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The Jewish Body: An Anatomical History of the Jewish People (Jewish Encounters Series)

By Melvin Konner



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The Jewish Body: An Anatomical History of the Jewish People (Jewish Encounters Series) By Melvin Konner

Part of the Jewish Encounter series

A history of the Jewish people from bris to burial, from “muscle Jews” to nose jobs.

Melvin Konner, a renowned doctor and anthropologist, takes the measure of the “Jewish body,” considering sex, circumcision, menstruation, and even those most elusive and controversial of microscopic markers—Jewish genes. But this is not only a book that examines the human body through the prism of Jewish culture. Konner looks as well at the views of Jewish physiology held by non-Jews, and the way those views seeped into Jewish thought. He describes in detail the origins of the first nose job, and he writes about the Nazi ideology that categorized Jews as a public health menace on par with rats or germs.

A work of grand historical and philosophical sweep, *The Jewish Body* discusses the subtle relationship between the Jewish conception of the physical body and the Jewish conception of a bodiless God. It is a book about the relationship between a land—Israel—and the bodily sense not merely of individuals but of a people. As Konner describes, a renewed focus on the value of physical strength helped generate the creation of a Jewish homeland, and continued in the wake of it.

With deep insight and great originality, Konner gives us nothing less than an anatomical history of the Jewish people.

From the Hardcover edition.



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Anthropology professor and author Konner (*Unsettled: An Anthropology of the Jews*) exudes passion and knowledge while gamely evaluating the history of the body Judaic, including customs like circumcision and the way outsiders' ignorant or malicious portrayal—in all manner of historical art and propaganda (from Michaelangelo's horned Moses to children's picture book *The Poison Mushroom*)—have come to impact Jewish identity and physical awareness. Konner also offers his own interpretations of specific Torah passages alongside their historically evolving meanings, as well as more seemingly modern phenomena like nose jobs and "shiks-appeal" (the "ultimate realization" of which is the "Jewish weakness for blondes"). Konner also looks at the Holocaust, Socialist Zionism (and its promotion of gender equality), and the "Jewry of muscles" credited with the victory of Israel over hostile neighbors. In this comprehensive look into Jewish physicality, Konner discusses the most sensitive topics with curiosity, impartiality and an impressive breadth of knowledge.

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From [Booklist](#)

This is the eleventh book in the Jewish Encounters series and 17 more are planned. Konner writes that it is his intent to not only trace the Jewish body through its radical, almost magical transformations but also to try to understand how Jewish bodies and Jewish thoughts about them have shaped the Jewish mind and the Jewish contributions to civilization. We will consider how centuries of relative bodily isolation, inspired for better or worse by ideas about the body, may have shaped Jewish genes, he writes. Konner contends that two great events of the twentieth century—one the worst thing that ever happened to the Jews, and the other the best—turned the tables on Jewish weakness forever. These are the Holocaust and the state of Israel. Konner, an anthropologist, is the author of nine books. His new one helps to shed light on a complicated subject. -- George Cohen

Review

"Konner's examination of the Jewish body ranges from the implications of Jewish genes to visions of master mystics crawling in the dense curls of God's black beard—a brief metaphorical corporeality—and spans the ages from ancient Israel to Israel reborn. This range allows us fresh views of Jewish identity and self-identity from a committed and thoughtful author." —*Jewish Book World*

In praise of *Unsettled: An Anthropology of the Jews* by Melvin Konner

"A poignant and highly accessible account of an ongoing story that transcends all telling."

—Harold Bloom, author of *The Western Canon* and *Jesus and Yahweh*

"Certainly the best one-volume overview of Jewish history and identity available.:

—Sander L. Gilman, author of *The Jew's Body* and *Jewish Self-Hatred*

"This sweeping study of the Jews feels so fresh and alive . . . [It is] nothing less than inspiring."

—*The New York Times Book Review*

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Alma Bulger:

This The Jewish Body: An Anatomical History of the Jewish People (Jewish Encounters Series) book is not really ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you have by reading this book is definitely information inside this book incredible fresh, you will get info which is getting deeper you read a lot of information you will get. This specific The Jewish Body: An Anatomical History of the Jewish People (Jewish Encounters Series) without we realize teach the one who looking at it become critical in thinking and analyzing. Don't end up being worry The Jewish Body: An Anatomical History of the Jewish People (Jewish Encounters Series) can bring once you are and not make your bag space or bookshelves' turn out to be full because you can have it within your lovely laptop even cellphone. This The Jewish Body: An Anatomical History of the Jewish People (Jewish Encounters Series) having very good arrangement in word as well as layout, so you will not truly feel uninterested in reading.

Catherine Acevedo:

Reading a book can be one of a lot of task that everyone in the world adores. Do you like reading book and so. There are a lot of reasons why people enjoy it. First reading a book will give you a lot of new details. When you read a publication you will get new information simply because book is one of many ways to share the information or perhaps their idea. Second, examining a book will make anyone more imaginative. When you studying a book especially tale fantasy book the author will bring that you imagine the story how the people do it anything. Third, you are able to share your knowledge to other individuals. When you read this The Jewish Body: An Anatomical History of the Jewish People (Jewish Encounters Series), you are able to tells your family, friends and soon about yours publication. Your knowledge can inspire the mediocre, make them reading a guide.

Teresita Donahue:

The Jewish Body: An Anatomical History of the Jewish People (Jewish Encounters Series) can be one of your basic books that are good idea. We all recommend that straight away because this book has good vocabulary that will increase your knowledge in vocab, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nevertheless delivering the information. The article writer giving his/her effort to put every word into pleasure arrangement in writing The Jewish Body: An Anatomical History of the Jewish People (Jewish Encounters Series) yet doesn't forget the main stage, giving the reader the hottest and also based confirm resource facts that maybe you can be certainly one of it. This great information can drawn you into brand-new stage of crucial contemplating.

Joyce Francois:

This The Jewish Body: An Anatomical History of the Jewish People (Jewish Encounters Series) is fresh way

for you who has attention to look for some information as it relief your hunger associated with. Getting deeper you into it getting knowledge more you know or perhaps you who still having small amount of digest in reading this The Jewish Body: An Anatomical History of the Jewish People (Jewish Encounters Series) can be the light food for you because the information inside this particular book is easy to get by means of anyone. These books create itself in the form which is reachable by anyone, sure I mean in the e-book type. People who think that in guide form make them feel sleepy even dizzy this book is the answer. So there is absolutely no in reading a reserve especially this one. You can find what you are looking for. It should be here for you actually. So , don't miss the idea! Just read this e-book style for your better life and also knowledge.

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