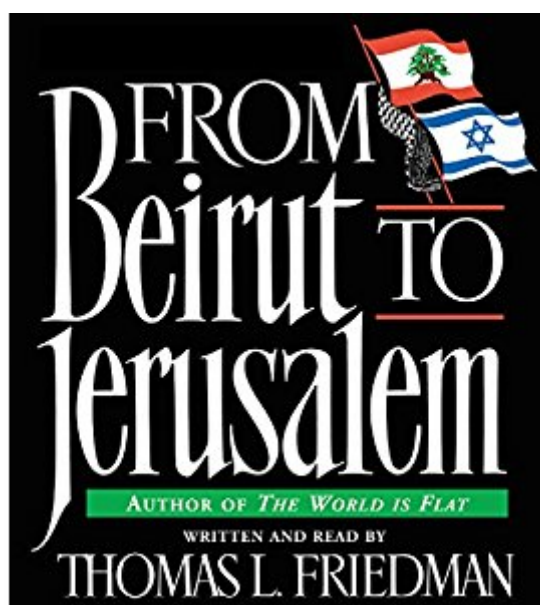


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From Beirut To Jerusalem



Synopsis

“If you’re only going to read one book on the Middle East, this is it.” —Seymour M.

Hersh One of the most thought-provoking books ever written about the Middle East, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* remains vital to our understanding of this complex and volatile region of the world.

Three-time Pulitzer Prize winner Thomas L. Friedman drew upon his ten years of experience reporting from Lebanon and Israel to write this now-classic work of journalism. In a new afterword, he updates his journey with a fresh discussion of the Arab Awakenings and how they are transforming the area, and a new look at relations between Israelis and Palestinians, and Israelis and Israelis. Rich with anecdote, history, analysis, and autobiography, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* will continue to shape how we see the Middle East for many years to come. —This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I had previously read Friedman's "The Lexus and the Olive Tree" and was basically disappointed with that book. "From Beirut to Jerusalem", his first and more widely acclaimed, is much better. I am on the opposite end of the spectrum as Friedman, politically, so I was not expecting to agree with him on every view and suggestion for solution that he describes in this book, but his writing was entertaining, his stories amazing, and his opinions very fair to both sides. The book begins with Friedman's description of life in the middle of the Lebanese civil war. Friedman lived in the heart of Beirut when it was the worst place anyone could be at the time. His firsthand stories of bombings, murders, and simple terrorism, range from unimaginably scary to darkly humorous. Eventually

Friedman and his wife move from Beirut to Jerusalem, where the second half of the book begins. This second part is much more applicable to today's news and debates since it is from an area in the middle of daily battles, whereas Lebanon's civil war has died down. Friedman, although Jewish, has many misgivings about Israeli actions in their conflicts of the past several decades. But unlike most of his workmates and friends at the New York Times, Friedman is also not afraid to tell the whole truth when detailing Arab atrocities. Friedman's account of Hafez al-Asad's massacre of his own people in the town of Hama, Syria, is one that should be read by every Westerner -- especially those on the left who think the Jews, aided by America, simply "stole" a small plot of Arab land from an otherwise friendly group of people. This book won many awards and is very unique in that it is a wide-ranging report from the world's greatest newspaper's leading foreign affairs writer.

Those of you who follow and followed the events in the Middle East, Persian Gulf and the Gulf War, but seek a broader explanation of the sources of antagonism and conflict in the Arab world, would be enlightened and entertained by Friedman's book. A Pulitzer prize winning correspondent for the New York Times, he spent ten years in Beirut and Jerusalem reporting first hand the violence, suspicion and hatred that is part of life in that region. The standing norm in the Middle East, according to Friedman is what he calls "Hama Rules" the pitiless and remorseless pursuit of political and economic ends through bloodshed. This attitude is rampant in all of its regimes, including Israel. Its source is the tribal politics and deep rooted political tradition of authoritarianism, as well as the centuries of colonialism and subjugation that the region's peoples have endured. With a reporter's eye for detail, Friedman analyzes many of the decisions that are familiar to us: the Reagan decision to send marines to Lebanon, The Palestinian uprising in Israel, the history of the PLO and the Arab-Israeli conflict are all analyzed in detail. Friedman is careful to point out that the region's conflicts are not merely between Arab and Jew, but between Muslims and Christians, between Arabs, between different Muslim sects and different nation-states. In fact, Friedman finds the region's complexities beyond the comprehension of most American diplomats (no surprise!). This lack of understanding has resulted in numerous foreign policy blunders by the U.S. The first version of the book was written prior to the Gulf War, but its observations are still relevant, though you can now get a new edition. Hussein's regime is discussed at length and characterized as merely the latest version of "Hama Rules."

While I consider this book well worth reading, a word must be said about the context in which it was written. During the early 90's and late 80's a consensus was growing that the only way to end the

Israeli Palestinian conflict was for Israel to recognize Yasser Arafat as the de jure government of the Palestinians. Moving down such a path meant that Arafat would have to undergo considerable rehabilitation. One of the subtexts of Friedman's book is that very effort. The result is that Friedman intentionally glosses over the murder, mayhem and destruction Arafat spread through Lebanon. Little attention is paid to the civilians they murdered, the politicians they extorted, or the destabilizing influence that the PLO's "State-within-a-state" created. Occasionally Friedman is unfair in his assessment of Israel's actions. In particular failing to discuss the PLO's cross border raids into Northern Israel that left scores of civilian casualties and how it motivated Israeli public opinion is left insufficiently discussed. Probably that is due to Friedman's desire to indict Israel's Likud government which he saw as hostile to his belief in the need to create a PLO-Israel dialogue. What makes the book interesting is in the story of how a state sandwiched between two regional powers was unable to survive. Interestingly, that is partially because Beirut tried to play both sides. That puts it in contrast to Jordan, a similarly situated state that, after the '67 War, through its lot entirely with Israel and has prospered under its protection. A little should be added about Friedman's idea of a direct PLO-Israel dialogue.

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