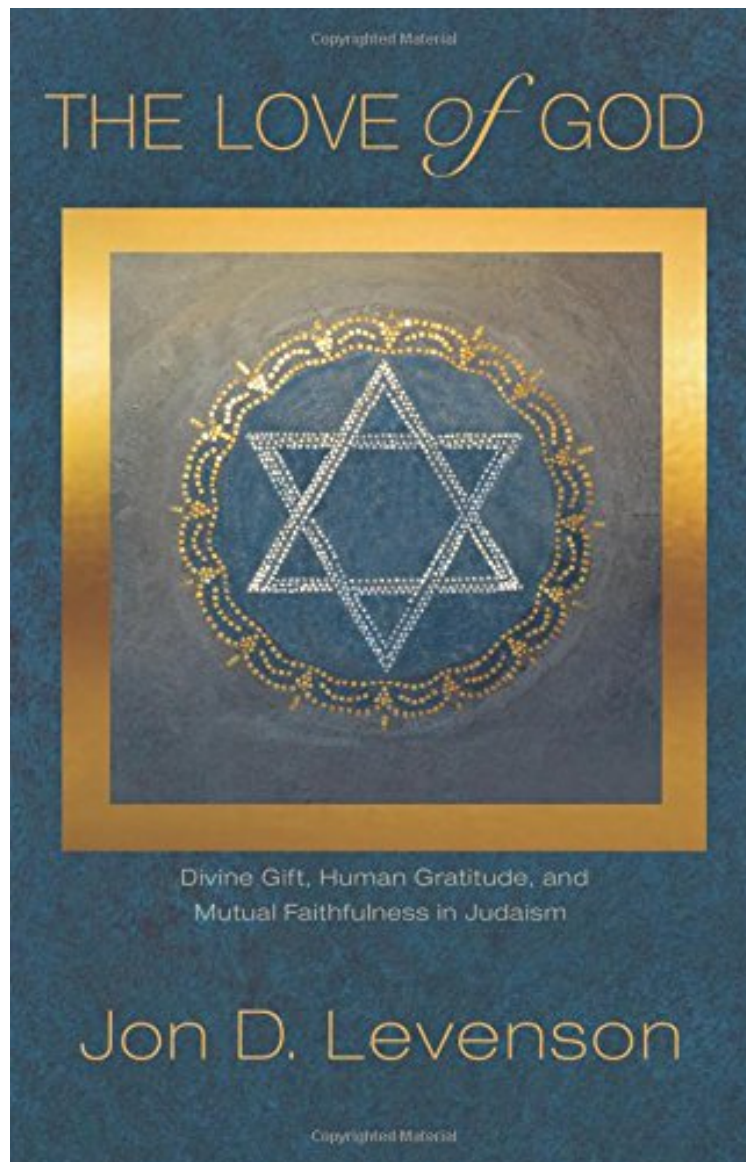


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(Library of Jewish Ideas)

## The Love of God: Divine Gift, Human Gratitude, and Mutual Faithfulness in Judaism (Library of Jewish Ideas)

*Jon D. Levenson*

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**Jon D. Levenson : The Love of God: Divine Gift, Human Gratitude, and Mutual Faithfulness in Judaism (Library of Jewish Ideas)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Love of God: Divine Gift, Human Gratitude, and Mutual Faithfulness in Judaism (Library of Jewish

Ideas):

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Spectacularly Well Done  
By Ira E. Stoll  
This is a profound and erudite book that made me think about the love between God and the Jewish people in a whole new way. Prayers that will be familiar to most observant Jews the Shma, Lekha Dodi, Yedid Nefesh, the phrase from Hosea that is said when wrapping tefillin on one's finger take on deeper meaning with Levenson's guidance. The book is worth buying for the last two paragraphs alone, which are exquisitely crafted. What kind of love exists between Jews and God, and between God and Jews? Levenson takes us through the early biblical love modeled on the relation between a king and his subject, or a lord and vassal, through the prophetic description of the relationship at the "moment of rupture," with the Jews as unfaithful, through the Medieval period and the critique by Hasdai Crescas and Joseph Albo of the Maimonidean God so abstract that he doesn't love back, and into modern times with Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig and their discussion of how law or commandment fit, or don't fit, into a loving relationship with God. This book is not long. It's not light reading, but it is reasonably accessible. If you are Jewish and/or interested in what the biblical commandment to love God means, go read it!  
1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great book as long as you understand gift.  
By Frederick J. Harris  
Jon Levenson helps us understand Judaism and its deep foundation for Christian faith. This book along with ' Paul and the Gift' by John Barclays make great companions and help us understand more about Levenson's contribution.  
1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This book is wonderful. Not only is the author an expert in ...  
By Robert B. Lawton  
This book is wonderful. Not only is the author an expert in the Hebrew Bible and later Judaism, his book is filled with wise human insights. I couldn't put the book down. There were days when I read it from morning to night. A true masterpiece!

The love of God is perhaps the most essential element in Judaism but also one of the most confounding. In biblical and rabbinic literature, the obligation to love God appears as a formal commandment. Yet most people today think of love as a feeling. How can an emotion be commanded? How could one ever fulfill such a requirement? The Love of God places these scholarly and existential questions in a new light. Jon Levenson traces the origins of the concept to the ancient institution of covenant, showing how covenantal love is a matter neither of sentiment nor of dry legalism. The love of God is instead a deeply personal two-way relationship that finds expression in God's mysterious love for the people of Israel, who in turn observe God's laws out of profound gratitude for his acts of deliverance. Levenson explores how this bond has survived episodes in which God's love appears to be painfully absent as in the brutal persecutions of Talmudic times and describes the intensely erotic portrayals of the relationship by biblical prophets and rabbinic interpreters of the Song of Songs. He examines the love of God as a spiritual discipline in the Middle Ages as well as efforts by two influential modern Jewish thinkers Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig to recover this vital but endangered aspect of their tradition. A breathtaking work of scholarship and spirituality alike that is certain to provoke debate, The Love of God develops fascinating insights into the foundations of religious life in the classical Jewish tradition.

"Our debt to Levenson is enormous. Here we receive the benefit of his attentive perception, which permits both Jewish and Christian readers of the Bible to see how much is shared, even given our formidable differences."--The Christian Century  
Jon Levenson's explication of these ideas is a miracle of organization, precision, and clarity. He writes accessibly and conversationally, belying his immense scholarship. The Love of God can be read for its original point of view, as a history of ideas, or as a way of finding new meaning in familiar ways of talking about God. It succeeds brilliantly on all counts."--Jewish Book Council  
An important, sober, and rewarding work that will find an audience among academic readers."--Library Journal  
A profound and erudite book that made me think about the love between God and the Jewish people in a whole new way. Prayers that will be familiar to most observant Jews--the Shma, Lekha Dodi, Yedid Nefesh, the phrase from Hosea that is said when wrapping tefillin on one's finger--take on deeper meaning with Levenson's guidance. . . . Exquisitely crafted. . . . If you are Jewish and/or interested in what the biblical commandment to love God means, go read it!"--Ira Stoll, former Washington correspondent and managing editor, The Forward, and author of Samuel Adams: A Life and JFK: Conservative  
[Levenson] skillfully weaves together a wealth of biblical passages that demonstrate that love of God entails a mutual relationship between God and Israel. . . . This book admirably demonstrates the impact of changing social realities, on Israel and on the Jewish people, amid which affection for God perseveres."--Choice  
Highly readable and engaging. Levenson's lifelong scholarship, like that of the best of popular theological writers, has refined his ability to write theologically rigorous books accessible to the lay reader."--Clint Schneklath, Word World  
The Love of God is compelling. L.s presentation of the subject is a masterpiece of clarity and precision. His decision not to offer a comprehensive study of the subject makes the work highly readable to all audiences. It is valuable also because it can be approached as the history of ideas surrounding God's love or as the story of God's mysterious love for the people of Israel."--J. L. Manzo, Catholic Biblical Quarterly  
The Love of God presents a focused and accessible treatment of its core subject, which will be of use to those who teach Jewish thought to undergraduates as well as to a wide audience of nonspecialists."--Samuel Hayim

Brody, *Journal of the Association for Jewish Studies*"There is too much nuance in Levenson's meticulous scholarship for a humble review to do justice. . . . Reading his graceful prose, like performing the deeds commanded by Torah, also evokes and inspires the very love it has so carefully described."--Fran Leap, *Horizons*From the Back Cover"Here is biblical and theological scholarship at its finest. With a rare combination of historical analysis, conceptual synthesis, and existential alertness, Levenson penetrates and illuminates the Bible and Jewish tradition. His writing is consistently fresh, lucid, and incisive. This is a book to savor."--R. W. L. Moberly, Durham University"A richly rewarding study of one of the central values of Judaism. In this deep and splendid book, Jon Levenson shows yet again that he is one of the finest contemporary Jewish scholars."--Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks"This book is nothing less than a reformulation of the whole idea of the love of God. Levenson offers a profound rereading of the evidence, one that stresses the continuity of Jewish thought from biblical times to the present. A strikingly original work, *The Love of God* is a landmark contribution to religious studies."--James L. Kugel, author of *The Ladder of Jacob: Ancient Interpretations of the Biblical Story of Jacob and His Children*"As one expects from Levenson, the book is elegantly written and clearly argued. It will be of great interest to Jewish and Christian readers alike."--Richard J. Clifford, SJ, Boston CollegeAbout the AuthorJon D. Levenson is the Albert A. List Professor of Jewish Studies at Harvard University. His many books include *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel*, which won the National Jewish Book Award, and *Inheriting Abraham and Creation and the Persistence of Evil* (both Princeton).