



River Jordan: The Mythology of a Dividing Line

Rachel Havrelock

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As the site of several miracles in the Jewish and Christian traditions, the Jordan is one of the world's holiest rivers. It is also the major political and symbolic border contested by Israelis and Palestinians. Combining biblical and folkloric studies with historical geography, Rachel Havrelock explores how the complex religious and mythological representations of the river have shaped the current conflict in the Middle East.

Havrelock contends that the intractability of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict stems from the nationalist myths of the Hebrew Bible, where the Jordan is defined as a border of the Promised Land. Both Israelis and Palestinians claim the Jordan as a necessary boundary of an indivisible homeland. Examining the Hebrew Bible alongside ancient and modern maps of the Jordan, Havrelock chronicles the evolution of Israel's borders based on nationalist myths while uncovering additional myths that envision Israel as a bi-national state. These other myths, she proposes, provide roadmaps for future political configurations of the nation. Ambitious and masterful in its scope, *River Jordan* brings a fresh, provocative perspective to the ongoing struggle in this violence-riddled region.

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