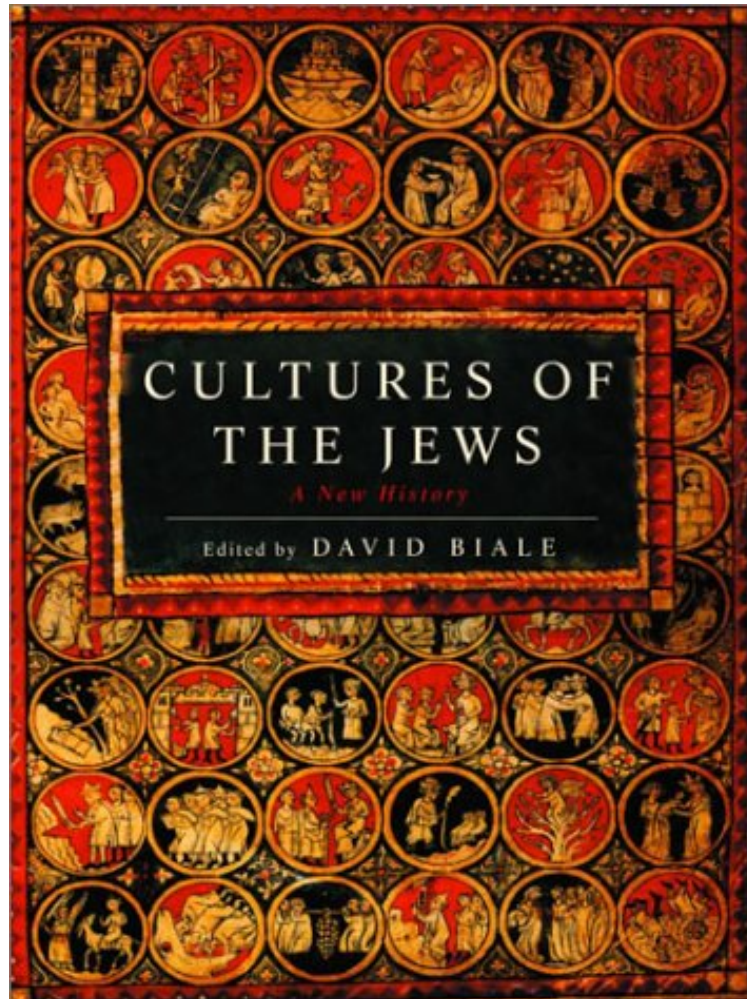


(Ebook pdf) Cultures of the Jews: A New History

Cultures of the Jews: A New History

David Biale

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David Biale : Cultures of the Jews: A New History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Cultures of the Jews: A New History:

33 of 35 people found the following review helpful. Outstanding treatment of Jewish culturesBy Yehezkel DrorThere are few more complex and also baffling subjects than the nature of the Jewish People and Judaism as a fusion between a civilization and a community/people/nation. Even more enigmatic is the survival and frequent thriving of Judaism during more than three thousand years of continuous pluralistic existence under a great variety of radically different conditions and in very different political and cultural environments.This collection by David Biale is an outstanding introduction and profile of this historic riddle, presenting in clear but scholarly sound narratives an overview of the dynamics of Jewish cultures (note the plural) with their shared cores and diverse envelopes. Further such books by Biale are to be eagerly expected, hopefully together with a comprehensive theoretic treatment providing deep

understanding of the past and supplying a basis for predicting and trying to weave the future. This book is strongly recommended to scholars and intellectuals concerned with the history and nature of the Jewish People and to decision makers and policy planners trying to assure its thriving together with contributions to changing global cultures in the future. This book is also essential reading for students of the dynamics of cultures. Professor Yehezkel Dror, Founding President, the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute (established by the Jewish Agency of Israel) and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Highly recommend to the serious reader. By SouthernTransplant Intense read, extremely interesting. Highly recommend to the serious reader. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Amazing book. I will be engrossed forever. By pja Amazing book. I will be engrossed forever.

WITH MORE THAN 100 BLACK-AND-WHITE ILLUSTRATIONS THROUGHOUT Who are the Jews? Scattered over much of the world throughout most of their three-thousand-year-old history, are they one people or many? How do they resemble and how do they differ from Jews in other places and times? What have their relationships been to the cultures of their neighbors? To address these and similar questions, twenty-three of the finest scholars of our day—archaeologists, cultural historians, literary critics, art historians, folklorists, and historians of religion, all affiliated with major academic institutions in the United States, Israel, and France—have contributed their insight to *Cultures of the Jews*. The premise of their endeavor is that although Jews have always had their own autonomous traditions, Jewish identity cannot be considered immutable, the fixed product of either ancient ethnic or religious origins. Rather, it has shifted and assumed new forms in response to the cultural environment in which the Jews have lived. Building their essays on specific cultural artifacts—a poem, a letter, a traveler's account, a physical object of everyday or ritual use that were made in the period and locale they study, the contributors describe the cultural interactions among different Jews—from rabbis and scholars to non-elite groups, including women—as well as between Jews and the surrounding non-Jewish world. Part One, *Mediterranean Origins*, describes the concept of the People or Nation of Israel that emerges in the Hebrew Bible and the culture of the Israelites in relation to that of the Canaanite groups. It goes on to discuss Jewish cultures in the Greco-Roman world, Palestine during the Byzantine period, Babylonia, and Arabia during the formative years of Islam. Part Two, *Diversities of Diaspora*, illuminates Judeo-Arabic culture in the Golden Age of Islam, Sephardic culture as it bloomed first in the Iberian Peninsula and later in Amsterdam, the Jewish-Christian symbiosis in Ashkenazic Europe and in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the culture of the Italian Jews of the Renaissance period, and the many strands of folklore, magic, and material culture that run through diaspora Jewish history. Part Three, *Modern Encounters*, examines communities, ways of life, and both high and folk culture in Western, Central, and Eastern Europe, the Ladino Diaspora, North Africa and the Middle East, Ethiopia, Zionist Palestine and the State of Israel, and, finally, the United States. *Cultures of the Jews* is a landmark, representing the fruits of the present generation of scholars in Jewish studies and offering a new foundation upon which all future research into Jewish history will be based. Its unprecedented interdisciplinary approach will resonate widely among general readers and the scholarly community, both Jewish and non-Jewish, and it will change the terms of the never-ending debate over what constitutes Jewish identity.

From *Publishers Weekly* This insightful collection of essays by today's leading Judaica scholars (such as Ilana Pardes and Isaiah Gafni) transports the reader from the nascent Jewish nation first emerging from bondage in Egypt through both its cultural and religious decline and efflorescence in the Middle Ages to modern-day Israeli and American Jewish culture. Divided into three sections, "Mediterranean Origins," "Diversities of Diaspora" and "Modern Encounters," the compilation provides an array of creative perspectives. Objects of material culture—a map, an amulet, a ketubah (a Jewish marriage contract)—are used as lenses through which to examine various aspects of Jewish life in a given time and place; e.g., a menorah topped by an eagle symbolizing Polish sovereignty opens Moshe Rosman's study of Polish-Lithuanian-Jewish culture. The contributors assume that Jewish history did not develop in a vacuum, but that Jewish culture and religion were at times influenced by the surrounding cultures, and that Jews incorporated elements of what they saw around them while striving to refashion them as distinctly Jewish. Furthermore, if Jewish identity changed according to differing historical contexts, editor Biale (a professor of Jewish history at UC-Davis and author of *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History*) suggests, referring to Jewish culture in the singular is inadequate and oversimplified. The authors raise questions central to the understanding of Judaism and Jewish life, and propose answers that try to reconcile ideas with their historical realities. Intellectually stimulating, articulately written and extensively documented, this collection is sure to raise excitement in aficionados looking for something to whet their historical appetite. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Booklist* *Starred* This monumental work comprises essays by 23 scholars, including editor Biale, who also has written a preface and an introduction to each of the book's three sections: *Mediterranean Origins*, *Diversities of Diaspora*, and *Modern Encounters*. Writers from many fields—archaeology, art history, ancient Near Eastern studies, cultural history, literary studies, and folklore—address the question of Jewish identity throughout history. In his conclusion, Biale writes that "The great crises of this age are not the destruction of the Temple but the Holocaust that eradicated the cultures of

Jewish Europe and, more broadly, the cultural pluralism ushered in by modernity." The extensive range of concepts and insights raised here cannot be examined in a brief review; suffice it to say that the book is truly one of the most important works on the subject ever published. George Cohen Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved Lay readers already hooked on Jewish history will be endlessly fascinated, and those seeking a solid state-of-the art introduction to the field will find it here, with ample reference to other, more specialized or canonical works. . . One of the most nourishing Jewish books we've encountered in some time. . . . Wonderful. The Jerusalem Report The writers revel in the new vistas opened by a cultural approach, lavishly providing us, in generous detail, with descriptions of a Jewish world more various than historians have allowed us to glimpse. Tikkun Biale has gathered a stellar international group of scholars around the grand theme of Jewish cultural history. The tastes of many different intellectual palates will find various satisfactions here. Jewish Quarterly