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Book Review

Yifat Weiss
Micro-Sovereignty: The Mount Scopus Enclave, 1948-1967
Jerusalem, Magnes Publishing, Hebrew University, 2025, 361 pp. [Hebrew.]

Starting a historical book is a journey into a story that recounts an idea, a corpus of facts, and a narrative the writer wishes to construct from their understanding of the information in their hands. Many times, there is a clear correspondence between what is held in the hand of the writer, between the titles and summaries of the chapters, and what is embodied on the pages. Sometimes, after reading only the first few lines, readers find themselves entering the pages of history, feeling it alive, and discovering what happened with clarity and eloquence.

Yifat Weiss's *Micro-Sovereignty* is one such book. From the first chapter to the tenth and last, there is a historiographic, cartographic, political, military, and human sequence of events in the beating heart of Jerusalem. The author weaves invaluable information into the lines with ease, humor, and expansion in a way that does not overburden the readers but rather expands their knowledge. Moreover, she sparks curiosity to learn more because her words are innovative and wide-ranging, revealing the feelings and thoughts of the main players in the campaign for the unification of Jerusalem.

The book focuses on two decades from the period before the establishment of the State of Israel as an independent state, revealing the history of the establishment of Israel's first Hebrew University on Mount Scopus, as a Jewish enclave, until the end of the Six-Day War and the establishment of the fact that "the Temple Mount is in our hands."[1] The author's

1 Motta Gur *The Temple Mount in Our Hands* (Ma'arachot, 1973).

choice to write specifically about the Mount Scopus enclave, as a milestone since the end of the Six-Day War, illuminates the fact of a united Jerusalem as Israel's capital and places the issue of sovereignty there at the center of the public debate. The book "trace[s] the development of the concept of Israeli sovereignty under exceptional conditions and its application in the geopolitical anomaly of the Mount Scopus enclave in Jerusalem, i.e., an area that was not included under international law within the sovereignty of Jordan or Israel and was in practice under the control of the United Nations" (p. 299).

Over the course of ten chapters, the book tells the story of the Mount Scopus enclave. Its pages contain exclusive quotes from various personalities, including academics, government personnel, administration staff, and diplomats. Their words are presented to the reader sometimes as if they were sitting next to us at a dinner party, sometimes as if we were standing by their side as they express their thoughts in public, and sometimes as if we are carefully reading the secrets of their thoughts in telegrams or private letters to their colleagues. One such letter is the one from the university's administrative director, David Werner Senator, to Felix Rosenblüth (Pinchas Rosen, later Israel's first justice minister), in which he wrote, "I read in the newspapers today that the Jewish Agency's management is about to unite the Haganah and the Irgun, and thus even take formal responsibility for what the Irgun will do and moral responsibility for what they have done in the past" (p. 24).

This book explains the uniqueness of the enclave on Mount Scopus and the stories of the State of Israel as a nation that establishes itself on the basis of its roots. The extensive use of primary sources, documents, letters, maps and drawings is the result of a decade of writing work that brings together extensive information that is presented to the reader in an orderly and fluid manner and puts the reader in a fascinating circle of correspondence and information. There is a feeling while reading that the events are unfolding in real time and that the changing characters exist in today's public space. The author's writing envelops the event, and the resulting picture is accurate and clear. The uniqueness of such writing is that it lets allows readers to connect to the story, to want to get to know the characters, and to keep reading to learn more and gain deeper insight.

Other books present the story of the city, such as *Divided Jerusalem 1948-1967, Sources, Summaries, Selected Passages and Reference Material*.[2] This book presents a comprehensive collection of articles on Jerusalem, its division, and its unification. This book gathers articles written by academics, intellectuals, government personnel, and diplomats. *In the Footsteps of the Jerusalem Battle Trails*[3] also tells the stories of the city's battles, Mount Scopus as an enclave, and life in divided Jerusalem, bringing the city's story to life through its narrow passageways, hidden streets and gates, smooth stones, and sublime minarets. These books describe Jerusalem as divided, but Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, is a united city. It holds the secrets of all nations within its walls, and it tells the story of the Jews who wish to keep their holdings in the holy, promised land. As the writer adds at the end of the book, it can even be said that "it is an inability to realize the 'corpus spartum' approved by the United Nations Council as Resolution No. 181 (II) at its famous meeting on November 29, 1947" (p. 302).

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2 Avi Bareli, *Divided Jerusalem 1948-1967: Sources, Summaries, Selected Passages and Reference Material* (Yad Ben Zvi, 1994).

3 Yossi Langotsky and Nehemiah Zerchowitz, *In the Footsteps of the Jerusalem Battle Trails* (Carmel Publishing, 2020).