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Editors' Introduction

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The Jerusalem Center photographed by a drone. Photograph by George Alawi, August 2016. Courtesy BYU Jerusalem Center.

Editors' Introduction

James R. Kearl and Dana M. Pike
Guest Editors

The Brigham Young University Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies was dedicated on May 16, 1989. Located on Mount Scopus, the Center offers an amazing view of Jerusalem and puts the Center's students in the heart of Jerusalem within easy walking distance of the Mount of Olives and the Old City. During the past thirty years, the Jerusalem Center has made a significant impact on Jerusalem as well as on all those who have studied and worked there. Known locally as "The Mormon University," this beautiful building with its many arches provides an inspiring venue for studying history, culture, and scripture; for community outreach; and for promoting the concept that Israelis and Palestinians can work harmoniously together.

The thirtieth anniversary of the Center's dedication provided a good vantage point from which to assess and commemorate this wonderful building and the study-abroad and other programs it houses. As the anniversary neared, several individuals approached the Jerusalem Center Provo Office suggesting something be done to celebrate it. We express gratitude to them for their interest in the Center and particularly note the encouragement received from Grant Underwood, Amber Taylor, and Jeffrey R. Chadwick.

With support from BYU professor James R. Kearl, assistant to the university president with administrative responsibility for the Jerusalem Center, a committee was formed to make arrangements for a commemorative conference. The committee consisted of Jeffrey R. Chadwick and Dana M. Pike, BYU professors of religious education who have taught at the Jerusalem Center, and Professor Kearl.

This special issue of *BYU Studies Quarterly* contains the presentations and other remarks delivered at the conference, held on the campus of Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, on October 11, 2019. The conference was sponsored by the BYU Jerusalem Center Provo Office in conjunction with the BYU College of Religious Education, BYU's Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, BYU Studies, and the BYU History Department. The presentations published herein follow the order of their original presentation at the conference and have generally been edited somewhat for length.

Due to the opposition directed against BYU and a Latter-day Saint presence in Jerusalem in the 1980s during the construction of the Center, a great deal of attention has already been given to the acquisition of a lease for the site where the Center was built, its construction, and the immediate aftermath. Although a few of the presentations at our conference touched on that period (for example, the remarks of Taylor, Galbraith, and Holland), we chose to give the majority of conference time to discussing what has happened with and at the Center *since* its dedication.

Our conference included participation from former students who have studied at the Center and faculty who have taught there. After the conference concluded, each participant was invited to add comments to what they had said during the student and faculty panel discussions, respectively, and their remarks published here are an expansion of the discussions that occurred at the conference.

Because this was a one-day conference, we were unable to give attention to everything that could have been covered, including the important roles and contributions of the expatriate service couples and the local staff—security, maintenance, custodial, kitchen, music, and secretarial—all of whom work so well, often behind the scenes, to keep those in the Center safe, well fed, and living in an environment that fosters learning and interaction between students and faculty. Their efforts have made and continue to make a valuable contribution to the overall success of the Center and its programs. We thank them all.

We invited Elder Jeffrey R. Holland to present the keynote address at our conference because he was the president of Brigham Young University (1980–1989) when the Jerusalem Center was being constructed, and because during Elder Holland's service as an Apostle of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, his assignments have included the Church's interests in the Center. We are grateful he was willing and able to join us.

We express appreciation to all who presented at and who attended the conference. We also thank the Provo staff of the Jerusalem Center, especially Debra Petersen and JanaLee Longhurst, for so ably handling arrangements for the conference and for assisting with many details involved in preparing the presentations for publication. And we express gratitude to Blair G. Van Dyke for his assistance with the “BYU Jerusalem Center Timeline.”

We thank Professor Steven Harper, editor in chief of *BYU Studies Quarterly*, for publishing the conference proceedings. We likewise thank the BYU Studies staff for their assistance in bringing this issue to fruition.

We invite you to read and experience, whether for the first time or by way of happy memory, the miracles of BYU's Jerusalem Center.



The entrance gates. Photograph by Mark Philbrick. Courtesy BYU Jerusalem Center.