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Jerusalem Besieged: From Ancient Canaan to Modern Israel
(review)

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Jerusalem Besieged: From Ancient Canaan to Modern Israel, by Eric H. Cline. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004. 400 pp. \$29.95.

Jerusalem is a major source of contention in the Middle East today. In some ways, the conflict over the political control of Jerusalem, as well as its cultural character, is as old as the city itself. This is essentially the thesis of Eric Cline's new book, *Jerusalem Besieged*. Cline uses military conflicts over control of the city as a lens for looking at the larger picture—the political history of Jerusalem. The fact that his historical examination is limited to just Jerusalem, as opposed to the more common focus on the entire land of Israel, is refreshing, since Jerusalem itself was the goal of all the armies that headed to the Holy Land since antiquity.

Cline, who teaches ancient history and archaeology at George Washington University, has produced a well researched and intricately footnoted volume. Although published by a university press, *Jerusalem Besieged* is intended for both academics and lay readers. Cline organizes the book historically, taking the reader from most ancient times to up-to-the-minute discussions of the current religious and political conflicts over Jerusalem.

One of the best features of this volume is the way Cline intersperses modern political “uses” of ancient history with the ancient history itself. He shows how history has been taken out of context and misused for political reasons by people of many nationalities. For instance, in 2001 Saddam Hussein formed a “Jerusalem Army” to free Jerusalem from Israel, and in so doing cited Nebuchadrezzar, a king in ancient Iraq who captured Jerusalem in the 6th century BCE. Hussein stated that the ancient history proved that Iraq still had the responsibility to “liberate” Jerusalem.

Cline similarly demonstrates how early Zionist leaders including Theodor Herzl identified the new Zionist Jews with the Hasmonian rebels of the 2nd century BCE, and shows that other Zionist leaders used the Bar Kochba rebels similarly, making the point that like their ancestors, the Jews were battle ready, and able to fight for their cause once more. Later in the volume, Cline points out that President Truman, when credited with playing a major role in establishing the State of Israel, compared himself to the 6th-century BCE leader of Persia who had allowed the Jews to return to their homeland. Truman apparently exclaimed, “I am Cyrus, I am Cyrus!”

As an ancient historian, Cline has excellent command of the early material. For instance, his description of the original topography of Jerusalem and the reasons it was originally settled—natural protection on the three sides—is comprehensive, and his descriptions of the complexities of Herodian Jerusalem, another very difficult archaeological topic, are logical and clearly stated.

For the several hundred years of the Roman period, which is filled with battles for Jerusalem as well as for the rest of the Holy Land, Cline peppers his narrative with long quotes from Josephus and other classical primary sources. However, the sections on both the Byzantine and early Arab periods are quite short. It is not until the Crusades that the text picks up again.

The Crusades themselves are dealt with in great detail. Here again, Cline is at his best as he collects both the Medieval and modern uses of the term "Crusade" and juxtaposes these to the Islamic concept of "Jihad." In this section the author specifically cites Osama bin Laden as an example of a modern leader on the one hand proclaiming a new Jihad, and on the other accusing both the United States and Israel of being Crusaders in the Medieval sense. In a book that walks a very careful political tightrope, one of Cline's strongest political speculations comes in this section, when he suggests that we are now seeing a third way of Jihad, the first being the early Islamic conquests and the second being the successful battles of Saladin against the Crusaders.

The only real gap in this book is with the discussions of the 400-year-long Ottoman Period. After brief discussions of the Ottoman conquest and the early years of Ottoman rule, the text jumps straight to Napoleon, and then to the 19th century, devoting only five pages to this formative time. The brevity of the 19th-century discussions is damaging to the extensive descriptions of the 20th-century conflicts that take up the last three chapters, as Cline does not fully acknowledge the relationship between 19th-century politics and the beginnings of the 20th-century conflicts. Consequently there is no mention of the 1840 British decision to make England the official protector of the Jews of Jerusalem, a policy that eventually led to both the Sikes-Picot Agreement and to the Balfour Declaration. There is also no mention of the Status Quo Agreement of 1852 concerning political jurisdiction over the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, an agreement that is still in place today.

Another problem is that sometimes Jerusalem is too specific. Certainly the city has always been the main military goal; however, with Jerusalem as the single focus, Cline perforce leaves out certain facts concerning other places. For instance, when discussing the pre-Crusader Arab period, Cline does not have an opportunity to mention the building of the planned city of Ramla and its effects on other cities and on the countryside. Later, he does not have an opportunity to mention the major riots of Hebron in 1920 and 1929, which were politically interwoven with similar rioting in Jerusalem.

The last several chapters of the volume are devoted to military history, from the capture of Jerusalem by the British under General Allenby, to the current political situation today. As he carries the story right up to the news-

paper pages of today, Cline is quick to point out that it is too early to put such events into their proper historical perspective.

Overall this text is a welcome addition to histories of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. The weaving together of ancient and modern, at which Cline excels, is something that everyone interested in the modern Middle East should appreciate.

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Palestinians Born in Exile: Diaspora and the Search for a Homeland, by Juliane Hammer. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005. 271 pp. \$22.95.

If you are interested in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, chances are you have an opinion on the issue of Palestinians' "right to return"—and most likely, a strong opinion. In that case, the book reviewed here may answer some of your questions about returnees, including what actually happens to them when they "return" to Palestine, how they are received by those who never left, and where they actually feel most at home. Juliane Hammer sets out to study the experiences of a small group of young Palestinian returnees to the West Bank in the years following the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords. The study is revealing for what it shows us about the nature of these returnees' experiences, including the variability of their experiences, their emotional and intellectual discomfort with the realities they found "on the ground," and their negotiated integration into Palestinian society in some instances, and, in others, their decisions to leave for homelands in other places. By revealing the complexities and uncertainties surrounding these returnees' experiences, Hammer effectively demonstrates the "disconnect" for many Palestinian returnees between imagined homelands and real returns, as well as between professed nationalism and self-interested individualism.

Throughout the book, a central focus is on the tension between two groups of returnees whom Hammer refers to as "Amrikan" and "Aideen." The former are returnees from North America and Europe. The latter are returnees from Arab countries, many of whose fathers typically worked for the PLO in diaspora. Many of the Aideens' fathers returned to Palestine in order to work for the Palestinian Authority. Many Aideen, Hammer tells us, had to cope with "the negative perceptions of local Palestinians" (p. 106) who felt that the PA was a "synonym for corruption, privilege, and the takeover of political power" (p. 140). Throughout the study Hammer compares the two