

Jewish Independent interview with Katharine Hamer, Editor, for an article published April 20, 2007

Q: Where did you get the idea for the book and why do you think it is so important to present Israel's history in this kind of format?

A: The Middle East is in the news nearly every day and yet, there is a real lack of understanding about the area. The 500-page works of history are sitting on the shelves for this generation. We wanted to bring Israel's narrative to the public in a way that would be accessible, academically sound and balanced. The work will specifically open up significant access for the Jewish people to better understand its history. The history of the State of Israel is a great story and I knew that this type of information would work exceedingly well in the graphic novel format. HOMELAND's combination of graphics and compelling narrative offers a way to better understand the Middle East and provides important background to answer the question as to why the region is continuously in the news. In just a few hours, readers will absorb, understand and retain key information about 3,500 years of history.

Q: You are quoted on the Nachshon website as saying that "Homelandwill be the most important work for Israel since Leon Uris' Exodus...." Exodus was an extremely influential work - what makes you think "Homeland" will have as much of a legacy?

A: The work is in a format that is the fastest growing portion of the book store market. It is a nexus of three of the areas of greatest interest in our country: 1) Religion 2) History of the Middle East 3) The Graphic Adaptation It is the story of the Jewish people in a format that can be devoured in a few sittings, it is for all audiences and it has appeal to virtually all ages and religions. It is a unique attempt to tell a great story for this generation in a way that the MTV generation understands. How could it not be a huge success?

Q: Can you tell me a little about your own background and also tell me about how you got the participants for the project - artist, writer and also Rona Ramon - together?

A: I had seen Mario's work on Testament and was impressed with his artistic talent and obvious wide perspective. We met and began discussing who could help write this work. In addition to such classics as Teen Titans and Tomb of Dracula, Marv Wolfman had written a terrific history of the DC Comics Universe so we approached him about working with us on a history of the State of Israel. As the Executive Director and Chief Professional Officer of the largest umbrella for Jewish Education in Metropolitan Chicago, I have always been plagued by the knowledge that both our children and adults do not know Israel's history. HOMELAND is a response to that. I know the graphic novel world and knew that this would be a terrific way to convey information in an engaging way.

Q: What was behind the decision to have a "narrator" character - the college professor and to have the book be interactive - ie., to have students asking the professor questions within the book?

A: The element of the Professor allowed us to heighten the level of dialogue in the work. The Professor addresses some of the toughest questions about Israel and essentially acts as our voice in the effort. Also, we needed someone to keep the objective narrative of the work flowing and she looks like none of the traditional archetypes of Judaic instructors that our students have ever seen. We sought to create a brilliant woman, most probably in her late 20's-early 30's, that students of all ages and genders could relate to and who would appeal to the general public. She is simply, "The Professor," and that is all one knows.

Q: Can you describe your own thoughts and feelings about Israel and the importance of this project to you?

A: Israel is the embodiment of the Jewish people. We of this generation are blessed to live in a time that Israel exists. Support of Israel is essential and our individual responsibility today. The work is a very serious attempt to tell Israel's story to both the Jewish people and the world. Those of us that worked on the project are honored to have made the smallest of contributions to help fortify and explain the Jewish State in a bold new way. We are confident that it will be successful.