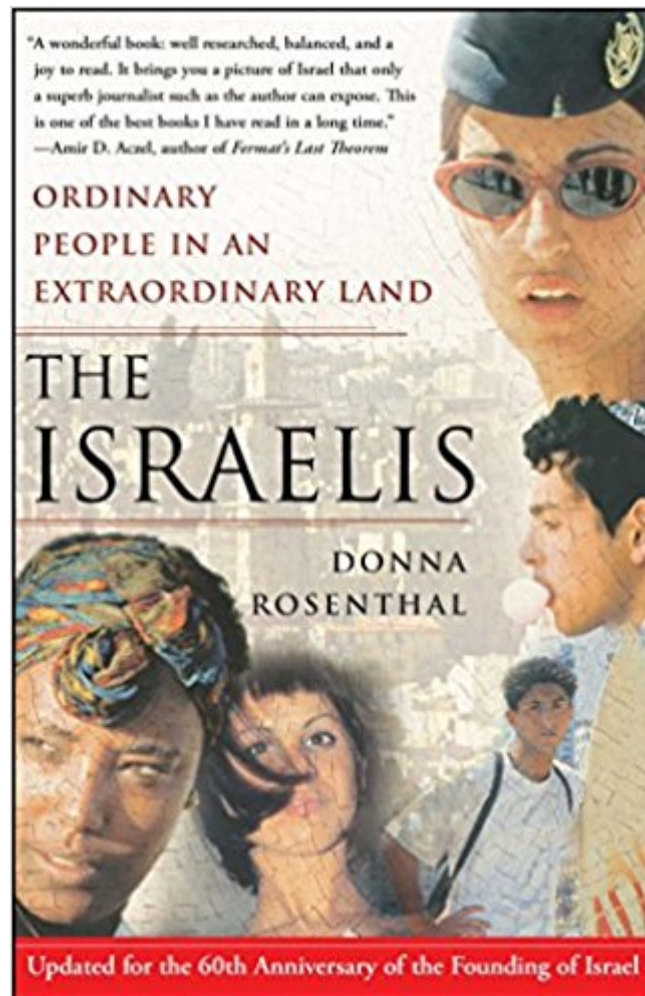




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# The Israelis: Ordinary People In An Extraordinary Land



## Synopsis

Israel is smaller than New Jersey, with 0.11% of the world's population, yet captures a lion's share of headlines. It looks like one country on CNN, a very different one on al-Jazeera. The BBC has their version, The New York Times theirs. But how does Israel look to Israelis? Israel is smaller than New Jersey, with 0.11% of the world's population, yet captures a lion's share of headlines. It looks like one country on CNN, a very different one on al-Jazeera. The BBC has their version, The New York Times theirs. But how does Israel look to Israelis? The answers are varied, and they have been brought together here in one of the most original books about Israel in decades. From battlefields to bedrooms to boardrooms, discover the colliding worlds in which an astounding mix of 7.2 million devoutly traditional and radically modern people live. You'll meet "Arab Jews" who fled Islamic countries, dreadlock-wearing Ethiopian immigrants who sing reggae in Hebrew, Christians in Nazareth who publish an Arabic-style Cosmo, young Israeli Muslims who know more about Judaism than most Jews of the Diaspora, ultra-Orthodox Jews on "Modesty Patrols" and more. Interweaving hundreds of personal stories with intriguing new research, *The Israelis* is lively, irreverent, and always fascinating.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Today's headlines leave the impression there's little to know about Israel outside of its conflict with the Palestinians. Using Hedrick Smith's landmark *The Russians* as a model, journalist Rosenthal, with years of experience in and knowledge of the Middle East, defies that notion, giving an in-depth look at the rich variety of people in the Jewish state. Relying on dozens of interviews, she gives a

lively, variegated portrait of all facets of Israeli life. Terrorism and relations with the Palestinians are covered, but so are secular-religious tensions, Ashkenazi-Sephardi divisions, Israeli Arabs and Jewish immigrants from Ethiopia and Russia. Throughout, Rosenthal stresses the contradictions in Israel: a country steeped in historical and religious tradition that is trying to develop a high-tech economic future; a democracy that many see as favoring its Jewish citizens above its Arab ones; a country ruled in some ways by a rigid religious establishment that also maintains thriving gay and lesbian communities. Rosenthal displays prodigious reporting and allows the people themselves—whether Jewish or Arab, men or women, religious or secular—to speak, and their voices are alternately despairing and hopeful, defiant and conciliatory. As a result, she captures an entire country, one full of flux and drama, in as vivid and nuanced a way as possible: a former male model turns Orthodox; an Ethiopian who "had never used electricity... until he was twelve" now designs computers. With the huge interest in Israel among the reading public, this is likely to find a sizable audience. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Depending upon the source of the report, Israelis are either portrayed to Americans as stalwart but beleaguered allies in the war against terror or frequently brutal colonizers determined to maintain control over justifiably resentful Palestinians. Of course, both images can be true, and both can be terrible distortions of reality. Rosenthal, a journalist, television news producer, and lecturer at Hebrew University, has written a broad portrait of a people and of individual Israeli citizens that is interesting, compelling, and often surprising. As revealed by Rosenthal, Israel is a vibrant and amazingly diverse nation. Ultra-Orthodox Jews wait for the Messiah and hunt down and abuse "immodestly" dressed women in Jerusalem streets. Nearby, twenty-first-century entrepreneurs break new ground in high-tech industries. Children of Bedouin families strive to carve a niche for themselves in a relentlessly modernizing society, while other Israeli Arabs struggle to define their identity in a Jewish state. This is a refreshing book that humanizes people and helps to counteract news reports that usually stress acts of savage inhumanity. Jay Freeman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Rosenthal writes in the notes for page 188 " ...Christian Arabs have the highest income and education level of all Israelis." I did a search on this and all sources say that Christian Arabs have the highest income among Arabs, but are second to Jews. Two references for this are 1)

Decomposing Wage Gaps Between Ethnic Groups: The Case of Israel by Raviv, and 2) Wikipedia, Arab citizens of Israel, Christians, "They have also the highest median household income among Arab citizens of Israel and second highest median household income among the Israeli ethno-religious groups." Good book but a bit loose with the facts.

I just returned from Israel and wished I had read this prior. While in Israel I met Jewish secular and orthodox people, Druze, Arab Christians and Muslims, Bedouins, and Baha'i. I have often wondered about the different Jewish practices and this will definitely educate as well as open your heart to the many different peoples who inhabit this amazing and complicated country. Especially interesting was the section on the Ethiopian Jews and their perseverance and isolation for thousands of years and the talents that they have gifted to their new found country. It is an amazing vibrant read even if you are not visiting this wonderful country but will have felt that you were there, meeting its rich embroidery of people and the sacrifices they have made to settle here.

I took this book with me on a tour of Israel and found it to be a fascinating companion. The best sections are on the Jewish people themselves, both Sabras and those making Aliyah. The later sections on minority groups such as Druze, etc are less interesting and seem to be simply filling out a survey for form's sake. Having this book with me as I traveled and met the Israelis themselves was one of life's great adventures.

This book was recommended to me before I go to Israel this summer and I have to say, I could not be more satisfied. The way it is written makes it very difficult to put down. Moreover, it sheds light on so much of Israeli society and culture that one could never know without going to Israel, knowing people who have gone, or knowing Israelis. I often find it is so difficult with the media to learn anything about Israel aside from the conflict (of course, this is very important and I do not mean to say it is not.) Anyway, I was thoroughly impressed by this book and I have suggested it to others as well!

From page one I was able to get into "The Israelis". I attribute that to the writer's style. The author gives excellent insight to the various groups of people in Israeli society. She also gives good insight to the problems and attributes in Israel today. It is really a true life story of survival against the odds.

Well written book that gives a unique perspective on Israel. The people and their stories are

fascinating. If you want to learn about Israeli culture/society, definitely pick this up.

This is an easy to pick up & read a chapter at a time book although I wanted to know more and more so I read it continuously. This book evoked so many emotions -- the people and their stories will linger long after you put this beautifully written book down. Highly recommend especially if you plan to visit Israel.

Very well written and enjoyable to read. Information about every day life in Israel was interesting. Particularly enjoyed learning about the history of the Ethiopian Jews and how they were brought to Israel, as well as about all of the different groups of Jews and how they interact. Good overview of present day life in Israel.

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