



Statement of Solidarity

The Association of Jewish Libraries stands in solidarity with Israel and its people. We are profoundly shocked and horrified by the terrorist attacks that began on October 7. Our grief and sense of loss are deeply personal as so many of our colleagues have been directly affected by these heinous crimes. We mourn the loss

of lives, wish healing for the injured, pray for the return of hostages, and hope for a swift end to this war. We are grateful to the international leaders who have voiced their unwavering support for the victims of Hamas's brutality.

—Association of Jewish Libraries Board and Council, October 10, 2023

From the President

Dear Colleagues, We're still reeling from the horrific events in Israel on October 7, Simhat Torah, in Israel, and the weeks that have followed. Many of our members have been directly impacted, and we are doing our best to support them.

As an association and as Judaic Librarians, we can lean in to doing the work that we always do, especially around the sharing of accurate information. Disinformation began appearing almost immediately after the original attacks, and is continuing to be spread all over social media channels. We can teach about critical thinking, identifying vetted and accurate sources, and provide lists of books that are appropriate for teaching on the topic. As I'm writing this, our Love Your Neighbor list on Israel is already available, a list of works advising how to discuss the issues with children was shared to Hasafran, and a bibliography of sources has been shared with members. On the collecting side, we know that the National Library of Israel and the Berman Archive at Stanford are both collecting physical and digital materials relating to this time.

Here is a summary of information recently shared with members

Israel Updates for AJL Members

Membership Gala. We have decided to postpone our annual membership gala, originally scheduled for the fall. We had planned to partner with the National Library of Israel for a behind-the-scenes look at the new NLI building. The opening ceremony for the New NLI has been understandably postponed; we hope to reschedule the event with NLI when circumstances allow.

Town Halls. Two Member Only Town Halls were held the week of October 18. At the time of this writing, there are additional member-only town halls scheduled for October/November. Please check the AJL website for details.

Supporting Our Israeli Colleagues. After a request by an Israeli librarian for access to e-books for displaced Israelis, we reached out to Emily Drabinski at the American Library Association, who connected us to the staff at Overdrive. Overdrive has been providing free e-books to displaced Israelis, and we were happy to make some connections to colleagues there. Please be in touch if you would like more information about this, or if there are additional initiatives that we as librarians can support.

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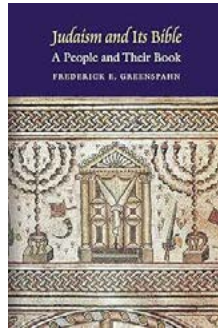


REVIEWS OF TITLES FOR ADULTS

been understood.” Greenspahn adopts a “behavioralist approach” and focuses on the connection between the Jewish people and the Bible, and how more often than not, despite the Bible’s centrality, it is not the Bible itself that dictates Jewish law, custom and behavior.

Greenspahn discusses different ways in which Jews have related to the physical Bible and the Bible’s role in the synagogue and liturgy and even within a magical context in the form of amulets and protective scrolls. He also centers around the writing of the books that comprise the Bible and the biblical canon and sets forth different approaches to how the Bible has been viewed theologically. The concept of the Oral Law is introduced and how that concept historically has been connected to the Bible/Written Law and how the academic study of the Bible and Zionism have impacted the Bible. The text describes the historically and conceptually broad and diverse interpretive landscape involved in studying the Bible and how the Bible has been made accessible throughout history by listing important translations and their impact on the reader.

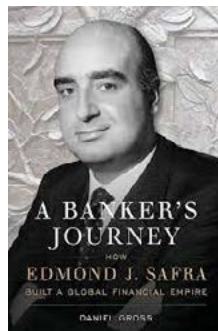
Judaism and Its Bible is a well written introductory work about the Bible and its relationship to the Jewish people and Judaism. This title is recommended for all libraries.



David Tesler,
Efrat, Israel

Gross, Daniel. *A Banker’s Journey: How Edmond J. Safra Built a Global Financial Empire*. New York: Radius Book Group, 2022. 339 pp. \$34.99 (9781635767858) HC.

One might wonder why a book about a banker would be relevant to Jewish Studies (other than for stereotypical reasons). However, Daniel Gross’s sweeping study of the life of Edmond J. Safra is a wonderful description of a man who lived, worked, and breathed as a Jew. The uniqueness of Safra’s banking style and success came from a very specific Lebanese Jewish experience, which is vibrantly depicted in the book. While covering the seven decades of Safra’s life, Gross describes the diaspora of Lebanese Jewry in the second half of the 20th century, deep antisemitism within the banking industry via the American Express affair, and ultimately, the story of a remarkable life. The author’s sources come from interviews with many of his subject’s closest friends and family as well as archival sources. A compelling and fascinating read, this book is highly recommended for all libraries.



Michelle Margolis,
Columbia University, New York, NY
AJL President

Korman, Gerd. *This Was America, 1865-1965: Unequal Citizens in the Segregated Republic*. Boston: Academic Studies Press. 2022. 340 pp. \$149.00 (9781644696378) HC.

There are several volumes that link the Jewish experience in America with that of African Americans. Gerd Korman, here, summarizes and attempts to synthesize the two narratives.

Part one explores the concept of ethnicity (“ethnicking”) in 19th century America, focusing on life in the South. Korman describes slave life and the post-Civil War southern world, using quotes from Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. DuBois and others, to elaborate on the continued “other-ing” of Blacks after emancipation. He likens them to Chinese immigrants, who were denied citizenship.

Part two provides a social history of the wave of Eastern European Jews who arrived between 1885 and 1914. Here, Korman presents a variety of situations faced by the immigrants. He covers the Labor movement—specifically the New York Garment unions during the Interwar period—as well as health and welfare issues, language, and education.

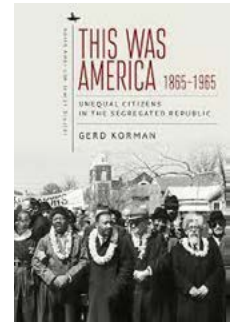
Part three carries the story through the 1950s and ‘60s, when the Civil Rights movement emerged and support for Israel became an alternative for Jews seeking a cause to support. The book concludes with short profiles of mid-century academics and intellectuals—Schlesinger, Handlin, Higham—who struggled with identity issues in the midst of social turmoil.

The premise of *This was America* is interesting. But its content is unhelpful. The text is dense and without topical subheadings. The author assumes readers to be conversant with a wide range of historical, social science and religious topics. Names and concepts—Marcus Garvey, Horace Kallen, Simon Wolf (misspelled “Wolfe”), “neo-Lamarckianism”, the Dunning School of Reconstruction, for example, are introduced without adequate explanation or context. There are no appendices or bibliography (though the footnotes are extensive) and the index is regrettably short. As the intended audience is unclear, this book cannot be easily recommended for any specific type of collection.

Fred Isaac,
Oakland, CA

Korn, Eugene. *Israel and the Nations: The Bible, the Rabbis, and Jewish-Gentile Relations*. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2023. Emunot: Jewish Philosophy and *Kabbalah* series. 191 pp. \$139.00 (9798887190051) HC.

In *Israel and the Nations*, the orthodox scholar and rabbi Eugene Korn presents nine essays exploring the issues confronting those seeking Jewish-Gentile dialogue. Korn asserts that the biblical



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