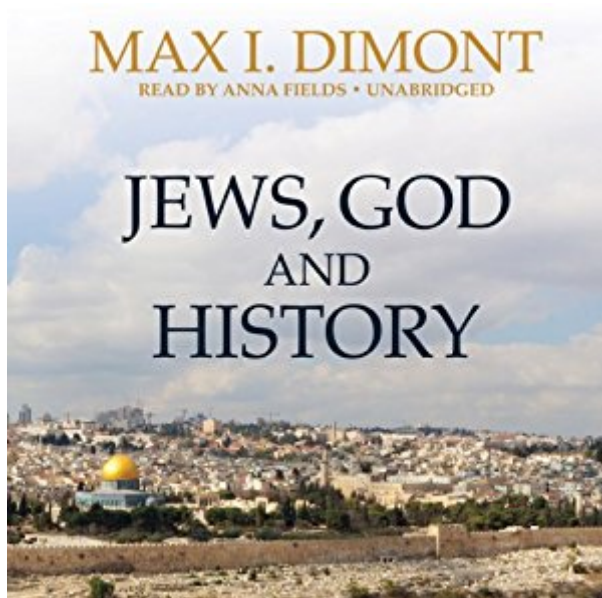


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Jews, God, And History



Synopsis

Vitality floods its pages. Philosophers and kings, warriors and merchants, poets and financiers come alive as the story ranges across time and the globe. From ancient Palestine through Europe and the Orient, to America and modern Israel, Max Dimont shows how the saga of the Jews is interwoven with the history of virtually every nation on earth. Brilliantly narrated in a thousand and one episodes, this newly revised and updated edition tells the story of a people escaping annihilation and cultural death, fighting, falling back, advancing. Infused with an almost miraculous life force, they have survived the death of civilizations and have triumphantly contributed to man's spiritual and intellectual heritage for some four thousand years. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

Dimont is at the top of what is a very small group of scholars, those being men who've taken on comprehensive treatments of the 400 "silent" years of the intertestamental period. I rank this aside ONLY "Between The Testaments" by Chas. Pfeiffer and "From Bondage To Freedom" by Daniel Fuchs. With these 3 volumes, you needn't look further for proof that the Jews are THE most resilient people group in all of history!!

I have an original hardcopy of this book published in 1962, with my mother's name neatly penned on the inside cover. She gave it to me when I was a very young adult, and has remained a timeless

treasure on my bookshelf. Re-discovering it as a Kindle 50th anniversary edition -- with its ability to highlight passages without defacing the book AND to search the entire book for a specific reference -- was truly wonderful. I love this book for the author's ability to put Western culture in its proper and historically accurate perspective. The 4,000 year-old history of Judaism is the story of ideas and the intellect as the foundation for human culture. This is in sharp contrast to culture as attributed to geography, nobility or the exploits of war, in which 'might made right'. Judaism is the origin of religion in its original Latin meaning, re-ligio -- to tie [ligate or ligature] back [re] together. The word is meant to describe the 'tie that binds us together as a human species' as differentiated from animals. The core of this ethical sentiment replaced both cannibalism and human sacrifice with an elevated consciousness that promoted social justice, individual acts of mercy and civil societies. True "re-ligio" has nothing to do with individual sectarian groups, or the propensity of misguided people in the name of 're-ligio' to generate dogmas that splits people apart into insiders and outsiders and then declares war on the 'others'. Personally, I am taking the word "religion" back from those who have historically abused it by using the word to camouflage or sanctify discrimination, brutality and murder, and from those in modern societies who currently abuse the term linguistically by making the idea of religion into something demeaning or offensive. For all Western cultures, our system of ethics, jurisprudence and democratic governance came directly out of Judaism. Not to know this most fundamental history is like not knowing anything about American history before 1950 -- one would find such a debilitating state of ignorance to be intellectually crippling. In addition to the wealth of information about our cultural origins, "Jews, GOD and History" is also a beautifully written book. It provides a balanced view of the Jewish experience that praises when praiseworthy, and finds fault on those occasions when bad decisions resulted in harmful actions or bad outcomes. Its author Max I. Dimont was himself Jewish, born in Lithuania in 1912, which was part of the Russian Empire at the time. He was raised in Finland but immigrated with his family to the US at the age of 17. He taught himself English by reading the King James version of the Old and New Testaments. This no doubt contributed to his deep understanding of Christianity, and ability to write about both religions in a non-judgmental and affectionate tone. The author's information about Jesus and early Christianity is particularly helpful, as this new world religion was originally a sect of Judaism. At the inception of Christianity, there were three dominant Jewish sects -- the Sadduces, the Pharisees, and the Essenes. As Christians, our heritage can be traced back to the Pharisees and the Essenes. The Sadduces were the wealthier members of Jewish society and aristocratic leaders who were religiously 'conservative' or 'literalists'. They were (no surprise!) the politically most powerful sect, responsible for running the Temple and invested in maintaining the status quo. Sadduce priests

interpreted the Pentateuch (five books of the Law) and the Prophets (i.e. "Old Testament") as a fixed document that was not to be seen as metaphoric or to be individually re-interpreted. As literalists, Sadduces did NOT believe in an afterlife. Politically, they generally 'cooperated' with the officials of the Roman occupation and were often resented by the general population. The Pharisees represented what historians refer to as 'commoners' -- the ordinary, non-wealthy, not-politically influential population. Pharisees related to the Law and the Prophets as metaphor, so its meaning could change with changing times. This allowed Pharisees to form their own opinions and one of those creative inferences was a belief in an afterlife. Some individual Pharisees mentioned in the New Testament were jerks. For example, tax-collecting was a low-class occupation that paid itself out of tax monies extorted from the population. It was something that elite members of the Sadduces would never do, so all tax-collectors came from the Pharisee sect. However historically their bad reputation was not because they were Pharisees, but was based on reprehensible behavior. In its time, the sect and category of "Pharisee" was not derogatory slur, but an ethical part of mainstream culture. Pharisees in general were the good guys -- liberal democrats as seen from today's perspective. Based on the teachings of Jesus as presented in the New Testament, Jesus's family would have been members of the sect of Pharisees. Raised as a good Jew of the Pharisee sect, Jesus would have been literate, had a metaphoric (i.e., not literalist) relationship with the Bible of his day and believed in an after-life. The Essenes were by far the smallest and as separatists, the least politically influential of the three Jewish sects. They were the most liberal in interpretation of religious texts and most politically radical in putting these new ideas into action. This included a belief in an after-life as introduced by the Pharisees, but one they took a step farther by introducing a belief in hell and eternal damnation for the unrepentant. At this time, the "Bible" (the Pentateuch and the Prophets) did NOT contain any reference to either Heaven or Hell as a destination for the soul after death. The Essenes also believed in a divinely-sent 'messiah' that they called the "Teacher of Righteousness", who was destined to die a violent death at the hands of the "Sons of Darkness" (another non-biblical belief). Followers of the Essenes called themselves the "Elect of G*D" and believed their religious community represented a "New Covenant" (Moses having given the first covenant when he received the Ten Commandments). Those who wanted to join the Essenes were initiated through the new Jewish ritual of 'baptism' -- a symbolic washing away of the old life and beliefs, and being born anew into the New Covenant. John the Baptist was an Essene and likely associated with an ancient Essene monastery later found in that area of Galilee. In addition, the Dead Sea Scrolls, which since 1947 have provided us with almost everything known about Essene Judaism, places the life of John the Baptist and Jesus in a new frame of reference.

From these manuscripts, it is clear that Christianity as we know it today is functionally a mirror image of the Jewish sect of the Essenes. Anyone who identifies him or herself as a Christian (which include me) belongs to a sect of Judaism, and thus is factually a Judeo-Christian. This is a very good reason to root out any lingering anti-Semitism that might besmirch the Christian branch of our shared faith. Reading "Jews, G*D, and History" is like finding out for the first time that the US was originally an English colony and realizing that the reason we all speak English is because we are, culturally-speaking, English. In this case, Christianity is not "other" but woven out of the fabric of Judaism. Just as a child is forever the product and reflection of its parentage, Christianity will continue to be far more alike than different from its parent-religion. As a Judeo-Christian society that wisely keeps its religion and government separate, it behooves us to be aware of our mutual beginnings and honor the many blessings that Judaism has bestowed on the Western world via its intellectual contribution of ethics, jurisprudence and democratic governance. So don't waste any more time reading this boring book review --> just download "Jews, GOD, and History". It's what "inquiring minds" want to know!

I finally found time to read this book which I bought more than a year ago. Now I also read some of the reviews. I think many of the people who reviewed it poorly are historical perfectionists. History, especially about the earliest time periods, can be interpreted in many ways. Many events and "facts" are missing or not clear. This book provides a broad and unique perspective on 5000 years of history in a very readable and understandable and interesting manner. It's like looking at a large beautifully painted mural. Some details may be imperfect but the entire view is extraordinary. I am not a frequent reader of books. But I could not wait to continue reading this book when I put it down to rest. The author's views provide a new understanding of the difficult history of the Jewish experience. Many of the critics "do not see the forest for the trees".

The author cites much of the critical scholarship on ancient history but does not always make it clear when he switches contexts between scholarly research and a less critical reading of history. In addition, there are a number of spurious and unsubstantiated claims. For example, he states "[the Jews] established the first democracy in the world, four hundred years before the Greeks." There is no support given, and it is difficult to imagine the stretch of the biblical record that could be construed as democracy in the 8th or 9th century BCE. The biggest problem, though, is the basic premise that there is something about Jewish people that is different from other people. He seems to have a positive opinion, but nevertheless seems to think of them as fundamentally "other." It

would be an interesting study to look into the sociological causes that have allowed Jews to maintain a cultural identity in so many different places around the world for so many centuries, but this is not it.

.com delivered efficient service as promised. Hurrah! Read 1962 version in the late 1960s at the suggestion of my grandfather, a man ahead of his times. Dimont is informative, irreverent and very witty. He provides a number of perspectives to explain events and beliefs. For example, maybe Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed et al actually experienced messages from a Supreme Being; on the other hand maybe they projected their own beliefs, aspirations... onto an imagined deity. Then again, maybe they all were delusional and required psychiatric treatment. Whatever the case, their long-lasting influence on history is undeniable. Example of Dimont's wit: The Babylonians, after destroying Jerusalem, carried all inhabitants except the poor, the crippled, and the young into captivity. ... Three years later, the poor, the crippled, and the young assassinated the Babylonian governor and slew the garrison. [a paraphrase] Gets the reader's attention, doesn't it? I had to buy the later edition because I've lent my original to another eager reader.

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