



# 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

Equal parts biographical puzzle, architectural meditation, and probing detective story, Adina Hoffman's *Till We Have Built Jerusalem* offers a prismatic view into one of the world's most beloved and troubled cities. Panoramic yet intimate, this portrait of three architects who helped build modern Jerusalem is also a gripping exploration of the ways in which politics and aesthetics clash in a place of constant conflict.

The book opens with the arrival in 1930s Jerusalem of the celebrated Berlin architect Erich Mendelsohn, who, as a refugee from Hitler's Germany, has to reckon with a complex new Middle Eastern reality. Next we meet Austen St. Barbe Harrison, Palestine's chief government architect from 1922 to 1937. Steeped in the traditions of Byzantine and Islamic building, he's forced to work in the often stifling and violent context of British rule. And in the riveting final section, Hoffman herself sets out through the battered streets of today's Jerusalem looking for traces of a possibly Greek, possibly Arab architect named Spyro Houris. Once renowned around town, Houris is now utterly forgotten, though his buildings still stand, a ghostly testimony to his presence.

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

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