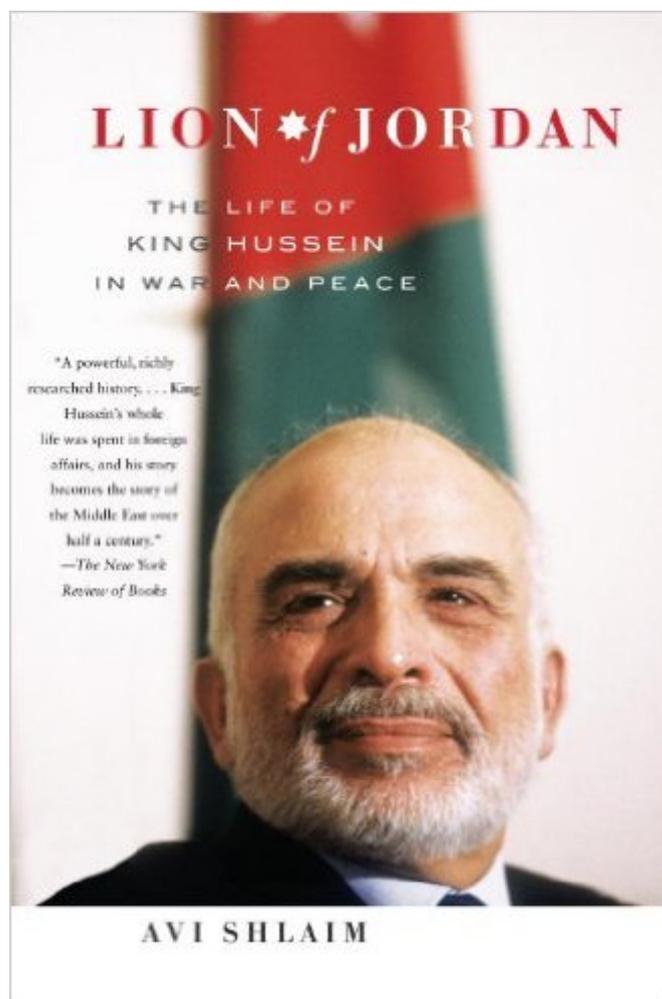


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Lion Of Jordan: The Life Of King Hussein In War And Peace



Synopsis

The first major account of the life of an extraordinary soldier and statesman, King Hussein of Jordan. Throughout his long reign (1953–1999), Hussein remained a dominant figure in Middle Eastern politics and a consistent proponent of peace with Israel. For over forty years he walked a tightrope between Palestinians and Arab radicals on the one hand and Israel on the other. Avi Shlaim reveals that Hussein initiated a secret dialogue with Israel in 1963 and spent hundreds of hours in talks with countless Israeli officials. Shlaim expertly reconstructs this dialogue from previously untapped records and first-hand accounts, significantly rewriting the history of the Middle East over the past fifty years and shedding light on the far-reaching impact of Hussein's leadership.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Hussein's life was principled on the premise that " King Hussein was fundamentally and structurally a client king ...for all practical purposes the Hashemite legacy inherited from his grandfather was one of continuing dependence on the West." P.154 His wide recognition, acclaim and complexity were due to " the principle of balancing applied at all levels: the inter -Arab, the regional, (domestic) and the global...this meant balancing between Arab and conservatives and Arab radicals, between the Arab world on the one hand and Israel on the other, and the global level between the West and the Soviet bloc...The survival of the Hashemite dynastic interests were paramount (and) the guiding principle behind his foreign policy, the key to constant shifts and maneuvers , to all the alliances and realignments " P.212 With these two elements as the deciding factors in Hussein's life, Avi Shlaim

delivers a superb biography that is well written, researched, revealing, passionate and to a great extent objective. Regardless if one agrees or not with the King's inherited role, he was able to save his dynasty and country. Although King Hussein's life revolved on the previous mentioned principles, not all of the King's actions can be aligned with those principles if one takes a simplistic view of those actions without serious reflection and reading between the lines. Avi Shlaim does an excellent job on analyzing the King and his actions from the day he reached the throne until the last moments on his deathbed. For example, when Iraq invaded Kuwait, the King sided with Iraq, which is contradictory to King's "balancing principle."

In his book, *Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace*, Avi Shlaim describes a man determined to make peace in the Middle East by risking his life and the future of the Hashemite dynasty of Jordan in this relentless but unsuccessful quest. Witnessing the assassination of his beloved grandfather at the age of seventeen, Hussein stepped into the role of king in 1952, a young man at the bottom of a very steep learning curve. He honed his skills quickly and defied all bets against the survival of his throne. The new king inherited the Palestinian cause, which necessitated the dexterity of a firewalker between the Arab world, Israel, the Soviets, and the West. Shlaim meticulously details the tireless efforts of Hussein to make peace with Israel, discrediting beyond any doubt the persistent Zionist claims that no Arab partner to peace ever existed. Distrust was rampant in the Arab world, and under shifting loyalties of Arab friends and enemies alike King Hussein maintained secret contacts with Israel for, at least 1000 hours of meetings with Prime Ministers and other top Israeli officials over the course of some thirty years until his death in 1999. From monumental mistakes in the 1967 War to his success at the Oslo Accords, Hussein adapted to events and players around him saving not only himself, but often the less pragmatic leaders with whom he dealt. The assassination of Yitzhak Rabin toward the end of Hussein's life devastated the king and proved the undoing of the peace he worked so hard to secure. The next Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, was devious, dishonest, and completely unreliable.

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