

Beyond Tribal Loyalties: Personal Stories of Jewish Peace Activists

Avigail Abarbanel



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There is an expectation in Jewish communities around the world that all Jews embrace Zionism and offer unquestioning support for Israel, right or wrong. Jewish identity and Zionism are commonly and deliberately blurred. Jews who criticise Israel or question Zionism are often excluded, vilified and threatened. If they express sympathy for the plight of the Palestinian people, they risk being branded as traitors and accused of supporting the enemies of Israel. Beyond Tribal Loyalties is a unique collection of twenty-five personal stories of Jewish peace activists from Australia, Canada, Israel, the United Kingdom and the United States. There is an age difference of more than fifty years between the oldest and the youngest contributor. The stories focus on the complex and intensely personal journey that Jewish activists go through to free themselves from the hold of Zionist ideology and its requirement to support all Israeli policies. Like many Jews, most of the contributors were once unquestioning supporters of Israel and Zionism. Something happened in the life of each of these extraordinary people that caused them to question and re-evaluate their understanding of the conflict and their relationship with Israel and the Palestinian people. In many cases this journey involved a reassessment of personal values, belief systems and identity. Beyond Tribal Loyalties seeks to discover what makes it possible for Jewish peace activists to follow through with this transformative journey and their activist work, despite fanatical and sometimes violent opposition. This is an inspiring book for anyone who is interested in the experience of being a peace activist. It offers a fresh and unusual angle on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and is a unique contribution in a field where political analysis is common, but where the personal angle is often lacking.



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