



From Beirut to Jerusalem

Thomas L. Friedman

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This is a book that must be read by all who are concerned about the present and future of a part of our world to which Western civilization has always been and will continue to be, vitally connected...

From Beirut to Jerusalem Details

Date : Published July 15th 1990 by Anchor Books (first published 1989)

ISBN : 9780385413725

Author : Thomas L. Friedman

Format : Paperback 608 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, Politics, Cultural, Israel



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From Reader Review From Beirut to Jerusalem for online ebook

Sara says

This is a great book. I like the writing style and I learned a lot. Friedman is extremely well-informed and his first-hand experiences are truly interesting. Just be aware that it covers a limited period of time, and is very much an exposition of Friedman's own perspective.

Emily says

This was required reading for one of my undergrad poli sci classes, and it's very good. Anyone who's interested in learning more about the history of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict should read it.

Dr.J.G. says

Friedman's life, work and impressions of the two places when he was stationed there during the eighties, the work is informative in detail in more ways than one - horrors such as Hama and confusion of Lebanon are not this well known to those not of the nations involved, for example - and very worth reading.

Even as one reads these accounts one wonders at the cry against the comparatively smaller details of events elsewhere due to the democratic nature of the nations and culture in the said elsewhere places, while almost no sound is made about the Hama massacre of 38,000 Islamic fundamentalists and the neighbourhood they lived in by their own regime in an Islamic nation, just as very little noise is heard above the bare mention of the massacre of Armenian million and more by the Turkish government a century or so ago. But then, so very little noise or mention exists about the massacre of millions of Tibetans in Tibet by China, while billions were spent to arm the Afghans against - comparatively - an almost benign, benefic Soviet occupation (women will never be so free again as under the Soviet occupation according to the prophecy by the father of the protagonist in *The Kite Runner*, and it seems to be all too true even until now what with the neighbouring regime supporting Taliban to wage their war in a supposedly free Afghanistan, supposedly free from not only other other repressive regimes but from Taliban chiefly).

But then, it ought to be clear to anyone looking dispassionately, or with a passion for humanity, that the misplaced war on Soviet regime to the exclusion of ignoring massacres in Tibet, Hama, and elsewhere by Islamic fundamentalist regimes using weapons of terror across their own borders and within too (massacre prior to independence of Bangladesh by the military of west Pakistan of what they thought were their own people in the eastern part, including the horrendous use of women of Bangladesh, kept naked and chained so they could not run away, half a million women - or was it only fifty thousand? - so treated in inhumane way for sexual needs of the occupying west Pakistan military soldiers, a la nazi treatment of their own - read German, misnamed "Aryan", the real meaning of the word Aryan from Sanskrit having nothing to do with the usage made by nazi regime or their predecessor racists in any part of Europe - women kept for sexual use of their soldiers) being one example. The only difference was the German women were probably allowed to wear clothes when they were not being used.

And yet none of these various atrocities are mentioned a fraction as much as the happenings in a couple of

places, easy targets for being not only democratic regimes of modern nations that believe in education and cultures of certain faiths that do not go about converting with aggressive fervour and hence targeted.

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One reads about the two nations and two cultures in this work - with people of diverse agenda and more than one nations in each of the two - and one is overwhelmed with the information unless one is extensively familiar with all this, which a general reader is not quite likely to be, not so much.

The diversity of Lebanon in the citizenry of not only including Christianity among the nation but remote and elsewhere not so well known branches of both Islam and Christianity is as much a new fact for most of generic readers as the description of almost claustrophobic nature of orthodox variation of faith in Israel that is so very a mirror image of Islam in its fundamental robe.

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Informative although not exhaustively so - for instance, details of the terrorism are missing with their effects, and the few mentions include a branding of a people but refrains from mentioning if such branding was justified by their sympathy and covert help for those that did commit acts of terror - this is an account of the author's life in the two places and his perception, understanding, and information about the people and nations of the two places - the number being a lot more than two.

Also, it explains a lot about acts of terror committed elsewhere that are linked to the topic of this work, by the tide of the movements, and successes perceived thereof by various others who sought to copy those successes including what counts as martyrdom, but more relevantly the expansion of a people connected by what is misnamed faith via methods tested and proved effective - high rates of reproduction, induction of small children in acts of terror and war (and subsequent howling against the same children being caught in crossfire or affected as result of the encouragement by the adults towards taking part in the war), occupation of lands and hypocrisy of howling protests against others either being part of the same lands or copying the occupation tactics, flat out declaration of not tolerating others among themselves and howling against similar reluctance by others to tolerate their own selves, using their own intolerance and democratic tolerance of others to their own benefits of expansion and take over towards a final aim of converting humanity with a clear agenda of clearing the world of any other faiths or systems, it is all eerily familiar across spaces and time.

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Interestingly another analogy is that about settling of US, Australia, and so forth, generally the continent(s) of the so called New World, by migrants from Europe; "settling" (they were none of them empty, to begin with!) those continents by every possible tactic including massacres and denigrations of real inhabitants of the places, including misnomers such as Indian (for a variety of people that had nothing to do with India - but then again, the very name India was given by people outside India to the land once so known) - or Aborigines, rather than retaining names they have for themselves.

Is settling of Palestine - by an original people driven out of it by Rome two millennia ago - against the unwillingness of the more recent inhabitants of the land (bought by the settlers from owners who were of the same ilk as the unwilling recent inhabitants, only they were rich landowners and couldn't care less for the tenants' opinions, feelings, or lives - unless they simply knew they were taking the money for a land they intended to drive away or massacre the new settler from anyway) - is this worse than the massacres, and

worse, of original people of continents of Australia and America, by weapons and infected blankets and deliberate "whitewashing" of races by using European male settlers' usage of women of the land (it would be called rape if the males involved saw those women as human, but in all likelihood they saw them as objects of use, and this is worse than rape) and taking the resulting children away by force, causing disruption of families and trauma very like that of slavery of people kidnapped from Africa and sold in US - well, one doubts Israeli occupation of Palestine, including the post '67 territories, could even begin to compare, all the more so since it was a much persecuted people flocking to their homeland they had been driven away from by Rome then occupying Judea, and never allowed to live in peace anywhere else in the world with the exception of two places, two nations (one since expanded, one severely divided and a victim of terrorism of expansion by a colonising and conversionist people or two).

Those two places through history of the two millennia when Jews were driven out of their homeland and dispersed, seeking to live elsewhere and never allowed to feel at home or have rights, were India and China.

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In the land and culture that India was before the forced partitions (due to some that required supremacy of their faith as a national character), Jews lived in peace, were free to follow their own faith and culture or assimilate as much as they chose, prosper, and survive - as other refugees since and before, including Parsis, those from Persia fleeing terrors of a persecuting new religion over a millennium ago, and more recently Tibetans. This is by no means a complete or exhaustive list, either - it includes all those from east or west that came with intentions of life rather than that of death of others.

China on the other hand assimilated the Jewish diaspora gently - according to Pearl S. Buck, for example - until trace of such assimilation is found in a name here, a nose there, and very little more.

In India - what is now retained by that name - however, one can find old Jewish settlements in various places, and people who have lived there for all this time. The young might have emigrated elsewhere, but that was due to better economic prospects post formation of Israel as much as a returning to an ancient homeland or finding others of one's faith from across the globe - all the positive reasons, and none of the usual ones of persecution or lack of any rights of citizenry on par with everyone else.

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Events have gone far beyond the book's beginning of Hamas, of course. Now the world is smaller, terror spread beyond boundaries of the nations that have been the usual target, rogue nations have been reluctantly admitted by various powers of west after attempting to coopt them into "fight against terror" by labeling them as a partner of US in this fight and bribing them with billions of dollars unaccounted for - only to find the money vanishing, more demands for sophisticated weaponry, and backdoor coordination by those "partners" with the very agencies of terrorism they have been pretending to cooperate fighting. This is today, post not only the horror of towers unfolded over a decade ago but nearly a year post having the man who masterminded or at least was leader and spirit being hunted down in his lair in the very heart of military establishment of the "partner" of US in fighting terror.

Few dare to ask, was US really so stupid as to be duped by this nation, one born less than a century ago out of terrorism used for demanding it to begin with (but teaching its children, falsely, that it had existed for over a millennium, never mind how unlikely it was to exist even today without the massacre of thousands in Calcutta to force the demand), all along, or was it something else?

Now however not only this is post 2001, it is post the 26/11 targetting of western and Israeli people in a landmark luxury hotel in Mumbai used as focal point of a terrorist attack masterminded on cellphones from across the western border to instruct the terrorists continuously, and there can no longer be a pretension of doubt about the rogue nature of the agencies that mastermind and train the terrorists while denying it with open lies as long as the paymasters are willing to buy the lies. Hamas has been joined by various other agencies of terror as a front for the authorities of the rogue nation - agencies that merely change names and claim to be institutions of charity, on the whole creating a picture of a killer on the loose pretending to be a beggar and denying both begging and killing, or blackmail that joins the two.

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Brendan says

If you're sick and tired of what a pedantic wind-bag Thomas Friedman has become since his stupid 'lexus & olive-tree' epiphany, take a trip back to when he was less pedantic, less wind-baggish, and could make a point without the use of a dozen unnecessary, self-aggrandizing anecdotes.

From Beirut to Jerusalem is entertaining, well-written, poignant, and a great primer to middle-eastern/Israeli-Palestinian affairs. The Beirut section of the book is a bit better than the Jerusalem section (I get the feeling he had different editors for each), but overall it remains indispensable reading.

Chris Hall says

I can understand why the Middle East is the way it is now. Friedman was boots on the ground in both Beirut and Jerusalem in the 1980s as a reporter for the New York Times. An excellent writer, he keeps you engaged and draws thought-provoking analogies and conclusions throughout the book. I'd highly recommend it to anyone interested in the region.

H?i L?u says

S?ng ??ng, tr?n ??y th?ng tin, ?? ch?n th?c th? ch?a r?i, nh?ng ??c r?t h?p d?n!

Th?nh says

Trong 10 n?m s?ng v? làm vi?c c?a m?nh ? trung ?ng, Thomas Friedman ? tr?i qua nh?ng kho?ng kh?c v? b??c ngo?t l?ch s? t?i ?y.

V?i 5 n?m ??u s?ng t?i Be?ut, Friedman ? ????c ch?ng m?t "Tam Qu?c Di?n Ngh?a" ? Trung ?ng ??u nh?ng n?m 80. Nh?ng l? ?a t?c" thay cho "tam qu?c" v? "xung ??t l?i ?ch" thay cho "di?n ngh?a".

Sau khi ???c NYT thi?n chuy?n ??n Jerusalem, Friedman ? d?nh 5 n?m ti?p theo cu?c cu?c ??i ?? tìm hi?u v? s?ng cu?c s?ng c?a m?t ng?i Do Th?i, tr?n m?t ??t n???c Do Th?i, v? cùng ?a s?c v? nhi?u bi?n c?. C? th? c? ng?i cho r?ng Friedman l? ng?i Do Th?i nh?ng l?i ?i n?i x?u Isreal, nh?ng kh?ng ph?i th?. Thomas Friedman l? m?t nh? báo, v? ?ng ? ? h?n th?nh nh?ng nh?m v? c?a m?nh: n?i s? th?t v? ch? s? th?t (kh?ng ch?n c?m xúc cá nh?n).

Carli says

I'm not a huge fan of Friedman lately, but this book is great. I thought the section on Beirut to be more autobiographical in terms of relating directly to his experience as a journalist there. Meanwhile, the Jerusalem section seemed more broad. I can't help but wonder (I'm sure I can read his NY Times column if I wanted to find out) how he views events since- post- assassination of Rabin, premiership of Netanyahu, second intifada. At any rate, this is a must read for anyone interested in that area of the world.

Lisa (Harmonybites) says

It was an Israeli friend who told me that if I wanted to understand today's Middle East, I should read this book. The author is well-qualified as a guide to the region's complexities. Friedman, who is Jewish and studied Hebrew as a child, as a teen spent a vacation in an Israeli Kibbutz. He started studying Arabic as well, and fell in love with Egypt after a two-week visit on his way to a semester at Hebrew University. Less than two years later he was taking Arabic courses at the American University in Cairo. After college he earned a Masters at Oxford in Middle Eastern Studies: then, he became a reporter. In Beirut. In the midst of their civil war. He'd spend almost five years there, winning a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of the massacre at Sabra and Shatilia camps. When American marines were slaughtered in their Beirut barracks, Friedman was on scene watching the bomb's mushroom cloud rise overhead. He'd then spend almost four years as the Jerusalem Bureau Chief for the *New York Times*.

I've read criticisms of Friedman's style as risible, with mixed metaphors and outlandish analogies. I didn't really notice in the Beirut portion of the book, and I usually do. I think it's that the story he had to tell was so riveting, I didn't trip up on that--I just glided right through. When you're reading about an Israeli officer being confronted in Beirut with three boxes, one filled with heads, another with torsos and another with limbs or read of how the parrot at the bar of the Commodore Hotel rendered a "perfect imitation of the whistle of an incoming shell," it's not style that draws your attention. I certainly found this book very readable and well-paced in that first half of the book. I admit I did start noticing the plethora of analogies in the Jerusalem portion. Maybe because a Hobbesian hell like Beirut rivets your attention more than the stories of a functioning democracy. Maybe it's that the Beirut portions seemed more built on personal experience and observations, while the Jerusalem portions more based on interviews with others. Maybe it's that his stylistic tics, as some reviewers suggest, increased over time and the Beirut portions were based on material written earlier. For whatever reason, I did find the second half of the book less compelling, and the style much more irksome.

Friedman seemed to me very even-handed. He certainly took to task not just Arabs, but the Israelis and the Americans for a generous share of the blame. Some reviewers pegged him as a Neo-Con, but given his insistence there will be no peace until Israeli settlers are withdrawn from the West Bank, his account of the Israeli occupation there, and his criticism of the Reagan and first Bush administrations, he hardly came across to me that way, and the Goodreads bio taken from the Wiki described him as "left-leaning." I don't think he's so easily labeled, at least not in this book. He identifies three forces that drive much of the madness of the Middle East, and interestingly it isn't religion, or at least religion *per se*, which he blames. Even when it comes to Islamic Fundamentalism, he believes it "is at root a secular socioeconomic problem." He points to three conflicting and competing forces: tribalism, authoritarianism, and nationalism--particularly in the context of how the colonial powers drew very artificial lines when in the aftermath of World War I the Middle Eastern states were established.

I may not always agree with Friedman's analysis or his solutions, but certainly his account of his time in the Middle East makes for a good primer on the nations of the Middle East and their conflicts, even though almost a quarter of a century has passed since the original publication. And the 2012 edition I read had an interesting Afterword on the events that have passed since, particularly Friedman's thoughts on the Arab Spring and its opportunities and dangers. This may not be the last word on the subject of the contemporary Middle East, but it's not a bad place to start.

Naina says

This is his only good book. It's a good account of the middle east at the time that he was stationed in Beirut and the writing quality is far better than his current books. It's a great primer if you need middle east politics background

Radwa Sharaf says

If you switch out "Beirut" for "Damascus", most of the stories would still apply. The sentence I liked the most was "Arabs constantly live under an IBM protocol: Inshallah, Bokra, Ma3lesh"

Dave says

A very insightful book that tells the story of two different cultures at odds, not just with one another, but with themselves. He draws parallels between these two disparate societies by focusing on each one's search for identity. In addition to the politics, greed, and the arrogant assumption that cruelty can be justified by an invisible sociopath in the sky described in this book, the author also beautifully conveys the dignity and sanity of which human beings are capable, even in the worst situations.

I don't pretend to know a hell of a lot about politics and I've never been off of the North American continent, so I can't say much about the accuracy of the author's assessments or predictions, but they seem a lot more realistic than the cartoonish view of the world that Sean Hannity and his merry band of jackasses at Fox News present.

So, if you want to read a very clever book about a bunch of idiots killing each other over a patch of dirt, then this is for you.

Adam says

Knowing nothing of Friedman I found it interesting that I was ridiculed for having this book in hand. I guess that's what you get for bringing 'Neo-Con Zionist' literature to an internship in Palestine! My only prior knowledge of the book was that it covered the recent history of the Middle East with a heavy emphasis on the Palestinian and Israeli conflict. I thought I'd dive in for a bit of education. . .

During the first half of the book, Friedman's profession is made very clear, both through his writing, and his

writing style. He talks at great lengths of himself as a journalist but also does a great job of reporting on the tumultuous period in Lebanese history. Knowing nothing of these conflicts, I appreciated his presentation of their development and, especially, America's involvement.

By the time Friedman, and the book, move on to Jerusalem, my interest slowly slipped away. Honestly, it was hard to go into the text objectively as those around me continued to tell me how horrible it was, despite never having read the book in full themselves. But, here's what I got out of it.

Unlike Beirut, Friedman presents little fact based history on the development of the Israeli State. Instead, he focuses on the ideological reasons that the country came about, and the implications that these reasons have for a visiting American Jew. An interesting perspective if you're curious as to how Friedman deals with his own religion, but not so much outside of that.

As the book dives deeper into the Palestinian and Israeli divide, Friedman isolates himself as a strong supporter of Israel. While, yes, he makes claims of wanting peace, and recognizing the difficulty of the process, the way in which he frames the situation is, well, antagonistic. I understand that the book was written at the height of the First Intifada, but, even so, continually referring to a people as a collective enemy is not only unscholarly but outright ignorant. Isn't creating 'us versus them' how wars start? Not how they end?

The dichotomy he creates, and adheres to, speaks worlds for his political views and unwillingness to accept the fact that there is a nation of people who have been routinely oppressed by the creation of the State of Israel. I cannot fathom how, or why, as a highly revered journalist, he can get away with the hypothetical speeches he has imagined Prime Ministers deliver at the end of the book. To be so brazen, so negative, so hateful.

I am amazed that he is still so highly regarded. Perhaps his writing since the publication of this book has been more objective. Or, perhaps, it hasn't, and that's exactly what America wants, or thinks it wants.

Ouch.

Now I know why I was mocked for reading it. I don't regret it, I just won't ever go back to it!

Mike says

I used to follow and read Thomas Friedman's columns regularly. Thought he was a pretty interesting guy even if I didn't subscribe to his politics. But he became a bloated, pompous caricature of a journalist as he turned out junk like *The World is Flat*, *The Sky is Blue*, *The Sea is Salty* (well maybe the last two aren't real but he has a bunch of similar-sounding books). I decided to go back to his first book *From Beirut to Jerusalem* to see how he got his start. I figured it would be a less slanted, more unbiased, open-eyed look at the world before he got sucked up into the "collective" that is the current NYT. I was wrong. He freely admits his intention to slant his stories about Israel's Lebanon invasion because he was so "betrayed" in his "Israel on a pedestal" views. This book is not what I expected and hoped for, a history of the region and why it is in conflict. This is a "Tom's excellent adventure" in Beirut and Jerusalem, mainly about him and his travels. It is also very focused on the personalities of the day, which is understandable because he was the reporter on the scene. The book does not travel the span of time well.

I give props to Friedman, he has some cojones going to report on the Lebanese civil war as his first big assignment. A Jew in Beirut, he figures no one would suspect him of being Jewish there. Pretty ballsy. But he quickly disabuses me of the idea he is an honest reporter. Short version of his reporting: the PLO is good-hearted but amateurish and unsophisticated in an appealing way; the Maronite Christians are Beirut's corrupt version of the mafia, evil and untrustworthy; the Sunni Muslims are mysterious and vaguely honorable; the Shia are somewhat naïve and trusting but rising up in justified anger; and the Israelis are lying devils invading poor, innocent Lebanon. I found him cold; his unemotional description of the death of his employee's wife and daughter who were babysitting his Beirut apartment during a particularly dangerous time and were blown up by warring factions struck me; his tossing off of the gassing of Iraqi Kurds by Saddam as just how strong leaders dealt with uppity tribes; the "Hama rules" of Hafez al-Assad. His treatment of the PLO and Arafat in Lebanon was very sympathetic. His treatment of Lebanese society seemed like caricatures.

He moves to Jerusalem and reports on Israel. Again I found his writing very slanted. He describes one incident where a Jewish man is pelted by stones as he is driving. The man stops to get revenge on the Palestinian boys who could have killed him. Friedman witnesses the event but says the reason the man was so upset was because he would have to pay \$250 to repair his windshield...? Are you freakin' kidding me?

The book does give a more nuanced view of the society with its warring factions over how to deal with the West Bank and Gaza. Also the friction between the secular and the religious populations is decent. I found his explanation of the first intifada interesting as he brings out the impacts on both sides. This part of the book was ok.

Finally, Friedman can't resist putting up his own solution to end the conflict. What is needed is an Israeli "bastard for peace" who will take the chance and give the West Bank and Gaza over to the Palestinians so they can have a "home" of their own. Working out really well in the case of Gaza now, isn't it Tom? The "river to the sea" is not an empty slogan, the Palestinians will never be satisfied until the entire state of Israel is gone. For a better history and assessment of the region, read *The High Cost of Peace: How Washington's Middle East Policy Left America Vulnerable to Terrorism*.

2 Stars in recognition of Friedman's guts to live and report in the region.

K says

According to one cynical goodreads reviewer, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* offers some insight into "two sets of idiots killing each other over a piece of dirt." My instinctive reaction when I read this was to feel sorry for this reviewer who clearly doesn't know what it means to have a homeland, and to be so deeply invested in it as to be willing to die for it. My husband pointed out that the reviewer may actually know what it's like to *have* a homeland. What the reviewer doesn't know is what it's like to have it taken away – a defining experience to which both Israelis and Palestinians lay claim.

This is but one of many divides between American culture and what's going on in the Middle East, which is why Americans may never truly understand what's happening there. I feel that this book is an excellent attempt at bridging that gap. Friedman writes clearly, and you come away from the book feeling like your understanding of Middle Eastern history and politics has both deepened and broadened greatly. For that alone, it's a great book.

I admit that my feelings toward Israel as a Zionist Jew currently living here in Israel tend to be emotional and irrational, and I'm aware that it was with no small measure of hypersensitivity and defensiveness that I read Friedman's criticisms of Israeli behavior. I do applaud Friedman's efforts to put his Jewish origins aside and report objectively on what goes on in the region. Objectivity and accuracy are important in journalism, even if this means that I won't always like what the writer has to say.

I wonder, though, whether Friedman goes too far in the other direction. I believe that he has succeeded in overcoming feelings for Israel that would lead him to see Israel's actions through rose-colored glasses and to report the news in a way that attempts to justify them. Instead, his reaction is frequently one of anger when Israel disappoints him and makes him ashamed of his Jewish identity – an equally personal and emotional reaction, and no less biased.

Friedman writes the following about his exclusive interview with Major General Amir Drori, the Israeli commander in Lebanon, following the Phalangist massacres at Sabra and Shatila which took place under the Israeli army's watch:

"I must admit I was not professionally detached in this interview. I banged the table with my fist and shouted at Drori, 'How could you do this? How could you not see? How could you not know?' But what I was really saying, in a very selfish way, was 'How could you do this to *me*, you bastards? I always thought you were different. I always thought *we* were different. I'm the only Jew in West Beirut. What do I tell people now? What do I tell myself?

"...So the next morning I buried Amir Drori on the front page of the *New York Times*, and along with him every illusion I ever held about the Jewish state." (p. 166)

I'm not trying to justify what happened in Sabra and Shatila. Drori arguably deserved to be buried. But there was clearly a personal agenda here for Friedman, just as personal as a pro-Zionist agenda would have been.

Friedman writes with plain disgust about the indignities suffered by the Palestinians under Israeli occupation, an occupation which, incidentally, began after Israel won the territories in a war fought for self-defense. The chapter where Friedman describes this is replete with anecdotes and quotes from victimized Palestinians and bullying Israelis.

In contrast, Friedman compares the Palestinian challenge to Israel to a "poke in the ribs." He goes on in the very next sentence to say:

"Palestinians planted bombs in Israeli supermarkets, on their airplanes, under the seats of their buses, and even in an old refrigerator in the heart of Jerusalem. They hijacked their airplanes, murdered their Olympic team, and shot up their embassies." (p. 347)

Some poke in the ribs! Ever ridden on a bus where a suspicious "package" is discovered? I have. So have my children. But that experience doesn't compare to riding a bus where the suspicious package remains undiscovered. It goes way beyond a poke in the ribs, I can tell you. Interviews with people who have lost arms, legs, or children to this poke in the ribs were woefully missing from Friedman's account, as was a fair effort to place oppressive Israeli behavior in context.

For example, in one particularly painful anecdote Friedman describes a Palestinian man interrupted during an intimate moment with his wife by Israeli soldiers who have come to arrest him. The soldier telling the story admits to wolfishly eying the wife as the husband dresses to accompany them. What Friedman doesn't tell us is what the Palestinian man had done to deserve his arrest. Would the anecdote read the same way if we were

also informed that this man was directly involved in innocent civilian murders? I don't know what the man's charges were or whether they were justified, but the complete omission of the context surrounding his arrest makes the story seem very one-sided.

Israeli arrests of Palestinians were generally painted by Friedman with a broad brush as largely unwarranted, paranoid behavior by Israelis. I'm not saying this is never the case. But I do think it's more complicated than Friedman makes it sound. In contrast, behavior by various Lebanese groups in Beirut which might seem unfathomable to a Westerner was carefully explained by Friedman and rendered almost understandable, if not sympathetic.

I don't want to overstate my case. Friedman does discuss Western hyper-scrutiny and quick judgment of Israel, and factors which go into over-reporting by the media of Israeli mistakes. He defends Israeli behavior occasionally, or at least explains it. And I'm sure that if I could get hold of Edward Said's review of this book, I would get some perspective on Friedman's possible unfairness in the other direction as well. Finally, as I said, I know that my objectivity when it comes to this issue is sharply limited.

Overall, I'm glad I read the book. "From Beirut to Jerusalem" both expanded and deepened my knowledge of what's going on around me, and I think it's important for me to start gathering the facts and not just the experiences. My understanding of my position as a Jew here in Israel is far more complex now than it was before I read the book. And the book is readable as well as informative – I whipped through its 500+ pages pretty quickly. My husband, who is better-informed than I am on these issues, summed it up well when he told me that he feels Friedman's perspective is a legitimate one – but it's one of many legitimate perspectives out there. And now, I want to read some others. My increasing desire to read further on the subject may be the greatest testimony to the book's worth.

Noah says

I am woefully ignorant of most of the conflicts in the Middle East, and even though the information in this book is pretty dated, it offers a useful window into the dynamics in Lebanon and Israel. Friedman writes with restraint and insight, and has some truly great pieces of analysis, like the chapter on Israel and Jewish identity. Now if he could only stop indulging his analogy fetish. Which one is it, Tom? Is the Middle East like an ice cream cone, or is it like *The Great Gatsby*? Make up your mind!
