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Start-Up Nation: The Story Of Israel's Economic Miracle



Synopsis

A fascinating expert look at Israel's meteoric rise in the global economy with timely hints for a world reeling from financial crisis. Start-Up Nation addresses the trillion-dollar question: How is it that Israel, a country of 7.1 million, surrounded by enemies, in a constant state of war, with no natural resources produces more start-up companies than large, peaceful nations like Canada, Japan, China, India, and the U.K.? With the savvy of foreign policy insiders, Senor and Singer examine Israeli culture and government to reveal the secrets behind the world's first ever start-up nation. As countries across the globe restart their own economies, and as businesses try to re-energize their entrepreneurial spirit, we can all look to Israel for some impressive, surprising clues. From the Hardcover edition. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 8 hours and 24 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Gildan Media, LLC

Audible.com Release Date: November 2, 2009

Language: English

ASIN: B002VGER2I

Best Sellers Rank: #22 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Politics & Current Events >

International Relations #23 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Middle East #54

in Books > History > Middle East > Israel & Palestine

Customer Reviews

As a serial entrepreneur, VC and angel investor, and teacher of entrepreneurship for many years, I am enthralled by "Startup Nation". It is a fascinating story of how Israel has succeeded disproportionately to its size and certainly to its geographic situation. It teaches valuable and unique lessons about region building and industry building. The principles of the country that stimulate individual entrepreneurial behavior in the military, in agriculture, and especially in high technology are lessons for all. I have shared the book with several leaders of industry and finance who have seen it as a remarkably interesting read. Congratulations to the authors. Edward Roberts Professor of Management of Technology, MIT Sloan School of Management Founder and Chair, MIT

There is a growing literature which speaks of the distinctiveness of Israel and its unique contribution to global culture. I think most recently of George Gilder's outstanding 'The Israel Test'. No doubt one impulse for the creation of such books has been the worldwide campaign to delegitimize Israel, as prelude to physically destroying it. Thus the very pro- Israel books come in a way as contributions to the justification of the Jewish state, and as defense of it. What is of course distressing about this, and the need for paeans to Israeli exceptionality is the fact that Israel is the only country in the world which is required to 'justify' its existence in this way. In any case this present book focuses on Israel's scientific and even more technological achievements. It speaks about the Israeli reaction to the Arab boycott, and the special situation of 'confinement' Israelis feel at not having normal access to neighboring countries. Israel is a very small country physically and thus many have a certain claustrophobic sense, especially those youngsters who have served in the Army. After the Army many young people adventurously use their new - found freedom. Two forms of this are the trekking Israelis do throughout distant regions of the world, with special emphasis on South America, and the India- Nepal region, and the 'tech-ing' Israelis do in creating start-ups at a rate all out of proportion to their numbers in the world. Israelis have hooked into high- tech communications and rode on the wave of a world economy which is increasingly electronic. The start- ups too come in part because of an encouraging government policy, which devotes a high proportion of funds to research. But they also come because Israelis are a people continually forced to find non- conventional answers to very difficult and unusual problems. For any supporter of Israel, and I assume that this is the real audience of this book, this book will be a real pleasure. It will provide yet more evidence of how one small state manages to make real contributions to the global economy, and the scientific and technological progress of mankind.

This is an enjoyable read that highlights how Israel has come to become such a leader in high tech startups. It is quick, light reading that explores the historical and cultural aspects that lead so many Israelis to pursue entrepreneurship. In Israel, it seems, there is a culture that embraces the questioning of authority, a flat hierarchical structure across society, and risk seeking behavior. For those who have traveled to Israel, these notions will not be unfamiliar to you. Furthermore, the book explores how the contacts made during mandatory army service serve as valuable social networking tools later on. The book was exactly what I was hoping for. It is written for the layperson, and did not read like an academic journal. While most books about Israel focus on its conflict with

the Palestinians, this book only brought up politics and conflict as it pertained to the subject at hand, and didn't editorialize in the process. Furthermore, the multitude of stories and vignettes made it a engaging read that held my interest for the time I sat reading it.

The book is an unabashed celebration of Israel's technical prowess, which the authors ascribe, to the hostile environment unique to the country. Quite early in the book the authors credit the Israel Defense Forces - IDF, and the unconventional war they are engaged in, for fostering this culture of innovation. The central premise of the book, worked over and over again, is that the IDF is forced to innovate to overcome the political and geographical constraints, and in doing so fosters creativity which, coupled with the extensive networking opportunities during the service, makes Israel a hot-house of creative talent. Having laid out the premise of IDF as an incubator of original ideas, the authors serve up numerous examples to support the proposition. Some of which are flawed! There is no doubt that the IDF has a far greater influence on the society compared to other armed forces, yet it is hard to imagine that any institution can single-handedly foster entrepreneurial talent a country of. Surely there are cultural and societal factors; for example a society tolerant of failures, that nurtures creativity. If one considers that serving in the army is a rite of passage for all male Israelis, the link between the IDF and their achievements latter in life, would appear marginal! On the whole the book is idolatry to the point that sections breach the line of objectivity and move into marketing territory. The description of how Paypal acquired fraud-detection software for example is different to how it is described in 'Juice'. The description of replaceable-battery powered electric cars conceived by Better Place is another example. The book provides interesting insights into the culture of innovation in Israel, but neglects objectivity, and with it, loses some of its credibility. It is a bit like reading a biography that turns out be hagiography.

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