

The Divided Self - Israel and the Jewish Psyche Today
by David J. Goldberg. I.B.Tauris 2006.

The Divided Self is not a comfortable read, but its author did not intend it to be and he has successfully attained this goal. In many ways this is the book that friends and colleagues of Rabbi Goldberg - and I am one of them - always expected him to write; it was never a question of whether only of when.

The Divided Self is a journey in 22 short and highly readable chapters through Jewish history with regard to the longing for, and ultimate achievement of a return to Zion. Goldberg places the former securely within Jewish history, making it incontrovertibly clear that Zionism as an ideology, as opposed to a political movement, has very ancient roots.

But the Divided Self is not just another history of Zionism, (Goldberg has already written one of those), it is as much, if not more, about the enormous success that Jews have made of Diaspora living and the brilliance with which they have integrated themselves into those host societies willing and unwilling to grant them complete acceptance.

The modern Zionist dream was for every Jew throughout the world to make a home in the new State of Israel, and Goldberg discusses not just the how but the why of the lack of fulfilment of this goal, as well as suggesting that there is now little incentive for most modern Diaspora Jews to contemplate the narrowness - on many levels - of living in the Middle East.

David Goldberg has always been a most consistent and honest critic of the State of Israel, arguing that loving criticism where merited is much better than mindless acquiescence. At times his comments have earned him opprobrium, but the reading of this book against the background of unfolding events in Northern Israel and Lebanon only serve to show how right he has been.

Unreconstituted Israel right-or-wrongniks, of whom there remain a few, will not enjoy or appreciate The Divided Self, but everyone else should applaud David Goldberg for a book whose honesty, clarity and truth shines through its pages, and whose fundamental premises have been more than borne out by current events.

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