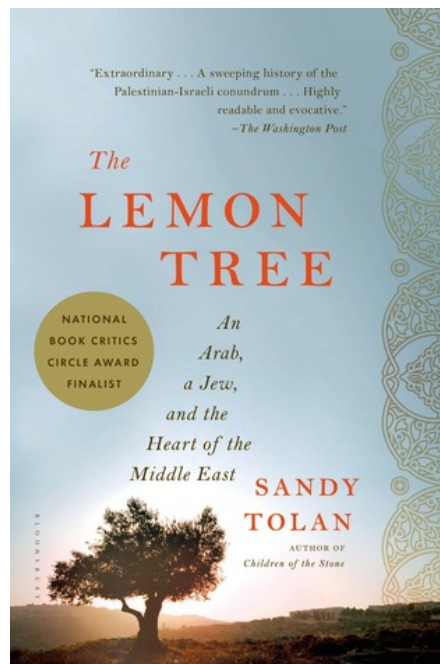




The Lemon Tree: An Arab, a Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East

Sandy Tolan

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In 1967, Bashir Al-Khayri, a Palestinian twenty-five-year-old, journeyed to Israel, with the goal of seeing the beloved old stone house, with the lemon tree behind it, that he and his family had fled nineteen years earlier. To his surprise, when he found the house he was greeted by Dalia Ashkenazi Landau, a nineteen-year-old Israeli college student, whose family fled Europe for Israel following the Holocaust. On the stoop of their shared home, Dalia and Bashir began a rare friendship, forged in the aftermath of war and tested over the next thirty-five years in ways that neither could imagine on that summer day in 1967. Based on extensive research, and springing from his enormously resonant documentary that aired on NPR's *Fresh Air* in 1998, Sandy Tolan brings the Israeli-Palestinian conflict down to its most human level, suggesting that even amid the bleakest political realities there exist stories of hope and reconciliation.

The Lemon Tree: An Arab, a Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East Details

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From Reader Review The Lemon Tree: An Arab, a Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East for online ebook

LemonLinda says

The centuries long conflict between the Jewish and Arab people and of the Israeli/Palestine conflict has dominated headlines for years and many books - fiction and non-fiction - many of which are slanted to one side or the other, have been written on this topic. This book, however, tells a true story and seems to honestly give the story as it unfolds without leaning heavily toward one side of the conflict.

It is told in the voices of Dalia, an Israeli, and Bashir, an Arab, who have both lived in the same home with the same lemon tree growing in their yard. They forge a most unlikely friendship even though wars are raging and violence is prominent throughout the area. Given the background in their lives of violence, mistrust and misunderstanding this friendship is pretty amazing.

This epic tale of truth goes though the history of the area, the declaration of Israel as a recognized nation to the expulsion of Arabs from their homes on to multiple wars with each side claiming justified action. Yet Dalia and Bashir's true life friendship does portray some measure of hope for an eventual resolution and it shows the conflict from a more personal viewpoint on both sides.

I highly recommend this book for those interested in a deeper understanding of this conflict and these two groups of people both vying for ownership and sovereignty of the same land.

Caroline says

This book is a marvellously thorough description of the formation of Israel, and the resulting Arab-Israeli conflict.

The story follows two families – the Khairis and the Eshkenazis. The Khairis were Arabs from al-Ramla, forced by the Israelis to leave their house and their town in July 1948, as refugees. The Eshkenazis were Jews from Bulgaria, who immigrated to Israel after the Second World War. They were sent to al-Ramla for settlement, and ended up living in what used to be the Khairis' house – a house with a lemon treerelating to the title of the book.

Whilst the story of this house, and the friendship between Bashir Khairi and Dalia Eshkenazi formed a small part of the book, I think the title is misleading. The overwhelming impetus of the book deals with general Arab-Israeli relations. The uprisings, the retaliations, the wars, the imprisoning of vast numbers of people, the influx of Jews, the displacement of Arabs, the setting up of gorilla factions, the major leaders on both side of the divide, the sentiments of ordinary people on the ground, the passionate desire for homelands, the positioning of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, the colonising, the efforts to broker peace, the peace makers, the war mongers.....everything is described with great clarity, and there is a major effort on the part of the author to achieve a fair and balanced description of events. I think he does a wonderful job. Not only that, but what the author achieves through his ongoing following of the Arab family of Khairi and Jewish family of Eshkenazi is a personal perspective on these themes and events.

I learnt an incredible amount from this book – and would highly recommend it to anyone wanting to get an overview of the history of Palestine and Israel from the time of the British occupation to the beginning of the twenty-first century. I felt it really got to the heart of what was going on.

Ram says

A book about the Israeli Palestinian conflict.

I am really not sure what to write about it. It opened my eyes and gave me a perspective of the conflict that I have not seen (or maybe chose not to see). I won't say that it changed my perspective completely but it did raise a lot of questions about the history of my country and the role of the Palestinians. Or to be more precise the role of the Zionist movement in the situation of the Palestinians.

The book tells the story of the friendship that was established between a Palestinian who was forced out of his house as a child in 1948 and the Israeli woman, who as a child, settled in his house (with her parents) after the 1948 war. A friendship that started in 1967, after the six day war when Bashir, the Palestinian, knocked on the door of the house that he could not visit for 19 years, and met Dalia, a young woman at the time.

While the story of the friendship is optimistic and shows that Israelis and Palestinians can somehow have a dialog, it emphasizes the giant gap between the people.

I would like to say that after reading this book, I have better hope for peace between Israel and the Palestinians but that is not the case.

The book just emphasized to me how deep the gap is and how complex the solution is.

The book does not put my country and its actions in a very positive light. I do not have the historical knowledge to contradict what is written in this book. Every story can be told in various ways and this one paints the Israelis in unflattering colors.

Laurel says

When it comes to the details and complicated history of the Israeli/Palestine conflict, I am admittedly shamefully ignorant. I was always aware of the conflict in a general sense of course, but I never took the time to really research it beyond what I heard on the news or remembered learning in school (which was very little).

Not that this book qualifies as research, of course, but it was a good starting point, and I found it quite informative and eye opening.

I read some reviews of the book both on GR and elsewhere, and some people felt the author left out some important facts and leaned too heavily towards one side. Not being well-read on the subject, it's difficult for me to discern just how unbiased the author really was. But, to me, it felt as though he presented the history in a manner that showed equal compassion to both Israel and Palestine. I feel I came away with a much better understanding of each perspective, and just how deeply rooted that perspective is in each culture's history.

I'm going to be a bit lame here and cut and paste the book description from its back cover, as I think it does a better job at a synopsis than I could do myself:

"In 1967, not long after the Six Day War, three young Arabs ventured into the town of Ramla, in Jewish Israel. They were on a pilgrimage to see their separate childhood homes, from which their families had been driven out nearly twenty years before during the Israeli war for independence. Only one was welcomed: Bashir Al-Khayri was greeted at the door by a young woman named Dalia.

This act of kindness in the face of years of animosity and warfare is the starting point for a remarkable true story of two families, one Arab, one Jewish; an unlikely friendship that encompasses the entire modern history of Israelis and Palestinians and that holds in its framework a hope for true peace and reconciliation for the region."

A difficult read in terms of subject matter, but also an important one.
Recommended.

David Gregory Lloyd says

I found the book to be very promising in the beginning. It seeks to present a very comprehensive overview of the conflict in the Middle East, presenting both sides of the conflict through the personal experience of two people: a Palestinian Arab and an Israeli Jew.

However the book gets somewhat bogged down through an overly repetitive style. I feel that parts, that go on for pages and pages, could be much more forcefully presented in a page or two. Unlike the book - "I Shall Not Hate" - written by a Palestinian doctor, which I felt to be compelling from beginning to end - I found myself plowing through much of the text in "The Lemon Tree". The writer also apparently felt that coming back time and time again to the same point, albeit through slightly different approaches, would reinforce much of what he wanted to bring across, but this approach didn't work for me.

I congratulate Sandy for taking on a very difficult task, and revealing many things that needed to be revealed, but I found the literary quality lacking.

Jan Rice says

This is an exposition of the Israel-Palestine conflict via the stories of two people, Dalia, a Jewish woman whose family immigrated when she was a baby in 1948 and Bashir, a Palestinian Arab whose family was driven out and became refugees. Dalia's family live in what had been Bashir's family's home. The lemon tree grew in the yard. The book uses their stories to tell the story of the conflict. The book does a good job of showing the personal experiences and views of all concerned. With this kind of book (another example of which is The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration) there is more emphasis on those personal experiences and rather less on explication. But there is enough to give the picture.

I think it would be called a "revisionist" book. That is, it doesn't tell the story of Israel in a mythic, heroic manner, but contains all the warts--i.e, not all the Arabs fled of their own accord in 1948 but some were driven out; bad treatment on the part of Israel happened. Torture has occurred. Some may see that as delegitimizing the state of Israel, but to me it means that, like other countries, Israel hasn't had an immaculate conception. (In my opinion, it is not criticism of Israel that is the problem, but the problem consists in removing it from time and history and holding it up as the paradigmatic evil.)

The book does have sections dedicated to politics, and it does describe the various narratives *as* narratives (rather than holding up a particular narrative as "truth" and "fact"). In that sense, the book is fair and even-keeled.

Here is an aspect of the book that may be considered not fair: In all the discussion of people's homes, right-

of-return, etc., the book never mentions that not all the Arab population owned their land. Look at this Wikipedia entry on Absentee Landlords, specifically the third section, on absentee landowners in Palestine before 1948: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Absentee....> In 1858 the Ottoman Empire made the people on the land register ownership in a new manner, as individuals. That caused problems because it interfered with traditional communal patterns of land ownership, and because the people on the land didn't want to register ownership; doing so would result in taxation and conscription. Several decades later there were secular land reforms that allowed the oppressed Jews of the Ottoman Empire to own land individually, which led to religious resentment by Muslims on the land. At any rate, land became increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few, particularly in the hands of absentee landowners of the Ottoman Empire. The people on the land were reduced to tenant farmers. In that way, resentment--and Arab nationalism--began to arise *prior to* the Zionist movement and prior to increased Jewish immigration. While Bashir's family had been prominent in their village and may have owned their land, many others would not have, and if they felt they should and didn't, there would have been issues that already existed and that were not instigated by Jewish immigration or the establishment of the state of Israel. I saw no reference to any of that in the book.

Also because of the concentrated focus on two individuals' stories in Israel and Palestine, the fact that other such issues have existed and do exist in other countries is not a consideration. Obviously it is a story of a particular place. I only think it is a problem because it is a place that is such a loaded issue for so many people. The author might have given at least some introductory context in terms of other areas of the world that have suffered partition or are undergoing influx or clashes of different ethnic groups.

Finally, it may be an unfortunate portrayal that the Israeli was capable of considering compromise while the Arab was intractable in his position. Since the book is based on actual events, that could not be helped, but is one of the drawbacks of focusing on the stories of these two people. At the same time, making their stories central brings history down to earth and makes it real.

3/11/13: I've decided to add my following comment to the body of the review as an addendum:

In my review, I stated, "...the fact that other such issues have existed and do exist in other countries is not a consideration. Obviously it is a story of a particular place. I only think it is a problem because it is a place that is such a loaded issue for so many people. The author might have given at least some introductory context in terms of other areas of the world...."

It seems to me that books I'm reading or have read may provide some of that context, or maybe everything I'm reading these days is ~related~. Although those connections aren't really part of my review, maybe I can assemble them here, for future reference. Or maybe add them to the review.

I recently read *Neither Wolf nor Dog: On Forgotten Roads with an Indian Elder*, on what happened to American Indians in the 1800s and particularly the late 1800s, after the Civil War. They, like the indigenous Arabs in Palestine, lacked a tradition of land ownership that lined up with emerging social and economic realities that would come to be dominant.

Listening for the Heartbeat of God: A Celtic Spirituality focuses overall on the suppression of Celtic spirituality by Rome, but a corollary has to do with the suppression of a people and way of life. Eventually economics coalesced with religious factors when sheep became more profitable than tenant farmers. In Scotland, 1792 was called "The Year of the Sheep." The large landowners got rid of their tenants to free the land for grazing. People were driven out; they coped poorly with sudden urbanization or forced emigration to Canada as paupers; people starved or died of disease in the consequent social uprooting and upheaval. The church did not help. The parish ministers were often the tools of the rich. Looking down on the people's religion made it easier to mistreat them. As I write, I'm wondering if these events weren't part of the ongoing dissolution of the feudal system.

I read an excerpt from a Palestinian Arab appeal of 1946 in which the Arab Office submitted appeals to the

Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry. Part of their complaint was that the Jewish immigrants had greater knowledge and skills with modern economic techniques, leading them to economic mastery of the area. The appeal asked not only for the rights of the indigenous inhabitants but also for the preservation of the traditional character of the country.

Here is a Facebook "note" I wrote after listening to The Modern Scholar - Odyssey Of The West III (3) The Medieval World:

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/jan-se...>

Here we see the impact of religio-economic factors writ large.

In The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet, Japan in 1800 had taken extreme measures to prevent the encroachment of Christianity. They had not let the Dutch enter the country beyond a special holding/trading area, and now that the English had gained control of the seas, they were treated the same. (Addendum: A friend just read the book God's Smuggler, about a man whose call was to smuggle bibles across closed borders.)

I read in the paper the other day about how it is against the law to spread Christianity in Libya, and doubtless in many other countries.

Why is that, unless we are not really speaking about the spread of a religious faith only, but about that religion as a cultural spearhead by means of which new ways may pierce a traditional society and, clearing all before it, conquer.

This reminds me of that joke to the effect that before the coming of the missionaries, the natives had the land and the colonialists had the bible. Afterward, the natives had the bible and the colonialists the land.

A few years ago I had the experience of sitting in a very liberal Protestant church that wears its anti-Israel colors proudly and in accompaniment preaches not a little anti-Judaism. Sitting there I witnessed their applause and delight as they were being told of the spread of Christianity in China.

It seems we "pays our money and takes our chances" with the political groups in which we find ourselves, but we often know not what we do.

It is easy to sympathize with the group that is suffering from change in this world--when they are us or our "client groups." When we are the winners and are perceiving ourselves as vindicated, it is another matter. Right and wrong are so difficult to establish. As I wrote on my review of Neither Wolf nor Dog, I don't think this Western culture that we have is the epitome of evil. But for those who do, I don't think another small culture can be made the scapegoat for it all. At the very least, that poses some serious theological questions--particularly for those who are of the conviction that price has already been paid.

thewanderingjew says

This is the true story of Dalia, a Bulgarian Jew, and Bashir, a Palestinian Arab. Both were uprooted from their homes for different, but related reasons; one was uprooted because of the Holocaust in Europe and the other because of the founding of the state of Israel which resulted from the heinous acts committed against Jews during the Holocaust. It must be mentioned here that the Arabs of Palestine supported Hitler and his Holocaust. They had a common enemy: Jews and Great Britain.

Both people claimed the same land, Israel, only known by that name since 1948, when it was given to the Jews by a United Nations declaration. However, since the ownership of that land is now and has always been

disputed, war is never-ending and fear is a constant companion for all sides considered.

Dalia and Bashir meet in 1967, when Bashir knocks on the door of her home only months after the Arab defeat in the 6-day war, just one of a series of violent acts toward the newly formed country since its inception. He asks to see the place he used to call his home, and she graciously grants that wish to him and his two friends who illegally traveled into Israel from their place of exile in the Arab territory. Over the ensuing years, they both become what I shall call frenemies, since they are both driven by different motives and goals, but both also inspiring a feeling of friendship for each other and a concern for each other's plight. Their needs and solutions pit them squarely in a fight against each other on the playing field that is Israel. Dalia seeks a solution that will require sacrifice by all parties involved, because she believes it could bring peace to the Middle East. Bashir seeks a solution in which Jews are driven out of their country and sent back to the place they came from. He will not tolerate any compromise regarding the land or the Jews who recently emigrated to his country.

Through their friendship, Dalia learns how her family acquired their home and how Bashir unfairly lost his when Israel commandeered it and forced the community he lived in to flee. She is sympathetic, but realizes that there is nothing she can do about it. She cannot return the home to him, she cannot even sell it to him. It is a brutal mark on Israel's history, but the Arabs wanted to drive them out, and the newly formed Israel saw no other way to guarantee its survival other than to kill or be killed. Israelis chose survival as cruel as its implementation required.

Bashir, unwilling to compromise in any way, wants only to regain the self respect his family lost which requires them to be able to return to their home, no strings attached. In conjunction, he wants the Jews to return to their homes, not understanding that they often had no home to return to because of the Holocaust. They were not wanted anywhere. Bashir, like the Israelis, believed that any means would justify the end of achieving the right of return. Although he has never admitted it, he was arrested many times for participating in acts of violence and terrorism in Israel. Unlike Dalia, who, to be fair, does have the upper hand as an Israeli, he does not want to work through peaceful means.

The book dwells largely on the different paths each of them follow to find a solution. Dalia eventually creates a school for Arab children in their mutual former home, and Bashir becomes an Arab Freedom Fighter, involved with many violent groups and spending many years of his life in Israeli prisons for the cause of a one-state solution to the Middle East controversy..

Dalia finds it hard to understand how someone she cares about, and supposedly someone who cares about her, can want the annihilation of her people. Yet Israel is also carrying out deeds of brutality, torture and murder, as they invade lands preemptively to protect their territory and their settlers. She finds it hard to justify or understand either behavior.

While Dalia is shown in a sympathetic light, and Bashir is depicted as someone who is the product of years of Israeli abuse, there is little true causation presented that connects the deeds of each enemy toward each other. Therefore, The brutality of Israeli actions often appear to be occurring in a vacuum rather than in reaction to Arab provocation. Israel would probably not exist today had they not taken swift action against their enemies, even preemptively. Did the means justify the ends? Since the Arabs were intransigent and would not accept Israel's right to exist, after the state was created, I, personally, believe they did.

Dalia appears to be naïve and more than just a little idealistic. Bashir is grounded in his belief that he has the right to return to his family's land. He believes in achieving this goal by any means possible. His children are taught that Israel is the cause of all their problems, rather than their refusal to accept Israel's right to exist. They do not own their responsibility for some of the brutality inflicted upon their people, and they feel no guilt for causing so many unnecessary deaths. No matter how hard she tries, Dalia cannot crack his stubborn façade. She believes that in friendship, if they both give up something, if they sacrifice equally, they can compromise and live together, and that this can be applied to the greater land around them, encompassing Arabs and Israelis. She, however, does understand that the right of return would negate Israel's existence as a Jewish state.

The book's message is over simplified. Bashir really cares more for his Palestine than he does for Dalia. His connection to terrorist behavior could as easily kill her as well as other innocent and unknown Israelis or innocent Palestinians who lives in Israel. To him, Jews are interlopers who have no right to be there and must be driven out by any means. It is a view similar to the Israeli Jew about the Arabs, sadly.

The author often referred to Bashir's belief about a resolution guaranteeing the right of return, but this resolution does not actually exist, and the author does not clarify this point, but rather allows the reader to believe what Bashir believes. It is the interpretation of that resolution by Bashir which is incorrect and the author should present it that way. <http://www.mythsandfacts.org/conflict...>

The groups that Bashir supports do not recognize Israel's history or its right to exist in what they believe is only "their land". When Jordan controlled the holy sites, Jews and Christians were forbidden access to certain places, even though the UN resolution required it. When Israel controlled them, Jerusalem was unified and religious sites were open to all.

<http://www.yale.edu/accords/jerusalem...>

Throughout the Jewish history, they have been attacked just because they were Jews and were different. After a long history of exile and abuse, the Israelis are a bit paranoid, and with good reason. They are a tiny country in the midst of a huge Arab population that will not recognize their right to exist. There is not one Arab country truly willing to give Palestinian refugees sanctuary in their country, on a long term basis, with equal rights and freedoms, yet that is what the Arabs demand from the Jews they attacked the moment the state of Israel was declared.

Many Jews, like me, always believed that all reactions or hostilities, engaged in by Israel, were provoked. In reality, not all were, I learned. I discovered I know a lot about the Holocaust, but not as much about the birth and development of Israel. However, I do know that Israel reacted in its defense, to protect the country from annihilation by an enemy that did not recognize its right to exist, that thought they could wipe the people and the country from the map with impunity and suffer no consequences. When they were forced to pay for their violence, they rebelled and questioned why they were being treated so cruelly when they only, rightfully, wanted their land back.

The problem is this; it was no longer their land. Intransigence will prevent any peace. Both sides have to move to a middle ground, but Israel has no choice, if it wishes to maintain its Jewish identity, but to behave they way it did and will have to continue to do so. Those that do not understand this will wish to doom Israel to extinction. They may even hope for it, as their ultimate goal.

In the Middle East, as in other developed nations, assassinations have become more and more prevalent, as has terrorism. It is necessary to fight hard and early to survive. If two friends could not come to a single cohesive conclusion about how they could live together in peace, how can two separate peoples who desire the same country to call their own, find a pathway to peace?

Dalia could not understand how Bashir could plot to murder Israelis when she could become his victim, and yet, Bashir has become a victim of Israel's prison system, perhaps not always fairly treated. Because time has passed since the book was published, the fluid situation in Israel has changed and it is now even more threatened by newly formed terrorist groups, by other Arab nations who have experienced the Arab Spring and by an Iran that will possibly soon acquire nuclear weapons. Who knows if there is even a plausible way out? I certainly don't. However, the truth must be written, not for bleeding hearts, but for the real world with beating hearts for one man's poison will become another man's meat on another day.

David says

For anyone interested in the history of Palestine, this is an absolutely gripping book, a profoundly insightful consideration of the birth of Israel in 1948 and the Arab / Israeli conflict before and since. The carefully documented history describes an Arab family forced to leave a home they built (and the lemon tree they planted in the back yard) when Jewish immigrants move into the country. The Jewish family loves the home and builds their own memories there. When the son of the Arab family returns to visit the home of his childhood, he gets to know the daughter of the Jewish family. They develop an unusual friendship in spite of ideological and political differences; mutual respect develops and they challenge preconceptions and learn from each other. In this context, the agonizing history of Israel and Palestine unfolds, and both Zionism and Palestinian homeland claims are defended. This is the first book I've read that really allowed me to consider

BOTH sides of the issue, and feel sympathy for the Arab position.

ellen says

I agree with the person who says required reading for anyone who lives in this world.

The Lemon Tree is the history of modern day Palestine and Israel. It is written in a Palestinian voice by an individual who was displaced from his home as a child but who I think remains fairly balanced in his viewpoint and presentation.

The book is also about an uncanny friendship between this Palestinian and his dear friend who was the child of a family that relocated to Israel after WWII to find a new freedom.

For once I feel I understand both sides from a human vs. a political point of view.

Sherry says

I loved/hated this book. The Washington Post nailed it tagging it "an extraordinary book...A sweeping history of the Palestinian-Israeli conundrum...highly readable and evocative."

Thank you, Laurie Williamson, my Tuscaloosa/Boone doctora hermana, for recommending it. Thank you, Fulbright Scholarships for awarding her one in Lebanon increasing her curiosity of the area and her front-line understandings.

Thank you, Sandy Tolan, for all your research, your passion and your ability to write this book, this story of Bashir and Dalia and their unusual friendship as bitter and sweet, as alive and wasted as the lemon tree in their backyard.

I think of you, Ettie, my fiesty Jewish friend, and you, Haifa, my passionate Palestinian/Jordanian friend, and of your friendship and ours. I think of my misunderstandings and frustrations with what for me seems to be way too much support of Israel by my own country, politically and financially. I definitely feel more informed and more wishful and still confused, frustrated and disempowered having read this book. What's that advocacy of something called "Blessed Unrest"? Not sure this is that but it is definitely something bigger than me and this book is a baby step toward at least being a better informed citizen of the world.

Sue says

Excellent, well-written portrait of the multiple changes that have occurred in the area of the Middle East known as Palestine, Israel, both to Arabs and Jews who both want to live on the same land in the same homes. History of the area from both perspectives is provided for the years leading to the declaration of Israeli independence in 1948 which changed the dynamics of the entire Middle East for all the years since.

The story is told from the perspectives of an Israel woman, Dalia, and an Arab man, Bashir, both of whom have ties to the same house formerly in Arab Palestine but, since 1948, in Jewish Israel. It is a true story of the wars, the individual happy moments of working toward peace or at least progress.

Highly recommended to anyone who wishes to learn more about the background for today's events.

Vicki says

I have just finished this book, and found it to be one of the most compelling books I have ever read.

An intriguing historical account of the Palestinian/Arab - Israeli conflict through the stories of the lives of two families who are connected through having resided in the same home (the Arab family built it and was later "displaced;" -- most violently. A Jewish family from Bulgaria comes to live there, newly arrived in Israel after World War II. A Lemon Tree grows in the back yard.

In 1967, a young Palestinian man knocks on the door -- hoping to see the home he fled from with his family, as a young boy. A young Jewish woman, on her college vacation, is home alone -- and opens the door.

The challenge of this book -- is that it revolves around two extraordinary individuals who choose to care and hear each other stories, and maintain a deep and respectful friendship spanning decades despite deep political differences - that go to the very core of their beings -- differences that each conscientiously acts upon through their lives.

It is a book I would recommend that you read -- but also that I would ask you to read. I feel we have a responsibility to know these stories.

I

Ryan says

A very slanted take on the struggle where the only people who get a voice are a Palestinian terrorist, an Israeli peacenik, and the leftist academic author. Every poor decision by an Arab leader is justified and every choice by an Israeli leader is stated flatly in the most damning way. Tolan delves deep into accounts to cherry-pick the most favorable items for Palestine and skims over complicated events to highlight the darkest side of the Israelis.

The conflict is a bad situation; I feel for the people living in camps with little control over their lives. There are refugees in every war and it's sad. But only blaming Israel over-simplifies a complex problem. Israelis have to be a hard people to exist surrounded by so many nations who want them destroyed.

The problem is not so much with Tolan though, it's impossible to write unbiased on this subject. Readers are best served by reading at least two books on the conflict, one biased on each side. For the Israeli side I'd recommend O Jerusalem, written by two journalists one American and one French. It's very similar to this book in that the authors do make an attempt at unbiased writing, but it clearly favors the Israeli side of the

story.

Christine says

This is the story of Dalia and Bashir. Dalia lives in the house where the lemon tree grows in the backyard. Back in the day when Israel was just formed, Bashir's family was kicked to the curb and thrown out of their house, since they were no longer allowed to live in the new Israel. They all lived in tents and stuff. Their lives sucked.

Dalia and the Jewish people of the new Israel just walked through the streets and got to claim whatever house they wanted back in the day. Dalia's family really liked Bashir's house and best of all they didn't have to pay a dime. Bashir and his family was not so happy about that. One day Bashir decides to go back and visit Dalia in the house and they become friends of sorts.

Now Bashir and the Palestinians bomb the crap out of the Israelies because they are pissed off. And the people of Israel start bombing back. We as Americans take the Jews side because, lets face it, they have good delis.

I think this book has boring dialog. Do people really talk that way? Maybe Dalia and Bashir should just chill out and become a bit more fun. The history in this book was so dry and boring! But history presented in a textbook format has always bored me to tears.

I did learn more about the whole situation and honestly think both sides are ridiculous. Life is unfair. Why do they both seem to think they will find some justice? It is about compromise at this point.

But I have always been surprised at how OK most people are that the Palestinians were just thrown out of their houses and country for some new country to essentially start up. That situation was pretty damn disgraceful to me but they need to move on at this point. Bashir needs to accept things and have peace. Hello, Native Americans are opening casinos laughing at white Americans as they hand over their money. Do something creative like that Bashir and stop your crazy terrorism!

What a wreck of a situation...the book will do some explaining. If you can tolerate lots of straightforward history, this may be the book for you.

Monk says

Now I know why wolves would rather eat through their own legs than stay in a trap. Awwwwwful. First, Tolan reads the book himself, and he has a bad case of NPR voice. Do not operate vehicles or heavy machinery while listening to this book. Second, the contents. Tolan mixes history of the "Palestine" crisis writ large with history writ small in the lives of two individuals, one a Jew and the other an Arab. Their stories could have been summarized on a post-it note with room to spare. The book gets incredibly repetitive very early on. ("How can our people get along? This is my home! But it was once your home! Did I mention that it was once my home? But previously yours? And then mine?"). I strongly urge more contructive uses of your time rather than listening to this thing. Perhaps knocking over liquor stores or developing an addiction to monkey pornography. Sweet Granny Moses, I should have chucked this out the window midway through Disc 1.

