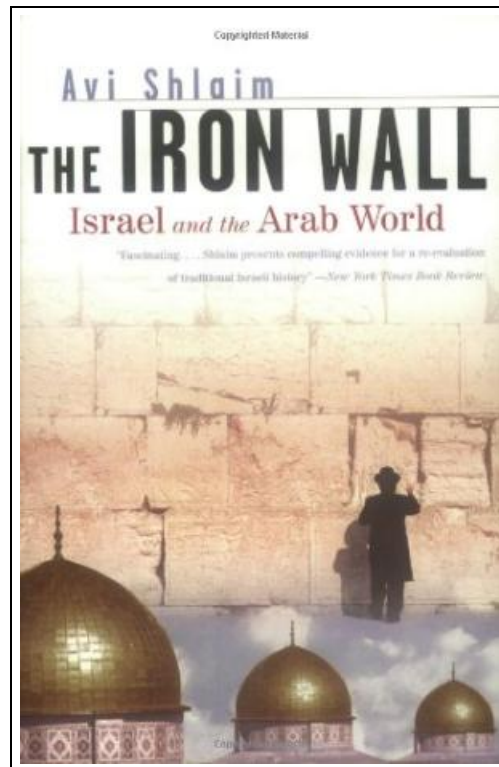


The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World



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THE IRON WALL: ISRAEL AND THE ARAB WORLD

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Scranton, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.: W W Norton & Co Inc, 2001. Soft cover. Condition: New. In 1897, under order of First Zionist Congress president Theodor Herzl, two Austrian rabbis traveled to Palestine to explore the possibility of locating a Jewish state there. "The bride is beautiful," the rabbis cabled Herzl, "but she is married to another man." That "other man" was the Palestinian Arab nation, long established in the region as a political entity. Undeterred, Herzl pressed on with his program of emigration, ignoring Palestine's existing occupants and creating in the process what came to be known as the "Arab question." In this far-ranging history, Avi Shlaim analyzes that question in remarkable detail, tracing the shifting policies of Israel toward the Palestinians and the Arab world at large. Herzl, he writes, followed a policy that consciously sought to enlist the great powers--principally Britain and later the United States--while dismissing indigenous claims to sovereignty; after all, Herzl argued, "the Arab problem paled in significance compared with the Jewish problem because the Arabs had vast spaces outside Palestine, whereas for the Jews, who were being persecuted in Europe, Palestine constituted the only possible haven." This policy later changed to a stance of confrontation against the admittedly hostile surrounding Arab powers, especially Syria, Jordan, and Egypt; this militant stance was a source of controversy in the international community, and it also divided Israelis into hawk and dove factions. The intransigence of those hawks, Shlaim shows, served to alienate Israel and made it possible for the Palestine Liberation Organization and other Arab nationalist groups to enlist the support of the great powers that Herzl had long before courted. Both sides, in turn, had eventually to face the "historic compromise" that led to the present peace in the Middle East--a peace that, the author suggests, may...

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