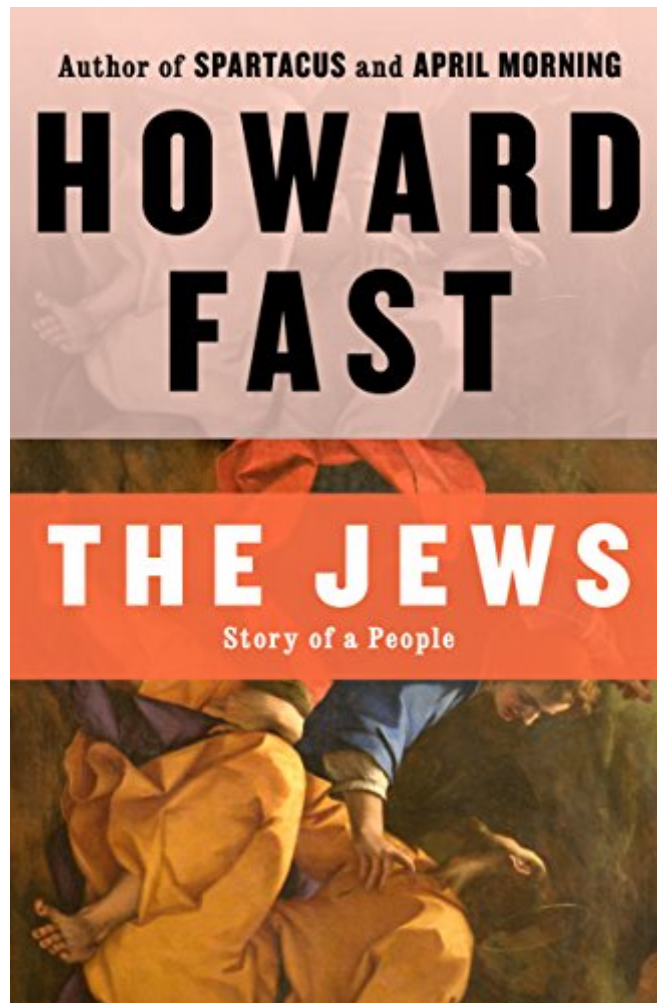




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The Jews: Story Of A People



Synopsis

The epic and stirring story of 4,000 years of Judaism told by a #1 New York Times bestselling author (Jewish Quarterly). From their nomadic beginnings and the rise of Moses to the kings David and Solomon through the Diaspora and the unthinkable horror of the Holocaust and culminating in the founding of the state of Israel this is the sweeping tale of the Jews. Howard Fast, author of the classic Spartacus, displays his gift for compelling narrative throughout this eminently readable and well-researched saga. In Fast's telling, truth is stranger, and more inspiring, than fiction. Here, I decided, was one of the most exciting and romantic adventures in all the history of mankind, he explains in his introduction. It had a continuity that spanned most of recorded history. It was filled with drama, passion, tragedy, and faith; and with all due reverence for the scholars, it pleaded for a storyteller to tell it as a story, indeed as the story of all stories. Fast's accomplishment is required reading not only for lovers of great literature but also for anyone interested in the march of civilization. Barry Holtz, the editor of The Schocken Guide to Jewish Books hails The Jews as an exciting and pleasurable [introduction] to a four-thousand-year epic. This ebook features an illustrated biography of Howard Fast including rare photos from the author's estate.

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Customer Reviews

A must read that fills in much that is not mentioned in conventional histories. Scholarly but reads like a novel.

An interesting history but definitely biased. amazing people but I wonder what so many lean left and embrace atheism?Y

This book is a pleasant surprise. Not knowing what to expect given the wide breadth of the subject and the constant change of world events, I expected a superficial and dated treatment of this topic, instead finding a thoughtful balanced treatment of this subject in a n easily readable format. I believe any reader will find pearls justifying the effort spent reading this book.

i am a voracious reader, especially non-fiction. This book was one of the best I have read. It mixes a more personal approach to the history of the Jewish people. I put it on my list of all time favorites.

An incredible look at the history not only of the Jewish people, but of monotheism as whole. Amazing insights and historical research by a master story teller.

A very detailed story of the Jewish people since beginning of time. Sometimes repetitive and confusing. For me the early centuries most interesting

`The Jews, Story of a People' by the very well known novelist and screenplay author, Howard Fast, is not a straightforward history covering every dot and whittle of Jewish religious and political history. That task would require a far larger volume, and I suspect many such books have been written to cover just such an account. The narrative in this book, however, is strictly based on historical and archeological findings. It's story of the Jews from the dawn of history to the beginning of true history writing, from about 1200 BCE to the time of the historian, Josephus, in 60 CE is NOT based on retelling the stories of the Jewish Testament, the `Law, the Prophets, and the Wisdom writings'. It is also not a fictionalized history, as one sees from the pen of Gore Vidal on parts of American history. With some trepidation, I might liken it to Truman Capote's `non-fiction novel' approach of `In Cold Blood'. That is, it recounts history with the novelist's skill in narrative. The book

covers all major events in Jewish history from the age when it was a collection of nomadic tribes traveling back and forth from one pasture to another to the Holocaust, but it concentrates on the highpoints. Whole centuries such as the time between the end of Solomon's reign in 931 BCE and the start of the Babylonian captivity of Judea in 586 BCE are glossed over. And, major figures such as Isaiah seem to get practically no treatment at all. That does not mean this is a 'bad' book. It only means that it is good for some purposes and not good for other. Fortunately, it fit my purposes perfectly, as I wanted a good general summary of Old Testament Judaism in order to present a historical introduction to a class of people studying parts of the New Testament. Most revealing for my purposes is the explanation given of the role of the Jerusalem temple in Judaism before the Babylonian captivity, and how the first destruction of the temple leads to the kind of full-fledged Jewish monotheism we see today. While a careful reading of the Torah hints at the fact that the Hebrew tribes lead by Moses really treated Yahweh as simply 'their' god, in a world filled with gods, from the Canaanite Baal to the Egyptian pantheon, the Chaldean pantheon, the Greek pantheon, and the Persian pantheon. The early civilizations of the Middle East were simply awash in deities, and everyone lived with that fact. The small difference which grew into a major 'paradigm shift' to true monotheism is that the early Hebrews had just one god for themselves, instead the large families of deities found in Thebes, Ur, and Olympus. And, the single venue where a Hebrew could truly commune with their God was in the temple of Jerusalem. So what happens when that temple is literally swept from the face of the earth (the first time) by the Babylonians? One thing that happens in Babylon is the writing down of the Torah and the rest of the Jewish scriptures after 586 BCE. Another thing is the invention of the synagogue and the origins of the rabbinical movement, leading to the Pharisees known so well by their appearance in the Gospels of the New Testament. What makes Fast's book so useful is that he gives first place to cultural and theological matters, and deals little with lots of names and dates. What frustrates me about the book is that although I have great faith in Fast's accuracy, at least his being true to his scholarly sources; I miss all those annoying scholarly paraphernalia such as footnotes. I'm annoyed to no end when Fast refers to the 'Unknown Prophet', but gives us no references to the scriptures where the Unknown Prophet is quoted or mentioned. This is especially noisome, as when I look up the 'Unknown Prophet' in the 6 volume Anchor Dictionary of the Bible, there is no reference to such a person. Even worse is the fact that this label is missing from the 'Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion'. I also miss good maps of Palestine at the time of the very early Hebrew tribes. I have a library full of such maps, but none of them refer to the early players in exactly the same terms as Fast uses from his archeological sources. Note that since I wrote this review, I've read more about pre-Christian Hebrew history in

other sources, and I am just a bit less sure of Fast's total accuracy. I still think it's a good place to start, as long as you immediately move on to other sources, once you've gotten your feet wet with Fast. In the end, I'm still delighted to have found this book and I get much from it for my study of Babylonian, Greek, and Roman influences on Judaism at the time of Christ.

Fast's vision is a true story of a people. In fact, exact History does not matter, as the author let it transpire in the pages of the book. There is no scientific certification to any of the things in the tale that might have happened over three thousand years back, but the book is so effective in making the story sound true that one just goes along, enjoying more and more. Being reading witness to the legend of a people that permanently fought for its survival and ethnic preservation - often ferociously too -- feels my eyes with tears when I think how easy was for the Hitler doormats to take advantage of a people seemingly without any resistance. This same people that were so tough and frightful in their glorious past. Of course, there was resistance, but regrettably not enough of the Mordechai Anilevitzes around. Read the book to understand the Old Testament!

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