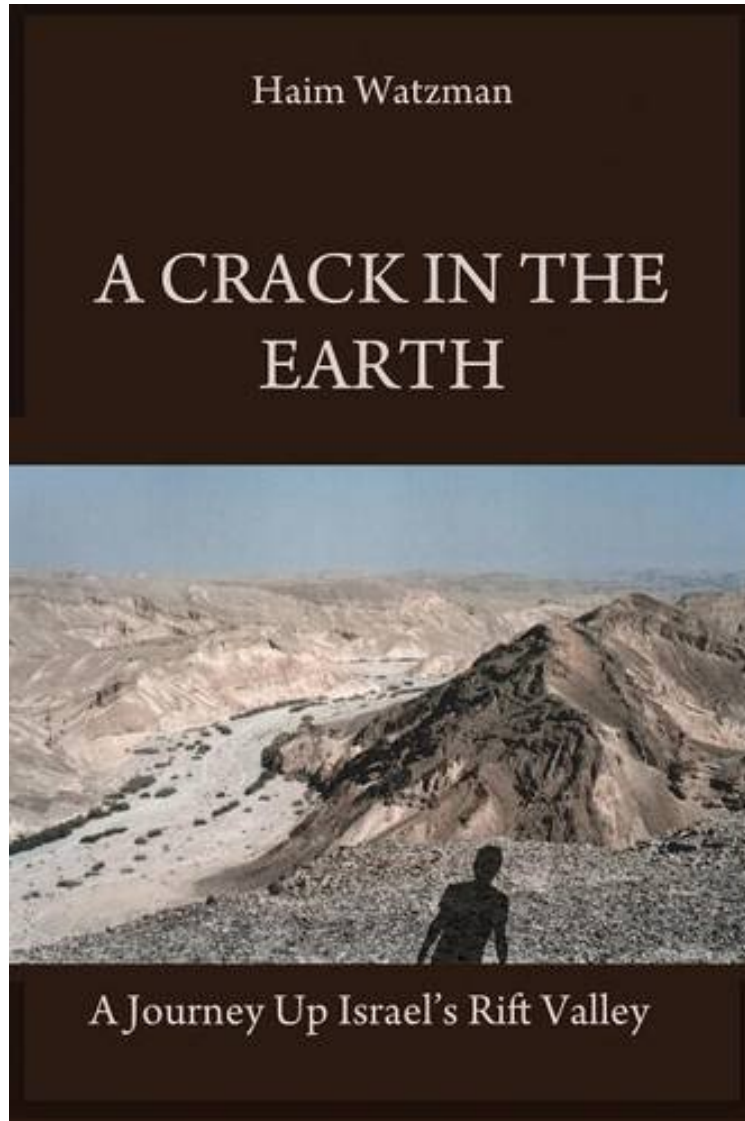


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A Crack in the Earth

Haim Watzman

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Haim Watzman : A Crack in the Earth before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Crack in the Earth:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. For geologists By TerriBeth Fascinating geology of Israel and the Arabah (Jordan Valley.) 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I enjoyed learning some background information and stories about the places ... By Cypridopsis I enjoyed learning some background information and stories about the places I visited. This was the reason I purchased the book. Have not been to Eilat, but have been to northern Negev and all the way to Mt. Hermon for geology field trip and field work. 1 of 1 people found the following review

helpful. More Politics and Personal Memories than Geology By DHB The author is a good writer and his descriptions are interesting but the book is not very much about the geology or the archeology of the Jordan Rift Valley. In writing about about places, he gives us more of his on reminiscences than anything else. When writing about geologists he seems more interested in their personal lives than their work.

The Jordan Rift Valley, stretching from the Red Sea to Lebanon, was ripped open millions of years ago by vast forces within the earth. This geological object has also been a part of human history ever since early humans used it as a path in their journey out of Africa. And for a quarter of a century it has been part of the biography of Israeli writer Haim Watzman. In the autumn of 2004, as his country was riven by a fierce debate over its borders, Watzman took a two-week journey up the valley. Along the way he met scientists who try to understand the rift through the evidence lying on its surface: an archaeologist who reconstructs the fallen altars of a long-forgotten people, a zoologist whose study of bird societies has produced a theory of why organisms cooperate, and a geologist who thinks that the valley will some day be an ocean. He encountered people whose life and work on the shores of the Dead Sea and Jordan River have led them to dream of paradise and to seem to build Gardens of Eden on earth: a booster for a chemical factory, the director of a tourist site, and an aging socialist farmer who curates a museum of idols. And he discovered that the geophysicist's instability is mirrored in the volatility of the tales that people tell about the Sea of Galilee. As an observant Jew who has written extensively about science and scholarship, Watzman tries to understand the valley in all its complexity: its physical facts, its role in human history and his own life, and the myths it has engendered. He realizes that human beings can never see the rift in isolation. It is the stories that men and women have told to explain what they see and what they do as a result that create the rift as we see it, he writes. As hard as we try to comprehend the landscape itself, it is humanity that we find. Watzman's poetic evocation of the scientific and the human is a unique chronicle of a quest for knowledge. Finalist, Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature, 2008.

From Publishers Weekly Israeli author Watzman (Company C) ambitiously takes on the whole of geological and human history as they developed in the Rift Valley, the defining geographical feature between Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian West Bank. Though he occasionally drops too much information too quickly, Watzman is a talented storyteller, deftly engaging readers interested in the Earth's constant evolution, along with those more likely to be interested in the humanity affected by it. With a nice sense of irony and the absurd, the American-born Watzman makes a lively tale out of his travels in the valley, lending a practiced ear to experts and plain folks alike. Yet there are important gaps. Though he clearly wants to do justice to all the rift's stories, frequently referring to his belief that "people see the same landscape differently depending on who they are," Watzman fails almost utterly to bring in non-Jewish voices; the one Arab we meet is an Israeli Bedouin. He is also inconsistent in his references to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, mentioning Palestinian violence frequently, but largely ignoring Israeli military operations and the ongoing occupation of Palestinian lands. Though this is a thoroughly enjoyable read, readers won't get a fully rounded version of the tale Watzman attempts to tell. (June 3) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Praise for "Company C": "An Israeli version of Anthony Swofford's *Jarhead* (2004), both hard-nosed and illuminating." -- "Kirkus" Praise for "Company C": "An Israeli version of Anthony Swofford's *Jarhead* (2004), both hard-nosed and illuminating." -- "Kirkus" About the Author Haim Watzman is a translator and journalist who lives in Jerusalem with his wife and four children. He is the author of *Company C: An American's Life as a Citizen-Soldier in Israel* (FSG, 2005).