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A History of the Jews in the Modern World

By Howard M. Sachar



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A History of the Jews in the Modern World By Howard M. Sachar

The distinguished historian of the Jewish people, Howard M. Sachar, gives us a comprehensive and enthralling chronicle of the achievements and traumas of the Jews over the last four hundred years.

Tracking their fate from Western Europe's age of mercantilism in the seventeenth century to the post-Soviet and post-imperialist Islamic upheavals of the twenty-first century, Sachar applies his renowned narrative skill to the central role of the Jews in many of the most impressive achievements of modern civilization: whether in the rise of economic capitalism or of political socialism; in the discoveries of theoretical physics or applied medicine; in "higher" literary criticism or mass communication and popular entertainment.

As his account unfolds and moves from epoch to epoch, from continent to continent, from Europe to the Americas and the Middle East, Sachar evaluates communities that, until lately, have been underestimated in the perspective of Jewish and world history—among them, Jews of Sephardic provenance, of the Moslem regions, and of Africa. By the same token, Sachar applies a master's hand in describing and deciphering the Jews' unique exposure and functional usefulness to totalitarian movements—fascist, Nazi, and Stalinist. In the process, he shines an unsparing light on the often widely dissimilar behavior of separate European peoples, and on separate Jewish populations, during the Holocaust.

A distillation of the author's lifetime of scholarly research and teaching experience, *A History of the Jews in the Modern World* provides a source of unsurpassed intellectual richness for university students and educated laypersons alike.



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. In this monumental and complex narrative, successor to his distinguished 1958 *The Course of Modern Jewish History* (substantially revised in 1990), Sachar, generally acknowledged as the preeminent scholar of modern Jewish history, proves himself to be not only a superb historian, but a compelling storyteller. The scope of this project is both exhilarating and daunting, including western and eastern Europe, America and the Middle East from the 17th century to the present; Sachar's major themes include the history of anti-Semitism, the development of the nation state, the rise of European fascism and the immigration of Jews throughout Europe and to the Americas. Sachar has constructed this history with such adroitness that it is best read as a sweeping chronicle of not just Jewish but world history. As always, Sachar's informal, almost conversational style is both inviting and accessible, whether sketching out the complicated position of Jews in Brazil during the country's fight for independence from Portugal in 1824 or demonstrating how Jewish religious thinking was vital in the advancement of modern medicine. For both the general reader and the scholar, this is an important addition to the literature on both Jewish and Western history and culture.

(Aug. 17)

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Sachar, author of 15 books and the editor of the 39-volume *Rise of Israel: A Documentary History*, begins his new, compelling, and comprehensive book with an account of the European Jews and anti-Semitism they faced as early as the sixteenth century, in what he calls their "indeterminate status as non-Europeans." He goes on to describe such events as their life in western Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the French Revolution and Jewish questions, the Jews of czarist Russia, their struggle for civil rights in the 1830s and 1840s, and their place in what Sachar labels an emancipated economy. There are chapters on such topics as the impact of Western culture on Jewish life and coping with Jewish identity, the rise of Jewish life in America, the era of pogroms in Russia, the migration of east European Jewry (1881-1914), and the onset of modern anti-Semitism. Sachar discusses the life of Theodor Herzl and the rise of political Zionism, the effect of World War I on European Jews and postwar anti-Semitism, the Balfour Declaration in 1917, quotas limiting Jewish immigration to the U.S. in 1921, the rise of Hitler and the Holocaust, and the birth of Israel. Sachar does not discuss the State of Israel, saying that the history of an independent nation deserves independent treatment, but otherwise he has written the definitive history of the Jews, unparalleled in its scope and depth. *George Cohen*

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Review

"A rich and balanced account. . . . There is no other book that attempts, as this one does, to recount the history of the Jews in modern times in all its geographical variation and breathtaking disparity."

—*Washington Post Book World*

"Magisterial . . . Sachar situates Jews on a global stage. . . . [He] relates an immensely complex story with precision and learning." —*New York Times Book Review*

"[Sachar's book features] an erudition that is confidently and casually displayed, a range of topics covered with crisp lucidity, and sentences whose cadences effortlessly sweep the reader along." —*The Boston Globe*

"Like all of Sachar's books, this too is comprehensive, illuminating, and readable. He weaves Jewish history

through the intricacies of modern developments with a magisterial sweep." –Shlomo Avineri, Professor of Political Science Emeritus, The Hebrew University

"A magnum opus....comprehensive, analytical, and written in a felicitous style....The book is a must. Both the lay and specialist reader will be richly rewarded." –Isaiah Friedman, Professor of Modern History Emeritus, Ben-Gurion University

"This learned, sweeping, panoramic view of the Jewish experience in modernity will long remain...the standard history of this period." –Alfred Gottschalk, President Emeritus, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

"In this expansive and magisterial history of the Jews in the modern world...this distinguished historian and experienced teacher has created a vibrant, highly readable text for students and general readers alike." –Jehuda Reinharz, President, Brandeis University

"This is the work of a lifetime, a magisterial study....a book that all future histories of modern Jewry will be judged by." –Jonathan Sarna, Chairman, School of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies, Brandeis University

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