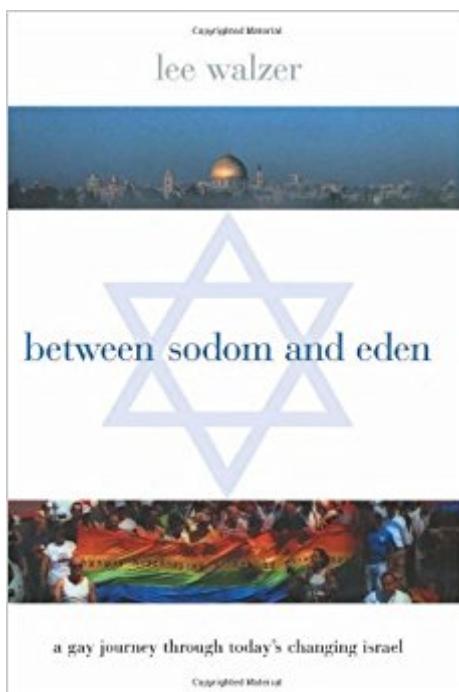


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# Between Sodom And Eden: A Gay Journey Through Today's Changing Israel



## **Synopsis**

Astonishingly, Israeli lesbians and gays have been able to achieve many political goals that still elude America's gay community. Israel's Supreme Court has mandated same-sex spousal benefits; the military, which never barred gays to begin with, has removed its last official restrictions; Israel's parliament boasts a Subcommittee for the Prevention of Sexual Orientation Discrimination; and school curricula are gay-friendly—call of this in a country where religious interests wield extraordinary power and whose identity today is the object of fierce struggle. Between Sodom and Eden, the first book to explore this rapidly changing landscape, is based on interviews with over one hundred Israelis, as well as Palestinians. Lee Walzer explores how, within a decade, Israel has evolved from a society that marginalized homosexuals to one that offers some of the most extensive legal protections in the world. He traces the political, religious, and social factors that make Israel a gay rights trendsetter, examining the interplay between Judaism and homosexuality, the growing prominence of gay themes in Israeli literature, film, music, and television, and the role of the media in advancing lesbian and gay political progress.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

If God didn't make Adam and Steve as well as Adam and Eve, somebody did--because they are certainly alive and well in modern-day Israel, along with their lesbian sisters. This engaging journalistic foray into everyday gay and lesbian life and culture in the Promised Land is brimming with surprising information and conclusions. Based on interviews with Israeli gay and lesbian activists, high school students, kibbutz members, teachers and legislators, as well as common

citizens, Walzer, an American attorney and journalist, portrays a complex culture that--although deeply divided on many religious and political issues--is reconciling itself to, and even celebrating, gay life and sexuality. Walzer is best at describing the extremes of Israeli culture: the government has banned employment and military discrimination based on sexual orientation and gay issues are discussed in high schools, yet family life and reproduction are so entrenched in Jewish tradition that it remains difficult for many gay people to come out. Still, many of the gay people he interviews claim that Israelis are not homophobic, simply heterosexist. Walzer reads Talmudic law sensitively--in his view, the Hebrew bible condemns homosexual acts, not people--and places anti-gay religious laws in the broader context of social mores and teachings on sexuality. Walzer's observations on the differences between gay life in Israel and the U.S. (such as that Israelis are far more willing to accept gay people if they identify as individuals and not as part of a "community") lend his provocative study additional interest. (Apr.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

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This engaging journalistic foray into everyday gay and lesbian life and culture in the Promised Land is brimming with surprising information and conclusions. (Publishers Weekly)

This is an incredibly good book for any interested in the topic of Gay rights in Israel. I was writing a thesis paper for a political science class on internal politics in Israel. It happened to be the week of the gay pride parades when I had to choose my topic, and there were news reports of protests in Israel about them, so I opted for the topic of gay rights (assuming that Israel, being something of a theocracy because of the power of religious parties, would be restrictive -- oh boy was I wrong). My professor tried to beg me off the topic, saying it would be VERY hard to find good sources in English. And for the most part he was right. Very little is out there in book form, although I did find some good articles in Legal journals. This book Saved me. Walzer, who graduated ironically enough from the same university I'm attending (Northwestern), provides an in depth analysis of the evolution of gay rights in Israel. In addition to issues on record, he adds personal interviews with head of state, including rabbi's from the far right who offered their interpretation. Offering insights into things such as below the table negotiations that occurred between interested political parties before votes. For ANYONE interested in the topic, this book is a must read

"Between Sodom and Eden" represents an astounding tour de force. Walzer's book is a must-read for anyone interested in contemporary Israeli society and politics, as well as the sometimes

surprising approach of Judaism to homosexuality. His prose brings alive the tensions, conflicts, and contradictions of a society in search of its identity as Israel becomes an increasingly multicultural, post-Zionist society. That Israel is one of the most progressive countries in the world today on gay rights will surprise most Americans, who think of the Jewish state as the land of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah (with its reputed condemnation of homosexuality). The cast of characters in Walzer's book -- a transsexual pop Diva, openly gay high school students and kibbutzniks, lesbian politicians, and a cast of supportive straight politicians and educators, to name just a few -- guarantees new surprises on each page.

Thanks

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