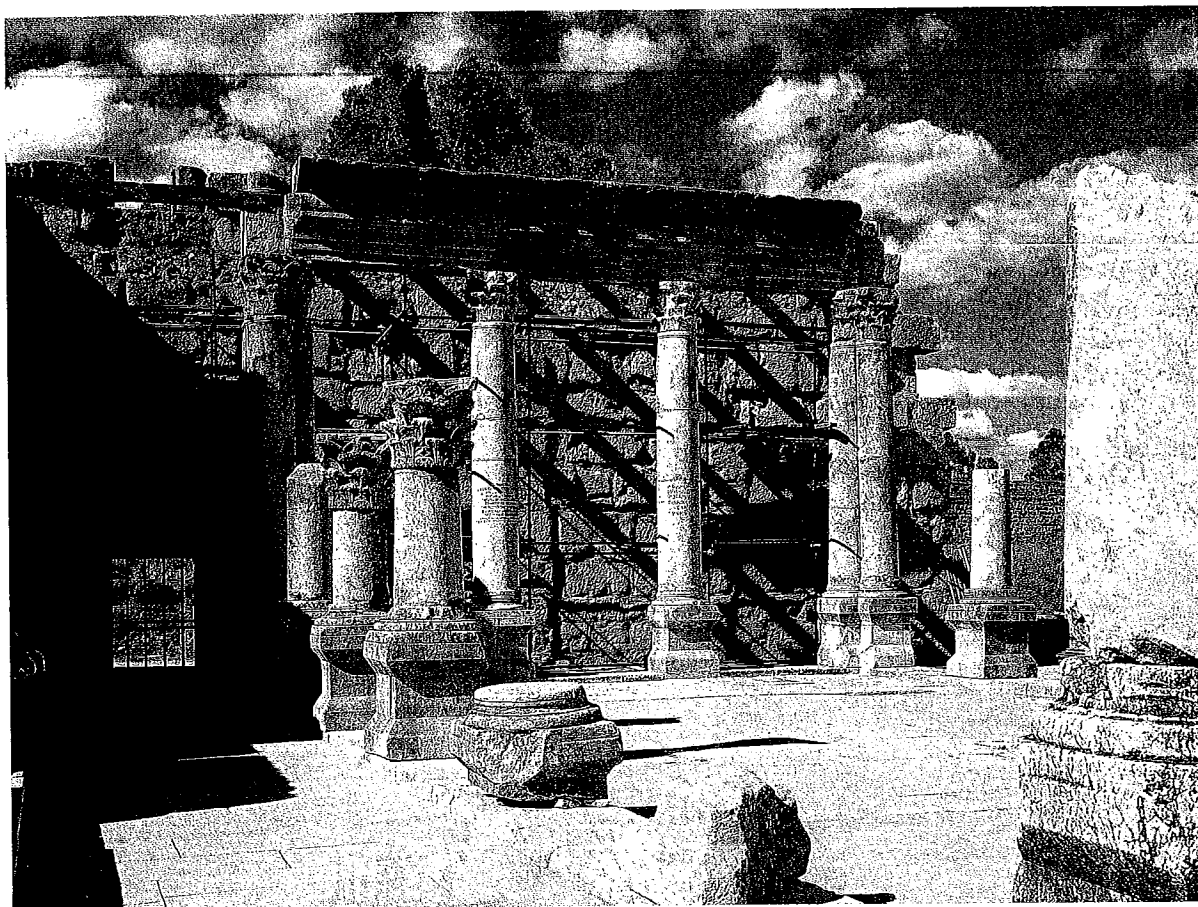
Benjamin is keen to specify the exact details of the altar site and its measurements. He mentions Christian places of worship connected with what he sees as primarily a Jewish holy spot, but concentrates on what he believes to be the really sacred places, Elijah's cave and altar. By implication the Christian church, near but not at the actual spot of the prophet's holy action, is in some sense degenerate.

At times Benjamin's account reveals even more explicitly his distaste for the monuments of Christianity. In describing the newer religion's holiest site in Jerusalem he writes:

The large place of worship, called Sepulchre, and containing the sepulchre of that man, is visited by all pilgrims.⁷

Benjamin's circumlocution, 'that man', reveals his reluctance even to mention the name of Jesus. When he comes to Bethlehem, he notes the grave of Rachel, the place where several roads meet, even the small number of Jews in the town (twelve, all dyers by profession), but at no stage mentions the Church of the Nativity.⁸

Benjamin's Jewish interpretation of the landscape is reinforced by his recounting of Jewish legend and his repopulation of the landscape with



12 Capernaum, ruins of the synagogue. This impressive basilican building dates from between the late 2nd and the 4th centuries AD. Its main façade, with three entrances, faced towards Jerusalem. Despite the scriptural injunction of the second commandment ('Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image'), many synagogues in Palestine and Syria were highly decorated in late antiquity, some with frescoes and many with mosaics.

remains of Jewish heroes. At Mount Zion, he tells the story of how two labourers found a cavern which led to a large hall supported by pillars of marble and encrusted with gold and silver. Within the hall were apparently contained the sepulchres of the kings of Judah, including David and Solomon. According to the legend, the workmen remained in the hall until frightened by a voice instructing them to 'get up, and go forth from this place'. Once they had recounted their experiences to the Patriarch of the city, the latter is said to have ordered the cavern to be walled up, thus hiding it from the gaze of future generations.⁹

The landscape of Palestine is also mythologised and made holy by specifically Jewish miracles:

Two parasangs from the (Dead) sea stands the salt pillar into which Lot's wife was metamorphosed; and although the sheep continually lick it, the pillar grows again and retains its original state.¹⁰

Anticipating Jewish pilgrims of today, Benjamin describes the Jews of Jerusalem going to the Western Wall to pay their devotions. He writes of

... the Western Wall, one of the walls which formed the Holy of Holies of the ancient Temple; it is called the Gate of Mercy, and all Jews resort thither to say their prayers near the wall of the courtyard.¹¹

In the experience of diaspora Jewry, the very difficulty, even inability, to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem became meaningful. The founder of the Hassidic sect, Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, known as the Baal Shem Tov (Master of God's Name) is said to have attempted to visit Jerusalem in the eighteenth century:

He stretched himself upward and cried to God, 'Give me leave, Lord, and respite. Unloose that with which you hold me bound here in order that I may go into your land which calls me'. But God spoke powerfully to him and answered, 'Israel, it is my judgment over you that you remain in your place and do not appear in my land'.¹²

After much torment and against God's injunction, the Baal Shem decided to go. His trials on the journey and his sense that God had abandoned him eventually convinced him not to pursue his voyage but to return home. As his disciple Dov Baer of Mezritch, known as the Great Maggid, is reported to have said:

Now in exile the holy spirit comes upon us more easily than at the time the Temple was still standing.¹³

Some exiled Jewish communities engaged in pilgrimages far removed from the Holy Land itself. In late medieval times, for instance, Persian Jews appear to have echoed the practices of their Muslim rulers in revering tombs attributed to religious heroes.¹⁴ The grave associated with Ezekiel, located at Dhu'l-Kifl, was actually sacred not only to Jews but also to Muslims, for whom the prophet was a saint. The tombs of Mordecai and Esther in the city of Hamadan, meanwhile, acted as pilgrimage centres during celebrations of Purim, when a scroll was read recounting the dangers that had faced previous generations of Jews.

In the absence of the Temple, and among those Jews during the Diaspora who could not make pilgrimage to its ruined site, a sense of continuity with an ancient tradition could nevertheless be maintained.



¹³ Jewish family celebrating Hanukkah, London.

14 Orthodox Jews at prayer by the Western Wall of the Temple, Jerusalem.



Synagogues were more than meeting places: they housed the Law (Torah) which, in embodying Jewish tradition, provided a distant echo of the Ark itself. The Passover service, not only a ritual embodiment of exile and return, but also one of the biblical pilgrimage-feasts, became a remembrance of Jerusalem. It was an occasion on which Jews affirmed their future return to the Promised Land with the phrase 'next year in Jerusalem'. Thus, even without the Temple, prime qualities of Jewish pilgrimage – sin, atonement, diaspora, redemption and veneration for the dead – were preserved and relived in the rituals of the tradition. Many such features can be found in the post-Holocaust impulse to visit both the places of massacre, such as Auschwitz, and their memorials, such as the museum of Yad Veshem in contemporary Israel.

That desire for atonement and redemption was never separate, throughout the Diaspora, from a yearning for the reunification of the people and a myth of return to Palestine. The potent dream of uniting the scattered people of the Lord is well expressed by Benjamin of Tudela, at the very end of his travelogue:

May the Lord in his mercy be full of compassion towards them [the communities of diaspora Jews] and us, and may he fulfil towards both the words of his Holy Scripture: 'The Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee.' – Amen, Amen, Amen.¹⁵

CITY OF DAVID, TEMPLE OF SOLOMON

The experiences of scattering and exile found their expiation in the yearning for the Promised Land. In both cases the sense of dispersal apparently gave rise to a desire for unity which was expressed in spatial

and spiritual terms by homing in on the holy city, its Temple and the Ark within. Perhaps central to the continuous aspiration for Zion as the ultimate holy place in Judaism was the claim that Yahweh himself chose the Holy Land as the dwelling of Israel (Joshua 1:2-6). However, even during the Exodus, Yahweh was considered to be accessible not in a fixed place in the Promised Land but in the portable Ark of the Covenant which God had instructed Moses to make.¹⁶ The Ark was a wooden chest covered with gold plates, in which Moses placed the tablets of the Law which God had given him at Sinai.¹⁷ In Palestine, the injunction to go on pilgrimage three times a year on the feasts of unleavened bread (Passover), weeks (Shavu'ot) and tabernacles (Sukkot) could be fulfilled by fixing the location of the holy in a single centre. This was Shiloh, the central sanctuary of the Israelites (where the Ark of the Covenant was kept) and the object of pilgrimage for the tribes of Israel until David moved it to Jerusalem.

Pilgrimage to Shiloh, at least in the ideal form described in the Bible, included women as well as men (despite the original injunction which only mentioned males), petitions to the Lord and sacrifices.¹⁸ The sacrificial ritual is described in the Book of Samuel:

And the priests' custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand; and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or cauldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither. . . . (I Sam. 2:13-14)

The term for pilgrimage-feasts in Hebrew is *hag*, the etymological ancestor of *hajj*, which is still the Arabic term for the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. The word *hag* implies turning around and dancing - evoking some of the activities that came to be associated with pilgrimage in the Jewish tradition.¹⁹

The reasons why David moved the holy centre to Jerusalem are not entirely clear. What is certain, however, is he bolstered the significance of his new royal capital by creating a new permanent location for the Ark of the Lord, recovered from Shiloh which had been sacked by the Philistines. Politically, David seemed to be appropriating the holy embodiment of Jewish faith to establish a kingship which unified the tribes not merely through might but also through sacred authority. He was able to move the Ark with the support of the Prophet Nathan and in this way to establish his dynasty with divine approval. David's act of transferring the Ark is several times celebrated in the Bible and became embodied in repeated ceremonial in Jerusalem thereafter.²⁰ Such ceremonies themselves became objects of pilgrimage and helped to consolidate the House of David.²¹

However, the fixing of the Ark in Jerusalem was not without contradiction. In wishing to house the Ark in a permanent temple, David was introducing a radical innovation in Jewish religious history. As he said to Nathan:

See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwelleth within curtains.²²

While Nathan was initially favourable to David's plan, on divine injunction he forbade David to build the temple itself:

Thus saith the Lord, thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in; for I have not dwelt in an house since the day that I brought up Israel unto this day; but have gone from tent to tent, and from one tabernacle to another.²³

David was thus allowed to authorise his new dynasty by bringing the Ark to his new capital, but the fixing of the Ark in a permanent place – representing the further institutionalisation of its cult – was denied to him. It has been argued that Nathan's pronouncement reflects the position of a conservative religious faction which sought to preserve the nomadic quality of worship inherited from the wandering desert origins of the Israelites.²⁴

In the event, the building of the Temple was left to David's heir, Solomon, as foretold by Nathan to David:

And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.²⁵

With Solomon, the unity of God's house and sacredly ordained kingship was finally confirmed.

Solomon built the Temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. It was, according to the Bible, a perfect cube in shape, 20 cubits each way, and consisted of a porch leading into a series of ever more sacred rooms. The form of the Temple itself echoed that of the Ark, especially in its use of gold overlay and its imagery of cherubim.²⁶ An object designed to be portable (rings were attached to the Ark through which poles could be passed) was housed in a building whose appearance was designed to recapitulate, make permanent and monumental its sacred presence.²⁷ Beyond the porch was a chamber called the Holy Place and beyond this a small inner shrine called the Holy of Holies, a dark windowless room in which the Ark was placed. Two courtyards, in which sacrifice was offered, separated the Temple from the outside world.²⁸ This building acted not only as a religious space, but was a legal centre for judgments.²⁹ The siting of the Temple on a hill in the city of David thus had fundamental symbolic significance. In social terms, the establishment of Jerusalem demonstrated clearly a shift from the nomadic culture of the early Israelites to a more sedentary life under the monarchy. In political terms, it implied the concentration of authority in a single divinely appointed dynasty. In religious terms, it involved the centralisation of worship.

This range of significance and the power of Jerusalem to act as a focus for the people of Israel were emphasised in the scriptural account of Solomon's dedication ceremony:

Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel unto king Solomon in Jerusalem. . . .³⁰

In response to Solomon's summoning of the people and the sacrifices

performed, God granted a theophany in which His presence filled the new Temple:

And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord. So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord.³¹

This sign was taken as a sanctification of the Temple, as God's approval of Solomon's action in placing the Ark inside it, and of Solomon's kingship. As David's dynasty was ratified, so the placement of the Ark was confirmed:

Then spake Solomon, The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever.³²

In this initial ceremony, in addition to affirming the Temple's spiritual authority, Solomon was seen as tying the Temple's meanings to the moral restitution of the people:

When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy because they have sinned against thee, and shall turn again to thee and confess thy name, and pray, and make supplication unto thee in this house: then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest unto their fathers.³³

The pilgrim who visited Jerusalem on one of the great pilgrimage-feasts would have come to the focus of royal power. Pilgrimage to the Temple was associated with the ultimate place of arbitration in legal terms as well as those of moral self-examination and penitence. Pilgrims would have ascended the Temple mount, symbolically coming ever closer to God, who was believed to be both present in the Temple and yet was also far above it. The sanctuary was seen in one sense as the highest point on earth, the quintessential meeting place of humanity and Yahweh.³⁴ Yet the Temple compound itself consisted of a series of boundaries which ultimately could not be penetrated by anyone save a limited group of priests.

Over time the Temple became an extraordinary nexus for mythical and symbolic meanings. In later Judaism, it was the place where the waters of the Deep were blocked off on the first day of creation; it was the first place and so the centre of the world; it was the site from which the dust was gathered in order to make Adam; it was the location of Adam's first sacrifice and the site of Adam's grave; it was the place where Cain and Abel offered sacrifice (and thus the site of Abel's death). The Flood was caused by lifting the Temple's foundation stone and releasing the waters of the Deep; the Temple was the site of Noah's first sacrifice after the Flood, of Abraham's circumcision and Melchizedek's altar in Salem.³⁵ The Temple thus became a material commemoration of the whole sacred history of the Jewish people.

The yearning for the Temple is wonderfully expressed in Psalm 84: 1-2, 10:

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord God of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: My heart and my flesh crieth out for the

living God. . . . For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Yet this was a theological conundrum. The Temple had to accommodate both the transcendence and the immanence of God. Implying that God was only present in the Temple (or the Ark) would confine his potential omnipresence. Solomon himself, in dedicating the Temple, expresses this apparent contradiction:

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded. Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant. . . . That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there: that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place.³⁶

The Temple and the Ark could thus be said to mediate the presence of Yahweh with the people in a special way. But this caused problems in exile, when the Temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians, since religious meetings could occur only in places where God had clearly made his presence known. The incompatibility between the need for the presence of God and the exile of the Jews was in the Bible only resolved by revelation, when God appeared in a theophany to prophets such as Ezekiel and Daniel. In this way, God's presence could be mediated not merely through a fixed place and object (embodied in the Temple and the Ark) but also through the living charismatic authority of a prophet in exile.

On the return of the Jews from exile in Babylon (in the sixth century BC), the destroyed Temple of Solomon was rebuilt as the Second Temple, partly at the behest of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, although it is likely that the Ark itself had been lost in Nebuchadnezzar's sacking of Jerusalem. Subsequently the Temple was reconstructed in a still more grandiose manner by Herod the Great. Herod's Temple (the Third Temple) was the one from which Christ is said to have expelled the money-changers and which Titus destroyed in AD 70. These latter Temples were still regarded as the dwelling place of the Lord, despite the loss of the Ark.³⁷

Many of the implications and meanings of pilgrimage to the Temple for Jews in the period just before its final destruction are well summarised by this passage from Philo Judaeus, a Hellenised Jew from Alexandria writing in the first half of the first century AD:

The highest, and in the truest sense the holy, temple of God is, as we must believe, the whole universe. . . . But he provided that there should not be temples built either in many places or many in the same place, for he judged that since God is one, there should be also only one temple. Further he does not consent to those who wish to perform the sacred rites in their houses, but bids them rise up from the ends of the earth and come to this temple. . . . One who is not going to sacrifice in a religious spirit would never bring himself to leave his country and friends and kinsfolk and sojourn in a strange land, but clearly it must be the stronger attraction of piety which leads him to endure separation from his most familiar and dearest friends who form as it were a single whole with himself.³⁸

If Philo even partially expressed the feelings of most first-century Jews, one can see how catastrophic was Titus' destruction of the Third Temple.

ISRAEL REGAINED

If the fall of the Temple were not to imply the end of Jewish religious practice, some new means of worship and an alternative mode of articulating religious community had to be evolved. Among the new forms developed by diaspora Judaism (which may themselves echo religious adaptations instigated in earlier periods of exile) were the establishment of synagogues, the ending of animal sacrifice at an altar and the exploration of a whole new topography of Jewish pilgrimage. Just as when Christianity lost the Holy Land in the early Middle Ages and used this opportunity to develop new sites of pilgrimage in Europe, so Jews in Palestine sought out places associated with their own holy figures. The earliest Christian pilgrims to Palestine also frequented many of these Jewish sites – indeed, a majority of the early Christian sacred places in the Holy Land referred to Old Testament events.³⁹

In more recent times, the desire for return was to become more than a spiritual aspiration: it took the form of a political project which finally crystallised in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century into Zionism. This was a largely secular movement in which the sacred themes of return and redemption were translated into the political language of nationhood and minority civil rights. The Zionist cause, especially as propagated in the 1890s by Theodore Herzl, won many adherents among the oppressed Jews of central and eastern Europe: by 1914 the Jewish population of Palestine had more than trebled to 85,000 through immigration.⁴⁰ After the Holocaust, the international community helped to create the state of Israel in 1948. Just as the original kingdom of Israel acted to centralise dispersed Jewish tribes, so the contemporary nation-state is built on the premise of uniting Jews who have been dispersed around the globe.

The Temple has not been rebuilt, although the Wailing Wall (the Western Wall of the Temple) and Jerusalem itself have retained their focal significance for Jews. This significance has become imbued with a series of political implications which assert a modern myth of unity through nationhood.⁴¹ Many of the immigrant Jewish communities have, however, attempted to preserve some aspects of their ethnic identity against the strong impulse to merge into the new nation. In the case of many Moroccan Jews, who, ironically, have felt discriminated against in Israel, the revival of pilgrimage practices has taken on a new religious and political significance which emerges directly out of the current political situation. Rather than incorporating them into a secular state bound by a nominal Judaism, pilgrimage has helped to assert their distinctiveness in opposition to other Israelis. These Moroccans have reinscribed the ritual landscape of the Holy Land with a series of their own saints, such as Rabbi David u' Moshe, whose body is believed to have been mysteriously transported from his tomb in the Moroccan Atlas to a new shrine in northern Israel. Many of the Moroccan shrines lie in peripheral areas,



15 Synagogue at the Hadassah Medical Centre, Jerusalem. The stained glass windows, designed by Marc Chagall, represent the twelve tribes of Israel. In this view (from left to right) the windows of Naphthali, Joseph, Benjamin, Reuben and Symeon are shown.

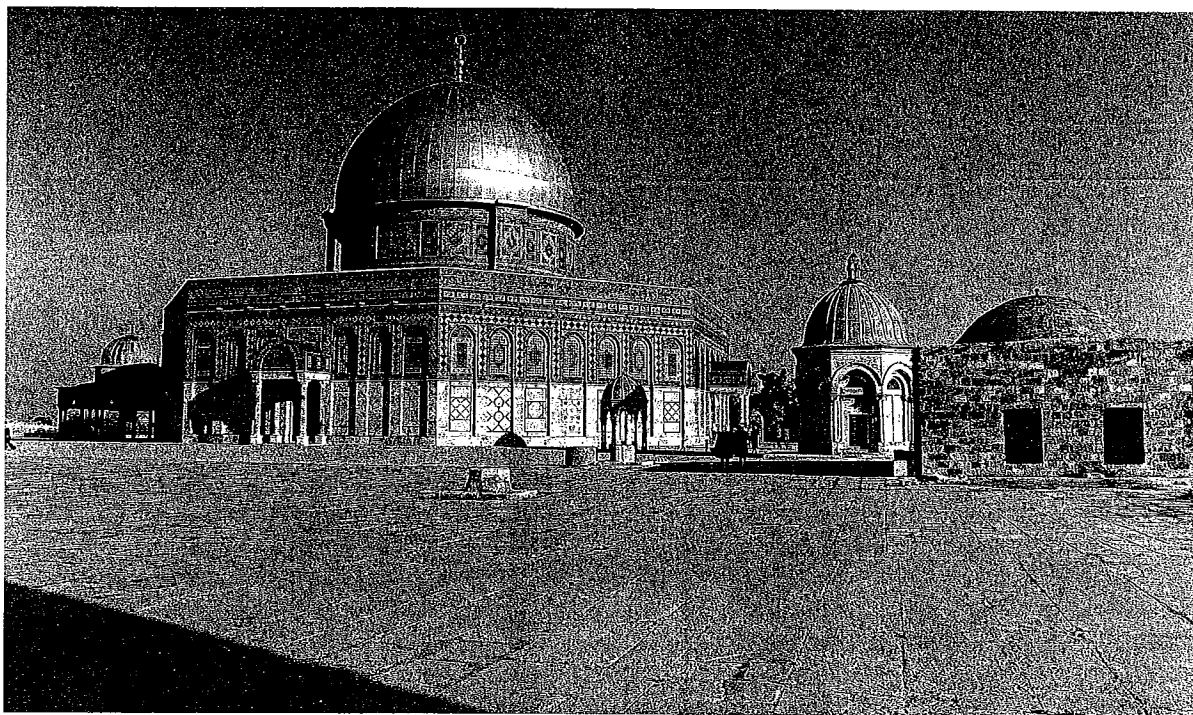
especially those with high Moroccan Jewish populations. Not only do the Moroccans seek their saints' intercession for help in everyday existence, but some pilgrimages explicitly associate mystical religion with political advocacy. Rabbis and politicians appear together on such occasions, and the images of shrines are even used to support political campaigns in television programmes.⁴²

In the Diaspora, the Promised Land was a mythical ideal for Jews. The people saw their identity in terms of a land from which they were in exile. Ritual practice in the Diaspora, such as the orientation towards Jerusalem, encouraged the notion of a common Judaism transcending spatial, temporal and linguistic differences, much like the practices of prayer and sacrifice in Islam. However, the creation of an apparently unified (at least for Jews) nation-state has forced members of a common religious faith to confront significant cultural divergences. When the return to Jerusalem ceases to be a myth, the realities of social and political existence have the potential to create exile within the Promised Land itself.⁴³



16 The old Jewish cemetery, Prague. One of the oldest ghettos of the Diaspora to have survived into the 20th century, Prague boasts a number of ancient synagogues, a Jewish Town Hall, and the cemetery (*left*), which was founded in the later 15th century.

II. The Sacred Site: Contestation and Co-operation



a. Exterior of the Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem, 7th century AD. Located on top of the Jewish Temple Mount, the octagonal building has side porches facing in the cardinal directions. Marble and tilework in blue, white, yellow and black cover the outer walls. The central dome is 115 foot (35 m) in height and coated with gold leaf.

No event is more traumatic in ancient Jewish tradition than the razing of the Second Temple by the Roman emperor Titus in AD 70. This brutal act of iconoclasm, coupled with Hadrian's destruction and re-founding of the city in AD 135, is an ironic testimony to the sacred significance of the city and the Temple, not only in the Jewish imagination but also in that of those who felt compelled to demolish a nexus of such evident power. The charisma of the site was only reinforced subsequently when other religions (tracing their origins back to, yet also in opposition to, Judaism) sought to construct their own sacred spaces in the city.

Such competitive use of a single sacred space by multiple religions has led to highly charged forms of contestation on the levels of architecture, tradition and, not least, politics. One

reason for this is that the obliteration of architecture or sacred objects by no means achieves an obliteration of their memory or cultural significance. On the contrary, the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple only served to reinforce the religious identity of those who had once worshipped there and their descendants.

The landscape of pilgrimage (and of sacred worship more generally) consists of much more than mere geography or architecture. It is a landscape of memory, myth and tradition in which monuments play as much a symbolic as an actual role. This symbolic significance of the lost can lead to the restoration of a destroyed centre centuries after the act of destruction. At the Marian shrine of Walsingham, which was brutally suppressed by Henry VIII during the English Reformation, a vibrant tradition of pilgrimage has re-emerged in the twentieth

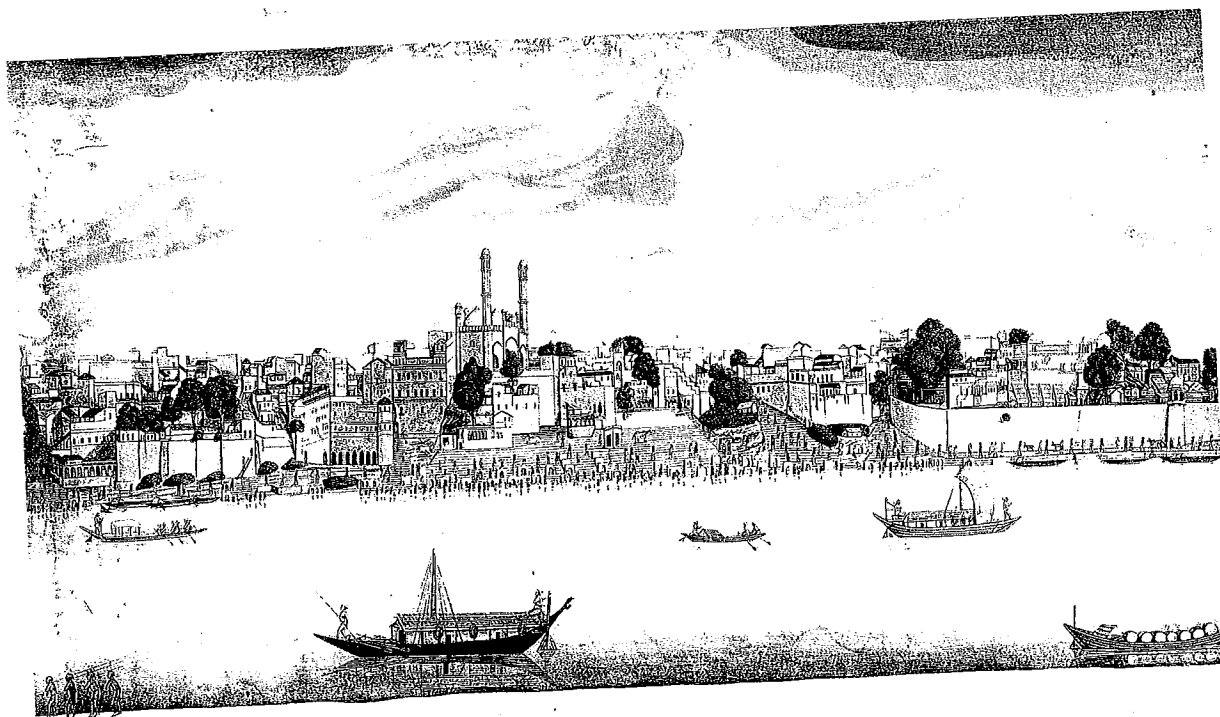
century. In the seventeenth century, the Muslim emperor Aurangzeb attempted to suppress the Hindu holy city of Benares, not only by destroying its sacred monuments and replacing them with mosques but also by changing its very name to Mohammedabad. The attempt failed, but its legacy was a city of post-seventeenth-century Hindu architecture and a number of highly contested mosques (see Fig. IIb).

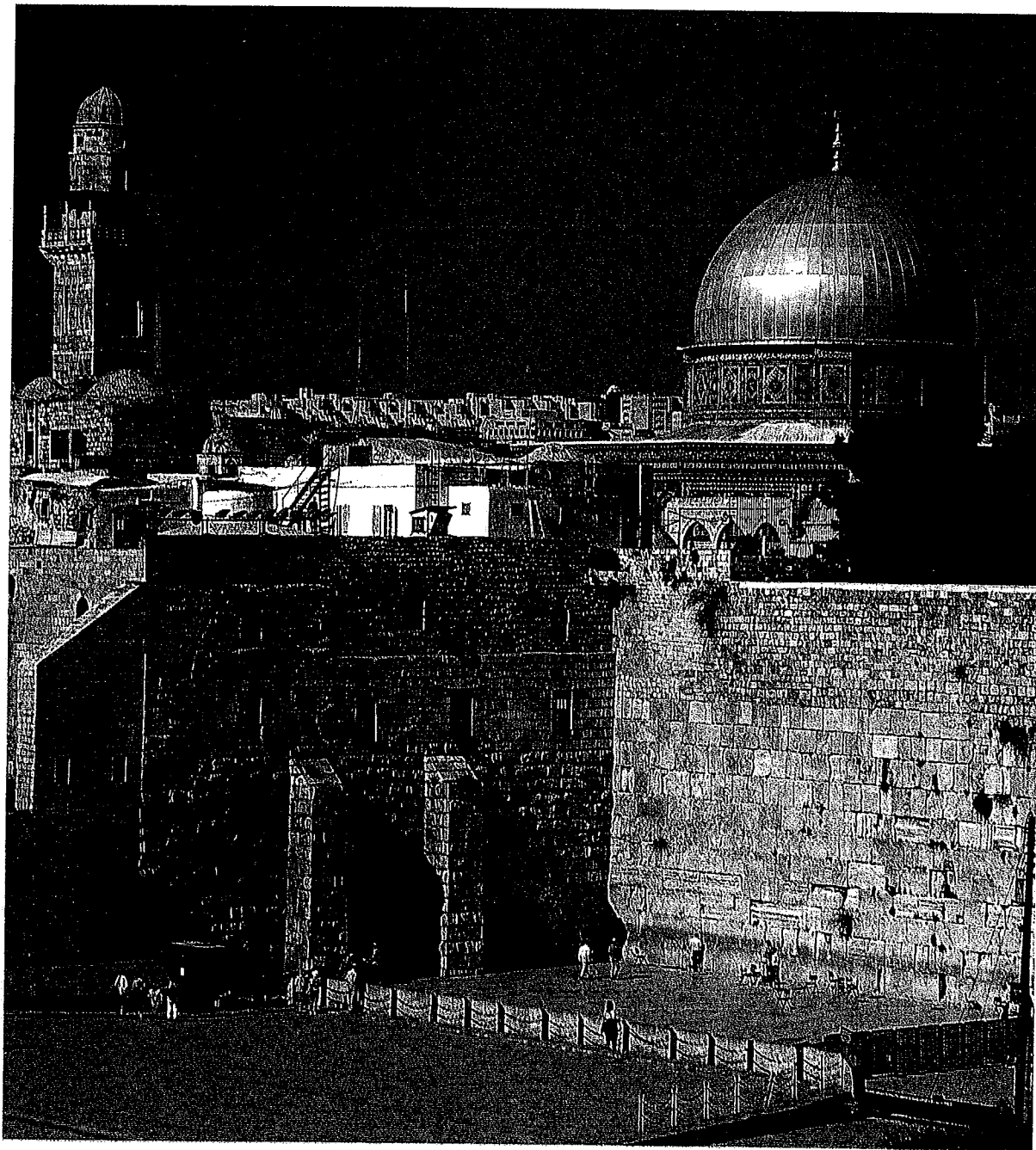
In other cases, the potent memory of a violated site may lead to the destruction of its replacement. Recently, Hindu extremists tore down the mosque constructed by the Mughals at Ayodhya, a site which they venerate as the birthplace of the god Rama. Jerusalem is still more complex: currently Jews have access to the remains of the Temple in the form of the Wailing Wall (Fig. IIc), yet the very act of approach and worship there is also a reminder of contested history. The pilgrim's view of the Wall is surmounted by eloquent testimony to Islam's appropriation of the site in the form of the magnificent Dome of the Rock.

The Dome of the Rock itself (Fig. IIa), built by

the caliph Abd al-Malik in AD 691-2, was deliberately placed on the site of the Temple to express Islam's continuity with its Jewish origins, as well as to mark Judaism's disinheritance from its spatial centre. The site has been given a further layer of significance beyond its Jewish mythological associations with such critical biblical events as the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, since it is seen by Muslims as the point from which the Prophet Muhammad ascended into Heaven. A principal motivation for building the Dome was that Mecca was at the time in the hands of a rival caliph, so that political competition became translated into sacred space and mythology. The architectural form of the Dome appropriates that of Byzantine octagonal churches and in particular the circular form of the main Christian shrine in Jerusalem, the Holy Sepulchre, thus marking a visual link with the Christian presence in the city. And yet, just as the Dome's situation denies the ultimate title of Judaism to the site of the Temple, so the Koranic inscription in its interior denies Christian doctrine by asserting the oneness of God in

b. Panorama of Benares, seen from across the Ganges, showing the Hindu holy city with a Mogul mosque dominating the sky-line. Early 19th century.



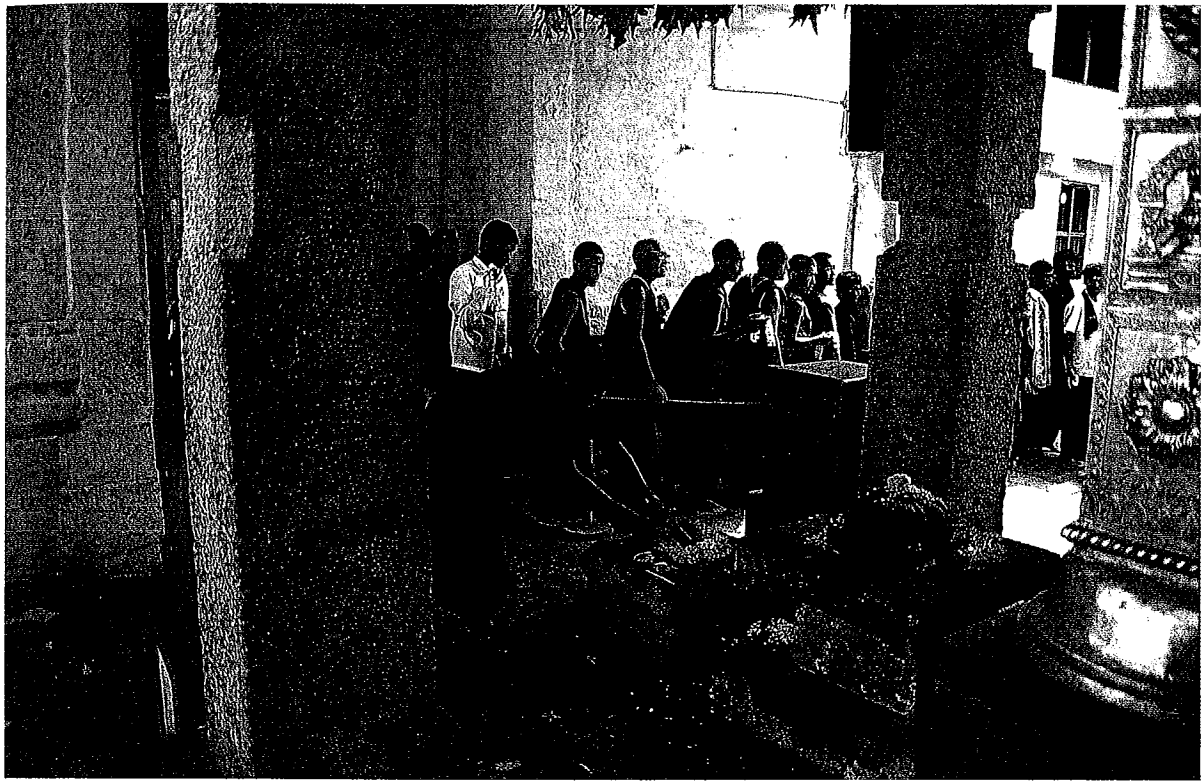


c. The Wailing Wall and Temple Mount, Jerusalem.

opposition to the Holy Trinity. The building is not by any means a pure elimination of earlier traditions, but rather is given shape by its opposition to and replacement of them.

Jerusalem therefore provides one spatial

model of the close juxtaposition of religious faiths. It is the supreme example of a place where monotheistic religions, each one with a single exclusive scripture, contest the sacred ground (although there are others, such as Mount Sinai,



d. Worshippers (Hindu and Buddhist) queuing to pay devotions to the main deity, Chamundi Temple, near Mysore, Karnataka, India.

which all three religions venerate as the site where God gave Moses the Law). Yet Jerusalem does not demonstrate the only possible outcome for a juxtaposition of faiths. While monotheism and exclusivity often (though by no means always) lead to competition between religions, a more polytheistic and inclusive kind of religion such as Hinduism, despite the example of Ayodhya, need not generate such conflicts. Take the case of the Temple of Chamundi near Mysore, which is venerated both by Hindus and by Tibetan Buddhists (Fig. IId). Rather than attempting to appropriate the space sacred to another religion, here devotees of both faiths worship the same cult image in the same temple. In this case, because the name of the Hindu goddess Chamundi is the same as that of the Tibetan consort of the deity Heruka, Tibetans come on pilgrimage to the site. Another example is Mount Kailas in the Himalayas, where Hindus, Buddhists and local Shamanistic worshippers (Bons) venerate different deities in the same place.

Whatever members of different religions may

feel about worshipping what is apparently the same image, even adherents of the same religion can exhibit radically different responses. In Christianity, belonging to what is apparently the same faith does not preclude and may even reinforce controversy. Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox visit a number of different sites in Jerusalem, and even in visiting the same sites perceive and interpret their experience of sacred space very differently. Within the walls of a single building, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Fig. 25), different Christian factions (such as Roman Catholics and the Orthodox) look after separate parts of the church and have different places for exercising their liturgy. Other confessions (for instance Evangelical Protestants and Ethiopians) have their main sites of worship outside the building. While some believers recognise Jesus's tomb to be that inside the Holy Sepulchre, others regard as authentic a tomb in a garden outside the current city walls. One lesson to be drawn from the complex series of attitudes around the Holy Sepulchre is that co-operation may itself embody a form of contestation.