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From Brand: S.P.I. Books : With Friends Like These: The Jewish Critics of Israel before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised With Friends Like These: The Jewish Critics of Israel:

0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Mostly Useless By Omer Belsky Current discourse about the Israeli-Arab situation is rather strange. The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, a struggle for a tiny piece of real estate involving less than 10 million people, garners more publicity than conflicts with greater territories, populations, and casualties. If you need convincing, simply count google results for 'Chechnya', 'Darfur' and 'Israel'. Why is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict so much in the news? Why all the attention to an obscure situation in a far away land? There may be several reasons. First, Israel is a holy place for the three major monotheistic religions. When conflict erupts in Kabul (Afghanistan), the name sounds strange and foreign. But everyone has heard about Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Second, unlike most conflict infested lands, Israel is a rich, democratic country. Journalists find it easy to come and to report on the events. Foreign correspondents can easily travel to all the hot spots, report with relatively little interference, and go back to a comfortable hotel in Tel Aviv at night. Another reason may be Israel's close relations to the United States - if you want to take on the US but are afraid to do so, Israel presents an easier target: America writ small, if you like. Still, beyond these reasonable grounds, many feel that there is another reason for the focus on the Israeli-Arab conflict, an ugly, secret reason: Anti-Semitism. The "New" anti-Semitism, usually from the Left, normally denies that its proponents are Anti-Semitic. But regarding vociferous critiques of Israel, ones that fail to consider its

legitimate security needs and especially ones that single it out among other countries, like recent attempts by British academics to boycott their Israeli colleagues - actions seem to be speaking louder than words. And what about Jewish critics of Israel, especially left wing ones? On the one hand, for Jews, unlike for gentiles, the focus on the Israeli-Arab and Israeli-Palestinian conflict is natural. Israel is the Jewish state, and it invites attention and support from Jews; It can't and shouldn't expect Diaspora Jews to be unquestioning "my country right or wrong" supporters. The Diaspora Jews have aided Israel in donation, public backing, and in flexing their political muscles for it. As Israel's closest allies, they have a right to criticize and Israel has a duty to listen. But while the close relationship between Israel and the Diaspora Jews is one reason for criticism, is it the only one? Identity Politics makes Jews - or even better, Israelis and former Israelis - the best critics of Israel. Thus we should expect a market for Israeli and Jewish self criticism from anti Israeli groups which would like to use Israelis and Jews as cover. Also, the psychology of 'Self Hating Jews' should be taken into consideration. Some prominent Anti-Semites were of Jewish or partial Jewish origin. I hope I have convinced you that the issue of the Jewish critics of Israel deserves scrutiny. A variety of fields: sociology, institutional economics, psychology, political science - may all contribute fruitfully. Alas "With Friends Like These", a collection of articles about the critics offers hardly any insightful analysis. Rather, this is almost without exceptions a right wing diatribe against anyone - Jew or Gentile, American or Israeli - who strays from the conventional thinking of 1980s era Likud. Israel is always right; Critics are always wrong and usually malicious or anti-Semitic. At times, the pious defense of Israel descends into literal piety. Editor Edward Alexander explicitly ties the birth of Israel to the giving of the Torah and asks "Was not the birth of the state of Israel... a miracle?" (pp. 47-48). If you think that Israel is the Lord's own handicraft, no wonder you're upset when someone criticizes it. The only contribution I can recommend is Norman Podhoretz's 'Israel: Lamentation from the Future'. Podhoretz's tone is unappealing, and I disagree with some of his analysis, but he is the only author who actually tries to explain changes in Jewish responses to Israel based on Israeli, Arab and American actions. I agree with Podhoretz's main point - the Intifada made it difficult for Liberal Jews to support Israel because Israel was perceived as a highly militarized power fighting rock-throwing children and opposing Palestinian self determination. Also somewhat useful are hysterical but informative articles on two Jewish left wing organizations, New Jewish Agenda and the New Israel Fund. The rest is useless. From Cynthia Ozick we get a silly piece stating, in effect, that because the 1948 Israeli Arab War was not caused by the Palestinian refugee problem, no other Israeli-Arab conflict was. Edward Alexander bemoans that many Left wing Israelis and opponents of Israel compare Israel to Nazism (Orthodox Philosopher Isaiah Leibowitz famously described Israeli soldiers as Judo-Nazis, and Edward cites many other examples). Comparing Israel's actions to those of the third Reich and Jews to Nazis is tasteless and hyperbolic. But Nazism is the benchmark against which everything bad is compared in Western, and especially Jewish society. As "Godwin's Law" states: As an online discussion grows longer, the probability of a comparison involving Nazis or Hitler approaches one. I wish public discourse was subtler, but making a fetish out of Nazi references is unreasonable. As if to make my point for me, Alexander relates an anecdote of one his targets, Michael Lerner (if you're asking "who?", you're not along) being called "indistinguishable from fascis[s] and Nazi" (p.52). Alexander himself calls Yassir Arafat "Evil Incarnate" (p.13). People who live in glass houses, etc... Also featured are an article which tries to tie Noam Chomsky into Nazism (Chomsky's views are problematic enough. Why resort to guilt by association?), attacks on Milton Viorst (who?) and Thomas Friedman (where author acknowledges that Friedman raises all the Zionist points, but berates Friedman for also seeing other perspectives). A Review of a few long out of print and forgotten anti-Zionist books is only less useless than an attack on a New York Review of Books article. A long, hard look at Israel's Jewish critics is due, but this book does not offer it. 1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. "Your destroyers and those who lay you waste shall come forth from your midst." By Gary Selikow Last year during the Israel-Hezbollah War, after Hezbollah had attacked Israel from Lebanon, and while Jewish children were hiding terrified in bomb shelters, something was done in South Africa that really revolted me. A group of about 40 'South Africans of Jewish descent': mainly academics, media people and partisans of the ruling Marxist-Leninist ANC signed a petition in the country's major newspapers, viciously condemning Israel, accusing her of war crimes and genocide and muttering dark threats that support for Israel threatened the moral and physical survival of the Jewish people. The phenomenon of Jews who side with Israel's genocidal enemies has been with us for decades, but these characters have become particularly brazen and vicious since Arafat launched the simultaneous propaganda and terror war against Israel in September, 2000. This book was first published 7 years before the Rosh ha Shana War that I have mentioned, at a time when fewer Jews were willing to denounce Israel in the vicious and genocidal terms that we are observing today. Then it was the PLO that they expressed such overt sympathy and support for. Today it is Hamas, Hezbollah and the Ahmadinejad and Assad regimes in Iran and Syria. This book deals with both murderous Israel-haters like Noam Chomsky who make their desire for the destruction of Israel and their support for the PLO (now Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran and Syria) quite clear, and also with Jews like Thomas Friedman and Anthony Lewis who believe that they must be cruel to be kind to Israel, and that supporting pressure on Israel is a necessary prelude to peace or at least the "purification" of Israel's soul". As Alexander points out: ' Jews who sympathize with the aims of the PLO are few in number, but exercise a tyranny over the majority in the prominence they command in public discourse and in their influence on public

decisions. The ease with which such "display Jews" vault to international prominence is not hard to explain. They are like the proverbial dog dancing on hind legs. It is not done well, but people are surprised to find it done at all. Surprise guarantees attention. Observing that these so-called critics aim to play the role of Biblical prophets "it is the aim of this book to strip away these long robes and reveal the naked hatred and self-love they often feel". In the introduction the editor refers to the story by the Yiddish writer IL Peretz called "The Shabbos Goy". The story concerns a Chelm Rabbi adept at explaining away the brutality of a non-Jewish servant towards a Jew named Yankele. The Rabbi eventually concludes that Yankele's very existence and preference of living over dying is a provocation to murder. He banishes Yankele from the town and increases the pay and liquor rations of the gentile servant. Referring to diaspora Jews who say that Israel must disappear because it is an embarrassment to them in their circles (Tony Judt comes to mind) Alexander concludes with reference to "The Shabbos Goy": "We will not consent that Yankele should be asked to leave Zion just so that his co-religionists should be at ease in exile." In the chapter entitled "anti-Semitism Israeli-style" Edward Alexander refers to the repulsive and evil strategy of transforming, in the popular imagination, "Jews into Nazis and Arabs into Jews". He refers to the resentment by Palestinian Arabs that Jews should monopolize all that beautiful Holocaust suffering which they would very much like, ex post facto, to share. Freud spoke of a sickness he called "penis envy". Palestinian Arabs suffer from what might be called "Holocaust envy", a feeling so strong that it prevents them from seeing that their compulsive desire to appropriate a history that is not their own is itself powerful proof of just how contrived and artificial is the Palestinian sense of national identity. A movement that can conceive of itself only as a mirror of its Jewish enemy is an anti-nation that deserves its whole purpose and meaning from the desire to destroy a living nation. One of the contributors to this digest, David Bar-Illan, demolishes the myths by anti-Zionist American journalist and pro-Arab propagandist Milton Viorst., while Werner Cohn reveals in the "The Hidden Alliances of Noam Chomsky", Chomsky's close association with Neo-Nazis and Holocaust deniers, in his vicious jihad against Israel. Usually left-wingers are very sensitive about Neo-Nazis, but they will make an exception for their idol and ideological mentor Noam Chomsky. Cohn quotes Chomsky who wrote the following: "I see no anti-Semitic implications in denial of the gas chambers or even denial of the Holocaust. The editor even reveals how pro-Arab and anti-Israel Jewish propagandists like Israel Shahak and Michael Lerner have been praised by the USA's top Neo-Nazi and rightwing anti-Semite Pat Buchanan. The contributors to this book demolish the myths put forward by Jewish anti-Zionists, exposing them as the moral charlatans and hate-mongers that they are, and blow away the covers that they use to conceal their cowardice. The editor quotes Isaiah's warning that "Your destroyers and those who lay you waste shall come forth from your midst."

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