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Inside cover (2001 edition)

‘Jerusalem’, wrote Herman Melville after a visit there in 1860, ‘is besieged by an army of the dead’. Today Jerusalem is at the core of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and of the larger Arab-Israeli relationship. But it has been in the international diplomatic agenda for more than a century. Why is the question of Jerusalem so intractable? Why has it outclassed almost every other political dispute as a focus for collective violence and diplomatic wrangling? What are the elements that have entangled so many outside interests and powers? What are the prospects now for a resolution? Based on many years of research in archives throughout the world, written with insight, humanity and elegance, this book sheds startling new light on the policies, motives and objectives of all those involved in the struggle for the holy city.

Wasserstein shows how, throughout modern history, Jerusalem has been exploited for the ulterior purposes of many powers. The religious devotion of masses of Christians, Muslims and Jews throughout the world, he argues, has been manipulated for often squalid ends. Wasserstein contends that a long-term solution to the Jerusalem question must involve recognition of current social reality: a city that in almost every way is irrevocably divided. Against the background of renewed violence in and around Jerusalem, this book offers a timely and illuminating contribution towards the effort to achieve a negotiated settlement of a tragic conflict that, in one way or another, affects us all.

Bernard Wasserstein was born in London in 1948 and educated at Oxford and at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. From 1980 to 1996 he was a member of the History Department at Brandeis University in Massachusetts and from 1996 to 2000 served as President of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies. He is now Professor of History at the University of Glasgow. His books, which have been translated into French, German, Dutch, Hebrew, Arabic, Romanian and Chinese, include *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* and *The Secret Lives of Trebitsch Lincoln* which received the Golden Dagger Prize for Non-fiction. *Vanishing Diaspora: The Jews in Europe since 1945* provoked impassioned debate with its forecast of the demise of European Jewry. His most recent book was *Secret War in Shanghai: treachery, subversion and collaboration in the Second World War*. Bernard Wasserstein is President of the Jewish Historical Society of England.
Today, Jerusalem lies at the core of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It is the most deeply divided capital city in the world: its Arab and Jewish residents inhabit different districts, speak different languages, attend different schools, read different newspapers, observe different holy days, live, in almost every significant respect, different lives. Against the background of renewed violence in and around Jerusalem, this book explores the complicated origins of the current diplomatic impasse. Why is the question of Jerusalem so intractable? Why has it outlasted almost every other pol

Jerusalem today includes the Old City and East Jerusalem, formerly held by Jordan and annexed by Israel in 1967, as well as West Jerusalem and the 1994 western expansion of the municipal borders. The city limits now encircle ninety-four square miles and at least 650,000 inhabitants. Members of both faiths consider it the navel of the earth. Wasserstein skillfully traces the competitive struggle for this most divisive of places, which was once pagan, then Jewish, Roman, Christian, Muslim, again Christian, again Muslim, and now Jewish/Muslim. It was at the Clinton-Barak-Arafat negotiating summit (Camp David, 2000) that President Clinton discovered to his surprise that the main unresolvable issue was the ownership of this small piece of real estate.