



Monday the Rabbi Took Off

Harry Kemelman

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A bomb plot draws Rabbi Small into international intrigue while he's vacationing in the Holy Land in this *New York Times*–bestselling novel

David Small has spent 6 years as the rabbi of Barnard's Crossing, Massachusetts, and every year his job has been in crisis. In desperate need of time away, he embarks on a 3-month trip to Israel. He expects a relaxing, soul-nourishing stay, but wherever Rabbi Small goes, murder follows.

A bombing disrupts his vacation and the rabbi finds himself thrust into a world of terrorism and political discord in the divided city of Jerusalem. He teams up with an Orthodox Israeli cop to hunt down the terrorists before they can attack again. Dispensing Jewish wisdom as he employs his astute detective skills, Rabbi Small might be the only one who can crack this explosive case.

Monday the Rabbi Took Off Details

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Author : Harry Kemelman

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From Reader Review Monday the Rabbi Took Off for online ebook

Jane Cordingley says

I have enjoyed the "..the Rabbi..." books, started reading them about 2 years ago. Interesting mysteries, and also to see what everyday life was like in the 50-80's - some real throwbacks in time here. Some interesting views on attitudes towards race and religion of the time come up in the books, too.

In addition, each book has a little bit, just a couple pages, about Judaism - fit into the story (why the rabbi approached something this way, how the Jewish faith interprets something, etc). I find it interesting - back when I got married, I had to take religious training (my to be husband was Jewish, I am not), 3 hours a week for 12 weeks. In the books I have read, I doubt less than a hour of the reading total has been on Judaism, yet I have learned so much more about Judaism through these "..the Rabbi.." books than the classes ever taught!

Diane says

Rabbi David Small decides he needs a vacation - a **real** vacation - and goes on a 3-month trip to Israel with his wife and young son. (Note: It's called a "sabbatical" but I never heard of a whole family on sabbatical like this. It's really more like a family vacation.) David has been having issues with the congregation as usual and just wants to get away for a while. David and his family are welcomed by his wife Miriam's aunt, Gittel, a savvy, resourceful and very secular Jewish member of the government. The Smalls adjust to life in Israel quite well, and it is tempting to make the stay permanent. Meanwhile, some members of David's congregation plot to replace him with someone more to their tastes.

The tension between Jews and Muslims, religious Jews and non-religious Jews, and young and old is a running theme throughout the book. Roy Stedman rebels by associating with Muslims rather than other Jewish students at his college. Gittel has to deal with her son becoming religious to please the girl he loves. There are terrorists at work setting off bombs and killing people, though not on a grand scale. This is before the *Intifada*.

One of the problems with the book is that there is not much of a mystery. In fact, the murder can almost be overlooked and the face of the killer is anti-climactic. The whole subplot falls flat. It's like no one cares. Then there's Roy Stedman. Apparently, his little subplot is supposed to be full of suspense - but it's not. Part of this is because Roy is a singularly unappealing character - an extremely self-centered, spoiled, obnoxious brat who never thinks about anyone other than himself, and is nasty to almost everyone he meets. Frankly, I wouldn't have minded one bit if he had ended up dead. (view spoiler)

I learned all I never wanted to know about life in Israel in 1972. I really would have preferred a mystery.

I recommend Friday the Rabbi Slept Late, the first book in the series, or Wednesday the Rabbi Got Wet. They're much better books than this.

Misanagi says

This one was entertaining. I found a couple of plot holes and threads that were left hanging but I enjoyed the

book. It was fun to get a look at the vision of Israel in the early seventies and how many things remain the same. It was the little comments on Judaism and Israeli society that made this book interesting. Rabbi Small I like less and less the more I read. Too arrogant and stubborn for me though I really enjoy his arguments. Nice quick, fun read.

Karen GoatKeeper says

The Rabbi needs a holiday and decides to move to Israel for three months of reflection and relaxation. His Synagogue isn't really sorry to see him go and engages an older Rabbi everyone likes as a temporary replacement. A man goes to Israel to write a book on people's attitudes about things, but also to visit his son presently attending University in Jerusalem and unhappy. His friends are Arab students.

The three story lines meander along seemingly at random, taking their time to get somewhere. This is smokescreen as they are moving quickly. One bombing happens the night the Rabbi arrives. Then a second bombing happens killing a man. Or does it? Who is he? Why was the bomb not set for the government official's residence?

The solution by the Rabbi is so swift, it surprises.

This is an interesting book both for the mystery and for the descriptions of Jerusalem and some of the people calling the city home. It is an easy, relaxing book to read.

Melissa says

I really liked this mystery...probably my favorite one of the series. Rabbi, the rebbetzin (rabbi's wife,) and his son take a 3 month sabbatical to Israel necessitating the need for a temporary rabbi for his shul (synagogue.) Once again synagogue board politics come into play and some are trying to oust the rabbi. A bomb goes off in Israel near the apartment the Rabbi and his family are currently taking up residence in. Then a car trader the rabbi has visited turns up dead. Are they related? You'll have to read the book to find out! Interesting historically based background on the young Israel in this book. The author does have Israeli friends and relatives. Definitely recommend.

Geoffrey Gelb says

Rabbi Small goes to Jerusalem circa 1970. Nothing happens for the first 200 pages of this book. For a book of 315 pages that's pretty boring! It's only interesting as a dated travel guide. By the time someone dies you're almost upset that it wasn't more people dying and it finally dawns on the Rabbi as to who and why the fellow dies on page 300! I like the series but this one's a huge yawn. Pass up on Monday and see what happens Tuesday.

Jamie Collins says

Rabbi Small goes to Israel around 1971. There's not much to the murder mystery in this one, but the description of his visit is interesting.

I'm amused by the temple politics in this series. I remember being a little shocked the first time I realized that religious organizations have just as much squabbling and politicking among their leadership as any other human institution.

Susan says

Fast moving and enjoyable. It was interesting to see the rabbi in a new setting, to share his turmoil over whether to stay in Israel and whether even to stay a rabbi, and to find out how his replacement was making out. Of course, there is a mystery to be solved and, as always, it takes the rabbi's superior thought processes to figure it out.

Dawn says

This is a cute series, informative about some aspects of Judaism and very predictable.

I liked this one less because of the secret service element. It just seemed so far fetched for bookish Rabbi Small to end up in this situation.

Nancy says

This was not a typical mystery - the murder doesn't take place until about halfway through the book. I was at first impatient with this - but as I adjusted to the story being told, I found it quite interesting in terms of characters and inner workings of a synagogue and its politics. Then toward the end I couldn't put it down. Very enjoyable read.

Corinne says

Less a mystery than an easy-to-digest lesson on Judaism and Israel.

Hermien says

This time amateur sleuth Rabbi Small goes to Jerusalem. The setting made it all the more enjoyable and I also liked the look behind the scenes of a religious community.

Bob Newman says

a small visit to Israel

I liked Rabbi Small when he was figuring out mysteries and murders in Marblehead, otherwise known as "Barnard's Crossing", a small town in Massachusetts in the '60s and '70s. His congregation always contained believable local characters, he dealt with people whom I could recognize, and most of all, there was more suspense and dare I say---action ! This series has many of the same characters from book to book, so you might enjoy the twang of familiar strings. If you live around Marblehead, you will certainly enjoy the familiar. Back when the books came out, locals tried to guess who was whom in reality. In MONDAY, the rabbi seems burnt out, he needs a break, a short sabbatical. He and his wife head off to Israel without much word to the folks back home as to whether they'll actually return or not. The rabbi, as usual, is not a gung-ho parish leader. He's thoughtful, he's retiring, and he doesn't kowtow to anyone. Harry Kemelman liked to explain Jewish customs and religion to his readers. I think it was an admirable part of his books; it lifted them above the average detective novel the way Tony Hillerman's Navajo characters and background did his. But if we get too much into "presentation" and too far from suspense or mystery, then the thing is going to fall a little flat. I'm afraid this number of the series plopped into that category. Terrorist bombings in Jerusalem that turn out to be something more or less, far-fetched connections to the past, unlikely suspects, the Israeli police and security apparatus, the rabbi very tangentially involved, but using pilpul, or Talmudic reasoning to bring closure to the case (all in a few pages)---this didn't add up for me. Israeli attitudes and contradictions in the 1970s may not ring too many bells today. If you're a big Kemelman fan, of course you'll want to read this one too, but I think the ones written about a more familiar environment are better.

Laura says

I liked the "Rabbi" series of books a lot. The problem is, after "Wednesday" or so, the formula wore a bit thin: the rabbi has some argument or disagreement with someone in his congregation. Someone gets killed. The rabbi has a fight with the Board of Directors at the shul. He threatens to leave. He solves the murder mystery. He resolves the problem with the person in his congregation and his Board of Directors, and everything is fine. Until the next book, where we repeat.

Still, these are well-crafted, engaging little mysteries, and frankly, I learned a good amount about Judaism from them.

annapi says

After six years, Rabbi David Small is tired and wants a break. He decides to take his family to Israel for a three-month vacation. Shortly after he arrives in Jerusalem, a bomb goes off nearby, and of course he has an opportunity to assist in the investigation.

So far, this has been my least favorite of the series. I was a bit bored with all the Israeli politics, and the rabbi doesn't get involved till fairly late in the book, and as usual, he sees immediately what others have missed. Meanwhile back in Barnard's Crossing a couple of board members try to replace him before he returns, which I found rather mean-spirited although in keeping with the characters involved. I just had less fun with this than the previous books.
