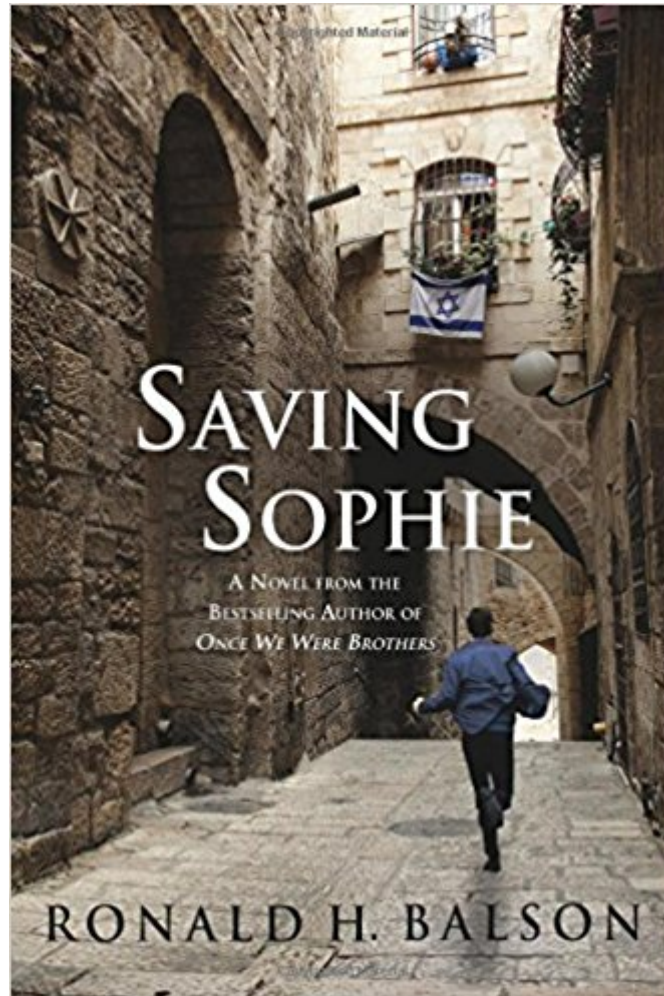




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Saving Sophie: A Novel



Synopsis

From Ronald H. Balson, author of *Once We Were Brothers*, *Saving Sophie* is the powerful story of the lengths a father will go through to protect his daughter and an action-packed thriller that will take you on an unforgettable journey of murder and deception, testing the bonds of family and love. Jack Sommers was just an ordinary accountant from Chicago—that is, until his wife passed away, his young daughter was kidnapped, and he became the main suspect in an \$88 million dollar embezzlement case. Now Jack is on the run, hoping to avoid the feds long enough to rescue his daughter, Sophie, from her maternal grandfather, a suspected terrorist in Palestine. With the help of investigative team Liam and Catherine, and a new CIA operative, a secret mission is launched to not only rescue Sophie but also to thwart a major terrorist attack in Hebron. But will being caught in the crossfires of the Palestine-Israeli conflict keep their team from accomplishing the task at hand, or can they overcome the odds and save countless lives, including their own?

Book Information

Paperback: 448 pages

Publisher: St. Martin's Griffin (September 15, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1250065852

ISBN-13: 978-1250065858

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1.2 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (545 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #12,345 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #52 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Religious & Inspirational > Jewish](#) #108 in [Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Thrillers & Suspense > Spies & Politics > Terrorism](#) #136 in [Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Thrillers & Suspense > Crime > Kidnapping](#)

Customer Reviews

SAVING SOPHIE REVIEW Long time attorney and author Ronald H. Balson follows up on his successful first novel, *Once We Were Brothers*, with another look at family ties and conflict in *Saving Sophie*. Here we have a troubled accountant, Jack Sommers, who has been given the task of putting together a business sale and gets involved with embezzling the proceeds. He intends the ill-gained money to be used to rescue his daughter, Sophie, who has been kidnapped by her maternal grandfather, a Palestinian terrorist. Others, including the grandfather, intend the money to

be used to finance a violent terrorist attack. Sommers tries to evade Federal officials as he attempts to regain Sophie but gets trapped in a secret plan to stop the terrorist attack with daughter becoming a secondary concern of the pursuers. Balson does many things right in this book. His research is extensive and highly accurate. He has extensive knowledge about the conflict of Jewish, Muslim, and Christian ideals that are the backbone of his story. He explains them in a secular manner that shines a comprehensible light on the conflict, something most difficult to accomplish. Centuries of discord have not resolved these differences, and Balson is not foolish enough to believe that he can settle them in his story. Instead he lets them speak for themselves and evolve into a plot that is believable and highly intriguing. Personalities are well defined and motives are clear. The reader is able to develop likes and dislikes for each character. The conflicts are realistically portrayed, even including a jealousy between two main characters over a comely Federal agent. A weak-willed Sommers is painstakingly developed into the foolhardy father who stops at nothing to get his daughter.

I have been reviewing books for several years now, both for and Independent Publishers (usually the authors themselves). Consequently I have run into some truly BAD books, some just mediocre bad, and some kind of good. It is only when I get to read a well respected author that I get to read the really good books. Thus I was so surprised in reading this book *Saving Sophie*, the author's second book, to find it was such a good book that I very much enjoyed reading. The book takes place in Chicago, Hawaii, and the Israel/Palestine area of the Mid-East. The Advanced Reading Copy had black and white maps in it, so I'm sure that the regular book will as well. I also pulled out my atlas to have an even clearer picture of what makes up today's Israel and the Palestinian settlements. One of the best things about this book other than an interesting story is the way the author set the book up in such a way that it was necessary to explain the history of the area to one of the book's characters. It was also a learning experience for me as well and I learned a lot from the book about the Israel and Palestine ongoing conflict and the people of the area. While it didn't take up the majority of the book it was an important part. The book starts out with a man giving away his first class airline ticket to Brazil to a man who was also going there only in coach. Quickly we learn that he was trying to get away without leaving a trail. The question becomes is he the good guy or the bad guy? The rest of the book takes off from there. We have a book that deals with kidnapping and ransom, embezzlement, murder, vicious virulent killer infections, friendship, love interests, the good guys and the bad guys, gambling, revenge and the list goes on.

If you enjoyed Joseph's Dream (<http://www..com/gp/product/1505823692>) you might also like Saving Sophie, another page-turner about the modern Middle East. Ronald H. Balson has a nice clean prose style, with occasional literary flourishes, such as "tens of thousands of white stone buildings on the Hebron hills, all boxlike, all with dark windows that looked like hollow eyes," or "a river of dawdlers in flipflops." By Chapter Six, somebody has stolen and laundered 88 million dollars. And our intrepid anti-hero has been on the run from the law for unspecified reasons from the very first paragraph. No backstory at first, no context, no obvious character motivations. It is the literary equivalent of those twenty-first century action movies that begin in the middle of a high-speed car chase and you don't find out who is chasing whom or why for a good fifteen minutes. Once we do get the backstory, there is a compelling motivation for the theft; Jack Sommers needs the money to ransom his daughter Sophie from an overseas kidnapper. He has already pursued Sophie through legitimate channels with no results. The kidnapper is Dr. al-Hazani, a PLO archterrorist and Sophie's maternal grandfather. The ransom money is being used to finance the biggest terrorist attack since September Eleventh. By the time Jack Sommers gets arrested for embezzlement, his arrest is the least of his problems. I won't give away any major plot twists, but Al-Hazani is an evil doctor, and the use of biological warfare culminates in a completely terrifying climax. There are scenes in which al-Hazani comes across as a one-dimensional cartoon villain "because real terrorist cheiftains actually are that caricaturish."

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