



The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities

Simha Flapan

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In this ground-breaking and controversial history of the founding of Israel, noted Israeli scholar and peace activist Simha Flapan gives us the first true account of one of the most momentous political events of the century. The official story is well known: the Zionists welcomed the partition of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state; the Arabs rejected partition and launched a war to drive the Jews into the sea; the Palestinians fled Israel despite the efforts of Jewish leaders to get them to stay; after Israel's miraculous victory in 1948, its hand was extended in peace, but not a single Arab leader responded. *The Birth of Israel* exposes these "historical truths" as propaganda myths that have misguided Israeli policy to this day. Drawing on recently declassified material - from David Ben Gurion's war diaries to the minutes of secret meetings - Flapan reconstructs the real events of that critical time. He demonstrates that the Zionist leadership accepted partition purely as a tactical strategy, that their intention was always to establish a homogeneous Jewish homeland in most, if not all, of Palestine. Flapan shows, furthermore, how these objectives shaped Israeli actions: their expulsion of the Palestinians, their exploitation of the 1948 war for territorial gain, and their refusal to make any concessions that might have brought about accommodation. Flapan's lucid analysis sheds light on the figures and events of that time: Ben-Gurion emerges as Begin's forerunner, the "just" war of 1948 as the precursor of the debacle in Lebanon. Eye-opening and bold, full of unsettling revelations, *The Birth of Israel* offers fresh hope for understanding the tragic Arab-Israeli stalemate, and for moving towards a solution.

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Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel, Myths and Realities* (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1987). Pp. 286. Don Peretz (a1). (a1). Department of Political Science State University of New York, Binghamton. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743800032724>. Published online by Cambridge University Press: 29 January 2009. *The Idea of Israel* traces how segments of Israeli society and academia eventually came to grips with their country's history. This is a process beginning with early anti-Zionists on the Marxist left, through the emergence of a new generation of demythologizing Israeli historians, to a period Pappe describes as post-Zionist, ending in what he says is the present-day neo-Zionist reality. Mood, not movement. Post-Zionism, which involved a widening critique of Zionism from many academic perspectives, including the disciplines of sociology, literary and art criticism, philosophy and political scienc