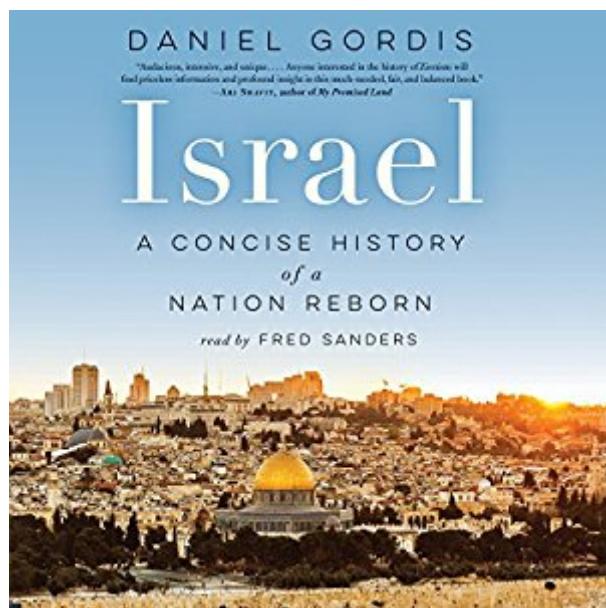


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# Israel: A Concise History Of A Nation Reborn



## **Synopsis**

The first comprehensive yet accessible history of the state of Israel from its inception to present day, from Daniel Gordis, "one of the most respected Israel analysts" (The Forward) living and writing in Jerusalem. Israel is a tiny state, and yet it has captured the world's attention, aroused its imagination, and lately, been the object of its opprobrium. Why does such a small country speak to so many global concerns? More pressingly: Why does Israel make the decisions it does? And what lies in its future? We cannot answer these questions until we understand Israel's people and the questions and conflicts, the hopes and desires, that have animated their conversations and actions. Though Israel's history is rife with conflict, these conflicts do not fully communicate the spirit of Israel and its people: they give short shrift to the dream that gave birth to the state, and to the vision for the Jewish people that was at its core. Guiding us through the milestones of Israeli history, Gordis relays the drama of the Jewish people's story and the creation of the state. Clear-eyed and erudite, he illustrates how Israel became a cultural, economic and military powerhouse - but also explains where Israel made grave mistakes and traces the long history of Israel's deepening isolation. With Israel, public intellectual Daniel Gordis offers us a brief but thorough account of the cultural, economic, and political history of this complex nation, from its beginnings to the present. Accessible, levelheaded, and rigorous, Israel sheds light on Israel's past so we can understand its future. The result is a vivid portrait of a people, and a nation, reborn.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn" by Daniel Gordis (Oct. 2016). Although it touts itself as a "Concise History" of Israel, the author has packed a lot of information and thoughtful analysis in

this 546-page book. This is much more than a chronological time-line of the highlights regarding the creation and existence of the Jewish state of Israel. The author re-plows the basic history as to how Theodor Herzl advocated for pogrom-weary European Jews to move to Palestine. The author not only details how Eastern European Jews were divided over whether or not a Jewish state should be created, the author notes the arguments and diverse personalities that debated this challenge. (The author provides some interesting commentary as to how the American writer Mark Twain reflected upon this issue.) [This book does a better job in explaining the "workings" of the early Zionist movement than what is discussed in the recently published "Zionism" by M. Viorst.] Rather than reviewing all of the Zionist arguments here, I found that the author really provided a lot of insight as to the various Zionist and anti-Zionist arguments and how personalities were split between secularists and religious fundamentalists.. I found that the author provide new insights as to the developments in the "return to Israel" movement, and how the Balfour Declaration was born. I found that the author reviewed many sources and provided great, informative insights into how the Zionist movement campaigned throughout Europe to entice Jews to return to the Palestine region. The author provided fine insight into the political and military disputes between Ben-Gurion and Begin during the 1940s. While the author noted that the Israeli government had a very difficult time in absorbing and caring for new, and oftentimes impoverished immigrants, I felt the author failed to convey the seriousness of the really desperate economic conditions of Israel during its first decade. I found it interesting to learn that Begin had opposed Israel receiving financial "war reparations" from the West German government. Also, perhaps it was due to his remembrance of the Holocaust he resigned as prime minister rather than receive a new German official. In reviewing the various political parties, it seemed that the primary disputes were more over personalities rather than economic policies -- although Begin certainly and consistently advocated for a greater "free market" economy that was in contrast to Ben-Gurion's socialistic Labor Party. It was interesting to learn how the high large influx of secular, Soviet-Jews starting in the 1980s changed the political dynamics of Israeli politics. I was surprised to learn that the kibbutzim accounted for only about 15% of the Israeli population, and how they eventually declined in popularity and economic influence. While the various wars are discussed, and casualties are noted, the author really doesn't spend much time in providing details as to how some military unit conducted some maneuver -- except to note how it affected the outcome of a war. Yes, it is a strong pro-Jewish Israel book -- the author doesn't lament much about the plight of Palestinian Arabs, except to claim that much of their problems were of their own doing by failing to accept a peaceful coexistence with a Jewish state. While the author noted that within the occupied/administered "West Bank" [Samaria-Judea] there are three areas/zones of

control or semi-control that are governed/administered by the Palestinian Authority (PA), the author doesn't dwell on analyzing the successes or failures of the PA's administration (that would take several other books to accomplish) -- except to say that Israelis themselves are deeply divided over the future "independence" of that area, and how Jewish settlements within are to be either expanded or reduced. (The author doesn't analyze the theological aspects of the Quran as to why the Muslim-Arabs won't accept a Jewish state.) The author has produced a fine book in revealing the determination of the Zionists to birth a secular, Jewish state -- and he analyzes how the original Zionist dream/hope that both Arabs and Jews could live peacefully together has not and most likely will not be achieved. This is more than just a history of Israel, it is a history -- well, for the lack of a better word -- of the "revival" of the Jewish spirit in reclaiming a homeland; or as the author put it in the book's sub-title: "of a Nation Reborn". A book that I can highly recommend.

I read this book to gain understanding for a recent trip to Israel. It answered a number of questions and gave me a good feel for how Israel developed. The street names are now alive and tell stories here. Unlike other histories, this one is not finished and actively changing.

The title does tell the story - it is a good concise history of Israel. It sometimes suffers a bit due to the amount of time it attempts to encompass. But overall it is a valuable read and, as the author suggests at the beginning, works to tell the story through the individuals who were pivotal to the events - which is a productive approach.

Excellent history. From the perspective of the Jewish people in finally achieving a homeland, the same one where they lived 3,000 years ago. Gordis does not engage in negativity and any animus towards the Palestinians. He presents the facts, without any distortion or prevarication. He is sympathetic to and favors the creation of a Palestinian state. However, it's the story of the Jewish people's historical struggles to attain a homeland, made ever more essential in the shadow of the annihilation of the six million and the refusal of all countries, including the U.S., to rescue them.

Comprehensive, knowledgable while eminently readable. This history book encompasses the values and dreams of Israelis and Jews who will always support their one and only state.

Well written and provides a concise history of the key factors leading to the creation and development of the Jewish homeland.

A concise history is a perfect read for curious minds. Well written and easy to read. A prize winner -- I highly recommend

This book puts the history of the Israelite Nation (aka the Jewish People) in a very cogent chronological order. It is objective, doesn't try to whitewash the imperfections and mistakes that were made. It places before the reader the historical facts while asking only that each and every one draw their own conclusions. Reads as fluidly as an absorbing page turning novel. (A great companion to "My Promised Land", by Shalit).

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