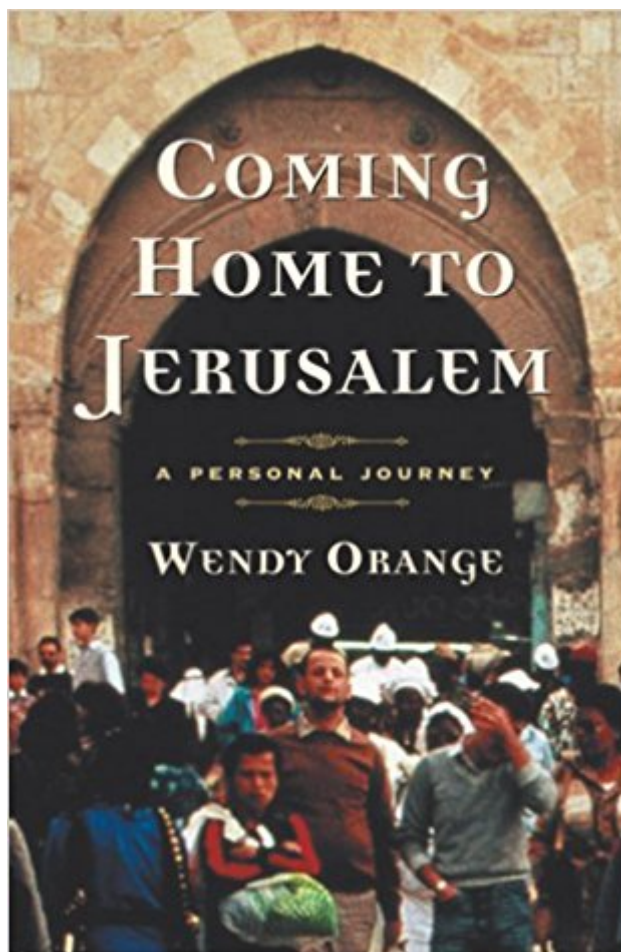


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Coming Home To Jerusalem: A Personal Journey



Synopsis

In the tradition of *Under the Tuscan Sun* and Peter Mayle's popular portraits of Provence, an American woman recounts her five-year stay in Israel with candor, wit, and a keen eye for the cultural and political undercurrents of her adopted home. Wendy Orange and her family settled in Israel in the 1990s, and, despite language barriers, household dramas, homesickness, and a difficult job search, Orange eventually found herself at home. *Coming Home to Jerusalem* is the story of the world she discovered, the people behind the politics, and the deep-seated ideals obscured behind divisive ideologies. Her sojourn brings her into contact with famous authors, obscure artists, Evangelical teachers, American-Israeli housewives, and citizens weary of the turbulent life Orange finds so fascinating. As a reporter for an American magazine, she travels to remote parts of Israel and into the Palestinian territories, adventures that give her a broader picture of the age-old conflicts that inform the opinions of peaceniks and young soldiers, downtrodden refugees and elite politicians on both sides of the cultural divide. Her portraits illuminate everyday lives lived in extraordinary circumstances with stunning immediacy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Coming Home to Jerusalem: A Personal Journey is an intelligent, entertaining, politically astute memoir by Wendy Orange, who from 1991 to 1997 was the Mideast correspondent for *Tikkun*, a leading American Jewish magazine. One autumn morning in 1990 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Orange realized that she would never feel at home where she lived--a feeling that she compared to "the claustrophobic awareness that you've just married the wrong person." Several months later,

she realized that she was homesick for a place she had never been before: while watching CNN reports from Jerusalem at the outbreak of the Gulf War, she was struck with an awareness that "the Israelis on the streets ... all felt familiar. They looked and dressed like me and my friends, were the same age, had the same verbal intonations as they spoke." Shortly thereafter, she visited Israel for the first time. Not long after her visit, she packed eight cardboard boxes, left her job, and took her young daughter Eliza with her to Jerusalem, for what she imagined would be forever. The story that follows, *Coming Home to Jerusalem*, is a tightly plotted play in a "theatre of incongruous, gruff, sexy, close-minded, religious, secular, cruel, funny, and excitable characters." Along the way, Orange offers plenty of insight on the political and religious conflicts that dominated Jerusalem's life during her time there. But the real strength of this book is its sprawling constellation of character studies of Holocaust survivors, famous writers, failed artists, politically elite people, and a cab driver with whom Orange falls in love. *Coming Home to Jerusalem* is essentially a travelogue, and it does what good travel writing should--it makes you want to go. --Michael Joseph Gross

Jewish baby boomer Orange moved to Israel in the early 1990s with her young daughter as part of a midlife attempt to find herself. (Televised pictures of Israelis wearing gas masks during the 1991 Gulf WarAa compelling vision for someone who grew up obsessed with the HolocaustAspurred her need to be with people) Now, the author chronicles the years she lived as a journalist in the Middle East. Though trained as a psychologist, she became a correspondent for the leftist Jewish magazine *Tikkun*. But in this book she is more than just an observerAshe leaps into the Israeli world with a vengeance, making both Palestinian and Israeli friends, taking on a lover who is a taxicab driver. She participates in the peace movement as the euphoria of the 1993 Oslo accord gives way to the violence of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the deadly bus bombings against Jews that lead to the 1996 election of Benjamin Netanyahu as Israeli prime minister. Along the way, Orange describes with intense earnestness the ups and downs that accompany life in the tinderbox of the Middle East. Regarding the Palestinians, whose views she seems to genuinely try to understand, she moves from fear to sympathy to rageAand back again. The reader remains unclear about the reasons for Orange's final departure from the region, but is left with a keen understanding of the grassroots frenzy that accompanies political life there and the author's own intoxication with this frenzy. Agent, Joy Harris. (June) FYI: For another immigrant's look at contemporary life in Israel, see David Horowitz's *A Little Too Close to God*, *Forecasts*, Apr. 25. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

What can you say about a book that has so much promised impact that some people are afraid of it? This is what I said: H-----, I can promise you that the book will provoke many feelings. You will cry, but you will also be filled with mana. Wendy Orange's evocation of the land, the sky, the way the light infuses its objects as if the light itself were animate, and the way she weaves the landscape into the warp and woof of people and politics is spellbinding. I have actually had my bookmark on the last page for the last week -- I don't want to leave this place. And I'm not Jewish or Palestinian! So it will probably be exponentially more intense for you. But though there is pain, frustration, futility and rage, there is so much soulfood in those pages. Don't deny yourself! Linda

Great book on the conflict in Israel. I found her views a little liberal, but enjoyed the book.

... and I've watched post-Oslo agreement events w/a broken heart. For decades I've avoided learning about Israel, since the vocal partisans on both sides seemed so one-note and hysterical. Too complicated, too intractable, too difficult to "get". Wendy's book changed me, from an avid reader in international politics who had long avoided learning more about that seemingly permanently at war part of the world, to an inveterate optimist from afar. Her eyes and her ears are sharp, and she doesn't shy from sharing her own fear, love, worry and the evolution of her own understanding and education, with evocative language uncommon in non-fiction -- especially non-fiction on politics! This book has engaged me in the peace process from afar, with nary a reason to care, but that I care anew about the peoples who clearly both belong there.

I read Wendy Orange's "Coming Home to Jerusalem" a few nights ago and was riveted. It began out in a familiar world to me-- as I grew up in Flushing, Queens at the same time that Wendy was growing up in Woodmere, Long Island. And at first I thought it was going to be one of those books where a woman reveals everything about her own life-- which I adore reading. The instant she arrived in Israel for a trip, it all changes. After 4 days (and nights) of being scared to leave her luxury hotel and adventure into the streets of Jerusalem, Wendy does. She falls in love with the Mideast instantly. But what changes everything is that evening, she bumps into an Israeli, they sit at a cafe talking, and as she listens she realizes that even though he is railing against peace with the Arabs, at the very same time he sees a case for it. The man is in turmoil in his own heart. And as she sits quietly, tenderly, listening-- she actually sees him bring forth a case for peace, which surprises him to contemplate. Her love, understanding, and quietness have helped him. By just a loving listening-- he sees what he always wanted to see, but never could. It is a brief encounter. She never meets him

again. But she has freed him, and he has freed her. Because she had set out on this trip, as a solution to feeling trapped and cut off from her real self. Suddenly she feels free, and she loves herself. She begins to fall in love with the Mideast in earnest and the Mideast falls in love with her. She returns to USA, packs her bags, and moves there with her daughter. And discovers that is what she loves doing best and what everyone wants from her. Israelis and Palestinians alike all want someone who will listen to them with love. Every encounter-- is as if that very first encounter was the bud, and now we have the beautiful rose. Wendy feels like a new person, giving and getting love wherever she goes-- and every single person she encounters also feels some binds slipping away. Amazingly, Wendy's experience is mirrored by Mideast politics at that instant. It is the great moment-- when Rabin and Arafat choose peace. This is an extraordinary and unusual book. Both personal and political-- and when the personal is political-- the light of love shines through. Thank you Wendy for your wonderful book. I send you all my love. Love, Anne Mesquite

A friend handed me this book and insisted, "This is the Summer Read that will stay in your head and heart." Looking at the cover, I assumed she had thought of me because, years ago, I worked in the Middle East. I am not Jewish, not Arab, and most importantly, I find politics of any kind to be boring. But Orange manages to make the politics irresistible through the lives of a host of individuals. She tells the story on so many levels, from specific moments already past to global consequences and conundrums which remain in effect. Even better than being the truth, the story is a page-turner. I loved the consciousness that runs throughout. This book delivers in so many categories: it is a woman's journey, a foreign affair, an education in the invisible life of Israel, a portrait of the Palestinians, a story filled with immediacy and charm. I was drawn into the picture and along for the ride. It is not merely a travelogue-- but it is definitely a TRIP. You're a member of the author's family within paragraphs but the writing never sinks to the tedious or home-grown. It is consistently literate, graceful, witty and to the point. Orange puts you on an intimate basis with her subjects immediately, sometimes with a single image or phrase. Highly recommended for anyone who loves to read. The statement that best captures my take on Coming Home To Jerusalem is, "This book gets under your skin and the pleasure is all yours!"

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