



Pangs of the Messiah: The Troubled Birth of the Jewish State

Martin Sicker

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Sicker provides a synthesis from a wide range of sources that have not previously been integrated to present an unromanticized recapitulation of the events and personalities that led to the troubled birth of modern Israel. Much historical writing on modern Israel, Sicker asserts, is apologetic and editorially filtered in conformity with a traditional Zionist historiography that tends to obscure as much as it reveals. As a result, the emergence of modern Israel is shrouded in a mythology that has little or no place for inconvenient facts or dissonant voices. Sicker examines the nature of the struggles within the Zionist community over the national idea and its implications, and the evolving interactions of that community with the external political environment. This leads him to assign a far more significant role to the so-called right-wing movements than is usually allotted to them in the traditional left-oriented historiography and a more critical assessment of the Zionist leadership.

He shows that virtually every major problem faced by contemporary Israel, a half-century after it came into existence, was foreshadowed by the events and circumstances that precipitated and conditioned its emergence. Sicker examines the seemingly irreconcilable differences between the left and right extremes of the political spectrum; between the religious community and the secular; and between the Zionists and the anti-Zionists. Today, a half-century later, these same issues are causing an increasing polarization of Israeli society, with uncertain ramifications for the future.

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