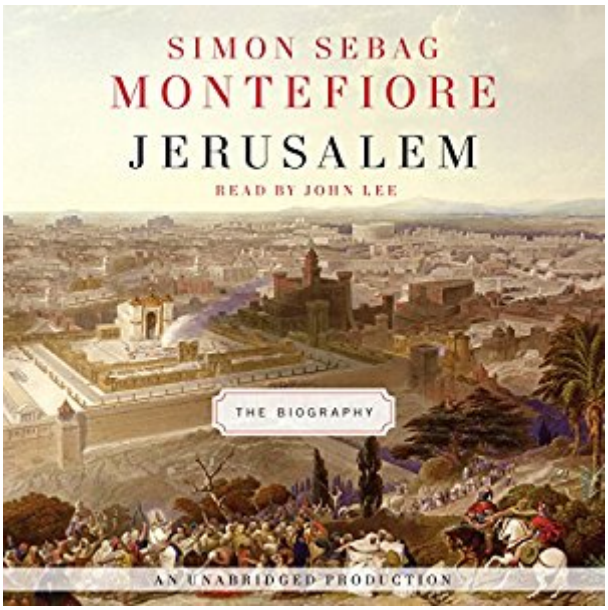
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Jerusalem: The Biography



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Synopsis

Jerusalem is the universal city, the capital of two peoples, the shrine of three faiths; it is the prize of empires, the site of Judgement Day and the battlefield of today’s clash of civilizations. From King David to Barack Obama, from the birth of Judaism, Christianity and Islam to the Israel-Palestine conflict, this is the epic history of three thousand years of faith, slaughter, fanaticism and coexistence. How did this small, remote town become the Holy City, the "center of the world" and now the key to peace in the Middle East? In a gripping narrative, Simon Sebag Montefiore reveals this ever-changing city in its many incarnations, bringing every epoch and character blazingly to life. Jerusalem’s biography is told through the wars, love affairs and revelations of the men and women - kings, empresses, prophets, poets, saints, conquerors and whores - who created, destroyed, chronicled and believed in Jerusalem. As well as the many ordinary Jerusalemites who have left their mark on the city, its cast varies from Solomon, Saladin and Suleiman the Magnificent to Cleopatra, Caligula and Churchill; from Abraham to Jesus and Muhammad; from the ancient world of Jezebel, Nebuchadnezzar, Herod and Nero to the modern times of the Kaiser, Disraeli, Mark Twain, Lincoln, Rasputin, Lawrence of Arabia and Moshe Dayan. Drawing on new archives, current scholarship, his own family papers and a lifetime’s study, Montefiore illuminates the essence of sanctity and mysticism, identity and empire in a unique chronicle of the city that many believe will be the setting for the Apocalypse. This is how Jerusalem became Jerusalem, and the only city that exists twice - in heaven and on earth.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Jerusalem the BiographyA rich and intriguing book, and packed with detail that makes for slow progress I have read this book as part of a graduate course I am taking on the Biblical Lands. It is packed with information, almost too much so, in that it covers Jerusalem from its beginnings as a small Jebusite town of less than 15 acres and 1,200 inhabitants to the present as an urbane, divided, internally warring city of great economic and political contrasts. Jerusalem is presently controlled by the State of Israel and parts of it are nominally shared with the Palestinian Authority. It stands at the cross roads of vast political and economic conflict between Western powers and developing Islamic national, and pan-national resistance to that control. The one time cooperation of the Muslims to ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“go along to get alongÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• has gone and now Jerusalem and neighboring Muslim nations are in a virtual state of war with the so called ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Islamic StateÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• which seeks to impose its political control across national boundaries and implement fundamentalist Islam, such as has not been seen in millennia. To implement this ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“IslamistÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• control the ISIS fighters have mounted a war of terrorism, imprisonment and decapitation which is made real to the world through media disseminated via the internet. What is most striking to me is that Jerusalem is the holy site for three monotheistic religions and the essence of what Montefiore reports is the wholesale slaughter, plundering, and looting of the occupants of Jerusalem, and the political despotism that has controlled Jerusalem across the millennia. The political elite of Jerusalem have come from across the face of the earth and seemingly the prime motivation is not that of religious sanctity but economic and political gain. Montefiore reports that the sacred Jewish, Christian and Islamic holy sites in many instances are carried on in a carnival atmosphere focused on the core economic activity of Jerusalem, tourism. Montefiore recites very carefully the history of those that have controlled and directed the destiny of Jerusalem. Always that control has been vested in one or another religious group of the three monotheistic religions. What I find ironic and of note is what Montefiore reports in Chapter 40, entitled ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Arab City, Imperial City 1870-1880.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• His opening sentence of the chapter, is telling: ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The real Jerusalem was like a Tower of Babel in fancy dressÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦.Ottoman officers wore embroidered jackets coupled with European uniforms; Ottoman Jews, Armenians and Arab Christians and Muslims sported frock-coatsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• He continues on page 377 and comments that all of the religions, after the end of the Islamic Ramadan fast celebrated with a feast and fair mode outside of the city walls. ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“During the Jewish festival of Purim, Muslim and Christian Arabs dressed up in traditional Jewish costumes, and all three religions attended the Jewish Picnic held at the tomb of Simon the Just north of the Damascus Gate. Jews

presented their Arab neighbors with matzah and invited them to the Passover Seder dinner, while the Arabs returned the favor by giving the Jews newly baked bread when the festival ended. Jewish mohels often circumcised Muslim children.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• And on the chapter continues reciting the ways that Jews, Christians and Muslims cooperated in that 19th century period; all of which has now come crashing down. Bottom line, this is a wonderful book that requires concentration and persistence. One is also helped by a love of history and a passing acquaintance with many of the issues and historical periods covered.

If you are a learned scholar, able to analyse the past in all it's minute detail, then I suspect you are going to pull this book apart, whether from a social, cultural, religious or historical stand point. The detail is incredible. Whether the author's motivations for writing this were from a privileged family connection (as claimed by other commentators) is irrelevant because what he has done is given us ordinary people - of which I am one - access to the confusing, bewildering, tortured background to this city that has riven asunder the peoples of not just the region but the world. Whether you are Christian or Jew or Muslim, whether an Iraqi, Palestinian, Syrian, Roman, Turk, Egyptian, French, German, Brit or any other shape, size or hue of humanity, Jerusalem has pulled and continues to entice those in search of religious comfort and salvation. God in all his glory, whatever cloak he wears stands on its walls beckoning anyone and everyone to control the uncontrollable.This book enables one to place the present ebb and flow of mayhem and slaughter over Jerusalem into context and for that I am extremely grateful to the author. Whether ALL and every detail is true is really irrelevant. I am not interested in whether the Jesus, who was crucified on the cross, in a huff really did tip over the tables of the money lenders but the vision of this grumpy Messiah doing so did make me smile. What is fact is that the religions, tribes, sects and nationalities that all want a slice of Jerusalem will continue to be denied their wishes whilst one of them holds control. How it happened that the Jews finally have Israel and control of Jerusalem is simply part of the city's history. It's their turn but those denied control are grumpy, as they have been for millennia. This book enables one to wonder at why anyone could possibly think (the arrogance of ex British PM Tony Blair comes to mind here) that they could ever mediate all parties with an interest in the city to produce everlasting peace. But what comes out of its pages is the clear fact that man, in search of eternal salvation of his soul, will not hesitate to inflict immeasurable harm on others to achieve his aims. Stand in his way at your peril. This very readable book allowed me a much deeper understanding of the turmoil that is that part of the world and especially allows one to place the atrocities of the current unrest in Syria into context. Disgruntled parties have been lobbing stones at each other - and worse, much

worse - for thousands of years, Jerusalem, bombed, bruised and besieged as the ultimate prize. And so it continues.I would have given it five stars but for one fact that I found the amount of detail in names utterly bewildering and in many places, impossible to follow. But this is a learned book, the author to be congratulated on such a monumental work.

Gripping read. A must-have for lovers of history.On the downside, the author appears to make some errors (or seems to rely on faulty sources) for some religious details on all sides, and labours under the misapprehension that modern religious leaders believe that everything was sunshine and roses back in their religion's heydey.Nonetheless, an excellent resource.

Amazing feat of putting facts together, still interesting how it unfolds like a thousand lifetimes, despite so many facts. There was many tribes conquering each other and they left a trail of killed, enslaved, tortured, ruined cities, and taxation. Every time the Jerusalemites regained control of the city, they built or rebuilt the sacred temple that had godly presence and gold, then a conquering army would destroy it and take the gold. Author says the history from 1500bc forward is from bible or related divine books some Jewish, there was no other recorded history, the information before then was from tabets, Iraqi It's an amazing book, not a story about the Jews and the Palistnians, not hardly, and most of the many groups, Persians, Babalonians, Cainanites, Syrians, etc. Most countries held religion of Babel, a belief in many gods most of which were angry and had to be appeased or you suffer consequences. The Romans conquered Juerusalem approaching year one (have to check my scribbled pages to know), and they didn't become Christian till many years after Jesus.

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