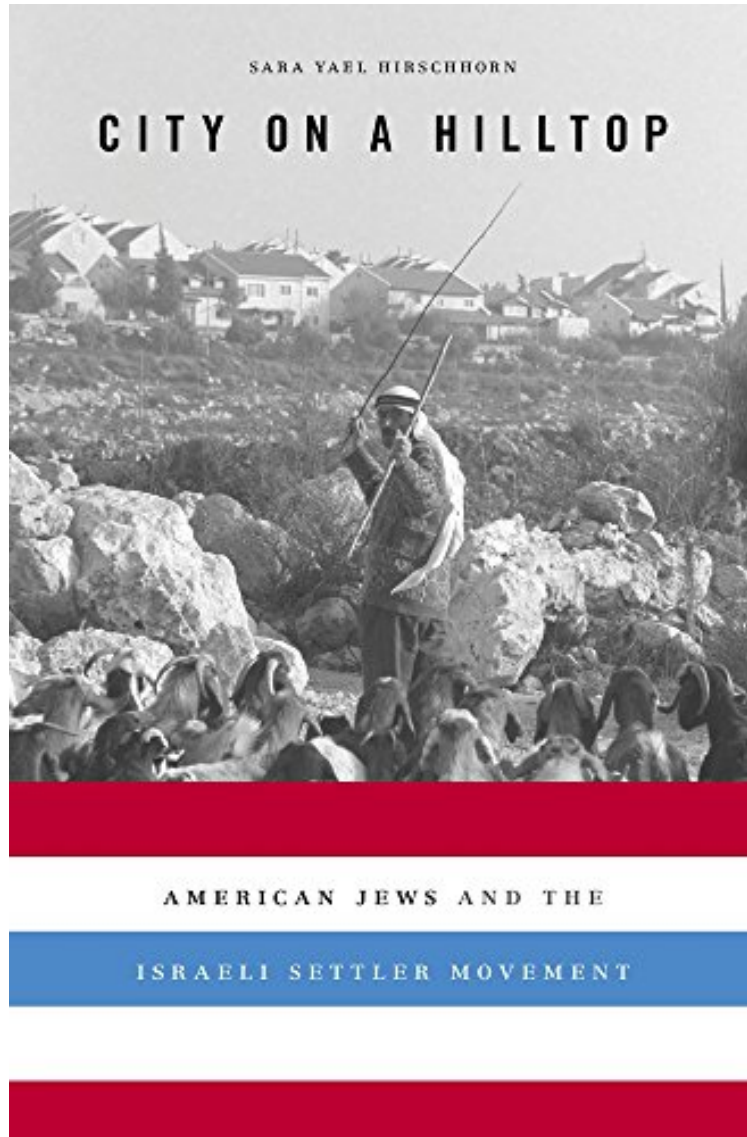


[Download] City on a Hilltop: American Jews and the Israeli Settler Movement

## City on a Hilltop: American Jews and the Israeli Settler Movement

*Sara Yael Hirschhorn*

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**Sara Yael Hirschhorn : City on a Hilltop: American Jews and the Israeli Settler Movement** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised City on a Hilltop: American Jews and the Israeli Settler Movement:

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zyxwInportant and errific book.READABLE and scholarly.Just 235 pages of text, More than 100 pages of endnotes and other appendices.A must read and ponder for anyone with USA mishpacha in Israelor planning to go on Aliya from here in USA.The book analyzes motives and actions of US born Israeliswho've lived in 3 varied areas, including penetrating views of EfratGradual shifts in views and deeds take place as times and frustrations and satisfactionsmanifest themselves.The author succeeds in letting people speak for themselves,After reading Hirschhorn's book, I bought two more copies,one for a leader of Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry,one for my grandkids moving to Israel.I urge reading this book carefully.7 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Worthwhile reading, but needs warning labelsBy Glenn RichterThumbs up and thumbs down for "City on a Hilltop". On the plus side, Sarah Yael Hirshhorn has invested an enormous amount of original research into detailing some aspects of American Jewish migration to the West Bank (historically Judaea and Samaria), and the Sinai's Yamit. They all became part of Israel after its stunning victory over Arab armies poised to destroy the Jewish state in 1967. Her narrative is readable and to me, as one who either personally knows or is acquainted with a good number of the personalities depicted, truly interesting. On the minus side, Hirschhorn's stated goal "to provide an objective, rigorous, scholarly account" (p. 11) is not met. It's can't be objective if she refers dozens of times to the West Bank as "Israel/Palestine", when there's no current Palestinian state. Any use of "Israel/Palestine" is a politically loaded and pre-judged conclusion. Just a handful of the author's negative characterizations -- She describes for 40 pages the efforts by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, the famed former leader of Manhattan's Lincoln Square Synagogue, to establish Efrat, a highly desirable community in the Etzion bloc south of Jerusalem. Rabbi Riskin's religious moderation and daring innovations are well-known, as are his efforts to reach out to local Palestinian mukhtars willing to dialogue with him. Certainly over the course of 35 years in Efrat some of his early political views have changed given the reality of many more terror attacks around or in Efrat than the author cares to disclose, such as the infamous February 2002 Efrat supermarket terror bombing. Yet in summing him up, Hirschhorn chooses leave the reader with a quote from a "progressive pundit": "Riskin could no longer masquerade as the liberal orthodox rabbi", but is really "a rightwing extremist in moderate's garb....through this life project, Riskin has caused more tragedy and pain to more Palestinians than any other rabbi of modern times, certainly more than Meir Kahane and his ilk" (p. 141). Seth and Sherri Mandell of Efrat established a foundation to assist victims of Palestinian terror or other traumatic events after their teenage son Kobi was brutally murdered by Palestinian terrorists. Yet Hirschhorn complains, apparently with a straight face, that "it does not offer its services to bereaved Palestinians" (p. 172). Hirschhorn begins her depiction of Tekoa, one of the three communities she describes in detail, as "deep the West Bank" (p. 143), and headlines the chapter, "Turn Left at the End of the World", subtle jabs. In reality, Tekoa is only seven miles east of Efrat. The author discusses several cases of anti-Arab mayhem perpetrated by American immigrants to Israel. While the number of attackers is miniscule compared to the 60,000 Americans she estimates live on the West Bank, it's a necessary part of the discussion. Yet Hirschhorn is largely silent in describing the daily cascade of inflammatory anti-Israeli, anti-semitic rhetoric pouring out of the Palestinian media, whether it be from the official peace partners of the Palestinian Authority or the Hamas terrorists who rule Gaza, evacuated of its 21 Jewish communities in 2005 in a failed Israeli bid to achieve peace. The author concludes that "American-Israeli immigrants within the settlement movement have contributed to making Israel less democratic while increasing conflict in the United States" (p. 228). I think that Hirschhorn's research -- as well as my own and my contemporaries' 50 years of interaction with these immigrants -- shows just the opposite. American olim largely do not accept stultifying Israeli bureaucracy or the commonly-heard phrase, "what can you do?" They act, they organize, they believe in a more democratic system, they always try to improve, they seek more communality with America. What's the bottom line? "City on a Hilltop" is worthwhile reading -- but only if leavened with a healthy dose of skepticism for some of the author's descriptions, omissions and conclusions. It ain't the gospel truth.

Since 1967, more than 60,000 Jewish-Americans have settled in the territories captured by the State of Israel during the Six Day War. Comprising 15 percent of the settler population today, these immigrants have established major communities, transformed domestic politics and international relations, and committed shocking acts of terrorism. They demand attention in both Israel and the United States, but little is known about who they are and why they chose to leave America to live at the center of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.In this deeply researched, engaging work, Sara Yael Hirschhorn unsettles stereotypes, showing that the 1960s generation who moved to the occupied territories were not messianic zealots or right-wing extremists but idealists engaged in liberal causes. They did not abandon their progressive heritage when they crossed the Green Line. Rather, they saw a historic opportunity to create new communities to serve as a beacons city on a hilltopt Jews across the globe. This pioneering vision was realized in their ventures at Yamit in the Sinai and Efrat and Tekoa in the West Bank. Later, the movement mobilized the rhetoric of civil rights to rebrand itself, especially in the wake of the 1994 Hebron massacre perpetrated by Baruch Goldstein, one of their own.On the fiftieth anniversary of the 1967 war, Hirschhorn illuminates the changing face of the settlements and the clash between liberal values and political realities at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Fifty years after the first American Jew crossed over the Green Line, Sara Yael Hirschhorn provides a fascinating and

well-written history of American Jews and the Israeli settler movement. Hundreds of thousands of American Jews have close family and friendship ties with Jews who live in West Bank cities and settlements. Hirschhorn's illuminating and timely study punctures many myths concerning these settlers, and places them not only within an Israeli context, but within an American one as well. (Jonathan D. Sarna, author of *American Judaism: A History*) Provocative, challenging, and revealing, *City on a Hilltop* takes us into the lives of American-Israeli settlers fighting for the most hotly disputed real estate on Earth. Hirschhorn chisels away at stereotypes and monoliths with a disciplined, scholarly touch, graced with humanity, revealing nuanced perspectives of a community that ultimately reveals the deeply fractured soul of a contested land. (Wajahat Ali, author of *The Domestic Crusaders*) For anyone interested in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is worth listening to these people to not least because they will be a key consideration if a peace deal is indeed reached. (John Reed *Financial Times* 2017-06-01) In vivid, approachable, yet deeply informative prose, *City on a Hilltop* zeroes in on the diverse personalities behind the phenomenon of the American settler. But what is perhaps most fascinating in the work is Hirschhorn's examination of the settlers' motivations in leaving the comforts of the United States for the undeveloped and often hostile territory of post-1967 Greater Israel. (Amanda Borschel-Dan *Times of Israel* 2017-05-24) Each year, thousands of North American Jews make aliya and relocate to Israel, casting their lot with the state. Hirschhorn tackles the topic in a comprehensive, sophisticated and nuanced manner. This excellent book offers a fascinating though troubling look at American Jewish settlers who have come to live across the Green Line since 1967. It raises serious questions about how people with liberal values could engage in such an illiberal project and analyzes the complexities of the movement. (Ron Kronish *Jerusalem Post Magazine* 2017-06-15) *City on a Hilltop* is a welcome addition to the body of literature on Zionism, the American Jewish and American-Israeli Jewish experience, the future of the State of Israel, and more. Hirschhorn's work unpacks settlement and settler stereotypes, personalizing the realities of these communities and their inhabitants in critical ways. Hirschhorn provides a highly nuanced understanding of how settlers view themselves and their life work as contributors to the greater Zionist dream, helping her readers to become better prepared to respond to conflicting ideas about them with grace and dignity. (Joy Getnick *Jewish Book Council* 2017-07-11) Hirschhorn has written an important book on Jewish American settlers in Israel. (J. Fischel *Choice* 2017-10-01) About the Author Sara Yael Hirschhorn is University Research Lecturer and Sidney Brichto Fellow in Israel Studies, Faculty of Oriental Studies and Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies at the University of Oxford.