



The End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount

Gershom Gorenberg

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The new millennium dawned quietly, defying modern-day prophets of apocalypse. Yet for countless believers around the globe - Christians, Jews and Muslims -- anticipation that the world is about to end burns more intensely than ever. God's kingdom is near, they believe, and the key to salvation is Jerusalem's Temple Mount, -- the most sacred and contested real estate on earth. In *The End of Days*, leading Israeli journalist Gershom Gorenberg portrays how such faith has fueled the real-world struggle in the Middle East and reveals why, even in times of peacemaking, it continues to be a powerful catalyst for conflict.

Adroitly portraying former-hippies-turned-true-believers, American radio evangelists of the End, radical Palestinian sheikhs, and Israeli ex-terrorists, Gorenberg weaves a story that stretches from California churches to West Bank settlements. He explains why believers hope for the End, and why prominent American fundamentalists provide hard-line support for Israel, while looking forward to an apocalypse in which they expect Jews to die or else convert. He makes sense of the messianic fervor that has driven Israeli settlers to oppose peace, and describes the Islamic apocalyptic visions that cast Israel's actions in Jerusalem as diabolic plots. He examines, as well, what happens when secular politicians try to channel these religious passions for their own purposes.

At the center of this story is the Temple Mount, where Solomon and Herod built their Temples, where the Dome of the Rock now stands -- and where both Jewish extremists and millions of Christian fundamentalists expect the Third Temple to be built soon. Holy to both Judaism and Islam, the Mount is where nationalism and faith join in a volatile mix. Any attempt to spark the End by clearing the ground for the Temple, therefore, could ignite holy war. This book explains the Mount's dangerous fascination for fundamentalists, and shows why the risks will actually increase in the new millennium as prophesied dates pass and believers look for a way to ensure that the End comes.

Cain murdered Abel, according to an ancient legend, in an argument over who would possess the Temple Mount. That parable sums up the passions aroused by the sacred hilltop. *The End of Days* shows, with clarity and poise, how conflict over Jerusalem is rooted not only in the past but even more in expectations of the future, and how the fiery belief in apocalypse has a very real impact on contemporary life and international politics.

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