

# Book Reviews

YEMIN MOSHE: THE STORY OF A JERUSALEM NEIGHBOURHOOD, by *Eliezer David Jaffe*. Praeger, New York, 167 pp.

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Academic disciplines in Israel are notorious for their firm and sacred boundaries. Historians, geographers and social scientists wishing to write about Jerusalem will inevitably find themselves caught up in cubby-holes of permissible subjects and periods. And in general communication between historians and social scientists and their "applied" colleagues in social work is nil.

Given this unfortunate reality, Dr. Jaffe's book on Yemin Moshe is a welcome addition both to historical, ethnographic and social analytical literature. Published previously in Hebrew, it surveys in a holistic manner both the neighbourhood's historical development and its contemporary vicissitudes. The coherent narrative which results allows us to follow social processes and municipal policies affecting Yemin Moshe over a 120 year period without breaking the story at some arbitrary date or confining the analysis to a narrow focus.

As the product of a long-time professor of social work at the Hebrew University, Dr. Jaffe's book, however, does have a central thread running throughout. Yemin Moshe is famous not only for its charm and its association with the famous nineteenth-century British philanthropist, Sir Moses Montefiore, but among neighbourhood activists and critical urban planners it is perhaps the most notorious example of a working-class ethnic community dispersed and destroyed in order to make way for high-income residents, supposedly for "the public good." In terms of social policy it is a landmark case which well deserves our attention, and Dr. Jaffe, who has been involved in both the politics and the study of Yemin Moshe since the 1960s, devotes a great deal of attention to the issue. As he writes in his first chapter on the "legend" of Yemin Moshe, "we do hope to sensitise both 'ordinary' citizens and government officials to the issues involved and

considerations that have to be taken into account when tampering with people's lives and with neighbourhood change." Where Dr. Jaffe breaks new ground is in his use of the historical record. Beginning with the founding of the quarter in the late 1880s, he documents the emergence of a truly unique community, guides us through the intricacies of neighbourhood culture and organization, and in the end provides us with that understanding of community dynamics which we need to evaluate the drastic programme of urban renewal carried out after 1967.

Dr. Jaffe begins his account of Yemin Moshe with its prehistory as an empty slope adjacent to Mishkenot Sha'ananim, the first neighbourhood outside the walls of the Old City, also founded by Montefiore. While obviously revelling in the details of Yemin Moshe's founding, which he unearthed from a variety of primary and secondary sources, the author confronts almost immediately the issue of evacuation of the poor in favour of the rich with which he will remain until the book's conclusion. Already in 1889 (after Montefiore's death) poor immigrant squatters were removed from the property so that it could be "properly planned."

Succeeding chapters take us through Yemin Moshe in its different periods: as one of Jerusalem's better neighbourhoods until World War I; as a besieged border area in the 1920s and 1930s when many of its original inhabitants left; the crucial role it played in the 1948 War of Independence; its precarious existence as a poor, dilapidated and war-torn ethnic neighbourhood inhabited largely by Turkish-Jewish immigrants between 1948-1967; and its evacuation by the East Jerusalem Development Corporation in favour of "new residents *officially* defined as "desirable and tasteful people." Throughout his account, Dr. Jaffe pays close attention to the fabric of local life. He describes Yemin Moshe's changing ethnic character in relation to the wider events affecting the city — waves of immigration, conflicts with and attacks on the area by the nearby Arab population, urban policies and processes of development. He also examines in depth the self-help organizations, religious and communal institutions and the social services which were available to the residents before and after 1948. But through interviews with old-time inhabitants of Yemin Moshe, the author goes beyond narrative and analysis to uncover emotional aspects

of local life, especially the deep feelings of community which counterbalance the residents' low socio-economic status.

Almost half the book is reserved for its essential point, however, and that is to describe and evaluate the process of evacuation, renovation and repopulation that, between 1967-1977, transformed Yemin Moshe from a "slum" to a highly-manicured upper middle class neighbourhood. Through the use of field studies carried out by his students, official reports and interviews with local residents and municipal officials, all supplemented by his own professional involvement as head of the Municipal Welfare Department during part of this period, Dr. Jaffe presents an analysis of the assumptions, policies and actions which guided the painful process of "renewal" — although his own sympathies with those evacuated is evident. Indeed, here the attempt to be fair leads to the strange convention of the author referring to himself in the third person when he enters into the story. This appears not only artificial but screens the author's real opinions behind a superficial formality.

In his conclusions, Dr. Jaffe explicitly evaluates the lessons of Yemin Moshe, not only in the context of Jerusalem but in the light of social policy from other cities and countries. For readers interested in an easy, jargon-free yet professional study of one landmark neighbourhood in its historical and cultural context — and, as Dr. Jaffe hints, for anyone concerned with what the authorities might have in store for Jerusalem in the future — this book is highly recommended. The extensive use of historical and contemporary photographs and a useful bibliography and index makes the work all the more attractive.

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