

Jerusalem

While this series focuses primarily on yovel as a source of wisdom for how to approach the fiftieth anniversary of the Six Day War in 1967 and its aftermath, our project would not be complete without engaging with Jerusalem itself. The joy of the Jewish people at regaining access to the Western Wall and other sacred sites is paired with the struggles and complexities of governing a multicultural city considered holy by Muslims and Christians as well as by Jews; and of having sovereignty over Palestinians in East Jerusalem, most of whom are not citizens of Israel or any other country. While many Jews speak of Jerusalem as being “united,” it is still very much divided, with both psychological boundaries and—in some cases—the separation wall dividing Jewish neighborhoods from Palestinian ones. This text study will help us engage with some of Jerusalem’s complexity as we contemplate the last fifty years and envision the future.

The Talmud offers a tale of Jews making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem during a time when the Roman occupiers forbade this practice: One group covered their baskets of first-fruit offerings with dried figs and a mortar and pestle; when the guards asked them where they were going, they said they were going to make pressed fig cakes, and the guards let them through. Another group brought wood for the altar, making it into ladders; when the guards asked where they were going, they said they were going to bring down some birds from a dovecote, and the guards let them through (Babylonian Talmud, Ta’anit 28a). Such stories and their particulars transmit the memory of our longing for Jerusalem and our struggle to reach it under adverse circumstances—a longing and a struggle that have accompanied us throughout our history.

Fifty years ago, that longing turned to elation when, during the Six-Day War, the State of Israel captured Jerusalem’s Old City—an area of about one square mile—and the villages surrounding it. Israeli leaders expanded Jerusalem’s municipal boundaries to 70 square miles, including the Old City and its holy sites, which for twenty years Jews had only glimpsed from over its walls. This annexation has never been accepted by the international community.

In the thousands of years that most Jews could only yearn for Jerusalem, our tradition developed myriad images of this place. We will explore here texts that extol Jerusalem's uniqueness; Jerusalem as a place to encounter the Divine presence; Jerusalem as a place of kindness; Jerusalem as a place where diverse people meet; and Jerusalem as a place of pain and suffering. We offer these texts with the hope that the prophet Isaiah's vision for Jerusalem might yet come to be (1:21) — קְרִיָה נְאֻמָּנָה מְלֵאֲתֵי מִשְׁפָּט צְדָק יֵלִין בָּהּ — Jerusalem the faithful city, filled with justice, where righteousness dwells.

I. The Uniqueness of Jerusalem

The sources that follow describe Jerusalem as an exceptional place. As you read, consider: Do you believe that Jerusalem is exceptional or unique? What are the particular ways that you or others see Jerusalem as unique? What might be some of the consequences of relating to Jerusalem as exceptional?

A. Center of the world: Midrash Tanhuma, Buber edition, Kedoshim 10

כּשֶׁם שֶׁהַטִּיבוֹר הַזֶּה נִתּוֹן בְּאִמְצַע הָאִישׁ, כִּד אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל טִיבוֹרָה שֶׁל עוֹלָם, שְׁנֵאמַר יוֹשְׁבֵי עַל טִבוֹר הָאֶרֶץ (יִחְזַקְאֵל לַח יב), אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל יוֹשֶׁבֶת בְּאִמְצַעֵיתוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, וִירוּשָׁלַיִם בְּאִמְצַע אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ בְּאִמְצַע יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, וְהַהִיכָל בְּאִמְצַע בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, וְהָאֲרוֹן בְּאִמְצַע הַהִיכָל, וְהָאֲבֹן שֶׁתִּיהָ לִפְנֵי הַהִיכָל, שְׁמִמֶּנָּה הוֹשַׁתָּת הָעוֹלָם.

Just as the navel is the center of a human being, the land of Israel is the navel of the world, being situated at its center (Ezekiel 38:12); Jerusalem is at the center of the Land of Israel; the Temple, at the center of Jerusalem; the sanctuary, at the center of the Temple; the ark, at the center of the sanctuary. And in front of the Sanctuary is the foundation stone upon which the world was founded.

- » *Does this depiction of Jerusalem as the center of the world ring true to you? Why or why not?*
- » *How can one place be the center of the world? Why do you think this text depicts Jerusalem this way? How might this concept of Jerusalem as the center of the world change the ways in which you or your community relate to Jerusalem? The ways in which Jews, Muslims, and Christians relate to each other's connection to Jerusalem?*

Midrash Tanhuma is a collection of stories, discussions of specific laws, and rabbinic homilies, all connected with the five books of the Torah. It was written c. 5th century in the Land of Israel and is named for Rabbi Tanhuma, the first character to appear in the collection. The material was collected from several manuscripts and published by Solomon Buber in 1885.

B. Nine portions of what? Avot DeRabbi Natan, B48

עשרה חלקים של נוי בעולם—תשעה בירושלים ואחד בכל העולם. עשרה חלקים של יסורין בעולם ט' בירושלים ואחד בכל העולם. עשרה חלקים של חכמה בעולם ט' בירושלים ואחד בכל העולם. עשרה חלקים של חנופה בעולם ט' בירושלים ואחד בכל העולם. עשרה חלקים של תורה בעולם ט' בירושלים ואחד בכל העולם.

Ten portions of beauty are in the world—nine in Jerusalem, and one in the rest of the world. Ten portions of suffering are in the world—nine in Jerusalem, and one in the rest of the world. Ten portions of wisdom are in the world—nine in Jerusalem, and one in the rest of the world. Ten portions of hypocrisy are in the world—nine in Jerusalem, and one in the rest of the world. Ten portions of Torah are in the world—nine in Jerusalem, and one in the rest of the world.

- » *Which of these aspects of Jerusalem best reflects your own experience? Why?*
- » *Which of these attributes of Jerusalem do you see as being most true right now? Why?*
- » *Which aspect do you hope will describe Jerusalem in the future?*

Avot d'Rabbi Natan is a commentary on Pirkei Avot that was probably compiled between 700-900 CE in the Land of Israel. It consists largely of maxims that cover the proper approach to Torah study, common human courtesy, and other life advice, including material from a variety of genres produced over several hundred years.

II. Jerusalem as a Place of Divine Presence

In ancient times, gods were associated with particular cities. Judaism proposed that God was mobile—not only the God of Jerusalem, but one who could move out of Ir Hakodesh (the Holy City). Many Jewish sources depict God accompanying the Jewish people into exile, though some suggest that the Divine presence remains always in Jerusalem. As you read these texts, think about this tension between Jerusalem as inherently sacred, and Jerusalem's sanctity depending on God's presence there.

A. Praying in Jerusalem: Midrash Tehillim Buber edition, Psalm 91

כל מי שהוא מתפלל בירושלים, כאילו מתפלל לפני כסא הכבוד, ששער השמים הוא שם, ופתח פתוח לשמוע תפלה.

All who pray in Jerusalem—it is as if they have prayed before the throne of glory, for the gate of heaven is there and there is an opening for prayer to be heard.

- » *Have you ever prayed in Jerusalem? Did the experience feel different than prayer in other places? How? If you have had multiple experiences praying in Jerusalem, how did they differ from each other? In what ways does this text reflect, or not reflect, your own experience?*
- » *If you pray, are you conscious of turning toward Jerusalem when you do so? Do you think about Jerusalem, or feel closer to it, when you pray?*
- » *If you were standing in Jerusalem right now, what prayer would you offer for the city and for the people who live there?*

Midrash Tehillim (Midrash on the Psalms) was compiled over many years and most likely completed between 800-1000 CE. The midrash contains detailed commentary on the Psalms, including a number of stories, legends, parables and proverbs, many including ethical and halachic instruction.

B. A place for God's name: Deuteronomy 16:11

וְשִׂמְחֶתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אַתָּה וּבְנֶךָ וּבִתְּךָ
וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתְּךָ וְהַלְוִי אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ וְהַגֵּר
וְהַיְתוּם וְהָאֵלְמָנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּךָ בְּמִקוֹם
אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשָׂכְנוֹ שְׂמוֹ שָׁם :

You shall rejoice before the Lord your God with your son and daughter, your male and female slave, the Levite in your communities, and the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow in your midst, at the place where the Lord your God will choose for God's name to dwell.

- » *The book of Deuteronomy speaks ten times of God's name dwelling in Jerusalem. What does it mean for God's name to dwell in a place? How is this different from God's presence dwelling there?*
- » *In what ways do you think of Jerusalem as a place of rejoicing? In what ways do you think of Jerusalem as a place where it is hard to rejoice?*
- » *How do you understand the command to rejoice with the slave, the stranger, the fatherless and the widow? Why do you think we are commanded to invite these people to rejoice with us at our holiest place?*

The following text refers to the western wall of the Temple in Jerusalem. The Holy of Holies stood at the western edge of the Temple, inside the building; it is possible that this text references that western wall of the Temple itself. The contemporary Western Wall (Kotel HaMaaravi) in Jerusalem is a portion of the western retaining wall of the Temple Mount. The Temple's western wall would have stood northeast of today's Kotel, and at higher elevation.

C. The Divine Presence stays: Midrash Tanhuma (Land of Israel, c. 5th century), Buber edition, Parashat Shmot 10

אמר ר' אחא, לעולם אין השכינה זזה מכותל מערבי של בית המקדש, שנאמר הנה זה עומד אחר כתלנו (שה"ש ב ט) Rabbi Aha said: the Divine Presence does not ever move from the western wall of the Temple, as it says [Song of Songs 2:9]: *There he stands behind our wall.*

- » *Do you believe that God is more present in certain places? Can God simultaneously be always in one particular place and also in other places?*
- » *If you have visited the Kotel, did you experience God there? How? Did this experience fulfill—or not—your expectations? If you have visited more than once, has your experience of the Kotel changed?*
- » *This midrash was written after the destruction of the Temple. Why do you think Rabbi Aha wants to imagine God remaining at this site of destruction?*

III. Jerusalem as a Place of *Shalom* (peace) and *Rachamim* (mercy)

A. Naming Jerusalem: Genesis Rabbah (Land of Israel, 5th century), Vilna edition, Parashat Vayera, 56:10

אברהם קרא אותו יראה שנאמר (בראשית כב) ויקרא אברהם שם המקום ההוא ה' יראה, שם קרא אותו שלם שנאמר (בראשית יד) ומלכי צדק מלך שלם Avraham called it [Jerusalem] *Yireh* (he will see), as it says [Genesis 22:14] and *Abraham called that place Adonai Yireh*. Shem called it *Shalem* (whole), as it says [Genesis 14:18] and *Melchizedek, the king of Shalem...*

אמר הקב"ה אם קורא אני אותו יראה כשם שקרא אותו אברהם, שם אדם צדיק מתרעם, ואם קורא אני אותו שלם אברהם אדם צדיק מתרעם, אלא הריני קורא אותו ירושלים כמו שקראו שניהם יראה שלם ירושלים The Holy Blessed One said, "If I call it *Yireh*, like the name that Avraham called it, Shem, a righteous person, will be angered. And if I call it *Shalem*, Avraham, a righteous person, will be angered. Therefore I will call it *Yerushalem*, in accordance with both of their names, *Yireh Shalem*—*Yeru-shalem*."

- » *What meaning does each of these two names—Yireh and Shalem—carry? Which speaks more to you? How would you interpret or explain the combination of the two words?*
- » *Do you think the modern city of Jerusalem reflects these names? Why or why not?*
- » *How does God resolve the potential conflict between the names given by Abraham and Shem? Do you think this could offer a possibility for our own approach to Jerusalem?*
- » *Today, the city is known by many names—Yerushalayim and Jerusalem both have their origins in the root “sh-l-m,” which means peace or wholeness, and Al Quds (the Arabic name for the city) and Ir Hakodesh both use the root “k-d-sh,” which means holy or set apart. How does the choice of name reflect, and also shape, our relationship with the city? What name (or names) for the city feels most meaningful to you, and why?*

Genesis Rabbah is a collection of *midrashim*—rabbinic expansions on the biblical text. It consists of stories and interpretive material on the book of Genesis and was probably compiled in the Land of Israel in the fifth century.

B1. Benjamin as compassionate: Deuteronomy 33:12

לְבִנְיָמִן אָמַר יְדִיד ה' יִשְׁכֹּן לְבֵטֶחַ עָלָיו
 חֲפֵץ עָלָיו כָּל הַיּוֹם וַיְבִין כְּתִפָּיו שָׂכֹן :
 Of Benjamin he said: Beloved of the Lord, he rests securely beside him; Ever does he protect him, as he rests between his shoulders.

- » *The verse is ambiguous in its last three clauses—is it God resting with Benjamin, or Benjamin resting with God? Is it God protecting Benjamin, or Benjamin protecting another? The following midrash from Yalkut Shimoni picks up on this ambiguity as it relates to God choosing Jerusalem as a place to dwell.*

B2. Yalkut Shimoni, VeZot HaBracha 949

מפני מה זכה בנימן שתשרה שכינה של בחלקו, שכל השבטים היו במכירתו של יוסף ובנימן לא היה במכירתו של יוסף, אמר הקב"ה אני אומר לאלו שיבנו בית הבחירה לא שיהיו מתפללין לפני ואני (מבקש) [מתמלא] עליהן רחמים, איני משרה שכינתי בחלקן שלא היו רחמנים על אחיהם.
 Why did Benjamin merit having the Presence dwell in his territory? Because all the tribes were in on the sale of Joseph, while Benjamin had nothing to do with it. So the Holy One said: Am I to tell these to build the house I choose to dwell in, so that they may pray to Me in it and I may be filled with compassion for them? No. They were not compassionate to their brother, so I shall not have My compassionate Presence dwell in their territory.

- » *How would you describe and characterize the compassion referenced in this verse? How would you understand this compassion meriting God's presence dwelling in Benjamin's territory?*
- » *How and where does compassion still exist in Jerusalem? Where do you think compassion is absent?*
- » *The text from Deuteronomy speaks of God and Benjamin dwelling securely (shochen lavetach) together. What is necessary to feel secure in a place? Does Jerusalem feel secure to the people who live there? To which people? How and how not?*
- » *If you have spent time in Jerusalem, what are the ways you felt secure there? What are the ways you didn't?*

Yalkut Shimoni is a collection of midrashim on the Torah, composed in southern Germany in the 13th century by "Rabbenu Simeon, chief of the preachers of Frankfurt."

C. Spaciousness in humility: Mishnah, Avot 5:5

עשרה נסים נעשו לאבותינו בבית המקדש : Ten miracles happened for our ancestors in the Temple:

...עומדים צפופים ומשתחווים רווחים...
...ולא אמר אדם לחברו צר לי המקום שאלין בירושלים : ...Though the people stood pressed closely together, when they bowed, there was ample space.

...No one ever said to another, "There is no room for me to stay overnight in Jerusalem."

- » *Each of these miracles indicates a kind of spaciousness in a crowded city. If you have spent time in Jerusalem, in what ways does it feel spacious to you? Crowded?*
- » *In conversations today about Jews and Palestinians living in Jerusalem, do you hear more about spaciousness or about crowdedness? How do the assumptions in the language shape our conversations?*

IV. Jerusalem as Place of Diversity

A. A city of friends: Jerusalem Talmud *Hagigah* 3:6 / 79d

אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי ירושלים הבנויה כעיר שחברה לה יחדו : עיר שהיא עושה כל ישראל חברים Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: *Jerusalem built up, a city knit together* [Psalm 122:3]—a city that makes all Israel friends.

- » *In which ways is, and isn't, contemporary Jerusalem a city "knit together" that makes all Jews friends? Where do you see the city knit together, and where do you see it torn apart?*

B. Exclusivity: Babylonian Talmud *Bava Batra* 75b

וּבְרָא ה' עַל כָּל מְכוּן הָרַ צִיּוֹן וְעַל מְקָרְאָהּ
 אָמַר רַבֵּה אֲרִי יוֹחָנָן: לֹא כִירוּשָׁלַיִם
 שֶׁל עוֹלָם הַזֶּה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם שֶׁל עוֹלָם הַבָּא,
 יְרוּשָׁלַיִם שֶׁל עוֹלָם הַזֶּה—כָּל הַרוּצָה
 לַעֲלוֹת עוֹלָה, שֶׁל עוֹלָם הַבָּא—אֵין עוֹלִין
 אֶלָּא הַמְזוּמְנִין לָהּ.

The Lord will create over the whole habitation of Zion, and over her invited guests... (Isaiah 4:5). Rabbah said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: Jerusalem of the world to come is not like Jerusalem of this world. For anyone who wishes to go up to Jerusalem of this world goes up. But only those invited will be able to go up to Jerusalem of the world-to-come.

- » *What is different about a place where anyone can show up and a place where only invited guests are allowed?*
- » *How do you feel about the exclusive invitation in the second part of this text? Is this the ideal you imagine for Jerusalem of the world-to-come? If so, who do you imagine would be the invited guests? If not, what is your vision for a future, ideal Jerusalem?*

The Talmud is a compilation of law, narrative, folk wisdom, and more. It consists of the *Mishnah*, probably compiled around 200 CE, and the *Gemara*, compiled around 500 CE or later.

The Talmud is divided into 63 tractates, each mostly focused on one subject (but often including much material on other subjects as well).

When we refer to "The Talmud," we usually mean the Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), codified in Babylonia. There is also a second Talmud, known as Talmud Yerushalmi (Palestinian Talmud), codified in the Land of Israel somewhat earlier. The latter is less complete and has been less central to the development of law.

C. City for all: Exodus Rabbah 23:10

אֲרִי יוֹחָנָן עֵתִידָהּ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם לַהֲעֲשׂוֹת
 מֵטְרֹפּוֹלִין לְכָל הָאָרְצוֹת

Rabbi Yohanan said: Jerusalem is destined to become the metropolis of all lands.

- » *What would it mean for a city to belong to all the lands? How do you understand this text in light of the previous texts? In your ideal scenario, is access to Jerusalem more open or more limited? Why?*
- » *In our time, some have put forward a vision for Jerusalem as an international city. Do you think this vision is possible or desirable?*

Exodus Rabbah is a collection of *midrashim* on the Book of Exodus, probably compiled between the ninth and eleventh century. It seems to be a combination of two different works: a line-by-line commentary on the first ten chapters of Exodus, and a series of homilies on most of the rest of the book.

D. Gathering place: Avot DeRebbe Natan 35

רשב"ג אומר עתידה ירושלים שיתקבצו
בתוכה כל הגוים וכל הממלכות
שנאמר ונקוו אליה כל הגוים לשם ה'
[לירושלים] (ירמיה ג' י"ז).

Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel said: In the future, all the nations and all the regimes of the world will be gathered into Jerusalem, as it says [Jeremiah 3:17] *All nations shall assemble there, in the name of the Lord, at Jerusalem.*

- » *In the previous texts, Jerusalem spreads its influence without people necessarily traveling to the city. In this text, Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel envisions many people and communities physically coming to Jerusalem. What is new and different about this image? Do you find any differences significant?*
- » *What would Jerusalem be like if all nations assembled there? How might they assemble? What might they accomplish? Do you think this would be a good thing? Why or why not?*

V. Jerusalem in Modern Poetry

A. Jerusalem (Yehuda Amichai: from Poems 1948-1962, Schocken Press, 1963. Translated by Irena Gordon)

On a roof in the Old City
Laundry hanging in the late afternoon sunlight:

על גג בַּעִיר הָעִתִּיקָה,
כְּבִיסָה מוֹאֲרֶת בְּאוֹר אַחֲרוֹן שֶׁל יוֹם :

The white sheet of a woman who is my enemy,
The towel of a man who is my enemy,
To wipe the sweat of his brow.

סָדִין לְבָן שֶׁל אוֹיְבָתִי,
מִגְבֵּית שֶׁל אוֹיֵב
לְנַגֵּב בָּהּ אֶת זְעֵת אָפוּי.

In the sky of the Old City
A kite.
At the other end of the string,
A child
I can't see
Because of the wall.

וּבִשְׁמֵי הָעִיר הָעִתִּיקָה
עֲפִיפּוֹן.
וּבִקְצֵה הַחוּט –
יֶלֶד,
שֶׁלֹּא רָאִיתִי אוֹתוֹ,
בְּגִלְלַת הַחוֹמָה.

We have put up many flags,
They have put up many flags.
To make us think that they're happy.
To make them think that we're happy.

הָעֲלִינוּ הַרְבֵּה דְגָלִים,
הָעֲלוּ הַרְבֵּה דְגָלִים.
כְּדִי שְׂנַחֲשֵׁב שֶׁהֵם שְׂמֵחִים
כְּדִי שְׂיַחֲשִׁבוּ שֶׁאַנְחֵנוּ שְׂמֵחִים.

B. In Jerusalem (Mahmoud Darwish: from *The Kenyon Review, New Series, Vol. 27 No. 3, Summer 2005. Translated by Fady Joudah*)

In Jerusalem, and I mean within the ancient walls,
I walk from one epoch to another without a memory
to guide me. The prophets over there are sharing
the history of the holy ... ascending to heaven
and returning less discouraged and melancholy, because love
and peace are holy and are coming to town.
I was walking down a slope and thinking to myself: How
do the narrators disagree over what light said about a stone?
Is it from a dimly lit stone that wars flare up?
I walk in my sleep. I stare in my sleep. I see
no one behind me. I see no one ahead of me.
All this light is for me. I walk. I become lighter. I fly
then I become another. Transfigured. Words
sprout like grass from Isaiah's messenger
mouth: "If you don't believe you won't be safe."
I walk as if I were another. And my wound a white
biblical rose. And my hands like two doves
on the cross hovering and carrying the earth.
I don't walk, I fly, I become another,
transfigured. No place and no time. So who am I?
I am no I in ascension's presence. But I
think to myself: Alone, the prophet Muhammad
spoke classical Arabic. "And then what?"
Then what? A woman soldier shouted:
Is that you again? Didn't I kill you?
I said: You killed me ... and I forgot, like you, to die.

في القدس، أعني داخل السور القديم،
أسير من زمن إلى زمن بلا ذكرى
تصوئي. فإن الأنبياء هناك يقتسمون
تاريخ المقدس... يصعدون إلى السماء
ويرجعون أقل إحباطاً وحنناً، فالمحبة
والسلام مقلّسان وقادمان إلى المدينة.
كنت أمشي فوق منحدر وأهجس: كيف
يختلف الرواة على كلام الضوء في حجر؟
أمن حجر شحيح الضوء تندلع الحروب؟
أسير في نومي. أحملق في منامي. لا
أرى أحداً ورائي. لا أرى أحداً أمامي.
كل هذا الضوء لي. أمشي. أخف. أطيّر
ثم أصير غيري في التجلي. تنبت
الكلمات كالأعشاب من فم أشعيا
النبي: ((إن لم تؤمنوا لن تأمنوا)).
أمشي كأنني واحد غيري. وجرحي وردة
بيضاء إنجيلية. ويدي مثل حمامتين
على الصليب تحلقان وتحملان الأرض.
لا أمشي، أطيّر، أصير غيري في
التجلي. لا مكان ولا زمان. فمن أنا؟
أنا لا أنا في حضرة المعراج. لكنني
أفكر: وحده، كان النبي محمداً
يتكلم العربية الفصحى. ((وماذا بعد؟))
ماذا بعد؟ صاحت فجأة جندية:
هو أنت ثانية؟ ألم أقتلك؟
قلت: قتلتني... ونسييت، مثلك، أن أموت.

- » *What image of Jerusalem do you take from each of these poems? What images or moments resonate with you, and why?*
- » *Both Amichai and Darwish write about objects to represent feelings. How would you compare the feelings evoked by Amichai's sheets and towels, kites and flags with the feelings evoked by Darwish's stone and grass, rose and doves?*
- » *What does each poet see or not see of the "other" side of Jerusalem? Do the poems describe a Jerusalem that is more unified or more divided? How do they express this?*

Yehuda Amichai (Jerusalem, 1924–2000) is widely considered Israel’s greatest modern poet. He was born in Würzburg, Germany, to an Orthodox Jewish family, and at age 11 immigrated with his family to British Mandate Palestine in 1935. He was one of the first poets to write in colloquial modern Hebrew, with many references to God and religion.

Mahmoud Darwish (1941–2008) is regarded as the Palestinian national poet. He was born in the village of al-Birwa in the Western Galilee, and fled with his family to Lebanon in June of 1948 when their village was destroyed by the Israeli army. Darwish eventually moved to Haifa, and then lived in Beirut and Paris for 26 years before moving to Ramallah, in the West Bank, in 1996.

C. Stones (Shirley Kaufman, 1996)

When you live in Jerusalem you begin
to feel the weight of stones.
You begin to know the word
was made stone, not flesh.

They dwell among us. They crawl
up the hillsides and lie down
on each other to build a wall.
They don’t care about prayers,
the small slips of paper
we feed them between the cracks.

They stamp at the earth
until the air runs out
and nothing can grow.

They stare at the sun without blinking
and when they’ve had enough,
make holes in the sky
so the rain will run down their faces.

They sprawl all over the town
with their pitted bodies. They want
to be water, but nobody
strikes them anymore.

Sometimes at night I hear them
licking the wind to drive it crazy.
There’s a huge rock lying on my chest
and I can’t get up.

- » *How does Kaufman describe Jerusalem? How this description compare to Amichai and Darwish’s approaches?*
- » *What does Kaufman see or not see about the different facets of Jerusalem’s reality?*
- » *Which of the three poems best speaks to your experience of Jerusalem? Why?*

Shirley Kaufman (1923- 2016) was born to parents who immigrated to the United States from Poland. She grew up in Seattle, graduated from UCLA in 1944, and moved to Israel in 1973. Her poetry addresses the full range of her identities as a Jewish American only child of immigrant parents who herself became an immigrant, and explores issues of family and conflict, often with Biblical themes.

Final Questions

- » *From these texts and from your own understanding, what elements do you see as essential to the character of Jerusalem? To what extent do these represent your own relationship to Jerusalem? How do you compare the ideal vision of Jerusalem with the reality of the present moment? Do you feel a need to reconcile the two, or not?*
- » *What hopes would you offer for the city?*
- » *How do you see Jerusalem in relationship to the nations of the world at the present moment? What has changed over the past fifty years? What do you hope for in the fifty years ahead?*