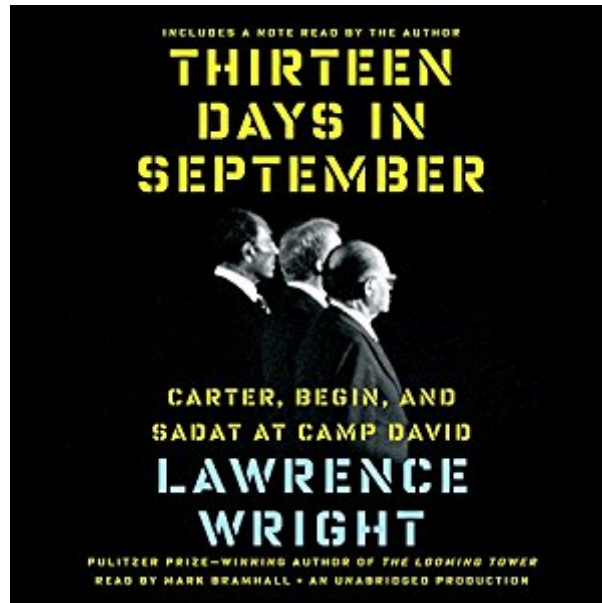


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Thirteen Days In September: Carter, Begin, And Sadat At Camp David



Synopsis

A gripping day-by-day account of the 1978 Camp David conference, when President Jimmy Carter persuaded Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian president Anwar Sadat to sign the first peace treaty in the modern Middle East, one which endures to this day. With his hallmark insight into the forces at play in the Middle East and his acclaimed journalistic skill, Lawrence Wright takes us through each of the 13 days of the Camp David conference, illuminating the issues that have made the problems of the region so intractable, as well as exploring the scriptural narratives that continue to frame the conflict. In addition to his in-depth accounts of the lives of the three leaders, Wright draws vivid portraits of other fiery personalities who were present at Camp David - including Moshe Dayan, Osama el-Baz, and Zbigniew Brzezinski - as they work furiously behind the scenes. Wright also explores the significant role played by Rosalynn Carter. What emerges is a riveting view of the making of this unexpected and so far unprecedented peace. Wright exhibits the full extent of Carter's persistence in pushing an agreement forward, the extraordinary way in which the participants at the conference - many of them lifelong enemies - attained it, and the profound difficulties inherent in the process and its outcome, not the least of which has been the still unsettled struggle between the Israelis and the Palestinians. In *Thirteen Days in September*, Wright gives us a resonant work of history and reportage that provides both a timely revisiting of this important diplomatic triumph and an inside look at how peace is made.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

What a tense, informative read. I had just graduated high school when President Carter hosted the Camp David Accords with President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin, and I remember how the signing of the accords was such an historic event. Later I read President Carter's memoirs of his presidency, and him saying how difficult it was to talk to Begin, and that Begin was so infuriated about having to make any kind of concession to the Egyptians. What is all new to me is the background of the Accords. Lawrence Wright did such a splendid job blending the meeting with the biographies of the three leaders and the history of the Sinai/Israeli region from both a biblical and archeological perspective. This made the fervent passion of the three leaders much better to understand. All three leaders were presented with both strengths and flaws. Both Sadat and Begin had committed terrorist acts against the British. Even Wright opines that "The transformation of terrorism as a primarily local phenomenon into a global one came about in large part because of the success of [Begin's] tactics. He proved that, under the right circumstances, terror works. Many years later, American forces would find a copy of Begin's memoir "The Revolt" in the library of an al-Qaeda training camp. Osama bin Laden read Begin in an attempt to understand how a terrorist transformed himself into a statesman (82) ." Wright does not leave out those players in the sidelines. Interesting is also the advisors that both Begin and Sadat brought with them. While the advisors were not at the meeting with Carter, both Sadat and Begin would go back to their cabins and discuss with their advisors what had been talked about earlier with Carter.

Remembering how much I enjoyed "The Looming Tower" , my wife recommended this book to me. When it was described to me, I worried that it might be so what boring because of the subject matter. After all, this is ostensibly about 3 men hammering out a peace treaty at Camp David. Instead, Mr. Wright turns the underlying narrative into a compelling and fascinating tale of how three men and three cultures forged a historic peace treaty, albeit an imperfect one. The day-to-day events at Camp David don't lend themselves to page-turning reading. Rather it is the way in which Wright weaves in the history of both cultures, and the wars they fought that makes this book great one. Equally interesting was the study of each man's character and how history forged their belief system. Make no mistake that this book paints a rather unflattering picture of Begin, and a far more sympathetic one of Sadat. Wright emphasizes the specious biblical claims that the dark-mooded Begin makes for his expansionist ambitions. When I completed the book, I wondered if some Israelis would find the book anti-Semitic or at least unsympathetic to the Zionist cause. According to some reviews I have read, that is indeed the case. I do fault Wright for not emphasizing and the holocaust as the formative event of what Begin calls "the fighting Jew". By not

emphasizing it as much as the faulted Old Testament claims, Wright gives the impression that he's more interested in undermining the Zionist cause rather than legitimizing it. Also, the book covers more of the military excesses by the IDF than the abhorrent terrorist responses by the PLO. It's pretty clear that the author simply doesn't like Begin and perhaps for legitimate reasons.

In a planned 350 pages, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist has produced a stunningly researched report on the 13 days President Jimmy Carter was gambled his presidency on bring peace between Egypt and Israel. Whatever the political persuasion of readers, this book provides an exhaustive evaluation of the leaders who met and haggled for 13 days in September 1978. Lawrence Wright spares no detail in showing us the histories of Menachem Begin, Anwar Sadat and Jimmy Carter. To fully understand how it was possible for Carter to accomplish the impossible, you really do need to get inside the heads of these three men. Until reading this book, I had no clue as to just how great the gamble was for Carter. Until Camp David, there probably was no possibility he could win re-nomination, let alone re-election as President. I especially appreciated the bits about Carter's impression regarding Sadat's intelligence. I doubt many of my Egyptian friends would concur with Carter, for most I spoke with were disappointed that Sadat agreed to the peace. Myself, though, I hope that one day Egyptians shall see the wisdom of the leader who opened the doors not just to peace with Israel, but to the progressive West. That is one bit of information that I wish the author, Lawrence Wright had included. I am confident that, if the Palestinians could be reminded of all the commercial progress that came to Egypt, they might better appreciate what could come to their country. I hasten to add, even knowing how impossible peace now appears for the Palestinians and Israel, it can come if their leaders are able to reach a point where they can bury the past. Sadat's legacy, regardless of any faults he might otherwise have had, will forever be a beam of light for peace.

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