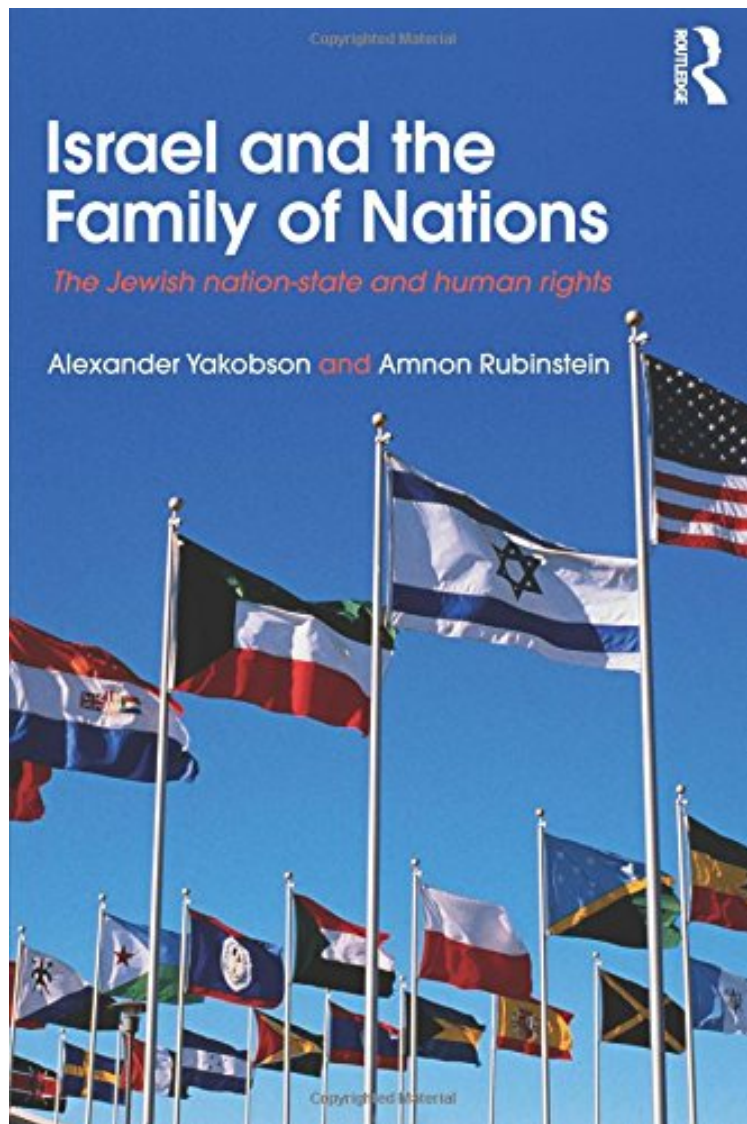


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Israel and the Family of Nations: The Jewish Nation-State and Human Rights (Israeli History, Politics and Society)

Alexander Yakobson, Amnon Rubinstein
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#2281914 in Books Alexander Yakobson 2008-09-10 2010-07-09 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.21 x .58 x 6.14l, .81 #File Name: 041578137X256 pages Israel and the Family of Nations The Jewish Nation state and Human Rights | File size: 21.Mb

Alexander Yakobson, Amnon Rubinstein : Israel and the Family of Nations: The Jewish Nation-State and Human Rights (Israeli History, Politics and Society) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Israel and the Family of Nations: The Jewish Nation-State and Human Rights (Israeli History, Politics and Society):

14 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Rebutting Intellectual Critics of Zionism By Rajesh S. Raghavan I ordered this book from after reading a timely review in the 23 Oct 2008 issue of "The Economist": "Jewish and Democratic - Two Israeli Academics offer a robust and timely defense of the Zionist Idea". I have not been disappointed. Ever since first learning about the Nazi Holocaust as a child in school, I have sympathized with the Jewish plight. However, for quite a long time--essentially from the 1980s onwards--I have also asked the question, "If it was Germans who murdered six million Jews, why should Arabs pay the penalty for the sins of European Christians?" Even after I have begun to read this book, this is still a difficult question to answer; however, it is no longer as difficult an answer for me to reach as it has been in the past. This is not a question which Jakobson and Rubinstein directly answer; but since their arguments help me to answer the question, this will be the context in which I review their work. To state that perhaps a Jewish state should have been established in a portion of Germany after World War Two, ignores several facts. First, as of 1947, the British Mandate of Palestine--distinct from Transjordan, a separate entity after the end of the First World War--was already one-third Jewish. Second, over 95% of the Jews who were still "Displaced Persons" in Europe--primarily in camps in Germany, did not want to remain in Germany or in Europe. They wanted to emigrate to Palestine. Finally, this argument seems to suggest that were it not for the Nazi Shoah, there would have been no need for the State of Israel. However, this denies the national aspirations of the Jewish people. Jakobson and Rubinstein squarely address the national aspirations of the Jewish people. They point out that the origins of this nationalism were very similar to those of other nationalist movements in the nineteenth century. The only difference from French, German, or Italian nationalism was that the Jews were not already resident in a state of their own. However, in this sense, their nationalism shared some similarities with Greek or Armenian nationalism, which also had worldwide diasporas. In the nineteenth century, Greece was ruled by the Turks, and the Armenians were ruled by the Turks and the Russians. As for territory, perhaps one could have suggested that Poland with nearly 3 million Jews was the logical choice for the Jewish nation-state. Yet that would have denied the aspirations of the Polish people whose territory had already been divided between Germany, Russia, and Austria. Furthermore, Jews around the world were not merely the followers of a religion. They maintained genuine literary, cultural, and other traditions beyond the worship of God which were all elements of a distinct national identity. And on top of all this, let us not forget that wherever they were, particularly in the Christian world, they were persecuted for their alleged crucifixion of Christ, even though Jesus died at the hands of Palestine's Roman rulers for the political threat he posed. In the same chapter where the authors address the question of a national identity, they also clearly refute the argument that Zionism was colonialism. Zionists were largely refugees, not colonizers. They settled in Palestine to escape persecution in their home countries. They were not sponsored by any particular imperial power; instead they came from a number of countries. And even after the establishment of the British Mandate in Palestine at the end of World War One, Britain's imperial interests often led the British to favor Palestine's Arab inhabitants. It is worth noting here that the opening chapter of the text deals with the debates in the United Nations leading up to the Partition Plan. The Arabs did not favor a binational state. They only wanted an Arab state in Palestine, with Jews as a protected minority. This would have deprived Jews of a state in which to realize their national identity. The Arabs rejected partition. But they also rejected a federal state comprised of Arab and Jewish sub-entities. This latter position probably resulted in the necessary votes in the UN General Assembly for a two-thirds majority to favor partition, since many nations that would otherwise have been queasy about partition saw no other choice, given Arab opposition both to partition or to a state with autonomous sub-regions. The second half of the book, which I admittedly have not yet read, deals with questions surrounding whether Israel can be both Jewish and democratic. The answer is, "Of course it can." Facts on the ground may fall short of this ideal, due to human nature; but there are numerous other democratic nations, particularly in Europe but also elsewhere in the world, where the dominant identity is that of one cultural group, yet where minorities also enjoy full equality under the law. Many of these nations also have specialized provisions for citizenship for immigrants of the dominant national group, much as Israel has a Law of Return for Jewish immigrants to Israel from anywhere in the world. "Israel and the Family of Nations" is a serious work authored by two pre-eminent Israeli scholars which provides powerful arguments for Israel's right to exist as a nation that is both Jewish and democratic. This text is must reading for those who criticize Israel on intellectual grounds, and for defenders of Israel who wish to be able to successfully rebut such criticisms.

2 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Book on Israel By R. Doherty I got this book for my daughter whose work is about the Middle East and Human Rights. She liked the book.

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. A brilliant and important analysis By Seth J. Frantzman It is one of the great shames of the modern world that there is still a question as to whether Israel has a right to exist in its present form or any form at all. The first twenty years of Israel's existence was, despite the relative insecurity of the country militarily, relatively free from this problem. Recent years have seen a rise in academic circles, student movements and a general cultural shift against the existence of Israel throughout the western world, particularly in Europe. But there has been a gap in the realm of an academic and more robust refutation of the accusations against Israel. Alexander Jakobson and Amnon Rubinstein's Israel and the Family of Nations is a brilliant attempt to fill that gap. The central idea behind Israel and the Family of Nations is not dramatically different than Dershowitz's attempt to defend Israel by providing a case by case examination of the accusations against her. Jakobson and Rubinstein provide

the readers with six chapters devoted methodologically to answering five questions or responding to five accusations: Can Israel be both Jewish and truly democratic? Is the Israeli Law of Return unique? Is the nexus between Israel and the Jewish diaspora an exceptional one? How can a nation-state be a state of all its citizens? There are interesting stories, for instance why India rejected the partition and why an Arab MK in Israel called Arab regimes racist for assaulting Jews. In terms of whether Zionism is colonialism the authors correctly note that the Zionist movement as a national movement was unique and that its relationship with the British government, rather than being an arm of that government, distinguishes it from other European colonial attempts. In the next discussion of the right of the Jews to Israel based on the historical bond of the people to the land the authors attempt to weave through a variety of texts that both provide the Jews with a right to the land due to history and those, such as Eric Hobsbawm and Nur Masalha, who argue that there is no right. The second theme of the book, and probably the most important and original section of it, deals with the question of whether Israel can be both Jewish and a democratic state. It also deals with the question of the rights of the Arab minority and whether the definition of the country as a Jewish nation-state with a flag with the Star of David and a national anthem that speaks of a "Jewish soul" can truly represent them. Here Yakobson and Rubinstein are at their finest, reaching a crescendo by providing nineteen pages of examples from constitutions throughout the world which not only speak of nation-states with a state religion and ethnicity but also speak of special rights for diasporas. A wonderful and important read for anyone interested in Israel and the Middle East. Seth J. Frantzman

Can Israel be both Jewish and truly democratic? How can a nationstate, which incorporates a large national minority with a distinct identity of its own be a state of all its citizens? Written by two eminent Israeli scholars, a professor of constitutional law and a historian, Alexander Yakobson and Amnon Rubinstein are the first to treat Zionism and Israeli experience in light of other states experiences and in particular of newly established states that have undergone constitutional changes and wrestled with issues of minorities. Citing various European, constitutions and laws, the authors explore concept of a Jewish State and its various meanings in the light of international law, and the current norms of Human Rights as applied to other democratic societies compatible with liberal democratic norms and conclude that international reality does not accord with the concept which regards a modern, liberal democracy as a culturally "neutral" and a nationally colourless entity. In light of the new political map in Israel and the prospect of future disengagement from the West Bank, Israel and the Family of Nations is essential reading for all those who wish to understand Israels future challenges.

"...Yakobson and Rubinstein have written a thoughtful and provocative study that sheds real light on Israel's approach to civic equality, in the context of the behavior of other democracies. The book will be a valuable addition to courses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Middle East politics, or liberal democratic theory and practice." -- H-Net s (2010), Michael Galchinsky, Georgia State University '...it is an important book, whose ideas deserve to be widely heard' - The Economist, 2008 'The book is not a traditional pro-Israel polemic in the sense that it does not extol Israeli behavior, but seeks to point out that, in its basic definition and goals, Israel is well within the norms of democratic practice. In Yakobson's words, while "every state is unique, Israel is not 'exceptional' in the negative sense. It is not an abnormal democracy." The book includes chapters on Israel's establishment and the UN debates on partition in 1947-9, when the international community voted for a "Jewish state"; the views of the Zionist movement on the character of the future Jewish state and the rights of the Arab minority; international law, human and minority rights and their application in different democratic countries; religion and state in Western democracies; the relationship between nation-states and their national minorities; along with other issues that come up in the intellectual debate over Israel's legitimacy. In dealing with the argument equating Zionism with colonialism - a favorite in both academia and Arab politics - the authors once again bring homegrown Israeli anti-Zionists into the ring.' - The Jerusalem Post, 2008 'In a sophisticated discussion of notions of citizenship, deeply informed by the new literature on multiculturalism, Yakobson and Rubinstein provide array of examples that belie Israel's exceptionalism' - SA Jewish Report, April 2009 'Israel and the Family of Nations is a timely and necessary book. It is scholarly but accessible and should provide a basis for intelligent debate about Israel and for defending its institutions and foundations' - Seth J. Frantzman, Middle East Quarterly, Fall 2009 About the Author Dr. Alexander Yacobson is a Senior lecturer in the history department of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel. Prof. Amnon Rubinstein, is currently Provost and Dean of the Radzyner School of Law at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) in Herzlia. He is a former Minister of Education and a regular contributor to Israeli Dailies.