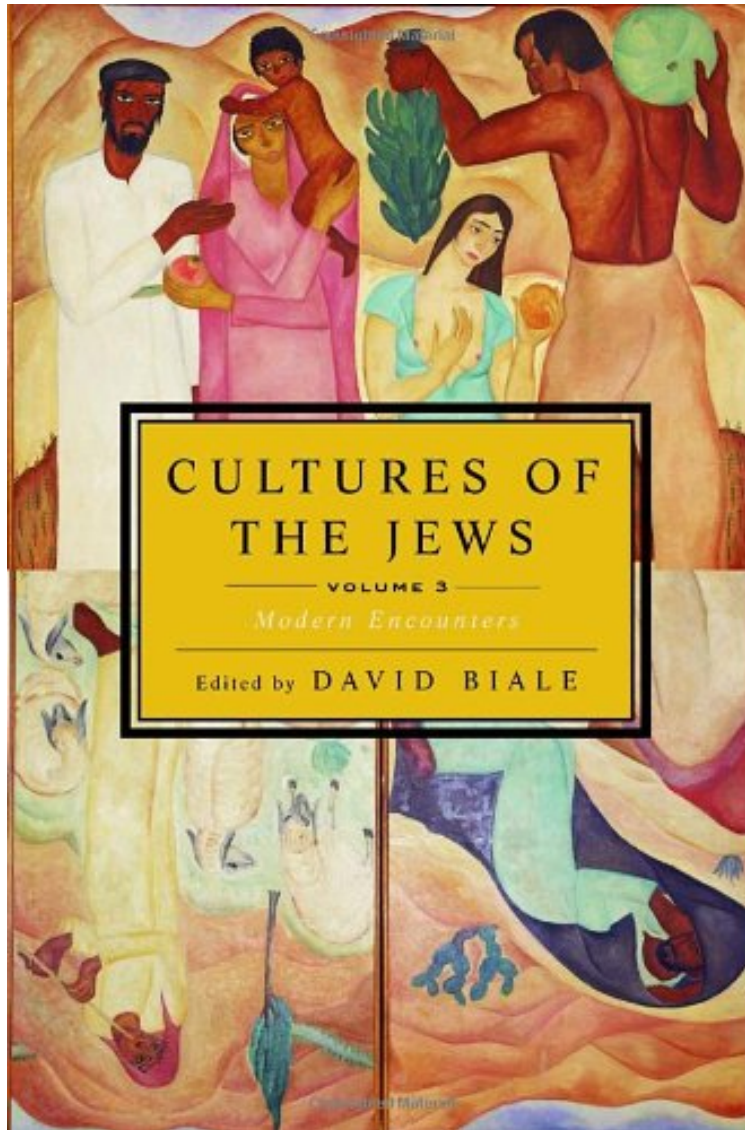


## Cultures of the Jews, Volume 3: Modern Encounters

From Brand: Knopf Group E-Books  
audiobook | \*ebooks | Download PDF | ePub | DOC



DOWNLOAD



READ ONLINE

#1841951 in Books Knopf Group E-Books 2006-01-10 2006-01-10Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.17 x 1.02 x 6.26l, 1.29 #File Name: 0805212027480 pages | File size: 28.Mb

**From Brand: Knopf Group E-Books : Cultures of the Jews, Volume 3: Modern Encounters** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Cultures of the Jews, Volume 3: Modern Encounters:

Scattered over much of the world throughout most of their history, are the Jews 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, some of the finest scholars of our day have contributed their insights to *Cultures of the Jews*, a winner of the National Jewish Book Award upon its hardcover publication in 2002. Constructing their essays around specific cultural artifacts that were created in the period and locale under 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. What they conclude is that although Jews have always had their own autonomous traditions, Jewish identity cannot be considered 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. *Modern Encounters*, the third volume in *Cultures of the Jews*, examines communities, ways of life, and both high and folk culture in the modern era in Western, Central, and Eastern Europe; the Ladino Diaspora; North Africa and the Middle East; Ethiopia; mandatory Palestine and the State of Israel; and the United States.

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. Tikun 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 About the Author David Biale is the Emanuel Ringelblum Professor of Jewish History at the University of California, Davis. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. URBAN VISIBILITY AND BIBLICAL VISIONS: Jewish Culture in Western and Central Europe in the Modern Age richard i. cohen Could Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), the Enlightenment Jewish philosopher and originator of the *Biur* (a translation of the Bible into German in Hebrew characters), have seen what a Galician-born Jewish artist used for the frontispiece of an illustrated Bible at the beginning of the twentieth century, he would certainly have been shocked and uncomfortable. But whether Ephraim Moses Lilien (1874-1925) was out to stun his audience or was just deeply engrossed in the art nouveau style is at present of little significance. However, by placing the renowned thinker alongside the less-known, erstwhile Zionist artist, we get a fuller view of the cultural transformation of West and Central European Jewry during a century and a half. Jewish sensibilities and concerns were radically transposed as the engagement with a panoply of cultural orientations superseded earlier pinnacles of Jewish integration, such as Muslim Spain. Even the Bible, the Old Testament, the touchstone of Judaism, would be refracted and refashioned in a multitude of expressions, showing the shifting boundaries of Jewish life and the Jews' profound acceptance of the surrounding environment. The tightrope Mendelssohn walked between traditional Judaism and European culture was long forgotten or discarded when Lilien brazenly incorporated into the frontispiece of his Bible (1908, 1923) two androgynous figures holding an extended Torah scroll that covers their genitalia. In Lilien's day, the tightrope stretched between European culture and a Jewish nationalist agenda. Juxtaposing these texts highlights other contrasts in the modern Jewish experience in Western and Central Europe. Whereas Mendelssohn continued an internal tradition of commentary and exegesis in written form, Lilien offered a visual interpretation, much less common or conscious of tradition. The former claimed the original text through intricate discourse, the latter playfully experimented with it. The written text was directed to Jews, to widen their horizons and concerns; the visual one was an ecumenical effort (which originated among German Lutherans), to engage both non-Jews and Jews. Whereas Mendelssohn's Bible demanded distinctness, Lilien's celebrated the nonsectarian, but constantly alluded to the exclusive. Combined, the texts merge rationalism, visibility, universalism, uniqueness, traditional scholarship, and modern skepticism, as well as encounters with the other, contemporaneously and historically. They are contrasting expressions of the ways Jews have tried in the modern period to integrate their culture into a larger category of civilization, but both reveal inner tensions within those paths. By studying the issues emanating from the oeuvres of Mendelssohn and Lilien, we will chart some of the roads that led from one to the other. Although today neither Mendelssohn nor Lilien are cited as the pioneers of new horizons, of modernism, in the way Marx, Freud, or Kafka are perceived, they and their works frame the confrontation with modernity that Jews of different religious, cultural, and social backgrounds faced. Mendelssohn's age saw the political and social barriers between Jews and non-Jews challenged by voices within European society and governments, though not overcome. Joseph II (r. 1780-1790), the Habsburg emperor, was the first to make a serious change in the political status of European Jews. He promulgated a series of Toleration Acts that promised to integrate the Jews into the general polity, and in the case of the recently occupied province of Galicia (1789) came close to extending equal rights to its more than 200,000 Jews. Joseph's actions generated a warm-hearted response from some Enlightenment Jews (*maskilim*), who viewed them as an opportunity to encourage an intensification of secular education and openness to different occupations. More traditionally minded Jews demurred, fearing the consequences of increased proximity to Christian society and culture. But it was the French Revolution (1789) that raised the ante of change, emancipating the Jews as full citizens of France (1790, 1791) and in other regions conquered by the revolutionary forces and ideology. Offered equality of

opportunity and faced with nascent nationalist spirit and a strong centralistic orientation, Jews in France rapidly began to refashion themselves, experiencing both dramatic demographic change and social mobility. Within a generation, from place to language, from traditions to style, from occupations to status, Jews moved from a more exclusive world to one permeated with a French disposition. Once begun, the political emancipation of the Jews continued unabated for several decades throughout Western and Central Europe, leaving in its wake (or at times even anticipating) similar internal changes in France. Fashioning a German, Italian, English, Dutch, or Austrian/Hungarian identity was an integral part of the modern Jewish experience, the contours of which were different from country to country, affected by the unique process of emancipation in each and by each particular system of government and concept of citizenship. Yet there were similarities in the ways that Jews juggled conflicting loyalties and feelings of belonging. Nationalism in its variegated forms engrossed them and shaped their allegiances but also challenged and provoked the sense of their own nationhood. By the time Lilien appeared on the scene, the political and cultural situation was a far cry from the days of Mendelssohn. Emancipation had been secured; Jews were intensely engaged in their surroundings and diversified in their interests and networks of associations. They had become involved, and disproportionately represented, in pursuits that were rarely considered their traditional domain—music, art, theater—and individual Jews figured prominently, or as leaders, in new areas of science, culture, and intellectual interests. Their economic pursuits made Jews forces to contend with in diverse spheres. Mendelssohn's friendship with the German playwright Gottfried Ephraim Lessing, mythologized in the nineteenth century as a symbol of German-Jewish symbiosis, did not find its sequel in that century. In the social sphere, the relationship between Jews and non-Jews remained remote. Jews were still excluded from various societies and associations, though some individuals had broken these barriers in almost every country. The animosity that left its imprint on Mendelssohn and several of his seminal texts became more caustic and organized from the 1870s on, jeopardizing the success of emancipation and jolting many Jews out of their sense of accommodation in their native countries. More or less intense expressions of antisemitism flourished in the last quarter of the century throughout Western and Central Europe. Although he was reared in emancipated Galicia, Lilien, like most Central European Jews, endorsed modernity but was not oblivious to these troubling developments. At times he lashed out at them in his illustrations. Notwithstanding the shadows on the horizon, most Jews in these parts of Europe continued their quest for full integration. They spoke a European language, grew distant from the traditions of their parents and grandparents, and quite remarkably acculturated to the surrounding society. In multinational countries, such as in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Jews swung between adopting the German language and showing allegiance to the rising currents of Czech and Hungarian nationalism by learning Czech or Magyar. In this period of some 150 years, the boundaries of Jewish belonging were seriously redefined and remapped. Individually and collectively, the Jews embarked on many new projects that often placed them in conflict with their traditional past, though elements of that past were forever gnawing at the core of these new forms of understanding and consciousness. Myriad different attachments—religious, social, cultural, and philanthropic—anchored them to their ancestral moorings (which only vaguely resembled traditional Judaism), while, politically, the nascent Jewish nationalist movements (including Zionism) that challenged the commitment to acculturation engaged only a smattering of adherents. Thus, if an urban Jew in Western or Central Europe were to purchase a Bible at the beginning of the twentieth century, chances are that neither Mendelssohn's German-language Bible nor Lilien's Bible with its Zionist flavor would be the most likely choice. Probably a translation in a European language, with or without the Hebrew original, would be preferred, because both Mendelssohn's and Lilien's efforts hardly reflected the mainstream of Jewish life at the time. Contemporary Jewish reality and culture were being refashioned in the European languages, accentuated by a growing commitment to the country of residence and buttressed by a distancing from the ways of the past and a frenetic movement to the urban hub. Nonetheless, a resilient Jewish voice could be detected in many areas and countries constructing public and private space. The increasing openness of the modern age offered a new temptation for Jews: to be at the center of the cultural, economic, and social arena, where politics were played out and where one enjoyed freedom of movement and association. Major European cities in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries underwent dramatic economic, demographic, structural, and cultural changes. Physical and economic expansion encouraged an influx of new elements—merchants, intelligentsia, petty traders, public officials, and others. This mobility weakened the stratified or quasi-feudal structures as agrarian society waned. The populations of Paris, Budapest, Vienna, and Berlin multiplied many times. National groups—Slovaks, Romanians, Germans, French, Serbs, Italians, Armenians, and Greeks—were on the move, and Jews joined this migratory movement with eager anticipation. They sought with equal passion the haven of cities that were predominantly Protestant or Catholic, surpassing the attraction to these cities of other ethnic or national minorities. A city such as Prague or Amsterdam that had previously had a major Jewish community became even more attractive; those at the periphery of Jewish activity because of legislation (such as Vienna and Pest) or small Jewish populations (such as Paris) turned into magnets, drawing Jews throughout the nineteenth century in increasing numbers. The statistics of Jewish urbanization in this period are staggering, and the process became especially pronounced after 1850. For example, the Jews in Paris and Vienna numbered between 900 and 1,000 in the latter part of the eighteenth century, but by 1870 these populations had grown to 30,000 and 40,000, respectively. In a new milieu with untold possibilities and attractions, a clear departure from

more restricted and confined living spaces, Jews were confronted very clearly with options for constructing their individual and collective space, a clear hallmark of their growing freedom. The cities to which Jews gravitated gradually ended residential segregation. Toleration became the rule of thumb (though privileged elements in society continued to prevent Jews from living in particular neighborhoods). The freedom to live where they wished required the Jews to make decisions of wide cultural and social implications concerning where they would reside, with whom, and how they would create their public and private spaces and system of values. Should Jews mask their identity, for fear of being seen as clannish, or should they accept their new freedom and congregate openly with both Jews and non-Jews? How would they use the freedom to build their public and private space? What would happen to the former center of Jewish life the synagogue when previous restrictions on its construction were almost completely removed? We ourselves may also ask some questions: What meanings can we attach to the interest at the end of the nineteenth century in creating an arena for Jewish art within the synagogue or within a separate institution, a museum? What transpired in the private sphere, in the home? How did gender figure into the roles men and women assumed in these different situations? How did the home now function as a transmitter of values and as the mediator between acculturation and preservation of a Jewish cultural identity, and who assumed the responsibility for this? Did the home create or break down barriers between Jews and non-Jews? Put differently, was the oft-quoted remark by the Russian-Jewish maskil Judah Leib Gordon that one should be a person outside of the home and a Jew in ones home a viable way of life for Jews in Western and Central Europe? And how were Jews able to preserve their traditional form of life in this new context? Upon their return to England in the seventeenth century, the Jews encountered a society that by and large enabled them to integrate and acculturate fully into its fabric. The memories of the medieval past and the expulsion of 1290 faded into oblivion. Although London was home to only a small number of Jews prior to 1700, its Jewish community grew significantly in the eighteenth century. The mere 750 Jews at the beginning of the century grew through waves of immigration to more than 15,000 (of a population of some 800,000) at its end. Jews gravitated to London from Germany, Holland, and Poland and brought with them diverse living patterns, levels of religious behavior, economic status, and a predisposition to acculturation with the surrounding society. Because neither legal restrictions nor Jewish communal organizations existed at this time, London offered the immigrants the remarkable freedom to live where they pleased. The citys complex and largely unregulated patterns of urban life allowed persons with ambition and drive much room for manoeuvre. London was not Berlin, where even Mendelssohn lived under a special dispensation. The newcomers seized the opportunities offered by the unregulated patterns of urban life. Both the poor and the wealthy lived initially in the eastern end of the city. But class and money quickly became a factor: the elegant living quarters of the West End enticed Sephardim and Ashkenazim of means, whereas the more traditionally minded and lower-class Jews remained in the City. Moving to the West End carried with it a clear demarcation from association with Jewish organizational life and synagogue attendance. Moreover, it is remarkable that Jews of wealth were already in the 1720s, in their emulation of English gentry style, purchasing lavish country homes and estates, at times with sprawling acres of land. As Todd Endelman has shown, living like a country gentleman . . . meant a physical separation from the mass of the Jewish community. Samson Gideon, who was born in London in 1699, is an example of this cut of Anglo-Jewish society. The son of Rehuel Gideon Abudiente, of Marrano stock, a trader in Barbados who was the first Jew to become a freeman in London, Samson inherited a sizable sum on his fathers death. Brought up traditionally, he used this legacy to purchase (in the 1720s) a home in a fashionable area, where people of the noble and gentry classes lived. Following his marriage to a non-Jewish woman in the 1740s, he acquired several country estates. Although he maintained a minimal connection with the Bevis Marks synagogue, he did everything possible to attain the status of an English aristocrat and shunned any connection with the efforts in 1753 to improve the political status of the Jews by an act of naturalization. Indeed, for the wealthy as the case of Gideon shows physical distance could contribute in time to almost total estrangement, including conversion, from Jewish life. The choice of where to build ones home was at times a determining factor in the maintenance of connection with Jewish mores, but at times it also stemmed from a predisposed attitude toward those mores alternatives that did not exist for the lower middle class. By the mid-nineteenth century, some 13,000 of Englands 35,000 Jews lived in London.