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# Like Dreamers: The Story Of The Israeli Paratroopers Who Reunited Jerusalem And Divided A Nation



## Synopsis

In *Like Dreamers*, acclaimed journalist Yossi Klein Halevi interweaves the stories of a group of 1967 paratroopers who reunited Jerusalem, tracing the history of Israel and the divergent ideologies shaping it from the Six-Day War to the present. Following the lives of seven young members from the 55th Paratroopers Reserve Brigade, the unit responsible for restoring Jewish sovereignty to Jerusalem, Halevi reveals how this band of brothers played pivotal roles in shaping Israel's destiny long after their historic victory. While they worked together to reunite their country in 1967, these men harbored drastically different visions for Israel's future. One emerges at the forefront of the religious settlement movement, while another is instrumental in the 2005 unilateral withdrawal from Gaza. One becomes a driving force in the growth of Israel's capitalist economy, while another ardently defends the socialist kibbutzim. One is a leading peace activist, while another helps create an anti-Zionist terror underground in Damascus. *Like Dreamers* is a nuanced, in-depth look at these diverse men and the conflicting beliefs that have helped to define modern Israel and the Middle East.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Jews have been praying for "next year in Jerusalem" for 2,000 years. Finally, thanks to these paratroopers Jerusalem is captured in the 1967 war and is now the capital of Israel, although no other country has located its embassy there. Some paratroopers are religious and see the expansion of Israel into the conquered lands of the 1967 war as a logical and a religious duty.

Others want to return these lands (Sinai, Golan Heights and Judea/ Samaria) as fast as possible and so it continues today. The author chooses a small group of paratroopers, who have political views from all 360 degrees (including one IDF soldier who all but joins the Arabs against Israel and is imprisoned when caught) to capture the various political positions of the Israeli people as a whole. If the book had 5 volumes, then various other ethnic, political and religious Jews would be represented. For Instance, kibbutz members are prominent but the word Moshav never appears. Both these forms of living arrangements are still extant in Israel with roughly an equal number of members. Moshe Dayan was from a Moshav. Ashkenazi Jews are the center of attention and other volumes could deal with Sephardic and Mizrahi elements. Instead of writing 550 pages of the differences of opinion among Israelis toward Jerusalem, war, settlements etc. that would read like a typical top down history, the author lets you get to know a few individuals so that you see the conflicts Israelis have amongst themselves - from the bottom up so to speak. Whatever your views on the current situation in Israel, you are presented with a wide array of viewpoints that are strongly held by these courageous soldiers. These viewpoints are often diametrically opposite, but the reader gains perspectives they may not have considered.

"Like Dreamers" is the non-fiction "War and Peace" of the Jewish people, and the modern Jewish State. As Tolstoy etched an epic portrait of Russian society in his classic novel, Yossi Klein Halevi also works on a giant historical canvas. And like all great story tellers, he understands that the best way to tell history is through the individuals who live through and often author that history. This stunning volume traces the lives of seven paratroopers from the 55th, the brigade that was the tip of the spear in the '67 battle for Jerusalem, and later the brigade that crossed the Suez Canal in the '73 Yom Kippur War, thereby turning disaster into victory. There are left-wing peace activists, and religious Zionists, kibbutz socialists, free market entrepreneurs, a gruff conceptual artist who was wounded in the battle for Jerusalem, a neurotic but brilliant musician--Israel's Bob Dylan--who died far too young, and a traitor who went to Syria in order to join anti-Israel terrorists. These men, in one way or another, played a vital role in the birth of the post-Six Day War Israel. The title "Like Dreamers" comes from Psalm 126, Shir Hamaalot, hayinu k'cholmim, "When the Lord returned the exiles to Zion, we were like dreamers." The spine of Halevi's book is that Israel's fate is based on two conflicting utopian dreams within the Zionist movement, the religious Zionists, and the secular left-wing kibbutzniks. These men--all Ashkenazi Jews--fought together to defend the state of Israel, and then between wars, these same men, some of them close friends, continued to fight to preserve their personal vision of the Jewish State. If you want to understand modern Israel in all its glorious

complexity, this is the book to read. A great work that sets a new standard for Jewish history.

Probably the best book I've read in years. No matter how much you read or know about what makes Israel 'tick', this book gives you that inside out perspective. The format forces you to pay attention though, and it's probably best to read in a few days if you can. Highly recommend.

I have visited Israel. I have Israeli friends. I have Palestinian friends. (This is inevitable if you spend any significant time in Israel, I hope.) I come from a partly-Jewish family of Israelophiles. I have studied, pondered, wondered and worried about that country. Physically so beautiful, politically so pyrotechnic, culturally so divided. Ultimately so crazy. Terrifyingly unsustainable. "Like Dreamers" does the best job of presenting myriad Israeli dilemmas on a human scale of anything I have read. It does not provide what we would typically consider comfort, but it does provide a measure of understanding of how different men grew to have wildly divergent views of the just aims of a nation. There are no monsters, here. These are ordinary men of varying gifts who are honorable in their different ways, with their different values. This is a wonderful, wonderful work. It should be read.

Totally magical and realistic at the same time. The book embraces you with its detailed novelistic portraits of events and characters. Reading it I marveled at my ignorance of events that I thought I knew and gained an appreciation for having lived through momentous times.

Having met and spoken with the author within my own professional capacity, I came to the book with a very high regard of his intellect and integrity. At the same time, I was hoping for more analysis and depth and even some message for where things stand today in Israeli society vis a vis our almost 50 years of control over the "Territories". For knowledgeable readers, the book adds interesting vignettes and personal insights of the main protagonists. For the uninitiated, the book can be confusing. For some reason, Halevy chose common Hebrew or Jewish terminology, with the expectation that every reader would understand (perhaps he did not have that expectation...). As an educator, that bothered me. Beyond that, I didn't feel as though I had any takeaway after finishing the book. I was not left with questions or thoughts about the subject. It was easy to move on. This is in complete contrast to the book I had just previously read - Ari Shavit's - "My Promised Land". Whether I agreed with or accepted his thesis or some of it, the result of the book was to get me thinking, arguing, talking about it, etc. None of those responses appeared following my completion of Halevy's book. For me, that was disappointing. It is possible that readers without a deep

background on the events and stories covered in this book will learn a lot about the players, the ideas and the souls of the people of Israel. In the very least, the book is written well, making it a "good read". But sorry, for me that is not enough.

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