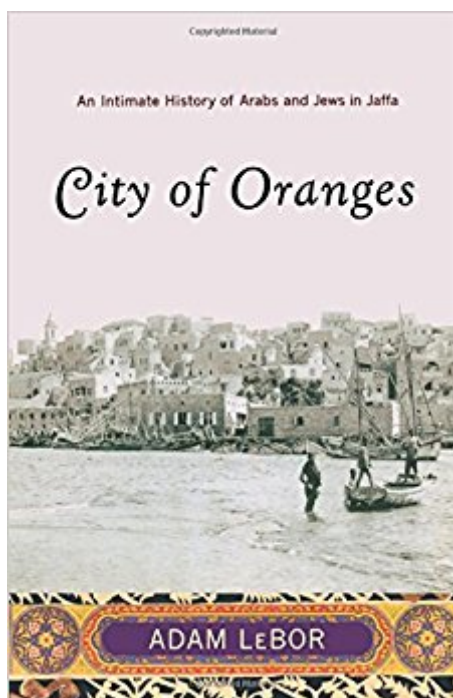


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City Of Oranges: An Intimate History Of Arabs And Jews In Jaffa



Synopsis

A profoundly human take on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, seen through the eyes of six families, three Arab and three Jewish. The millennia-old port of Jaffa, now part of Tel Aviv, was once known as the "Bride of Palestine," one of the truly cosmopolitan cities of the Mediterranean. There Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived, worked, and celebrated together—and it was commonplace for the Arabs of Jaffa to attend a wedding at the house of the Jewish Chelouche family or for Jews and Arabs to both gather at the Jewish spice shop Tiv and the Arab Khamis Abulafia's twenty-four-hour bakery. Through intimate personal interviews and generations-old memoirs, letters, and diaries, Adam LeBor gives us a crucial look at the human lives behind the headlines and a vivid narrative of cataclysmic change. 16 pages of photographs; 3 maps

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. As any student of the Middle East can attest, there's almost no way to approach the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with objectivity; virtually every word about it comes weighted with ideology or political mission. But English journalist LeBor (the Times) has achieved the near-impossible. While ostensibly telling the story of one town, he sketches the tale of Israel's birth and concomitant Palestinian nakba (catastrophe), with the knotted lives of Jaffa's Arab and Jewish residents serving as a humanizing lens. Though not a rigorous academic study, this history encompasses both the familiar (nonstop wars) and the lesser-known (Syria's 1949 peace overtures). Dotted with delightful period details, it gives individual opinion free rein, reporting

contradictions without judgment. The history of both peoples is marked by trauma and courage, and neither side has really managed to listen to the other. "because, LeBor notes, "any recognition of each other's losses is a kind of surrender in the endless battle for memory as well as territory." He quietly condemns the worst excesses of both sides—Israeli occupation, Palestinian corruption, Israeli racism, Palestinian suicide terrorism—and comes down on the side of compromise. Some readers will noisily object, but those looking for a well-rounded and truly human insight into the conflict will enjoy this account. (May) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Starred Review LeBor constructs his "intimate history" from the lives of six families—two Christian, two Muslim, and two Jewish—rooted in the ancient port city now part of Tel Aviv. From extensive personal interviews, memoirs, and private archives, he creates vivid portraits of these six families to illustrate the narrative of twentieth-century Arab-Jewish and Palestinian-Israeli relations. Though LeBor's dramatis personae may seem daunting, he knows his cast intimately, allowing the reader to be drawn into the complex and often turbulent lives of each generation as they endure political and social upheaval, urban decay and development, the violence of war, and the chaos of its aftermath. LeBor dispels common myths and media representations about both sides as he articulates, through the family members, the issues, little and big, of daily life in modern Israel. With striking conviction and eloquence, the six families share with LeBor their extraordinary, centuries-old histories and diasporas as they found themselves on different sides of violently divisive issues and events while living within this small, seaside city. Elliot Mandel Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Very difficult to follow the story line but interesting to hear about the history of the Palestinian/Jew situation.

Beautiful and fascinating book, one of the works of reasonably unflinching non fiction which holds out hope for mutual future for Arabs and Jews in the Middle East . It is not written for the passionate partisan who already knows a lot and is cemented in his opinion. There is much to anger both sides. But it is a useful case study of a place where things still can and do change.

Lovely Oranges LeBor's journalistic style allows him to translate Jaffa's intimacy easily. He places you in the midst of people's lives and their circumstances without your realizing it. Nor do you

realize the great education you receiving. Thoroughly enjoyed.

I did not finish the book yet, but so far it's really great. I will give a further review when I am finished with the book

This represents an interesting and effective approach to a difficult topic. Part two is especially good.

Confused if non-fiction, historical fiction, a novel or!? Assumed to be written by an impartial reporter, however its disguised!? Its factual when it suits the bias of it author.

I did not hesitate to rate this book five stars. That decision, to me, was obvious. And yet, I have lingered for a while over what to say about "City of Oranges," how to explain why, in the extravagant language of , "I loved it." I do love it. I read it steadily, but without haste, always enjoying it. And yet, I have read quite a few books on the Israel-Palestine controversy and some have greatly excited me. They have been polemics, or polemical histories, and I have responded to their passionate argument."City of Oranges" mounts no passionate polemical on the single most acrimonious, accusative question about foreign policy that Americans and Europeans face today. "City of Oranges" does not make an argument; or, rather, it tells a story in the fullest, most empathic, and balanced way--a triumph of reporting--that makes a complex argument mostly by relating the facts of human lives. It is an argument about two peoples, Jews and Palestinians, in the same historical dilemma: exiles, refugees, despised and degraded for political motives, victims of catastrophe--but now pitted against one another in the same slice of the Middle East--pitted against one another in a way that leaves them scant sympathy for one another, though their plights are so similar.In such a situation, merely to tell the true story of the historical accident of the clash of these two peoples, and to tell it by relating the lives of real individuals, real families, caught in the history of one legendary, ancient, seductive city on the Mediterranean, Jaffa, is to offer an answer. The answer is that politics are indeed important, but, in the end, politics are about the lives of individuals and families.

Whatever the aching summons of race, religion, and ethnicity, they are less important than the question: What, now, at this time in history, will open the lives, and hopes, of the individuals and families whose future is at stake?There is much, here, to arouse and infuriate those who view the Jewish settlement of Palestine as the imposition, by one group of exiles, refugees, on another group that has been made refugees. There is much to justify the actions of the State of Israel, even "the Jewish state," as it has built a mostly free, mostly democratic, mostly Western nation in the face of

overwhelming odds. But the author incites no arousal and no fury. He shows. He shows through the eyes of extraordinary individuals and families the reality of Palestine, the reality of the clash of two peoples, the reality of 1948--the triumph of the Jewish state, the catastrophe of the Palestinian. And by showing us the reality he recruits our allegiance not to the Jewish State and not to the Palestinian cause, but to the human plight of those who have lived, live, and will live in the beloved and embittered slice of the Middle East now called Israel. I recommend this book above all others I have read on Israel and Palestine. It is not that one should ignore other books, it is that every other book, to be meaningful, ought to read through the eyes of one who has seen the reality of the lives of those who lived and live in Palestine and call it, or refuse to call it, "Israel." Five stars. This book in simplest terms is the work of a reporter. But a reporter in the great tradition of commitment to objectivity, reporting the facts, telling the story in a way that enables the reader to judge. I suggest that if you read "City of Oranges," you never will read another book on Israel and Palestine in the same way. Though their authors might strain to recruit you to causes or partisans--and they are not to be ignored--you will see real people and judge in the end what is best for them.

City of Oranges provides an important, though incomplete, picture of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Adam LeBor compiles interviews with past and present residents of the city of Jaffa into a narrative overview of the topic. The prose style allows for easy but informative reading. The book is valuable for two reasons. Firstly, it presents the 'human' side of the story, beyond the dry historical facts that are common in most volumes on the issue; we get to hear from those who actually lived (and still live) the events. This should be worth reading for all. Secondly, it retells the mainstream account of the conflict. For those unfamiliar with the major events and themes of Palestine-Israel, LeBor provides a neat overview. One should not, however, confuse the sentiments expressed by the interviewees as a reflection on Israeli and Palestinian society more generally. Those whose voices we hear in the book largely come from the middle and upper class. They are architects, managers, teachers, and professors, among others. While crucial to hear from this section of society, they are not all-encompassing. This point ought to have been stressed by the author more. In addition, this book is no substitute for a more thorough, scholarly work on the topic. City of Oranges may provide a good overall sense of the conflict, but will not expound the evidence and timelines needed to discuss and debate the topic. In this respect, City of Oranges should be seen as a complement to the existing historiography.

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