

# HOW TO UNDERSTAND ISRAEL IN 60 DAYS OR LESS

SARAH GLIDDEN





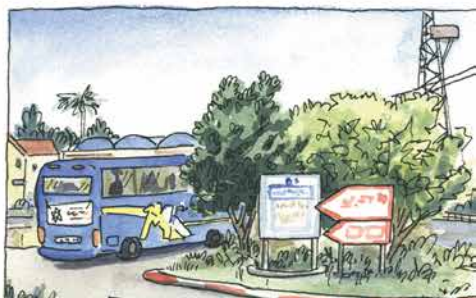
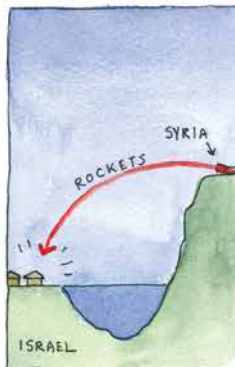






# HOW TO UNDERSTAND ISRAEL IN 60 DAYS OR LESS

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# CHAPTER ONE ORIENTATION

BUS ROUTE

HIGHWAY

SEPARATION BARRIER

'GREEN LINE'

PALESTINIAN  
AUTHORITY CONTROL

P.A. CONTROL  
BUT IDF AUTHORITY

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

GOLAN  
HEIGHTS

SEA OF  
GALILEE

Tiberias

Nazareth

Jenin

Caesaria

TEL AVIV

BEN GURION  
AIRPORT

Arriel

Ramallah

JERUSALEM

KIBBUTZ  
NASHCHON

Bethlehem

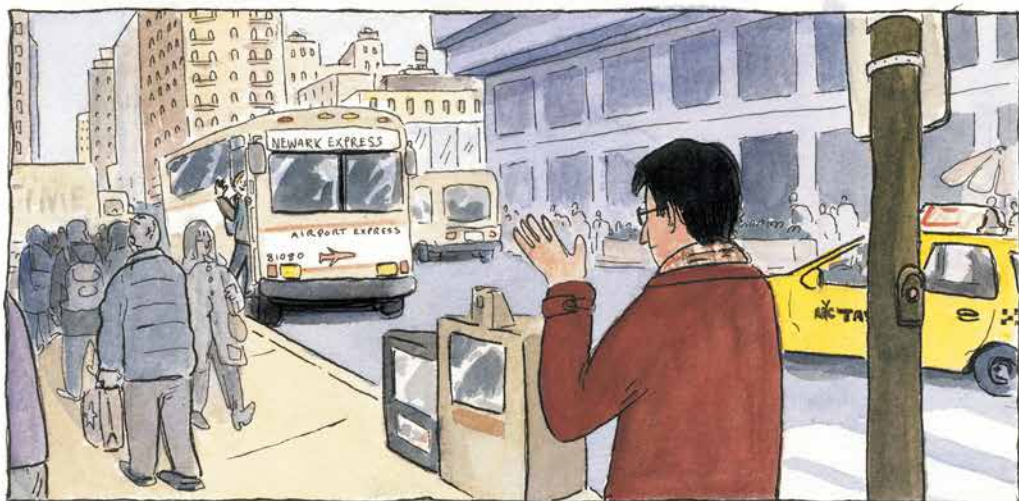
JORDAN

DEAD SEA

Ashdod











EXCUSE ME, IS THIS THE ISRAEL EXPERTS BIRTHRIGHT GROUP?

SURE IS! WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

SARAH.

HEY THERE! I'M SHARON AND I'LL BE YOUR GROUP LEADER.



SARAH...SARAH GLIDDEN? YEP, HERE YOU ARE. OKAY, WHY DON'T YOU GO AHEAD AND GET QUESTIONED SO YOU CAN CHECK IN?

QUESTIONED?



YEAH, EL AL HAS A REALLY RIGID SECURITY PROCEDURE. THEY PRETTY MUCH ASK YOU FOR YOUR WHOLE LIFE STORY AS A JEW. THEY EVEN ASKED ME WHAT MY FAVORITE HOLIDAY IS THE LAST TIME I WENT TO ISRAEL.

ALL RIGHT THEN. HEY, HAS MY FRIEND MELISSA CHECKED IN YET? MELISSA SHAN?

ELYAL



MELISSA? YEAH, SHE'S HERE. SHE GOT RED-FLAGGED. SHE DIDN'T KNOW HER HEBREW NAME.

IS SHE DOING YOGA?



SO...READY TO GO TO ISRAEL, MISSY?

I'M REALLY TRYING VERY HARD TO MAINTAIN MY LOVE RIGHT NOW, FOCUSING ON IT AND TRYING NOT TO DISLIKE ISRAELIS. I'M. REALLY. TRYING.



NOBODY TOLD ME THEY WOULD BE ASKING ME THESE KINDS OF QUESTIONS! THEY SAID IT DIDN'T MATTER IF YOU DON'T COME FROM A RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND! AND NOW I HAVE TO GET STRIP-SEARCHED? THIS IS RIDICULOUS!



LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, AT LEAST NOW WE'LL KNOW FOR SURE THAT YOU'RE NOT A TERRORIST!

FUCKING GREAT!



NEXT! NEXT IN LINE, PLEASE!

















SO MAYBE EVEN THOUGH I'M TECHNICALLY STILL IN NEWARK, IT DOES FEEL LIKE WE ARE A LITTLE BIT "THERE" ALREADY.



BUT THEN AGAIN, I'VE BEEN A LITTLE BIT THERE FOR WEEKS NOW.



AFTER THE TWO OF US DECIDED TO GO ON THIS TRIP, I SPENT EVERY SPARE MOMENT READING ABOUT ISRAEL, PALESTINE, AND THE CONFLICT. I WANTED TO FILL IN THE GAPS BETWEEN WHAT I ALREADY KNEW, TRYING TO PREPARE MYSELF.



HAARETZ REPLACED THE NEW YORK TIMES AS MY DAILY LEFT-LEANING NEWS SOURCE.



I STARTED WITH THE BEGINNINGS OF RECORDED HISTORY AND WORKED MY WAY FORWARD, TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT HAPPENED.



WHAT WENT WRONG OVER THERE? AND WHY AREN'T THERE ANY ANSWERS WITHOUT BIAS? OBJECTIVE SOURCES ARE VERY HARD TO FIND.



HUNDREDS OF PAGES LATER, I HAD ALIENATED FRIENDS WITH MY OBSESSION...



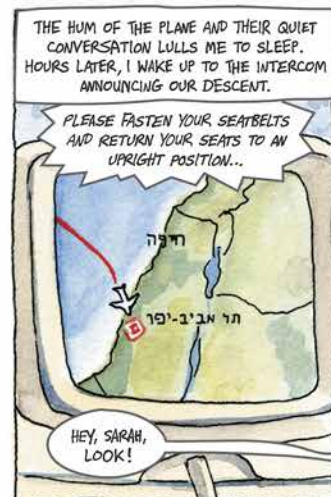
IGNORED IMPORTANT THINGS IN MY LIFE...



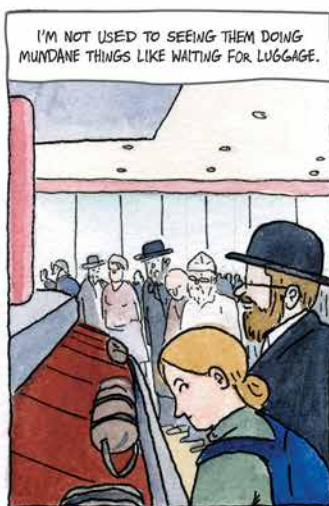
AND SOMEHOW KNEW LESS THAN WHEN I STARTED.













AS MATT TELLS ME ABOUT THE RIFT BETWEEN THE HASIDIC AND SECULAR JEWS IN ISRAEL, I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL SATISFIED AS MY OWN PREJUDICES ARE VALIDATED. I HAVEN'T HAD GOOD EXPERIENCES WITH THE HASIDIC COMMUNITY...



FRESH OUT OF ART SCHOOL IN BOSTON, I CAME TO BROOKLYN TO LOOK FOR AN APARTMENT. I HAD HEARD A LOT ABOUT THE BOHEMIAN WILLIAMSBURG NEIGHBORHOOD, SO I STARTED THERE.



BUT I WANDERED SOUTH INSTEAD OF NORTH ON BEDFORD AVENUE, AND INSTEAD OF ULTRA-HIP I FOUND ULTRA-ORTHODOX.



















AH, SHALOM EVERY-ONE! CAN YOU ALL HEAR ME IN THE BACK?



SO GOOD MORNING! MY NAME IS GIL AND I WILL BE YOUR GUIDE.



BEFORE WE START, CAN YOU TELL ME HOW MANY OF YOU ARE IN ISRAEL FOR THE FIRST TIME?



WOW, ALMOST ALL OF YOU! WHAT A BURDEN AND RESPONSIBILITY I HAVE TO SHOW THIS COUNTRY TO YOU!



GIL INTRODUCES US TO THE REST OF THE ISRAELI EXPERTS STAFF ON OUR TRIP. THERE IS NADAN, SHARON'S ISRAELI COUNTERPART.



AND BEN, OUR ARMED GUARD AND MEDIC.



SHAI IS OUR DRIVER, AND HE SEEMS TO ENJOY DRIVING THE BUS AS IF IT WERE A SMALL CAR WITH GREAT PICKUP.



IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THERE'S A SOLDIER SOMEWHERE IN GIL.

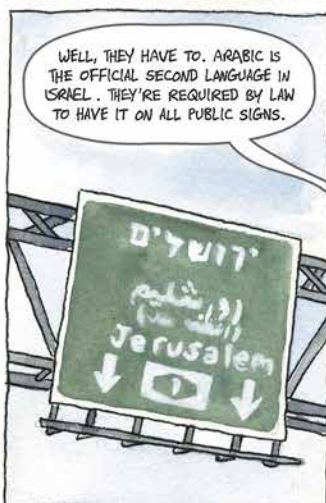
I KNOW YOU MUST BE VERY TIRED, BUT IF WE PUSH THROUGH TODAY, YOUR JETLAG WILL BE EASIER TO OVERCOME, BELIEVE ME.



HE MAY HAVE FOUGHT IN ONE OF THE WARS! AND NOW HE IS OUR TOUR GUIDE.

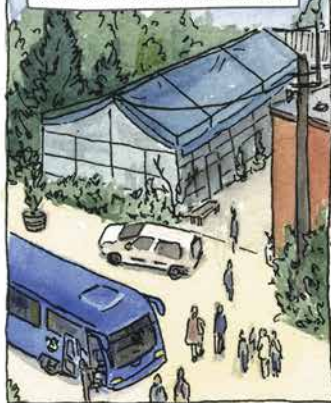
SO PLEASE RELAX AND WE WILL SOON STOP FOR BREAKFAST AND ORIENTATION.







OUR FIRST STOP IS KIBBUTZ NACHSHON, SITUATED SOMEWHERE BETWEEN JERUSALEM AND TEL AVIV.



THIS ISN'T HOW I HAD IMAGINED A KIBBUTZ TO LOOK AT ALL.



IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS MY MOTHER TOOK OF HER STAY AT A KIBBUTZ NOT FAR FROM HERE, YOUNG INTERNATIONALS IN CUT-OFFS AND TEE SHIRTS BONDED IN THE BRIGHT SUN.



AT THE END OF A LONG DAY WORKING IN THE COTTON FIELDS, THEY SLUMPED EXHAUSTED IN THEIR SPARTAN WOOD CABINS AND EXCHANGED STORIES ABOUT TRAVEL AND POLITICAL PROTEST.



THAT WAS IN 1972. MY MOM DOESN'T EVEN KNOW IF KIBBUTZ EYAL STILL EXISTS.



AT KIBBUTZ NACHSHON THERE ARE CINDER BLOCK BUILDINGS INSTEAD OF WOODEN BARRACKS.



AND INSTEAD OF KHAKI CLAD KIBBUTZNIKS CARRYING BOXES OF GRAPES AND ORANGES, THE ONLY PEOPLE AROUND SEEM TO BE US...



A BUNCH OF AMERICAN JEWS IN THEIR TWENTIES, PALE AND JETLAGGED.



NO SOY MILK. GREAT.

WHERE IS EVERYBODY? ISN'T THIS A WORKING KIBBUTZ?





