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A City Carved of Stone

An Architectural Treatise on Jerusalem's Search for
Monumentality

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"To provide meaningful architecture is not to parody history but to articulate it"
Daniel Libeskind

Capital cities, for their own sake and that of the greater nation, maintain a synergy of historical relevance and a future-seeking pragmatism through their architectural design. The city of Jerusalem is no exception. Imbued in its post-1967 development is a certain sympathy for the past in order to massage long-standing notions and images of Jerusalem as an “ideal” city, deserving of various levels of preservation. More precisely, there is a politicized agenda of ethno-nationalist pride in much of the city’s newly built structures directly manifested through the use of monumentality.

In order to better understand monumentality, it is important to analyze the current status of monumental architecture and its respective role in ancient civilizations. As part of a larger manifesto on this particular topic, Sigfried Geidion, Jose Luis Sert, and Fernand Leger, pioneering modernist architectural critics from the first half of the 20th century, compiled a short list entitled, “9 Points of Monumentality.” In it, the authors claimed that monuments are “symbols for [man’s] ideals, for their aims, and for their actions...They have to satisfy the eternal demand of the people for translation of their collective force into symbols” (1943). This strikes upon a major component of this debate, that monumentalizing goes far beyond a singular person, regional place, or specific event, and attempts to capture a combined pathos of the community- however widespread that community wants to be defined.

Israeli, Canadian, and American architect Moshe Safdie expanded upon Giedion's interpretation of monumentality as an "articulation of a network of spaces and particular buildings that give the city legibility. It is that network of significant buildings and public places, and the connections between them, that has always given the city perceptible order, a sense of location for the people within it, a sense of structure, and a much needed hierarchy" (Safdie 1987). By taking it even one step further, Safdie explains that not only does monumental architecture need to embody a shared spirit among society, but between the structures themselves there needs to be a drawn correlation of harmony over dissonance. By doing so though, cities can fashion themselves with more than just a sense of "order" and can intertwine into that hierarchy a sense of time vis-à-vis tradition.

Monumental architecture has a long history, and looking back to ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, South Asia, China, Mexico, Peru, and West Africa, one can find examples of fortresses, temples, palaces, and tombs of kings and other high-ranking officials that fit into our standard definition of monumentality (Trigger 120). Perhaps most noticeable and consistent is their lavish scale and degree of proficiency, evidenced by the nearly impeccable construction and decoration (121). One can postulate that the abstract ideology behind monumental architecture desires an elaborate structure far surpassing the energy needed to impress, seduce, or engender fear. Peter Wilson views this degree of excess as a "fusion of permanence and perfection." By so directly showcasing power and authority, monumental architecture, "becomes power rather than merely a symbol of it" (122).

By taking this idea and returning to the tenets of Geidion and Safdie, we can conceive of a rational humanization of the concept of power and its role in monumentality. The populace, after all, in a democracy like Israel, possess the power, and thus modern monumentality seeks to satisfy the communal will of pride and excitement felt when viewing such marvelous structures. This can be done, according to Professor Cecil Elliot, by being “dignified in manner, permanent in construction, static in form, geometric in shape, and *grandiose in scale*” (Elliot 52), but I would submit that merely playing off a homogenous past- whether entirely uniform or more likely pieced together with commonalities- can achieve desired fantasies of monumentality. In effect, tradition, for people and for cities, is a major agent in garnering sentiments of sympathy aligned with the purpose of monumentality.

Taking the above framework of how to think about monumentality, one can focus an architectural treatise on Jerusalem after the Israeli government won the Six Day War and recaptured East Jerusalem. Clad in shimmering gold and textured stone, the city is quite easily romanticized by first-time visitors, religious aficionados, and every-day residents. Archaeological remains and artifacts throughout the city and state add to this animated atmosphere, bringing days of the past to the forefront of modern times. Behind this rhetoric remains the original inspiration for these structures: the architect juxtaposed alongside the client, which in this case were official Israeli government committees¹. At times, these two

¹ The Block 38 and Hurva Synagogue construction were overseen by the Company for the Reconstruction and Development of the Jewish Quarter (CRDJQ) which was

parties are pitted against one another with differences in conceptual agenda and functionality, but in other instances, the two can engage in serious collaboration with the hopes of erecting architecture that furthers a holistic goal. After 1967, that goal was to create a reemergence of monumentality for the nation's capital that would improve tourism and economic gains, and more importantly, foster a sense of Zionist ethno-nationalist pride.

An in-depth case study of three Jerusalem architectural projects serves as an enlightening exemplification of how every individual design synthesis can expose a nuance crucial to assessing the architecture of Jerusalem. These projects span the programmatic spectrum from purely residential- Moshe Safdie's *Block 38 Housing* in the Jewish Quarter- to both residential and commercial- Safdie's *Mammilla Center* – and finally, to religious- Louis Kahn's noncommissioned proposals for the new *Hurva Synagogue*. In each of these designs, monumentality and a significant sense of place and political context were manifested through distinct expressions of form and harnessing of tradition. Using these as a framework, one can assess to what degree these three architectural landmarks successfully actualized the aforementioned goal of Zionist historicity.

directly accountable to the Israeli Prime Minister and the inter-ministerial "Committee for Jerusalem Affairs" (Dumper 38). Moreover, according to the Company's website, the CRDJQ was established in 1969 by the Government of Israel and is fully owned by the Ministry of Construction and Housing. The Mamilla Center, which is not located in the Old City, was developed for the KARTA Central Jerusalem Development Company. This company is jointly owned by the Housing and Construction Ministry and the Jerusalem Municipality, thus it is indeed considered a government entity (Zohar 2007).

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Moshe Safdie's Block 38 Housing was the first of the three to be realized in entirety, built between 1971 and 1977. Moshe Safdie and Associates worked with the newly created Company for the Reconstruction and Development of the Jewish Quarter to restore several ancient buildings for residential use and design brand new buildings as infill housing. These houses afford quite spectacular views of the Western Wall and the Temple Mount, forming the outer edge of the plaza opposite these frequented pilgrimage sites (Goldberger 19), while the northern edge is party to a typical Israeli market (Safdie 63). The site, therefore, simultaneously captures the religious imagery blanketing the Jewish Quarter as well as placing residents in the midst of the everyday urban sights and sounds of the narrow stone streets. This dichotomy seems to be at the very heart of Safdie's design inspiration, as newly constructed and restored ancient buildings complement the existing texture of Jerusalem's diverse cityscape.

Mamilla Center, situated just outside the walls of the Jewish Quarter, has a storied history, but one extremely different from that of the Old City. For decades it was left essentially as "no-man's land" between Israel and Jordan. Previously, it was a crucial area for Jerusalem's water supply, containing ample cisterns and pools, but from 1948 to 1967 the border that divided Jordanian rule and Israeli owned land bisected Mamilla into an eastern and western half. Unfortunately, this rendered the site quite dangerous and inevitably the once appreciated land deteriorated and grew into slums (Goldberger 20). Consequently, it comes as no surprise that when

the Israeli government took over the Mamilla property, it envisioned an entirely redesigned district that no longer divided the Arab and Jewish populations, but rather brought them together.

Finally, the Hurva of Rabbi haHasid's Synagogue, or as it is simply known: the Hurva (meaning *ruin* in Hebrew) is a fascinating tale that could be dissected from multiple angles. In this essay, I will deal specifically with the three proposed designs by Louis Kahn, even though they were all eventually rejected. Kahn is widely seen as one of the most influential 20th century architects, consciously designing with a critical eye for intense metaphorical significance unparalleled by most other architects. Kahn, similar to Le Corbusier before him, flirted with the role of an architect philosopher, as he was a prolific writer, lecturer, and professor (De Long 1991). Consequently, by looking at hypothetical plans, one is treating Kahn in a speculative manner much aligned with the nature of his architecture.

The Hurva came to be known by this name from its repetitive history of being built and then destroyed. In 1700, Rabbi Yehuda haHasid came to Jerusalem from Poland with a small group of Ashkenazi Jews with the intent of building a synagogue in the Jewish Quarter. Suddenly the Rabbi died prematurely, leaving the Jewish community deprived of necessary funds to finish the synagogue's construction. With no other options at their disposal, the Polish Jews had to borrow from the Muslim community and were eventually unable to repay these loans. Tensions escalated in Jerusalem, the newly built synagogue was destroyed, and the community was driven out in 1720 (Ricca 104). Almost a century later, Ashkenazi

Jews following the Vilna Gaon came to the Old City and started developing smaller fringe synagogues for themselves. In 1864, they built a large synagogue in the Hurva complex, calling it the Beit Ya'akov. This impressive structure symbolized the Jewish presence in the Holy City, as its large dome blended into the sensual skyline of monumental religious landmarks. Once again, this all came to an end during the 1948 War of Independence when it was shelled and demolished for a second time (Ricca 105).

Block 38 and the Jewish Quarter

Visiting Block 38 for the first time after being hired by Yehuda Tamir, head of the Company for the Reconstruction and Development of the Jewish Quarter, Moshe Safdie walked around the approximate site and surveyed the conditions. All of the houses specifically along Misgav Ladach Street (the western border of the area) were intact, but exceptionally damaged. Many of the house's domes were collapsed and featured cisterns that only stood as remnants of explosions. It was these void spaces that left Safdie with great opportunity for designing tight adjacencies of the new and the old (Safdie 63). In fact, these issues facing Safdie were very common throughout the restoration project of the Jewish Quarter. While damage to these and other buildings was minimal during the War of Independence in 1948, the majority of wreckage came about shortly afterwards once the Arab Legion formally stepped in and destroyed monuments, institutions, and synagogues. When the Israeli government finally regained control of East Jerusalem in 1967, they reported that about one third of the buildings were totally destroyed, a third was significantly

damaged, and the remaining third were likely victims of apathetic neglect (62).

Because of these simple facts, I will analyze Block 38 not solely as an assemblage, but in context with other buildings in the Jewish Quarter.

To call Block 38 a monumental piece of architecture simply by virtue of its size is erroneous and facile, as the 82,760 square foot area is not a staggering figure for a complex consisting of restored buildings, infill buildings, and new residential ones (Safdie 1979). What was monumental about this project, however, was the degree of inventiveness, quality of craft, and involvement in the overall Jewish Quarter redevelopment. Safdie was a rare exception among the architects involved in the project as he was able to disagree with the Company and create a design more aligned with his own vision. With the hopes of strictly recalling materiality and geometries of the Herodian period, the Israeli government recommended he rebuild new structures that mimicked the older ones in form and tectonics; but Safdie saw this as a lazy example of producing a “Jerusalem-Williamsburg” (Safdie 68). What he ultimately proposed was a much more ceremonial weaving of traditional Jerusalem architecture that intrinsically aligned his design solution with a deeply rooted and emotional sequence of gentrified, Jewish, ‘heritage planning².’

² Heritage planning is a term, or more precisely a discipline, coined by Professors J.E. Tunbridge and GJ Ashworth. These two prominent figures have done ample research on geography, economics, and urban heritage and have posited that heritage can be created by a city or community as an economic utility in the market, thus denying the existence of a fixed amount of historical “products” to be utilized (Ricca 5). In their essay, *Dissonance in Heritage*, they define heritage planning most distinguishably by the ideological goal of “places [being] structured or planned deliberately to create such associations with a past, for various purposes,” explaining that in fact the locality can shape the past “upon which rests the

The government's explicit goal of monumentalizing Jerusalem and the Jewish Quarter can be traced back to the words of Mordechai Ish-Shalom, former mayor of West Jerusalem, during a city council session on August 13, 1967: "We desire and wish...that Jerusalem will forever have a clear Jewish stamp on it...That is to say: many Jews for this city" (Ricca 31). Besides merely restricting who was allowed to move into the Jewish Quarter after the redevelopment, the architecture and grandiose forming of space was at times a subtle- and not so subtle- means of adapting the city's past and present character to a portrayal of Jerusalem as a Jewish city.

In order to do this, Safdie initially needed to improve upon the prior condition of these apartments (when under Arab control) by spreading out the distribution of space among family units. These buildings, in the first half of the 20th century, were in fact nothing more than collections of individual rooms that would house an entire family. Living among one's relatives and so close to complete strangers, the residents had to share small yet crucial items like a singular toilet (Safdie 63). For obvious reasons, the new Block 38 was improved to a more modern standard fit for a middle class clientele in Jerusalem. Each building is organized around a service core, containing entrances, access stairs, bathrooms, and kitchens, surrounded by six by six meter bays filled with the living rooms and bedrooms (Safdie 1996).

uniqueness of local place identities" (Ashworth and Tunbridge 24). For Safdie and the Old City, heritage planning is no longer academic; it is a motive made tangible by the Block 38 design decisions I outline in this essay. Together, architect and client fostered a merger of archaeological evidence and illusionary 'facadism' in an attempt to transcend into communal symbolism.

Safdie's real genius was put on display through his blending of the interior and exterior, as each apartment is terraced giving way to rooftop gardens and convertible spaces. By addressing the arid Israeli climate, Safdie looked around the country for precedents on how to handle the roof terrace. In certain districts, large glazed terraces face south and become a semi-outdoor extension of the living room during the winter, as families literally migrate to this outer room and return to the inner shaded portion of the home during the hot summer (Safdie 66). Playing off the motif of adaptability and climatic transformations dictating living habits, Safdie placed transparent domes with a sliding opaque roof to shade the demarked 'adaptable' spaces. This feature provided the resident with the option of having an entire rooftop terrace open to the sky, a completely shaded bubble space during the summer, and a greenhouse solarium flooded with solar light during the winter (67)

Besides functionality, these domes created a tectonic and sharply visual connection to the surrounding Jerusalem cityscape as concrete becomes masked by stone, which links with other Jewish Quarter buildings topped by reflective white domes. The visual harmony is achieved in a "symphony of old and new masses" (Safdie 67), but Safdie's effort to make a distinct impact on the skyline, even in the hidden subtleties of new technologies, must be addressed as having respected the will of tradition, but not becoming subservient to it.

The homogenous aesthetics that gave way to this most recent version of Israeli regionalism can find a precursor in Al Mansfeld's highly symbolic design of the Israeli Museum in Jerusalem, which started an architectural trend of turning to

the local landscapes for creative inspiration (Ricca 59). In the Jewish Quarter, Safdie found remnants of traditional forms such as the arch, vault, and arcade, which in Block 38 he was able to use in a manner that fashioned this aura of monumentality. According to Ami Ran, editor of the *Architecture of Israel*, in the first issue of this architectural review, he wrote, “These manifestations (arch, vault, and arcade), once joined with motifs already perceived as ‘Mediterranean,’ such as white-washed plastered low buildings in ‘random’ juxtaposition, create an accepted reservoir of formative elements, the use of which is interpreted as an attempt to achieve the local Israeli effect” (61). Safdie, by alluding to the historical devices, was claiming a partnership with the past; a relationship built simultaneously and somewhat paradoxically on continuity and a steadfast pursuit of critical analysis.

This Israeli trend can be further traced back to Boris Schatz, a Lithuanian Jew who worked as the court sculptor for the King of Bulgaria before moving to Israel and founding the first Jewish art academy, the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem in 1906. Schatz’s goal was to “create an authentic Jewish artistic style, reconnecting the immigrants to their ancient Semitic roots while strengthening their national consciousness” (Ricca 57). The role of the immigrant in this example, as well as for the Jewish Quarter, cannot be stressed enough, as part in parcel of creating Zionist metaphors tied by architecture is the direct attraction of Jewish outsiders to come and live. In fact, since the inception of the State of Israel, there has been a heavy emphasis placed on the need for standard, cheap, prefabricated houses in order to allow vast amounts of immigrants to relocate in the country (58).

Safdie and the other Jewish Quarter restoration architects have not just received praise for reworking the traditional world of the Old City. UNESCO envoy, Raymond Lemaire, critically argued that, “The renewal of the external stonework- that essential skin that bears the history and sensitivity of a monument- is poorly done: the new stones do not respect either the size or the tooling of the ancient blocks, the renewal of the stone is often unnecessary, the architectural details are imprecisely imitated, pointing mortars do not respect the original composition” (Ricca 77). With respects to Safdie’s Block 38, he incorporated large prefabricated concrete wall elements faced with a thin layer of Jerusalem limestone for the load bearing core walls and reinforced concrete, sandblasted with limestone aggregate- once again with a stone veneer- for the bays. Ultimately, this material articulation is highlighted with subtle moments of expressed concrete at the edges and a continuation of the Jerusalem stone bleeding out into the paved terraces and roofs (Safdie 1979). Like a pastel artwork, the stroke of soft yellow is brushed across the Jerusalem hillside. But thinking more critically, Lemaire is being appropriate in picking a fight with the “renewal of the external stonework,” as in reality, Safdie is suggesting a sort of post-modern imposition of predefined details. What is meant to be “old,” is really just a mirage blanketing 20th century innovation. While I previously called this theme a partnership with the past, it could just as equally be a disappointingly superficial outlook, an architectural hoodwink, meant to satisfy the Israeli tourist or set up a picturesque portrayal of the city.

According to a journal from an 1830 English traveler, George Robinson, the typical courtyard of the Jewish Quarter at that time was a “square courtyard

surrounded by the living areas of many different families. The courtyard is shared by all inhabitants” (Ricca 83). Instead, Safdie redirected Block 38 for a more individualistic mode of apartment building blocks, a la Expo’ 67, instead of staying true to the practices of generations past. Presented with a potentially wonderful moment, where the residents of Block 38 could come out and feel like true members of an ancient Jewish community living on in a newly founded state, Safdie chose a route that incorporated new technologies about personal adaptability, not communal adaptability; a route that created surreal static *images* of stonework across an entire hillside, instead of one that actually looked and functioned like the ancient cityscape.

In essence, Block 38 Housing depicts what Israeli writer Almos Elon theorized about the nature of archaeology becoming a quasi-religious passion in Jerusalem. Citing Moshe Dayan, a famous amateur archaeologist working in the Jewish Quarter, Elon argues, “It is possible to observe, as of faith or of Freudian analysis, the achievement of a kind of cure; men overcome their doubts and fears and feel rejuvenated through the exposure of real, or assumed, but always hidden origins” (Armstrong 406). Expanding upon this idea is Nadia Abu El-Haj, author of the notorious book *Facts on the Ground*, by stating that the “presence of historical remains punctures the urban space...creat[ing] a general aura of historical continuity and longevity” (Abu El-Haj 173). Certainly, Safdie was attempting to juggle this “aura” on the one hand with genuine accuracy on the other, with Block 38 eventually falling somewhere in the middle of that spectrum.

Hurva Synagogue Proposals

Like the Block 38 Housing project, the Hurva fell under the auspices of the Company for the Reconstruction and Development of the Jewish Quarter, as they sought to restore the synagogue centrally located in the heart of the Jewish Quarter. Much like the Jewish Quarter redevelopment, the company found itself with three possibilities for approaching the Hurva project: “rebuild[ing] it as it was, where it was; construct[ing] a new building to stress the return of the Jews to the Old City; or conserv[ing] the ruins as a symbolic monument to war and independence” (Ricca 106). Kahn’s three proposals from 1967-1974 fell under the second option, displaying a modern rendition of the Hurva that looked nothing like the original, but was overflowing with a zeal for symbolic monumentality and integration of original precedents.

The Hurva presented Kahn with his first opportunity as a professional architect to design a structure on top of such important archaeological remains (De Long 88). This is significant because at the age of 51, Louis Kahn spent four months in Rome as the architect in residence at the American Academy of Rome, a period he used to reflect upon the ancient ruins and remaining structures from antiquity as a more mature professional than during his younger travels through Europe. Returning home to America, Kahn kept with him the lessons he learned while abroad and embarked upon a lasting investigation of mass and structure, materiality and light, volumetric forms, and the ability to have “ruins wrapped around buildings” (Larson 1). His plans for the Hurva can be considered a culminating

denouement of this architectural experiment that linked the old world with the re-imagined present one.

Kahn's affinity for origins went beyond ruins however, and was very much aligned with the purity of metaphorical traditionalism. Like a composer who tells a story with each symphonic note, Louis Kahn spoke to the ruins of Hurva and heard a reminder of the city's (as well as the world's) indigenous goodness and humanistic morality. Specifically requesting Louis Finkelstein's 1928 article, "The Origins of the Synagogue," as one of the first pieces of literature during his research stage for the Hurva, Kahn was undoubtedly inspired by Finkelstein's thesis. In the article, Finkelstein describes the origins of the synagogue as descending from the time of the king Manasheh, who persecuted the prophetic party. As a result, the party began meeting in private to pray. The places in which they would gather became known as a Midrash, literally the "place of Divine communion." Thus, Finkelstein's thesis places the synagogue in an Israeli line of humanistic prophetic ritualization. Extrapolating this across Kahn's philosophies about the Hurva ruins, the original remnants become a personification of that nationalist pursuit for transcendental mediation (Orozco 18).

The sense of pride evident in Kahn's letters serves as testament to not only the prestige of rebuilding the Hurva, but also to the extreme and perhaps lofty goals he wished to embody in his monumental design. One such example is his envisioning of a "light of eternity" that expressed the "spirit of history and religion of Jerusalem" (De Long 88). Moreover, his sketches of the Jerusalem hillside reveal a

touch of majesty, with the new Hurva responding boldly to the Dome of the Rock and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. This new synagogue, for Kahn, was to be a nucleus of Jewish assembly, a building held up not by pure concrete or stone, but by the will of Jewish history; it was, in the words of Mayor Teddy Kollek, a “world synagogue” (88).

Abstractly theorizing on the role of synagogues, Kahn believed the primary function should be in fostering personal interactions and a sense of community. “The essential thing,” he once said, “is that the chapel is a personal ritual, and that it is not a set ritual, and it is from this that you get the form” (Solomon 70). Consequently, the architectural implication is that there must be a degree of accommodation within these religious structures for the allowance of such indiscriminate acts of personal observance. More explicitly, Kahn, in a 1959 speech, tells an anecdote of an MIT student who, after doing well on an exam, goes to the outside of a chapel to wink at it as a means of gratitude. Putting an architectural twist on this, Kahn postulates, “that is your ritual- you don’t have to go in the chapel- you wouldn’t wink at a gymnasium, you’d wink at a chapel. The chapel is the right place, so therefore, what is a chapel of a university? It might be a room which I came to find for the moment and this room might be an ambulatory you see for those who don’t want to go into the room, and it may have an arcade for those who don’t want to go into the ambulatory, and the arcade might be in a garden for those who don’t want to go into the arcade, and the garden might have a wall around it for those who don’t want to go into the garden. And finally you can wink at the chapel” (70). These layers in other cases could be construed to be restricting enclosures, but for

Kahn and the synagogue, they are opportunities for the individual to make a choice, not to be directed by requirements. Bordering theological conjecture and architectural theory, the born fruit of this analogy can be witnessed in the stratum of ambulatories in each of his Hurva schemes. In fact, many have suggested that Kahn may have been trying to evoke the sequence of spaces in Solomon's Temple, a likely possibility considering that he was the architectural senior draftsman for the Philadelphia Sesquicentennial in 1926, which featured drawings of a reconstructed Solomon's Temple by New York architects Frank Helmle and Harvey Corbett. These drawings included an exterior courtyard with a central rectangular space having an arcade enclosed by a garden that was further circumscribed by a screen of columns (70).

Kahn described the Hurva as having an overall parti comprised of two buildings- "an outer one which would absorb the light and heat of the sun, and an inner one, giving the effect of a separate but related building...the exterior wall will be visible through the niches, which are in the stones" (Larson 135). This outer building was made up of sixteen gigantic pylons, entirely constructed out of load-bearing Jerusalem stone that recalled his 1951 pastel drawings of the Ptolemaic Temple at Edfu, the Temple of Amon at Luxor, and the Temple of Amon at Karnak (135). Unlike Safdie, Kahn expanded his interpretation of tradition to traverse outside strict regionalism and brought a more diverse range of precedents. Inherit in this conscious move is a more universal reading that speaks to the ancient civilizations of Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians, while still including the vernacular heritage of Jerusalem stone. In fact, the outer stones were directly meant to reflect

the very same ones as the Western Wall- large and as monolithic looking as possible (139). Ultimately though, this comparison turned more and more into a competition and was a leading reason for why the design was never actualized.

The inner chamber of the Hurva was a masterfully designed sanctuary, clothed in concrete and serenaded with shadows. The dichotomous juxtaposition of concrete interior and limestone exterior is a literal fulfillment of Kahn's famous expression, "ruins wrapping around buildings" (Larson 139). Here, Kahn is abstracting the forms and appearance of traditional ruins, not attempting to literally recall them in the manner that Safdie does at Block 38 and Mamilla. For example, the sixteen outer plinths are freestanding sloping walls, segmented and rationalized in groups of four on all sides, like a fusion of Egyptian celebratory entrances and a Greek temple colonnade. By not pretending to be anything other than what it is- in essence, a speculative metaphor- the Hurva seizes the entire monumentality of symbolic world history, while Safdie remains faithful to the tradition of Zionism.

At the four corners of the inner sanctuary are four hollow concrete columns providing seating and circulation to the balconies (Larson 141). Furthermore, these elements portray a consistent language of vertical members articulating an edge that demarks an outer zone from an inner one, a threshold acting like the sixteen plinths for the entire complex. Sectional drawings of this space reveal a delicately crafted zone occurring where the four sloping planes of the massive ceiling almost kiss the opposing pylons. Kahn described this in-between space as being there to "allow a sufficient amount of light to enter the outer chamber, and completely

surrounding the interior chamber...the construction of the building is like large leaves of a tree, allowing light to filter into the interiors" (141). Kahn's experimentation with this intense desert sun was carried out throughout the Hurva design, as not only was there a gap between the pylons, but also a cross-shaped opening in the ceiling form. Famously quoted as saying, "structure is the giver of light," Kahn seemingly perfected these gaps in the discontinuous walls and canopy roof in order to reveal the interior rooms with an eternal supply of expression, a forever balanced level of light and shadow (Orezco 17). By furthering the light techniques of his proposals for the Salk Meeting House, the Luanda consulate, and the Mikveh Israel Synagogue³, Kahn played with the path that light takes through the Hurva. For instance, sunlight strikes the upper pylons, throwing a diffused yellow light onto the nearby ceiling made of concrete. The concrete, by virtue of its material properties, reflects an even softer light onto the lower pylons. Consequently, that threshold condition creates a consistently harmonious change in luminous patterns (Larson 147).

Finally, to complement this natural light, Kahn carved into the main level pylons to allow space for small chapels illuminated by ritual candles. Kahn, playing off the historical significance of candle lighting in Judaism for both memorializing and celebrating (for instance candle lighting during the Sabbath, Chanukah, and *Yahrtzeit*, remembrances of someone's death) describes his personal attraction to

³ The plans for the Salk Meeting House, Luanda Consulate, and the Mikveh Israel Synagogue were, like the Hurva, never executed, but are often bunched together as being part of the same stage in Kahn's career after returning from Rome. A prior allusion to this *stage* was made on page 14.

the ceremony as being an “extension of the source of religion as well as an extension of the practice of Judaism” (Larson 139). Once again, Kahn presents for the synagogue meaning that goes beyond the walls of the Jewish Quarter and of Jerusalem, and extends to all of Judaism, and even to all religions. Kahn is embracing much more than Israeli nationalism and creating a monument for all peoples.

In Kahn’s second proposal for the Hurva, he introduced more of a Jewish zeal, but also one that was much more divinely ordained. In it, he removed many of the details that in a sense grounded the building for human contact and it became almost a fictitious novel of a building too sacred to be built by mere humans. In the scheme he drew no doors, seating, views, or details. While the first plan featured a podium/bema placed in the center of the inner sanctuary facing the ark, this version has the ark hidden behind columns and underneath the second level balcony. Counterintuitively, Kahn explains this choice as well as his decision to close off the gaps in the roof so that “this chamber should be more anonymous...It sums up, you see, a new beginning of a chamber, which, by practice, will become a ritual [for] the State of Israel today- with the various attitudes about religion [taking] place. So therefore, even the Torah, the Ark, is not present in these chambers as I see it now, but is in one of these niches...where it can be taken out, as it used to be done when there was a procession...So the Ark is there...or you might say the synagogue is the Ark...a very precious building” (Larson 161). This ideology, unlike that of the first, is distinctly Jewish and oriented for Israel, but still maintains the attitude to create

something that will grandiosely transform the Jewish identity within Jerusalem and the whole state.

Kahn also emphasized his adaptation of tradition and the architecture of origins by replacing the roof structure with a concrete dome that soaks up the light like a sponge. The typical fashion of Hadrian style architecture graces spectators with walls polished with lavish marble and creates a sublime brilliance of light reflectivity. Not at the Hurva, though. Kahn manipulated the building's texture to expose a material that comes directly from its formwork "pre-aged, marked by the pour, streaked with water stains, and suffering the spalls and trauma of the construction process" (Larson 167). While Safdie in his designs carved out intricate blocks of limestone to bring out a picturesque Jewish cityscape, Kahn was more concerned with creating architecture that spoke to the Jewish people, that related to their adverse history, and that gave them an acceptable place to come as an individual or assemble as a community.

Finally, Kahn's third proposal was a compromise between these two prior plans. The inner sanctuary is once again supported by four corner columns, but is reduced in size and inset to create a cantilever that recalls the second proposal's imagery of a seemingly floating second level. He reintroduced a variation of the sloping ceiling planes with light penetrating through from above, but eliminated the ambulatory in the second floor that was graced with the light of the sky. His final idea for how to introduce natural light was the placement of four striking horizontal cylindrical openings in the roof that blended the ceiling dome of the second scheme.

And while his first submission featured independent ceiling sections separated by two-foot wide slots, this version implemented a continuous enclosing structure punctured by a central, square opening- a Pantheonic oculus. And most importantly, Kahn settled on a fixed ark, bema, and surrounding seating, although the ark is no longer the massive wall with niches (Larson 181). By marrying the two proposals in a third and final submission, Kahn found a solution that implemented the worldly purity of the first, and the Jewish rituality of the second in something that if Israel had commissioned, could have been a major testament to the progress of its national heritage and culture.

Louis Kahn's proposals for the new Hurva was a major source of controversy however, and the amount of opponents- both religious and political- compounded with his untimely death in 1974, just two weeks after Mayor Kollek expressed his hopes to start construction, created a mountain that was just too tall to climb (Orozco 9). According to Nahum Meltzer, the eventual architect chosen to restore the Hurva back to original form, in direct contrast to Louis Kahn's proposals, "is it not more acceptable from an architectural point of view to preserve the original, organic language of the Jewish Quarter and the Old City? Is it not more acceptable to preserve the simple, living memory of the building as it was in its historical surroundings?" (Meltzer 2010). While coming from a very different school of thought from Kahn and even Safdie, Meltzer refuses to see the importance of looking back to the past and learning something about abstraction and symbolism and their role in portraying an architectural intent for a contemporary context. Moreover, Kahn was not only looking back to the time of the Hurva Synagogue, but through his

specific lens of inquiry was looking back to older periods of Jerusalem's history and religious past in general in hopes to harness an idealized structure for mankind.

Ironically, the passion and degree to which Israelis reacted against his design bears affirmation of his scheme's monumentality juxtaposed to the other major symbols of Judaism and religion in the capital city (Orozco 9). After the first submission, Mayor Kollek wrote to Kahn that, "it has been a long time since a single subject such as your plans for the Hurva has aroused as wide a response, and this, of course, not only in Jerusalem but throughout the country...Should we in the Jewish Quarter have a building of major importance which competes with the Mosque and the Holy Sepulcher, and should we in general have any building which would compete in importance with the Western Wall of the Temple" (Larson 151).

What is clear through this rhetoric is that Kahn succeeded in creating a wonderfully monumental structure for the capital city of Jerusalem, one that could certainly engender a sense of pride and passion for Jews throughout Israel, but also one that conflicted with the status quo of an idiosyncratic Israeli image. The Hurva complex played a very important role in Jewish history, but one that paled in comparison to the Holy Temple. Block 38 was a continuation of a specific vision and tradition that existed in generations prior, a tradition that became easily ascertained as being "Jewish" and as belonging to the Jerusalem historicity. The Hurva on the other hand, was replacing a beloved symbol; it was claiming the right to something the Israeli government did not have the audacity to claim the right to, even amidst its lofty visions of rejuvenation. Moreover, Kahn's Hurva claimed an inspiration

from the past that would require a much more critical eye and inquisitive attitude to recognize these creative and metaphorical sources. This factor hampers the quick attraction to the solidarity of a sensual skyline of stone. Surely the Hurva would have stood out, emboldened by sheer size and grandiose hierarchy; ultimately though, the building's form and angled perpetuation of nationalism diverted from the means and ends of the Israeli government's desire to promote ethno-nationalist pride.

Mamilla Center

The Mamilla development project had a significant personal meaning for Moshe Safdie, a poignant coincidence that remained with him throughout the design process. When Israel was under British rule in the 1920s, Safdie's great-uncle Eliyahu Shamah had bought the southern part of Mamilla with the hopes of establishing a place where Arabs and Jews could do business together. On his own accord and with his entire fortune invested, he designed and oversaw the construction of this "new commercial center." Then in 1924, shortly after the district was opened, the Mufti of Jerusalem incited mass demonstrations that heightened the tension between the two religions. The result was a violent uproar in Mamilla and other sections that led to the death of many Jews, as well as the end of Shamah's business endeavor. Bankrupt, Safdie's great-uncle became depressed and is suspected to have taken his own life (Safdie 94). Believing in the same optimistic ideals as his great-uncle though, Safdie proposed to the newly formed Central Jerusalem Development Company a 28-acre master plan consisting of an

urban center, a mixture of retail, recreational, and cultural facilities, hotels, and office space (95).

As expressed earlier, Mamilla was intended to, at least on paper, revitalize and support a growing economic district within Jerusalem and amicably unite the two parties- Arab and Jewish. These hopes, as one can imagine, were met with staunch criticism and fear, as the government fretted over the implications of placing a commercial center that directly brought together often opposing populaces, so close to the city wall and a national park. Moreover, this was not a modest sized design; instead, it was a major undertaking that would greatly transform the adjacent landscape of the Old City (Safdie 95). Safdie was well aware of these taboos as well as the functional hurdles of solving the intense traffic problem around the Jaffa Gate, which was the main gate through which vehicles entered the Old City (98). Embracing these design complications, Safdie tirelessly worked on Mamilla from 1972 until 1999, battling with his own thoughts as well as those of the Israeli government (Safdie 1999).

Like Block 38, Safdie spent ample time walking along the site and taking in the surrounding context in order to receive inspiration. Walking down to the bottom of the Hinnom valley and crossing over to the southern side, Safdie found himself surrounded by slums. Workshops were boarded up and mechanics filled the streets in front of the few remaining open shops, all of which were packed with miscellaneous parts. Above these shops lived families that were often pressed to make improvised additional rooms and kitchens out of timber and tin (Safdie 99). It

was clear, according to Safdie, that these existing buildings were unimpressive and demanded that the valley be opened up as a public space (100). Furthermore, the topography of the valley clued in the design choices that Safdie made; he noticed lavish olive trees, fig trees, terraces, and pools that were all erratically obstructed by deteriorating buildings (98). Consequently, Safdie proposed to demolish all the buildings in Mamilla, except for the historic monastery and orphanage of St. Vincent de Paul along Mamilla Street and its nearby church and shops (100).

With the clearing of the entire Hinnom valley being the chief plan requirement, Safdie covered either side of the sloping site with terraced buildings ranging from seven stories at the park's peak and only two by the foot of the hillside. By directly using the topography of the site and mimicking its increasing natural elevation through the built form, Safdie was emphasizing a very literal and precise notion of regionalism for the remainder of Mamilla. He then decided to place retail and office spaces on the northern side of the site to connect the downtown business district, while the southern portion would be largely residential and include the new Mamilla Hilton, as a balance to the nearby King David Hotel (Safdie 100). These choices were strictly made on a proximity and logistical basis, as Safdie turns to the existing land formations, and the existing built environment, rendering a uniformity and continuity that is quite rational. Then, in order to separate the cars and the shopping pedestrians, Mamilla and Jaffa Streets were dropped down by one level and now house a 600 car parking structure, bus terminal, and merchandise depot that directly serves the Old City. Finally, the main attraction is the pedestrian mall that Safdie designed as a continuous one thousand foot long market along Mamilla

Street, attempting literally and symbolically to bridge the Old City markets with those of the downtown shopping area (100).

After convincing the Jerusalem city council of Mamilla Center's programmatic pursuit, Safdie returned with this first proposal. The leaders in the Central Jerusalem Development Company criticized the scheme as being "too big, too automobile-oriented, and too indifferent to the traditional street pattern of the city" (Goldberger 20). Once again, the economic constraints also reappeared as a point of contention and put a major halt on the continuation of construction. Ultimately, the project was delayed fifteen years, giving Safdie time to rethink much of the Mamilla plan. Feeding off the popular sentiment of the time, Safdie decided to preserve more of the historic buildings pertinent in Mamilla, he eliminated the underground road under Mamilla Street and made it entirely closed off to traffic (Safdie 159). Finally, after several more iterations, the Mamilla master plan was finalized with a network of pathways and expansive stair sets crisscrossing the continuous park system, affording moments of reprieve at watercourses and under arcades that provide views to the Old City and the Jerusalem hillside (Goldberger 99).

Like Block 38, Safdie wished to decorate this entire complex in a manner that respected the surface color of the rest of Jerusalem while implementing a high degree of craft and technology. Mamilla Center thus incorporates perfectly carved rectilinear stone blocks of Jerusalem limestone throughout the entire district. Also, facing the Old City on the opposite side of Mamilla Street, David's Village comprises blocks of condominiums that are detailed with neo-oriental designs expressed in the

fenestration and in the bulbous white semi-domes growing out of the units' rear façades (Goldberger 20). Safdie is attempting to achieve the exact same goals as that of Block 38, to create an ideal image of Jerusalem using recognizable motifs. In Mamilla, Safdie is afforded an even grander stage with the scale immensely increased, but the direct role of inspirational tradition being changed. Working in the Jewish Quarter, Safdie often fit infill houses between entirely new construction and restored older buildings as a mode of blending time frames. In Mamilla, the truly significant precedents in Jewish history that could be readily adapted were in fact the elements of nature: the pools of water, the terraced and sloping valley, and the luscious greenery. As a result, Safdie was forced to look elsewhere in Jerusalem, namely the Jewish Quarter, to find architectural motifs to replicate. For example, many of the buildings in David's Village display sprawling arches either carved directly into the elevation or as support bridges giving way to pedestrian walkways (21). These arches are a common element throughout Jerusalem's vernacular architecture and the underpasses recall the urban promenade of walking through the narrow cobble streets of the Old City- a threshold between unroofed openness and an enclosed exterior.

There remains however, an unfortunately large disconnect between the goals of the tectonics and the character that the structure literally possesses. On the one hand, Safdie is trying to achieve a connection between the Old City and the New City and allow them harmoniously to integrate, but in reality this becomes kitsch at Mamilla. The commercial district, hotel, and residential buildings are in a sense too finely crafted to genuinely respect the role of tradition. This is not to say that in

order for architecture to be 'traditional' it must literally look and feel ancient, but it must have an essence of authenticity engraved behind the surface articulation. This is simply not plausible at Mamilla. Framed views under the soaring bridges are not of densely packed condominiums and markets living arm-in-arm as they are in the Old City, but rather of expansive, newly built buildings set apart from the newly designed shopping street. What Safdie has created in the gigantic U-shaped Hilton Mamilla, the movie theater complex, and the rows of Tommy Hilfiger, Abercrombie, and Nike stores is a perverse distortion of a lifestyle that never could have existed in ancient Jerusalem, and to attribute classical forms to this act is simply erroneous.

Looking at Safdie's perspective drawings for what he imagined Mamilla to be reveals a genuine desire to connect the old world with the new, as pedestrians are portrayed walking alongside the city walls and overlooking the center from afar. Or they are depicted gathering in a massive plaza-like space free of any built structure besides the Old City walls and the Jaffa Gate; and the continuity of ancient stones bleeds forth in the paving patterns and organic shrubbery flowing out of the stepped terraces (Safdie 96). Mamilla, as evidenced by these drawings, can only work as abstract and vague depictions of moments on paper, not in reality.

Specifically the business district lends itself more to the western ideologies of modern commercialism than to small family owned businesses of days past. This failure though, underscores a further revelation about the nature of Israel's plans in creating a new nationalism within Jerusalem. Beyond spawning Zionist-Jewish pride in those living in Jerusalem and coming to Jerusalem, the government wished

to prosper economically from a new wave of tourism and pilgrimage that was certain to come to Israel. According to McGill University Professor, Bruce Trigger, “the need to express power through the medium of monumental architecture may be greater during the formative stages of early civilizations or at times when the degree of centralized power is increasing” (127). Analogously, the young state of Israel was in need of defining itself and ensuring a sustainable future; Mamilla Center, although controversial, gave the city an opportunity to build something monumental that would surely attract others. Tracing the tourism industry since the Six Day War, it is evident that Israel made a concerted effort to have large-scale distribution of hotels in the western part of the city, as the number of hotel rooms went from 1,500 to 6,000 in the 30 years following 1967, a trend that paralleled the rise of annual tourists in Jerusalem from 350,000 in 1970 to 2,000,000 in 1995 (Shoval 919). The design of Mamilla, while failing to capture an authentic usage of monumental tradition, does enough for the Israeli government by satisfying the tourists’ desire to shop frivolously while blissfully enjoying the sights and sounds of *Jewish* architecture.



To define monumentality, or more precisely to outline a specific context that always demands monumentality and in a specific way, is to undermine the ingenuity at the heart of an architect. Architects thrive upon the pursuit of perpetual exploration; the nuanced variant exposed through experimentation can ultimately lead to a masterpiece, but only if handled with persistence and an understanding

that no final product is truly finished. The built environment does not just exist for the present, it will remain for eventual predecessors to maintain and restore. The Israeli government, after the decisive victory in the Six Day War, set out to do just that: repair structures from a relevant past in a way that taught the Israeli general public about their history, about their culture, and about what their future was bound to look like. Faced with such a bold opportunity, the Israeli government fittingly handpicked a Jewish national heritage that seemingly possessed a distinct architectural attire.

The main difference between the Block 38 residential complex, the Hurva Synagogue proposals, and the Mamilla Center district, is not the precise look of that attire, it is what that attire says about the government's agenda. Subconsciously, there is an appeal to traditionalism, there is an appeal to *what is known*, and there is an appeal to uniformity. But what I truly hoped to question throughout my research and synthesis is the hierarchical position given to these desires as opposed to a broader usage of symbolic contextualization. By this, I mean that monumental architecture possesses a rare opportunity to harness the fraternal will of a nation or community at a very significant and specific time in history (i.e. contextualization) and mold those feelings to be metaphorically expressed in the built environment. What remains self-evident at this juncture, is that while nationalism as it relates to locality is eternally evolving, its expressive byproducts continue to keep a strong grip on goals championed throughout their respective history (whether for good or bad).

Proving the first of these dichotomous points, all three of the discussed buildings were related to much more than just the Jewish Quarter and Jerusalem. They answered to the calls of all Jews living in Israel, to all Jews living outside the Holy Land, and to all Jews who were aware or would become aware these calls were being made in the first place. These various lenses and degrees of scope means that nationalism has, in the words of Cornell Professor, Benedict Anderson, “gone mobile.” The technological advancements the world has seen in the 21st and 20th centuries have shrunk the world; they have made the feelings of shame and pride associated with ethno-nationalist pride spread comradeship to groups of people living away from *home*. For instance, American Jews joining arms with Russian Jews to support Israel’s right to existence highlights the mobility of modern day nationalism. And ultimately, these Jews feel a sense of belonging to Israel, a sense of comfort manifested through the repetitive insistence that Israel’s heritage is part of their heritage. That is what Block 38 and Mamilla Center fostered despite issues of authenticity or superficiality, and what Kahn’s Hurva could have fostered with a deep universal zeal.

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