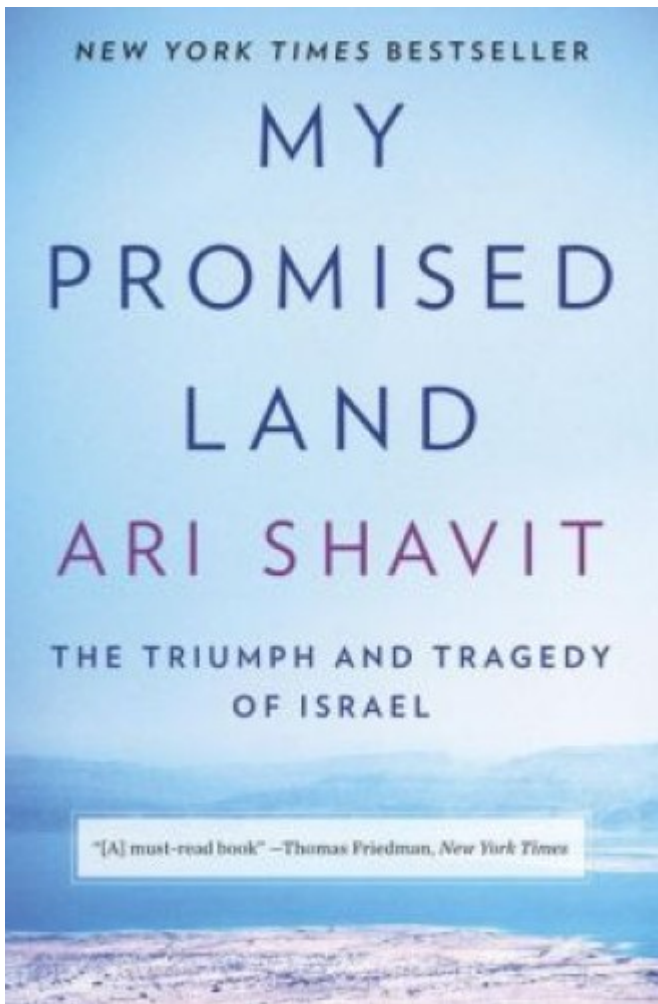


My Promised Land, by Ari Shavit

Books in the [May 28, 2014](#) issue

In Review



My Promised Land

By Ari Shavit
Spiegel and Grau

In this personal, impressionistic history, journalist Shavit lays out the variety of Zionisms—secular and religious, socialist and capitalist, ascetic and hedonistic, utopian and pragmatic—that constructed the modern state of Israel. Shavit captures

the sense of desperation behind many of these efforts: the Jews of Christian Europe had “discovered that they were alone in the world. . . . That is why they came to Palestine and why they now cling to the land with such desperate determination.” He is by no means blind to the dark side of this history—the forced and often violent removal of native Palestinians from the land. Indeed, he is haunted throughout the book by this history and devotes a chapter to the expulsion of Palestinians from the town of Lydda during the 1948 war. Shavit wishes that Zionism could have succeeded in another way but doesn’t pretend to know how, under the circumstances, that could have happened. He deeply admires the heroic efforts but sees few untainted heroes.