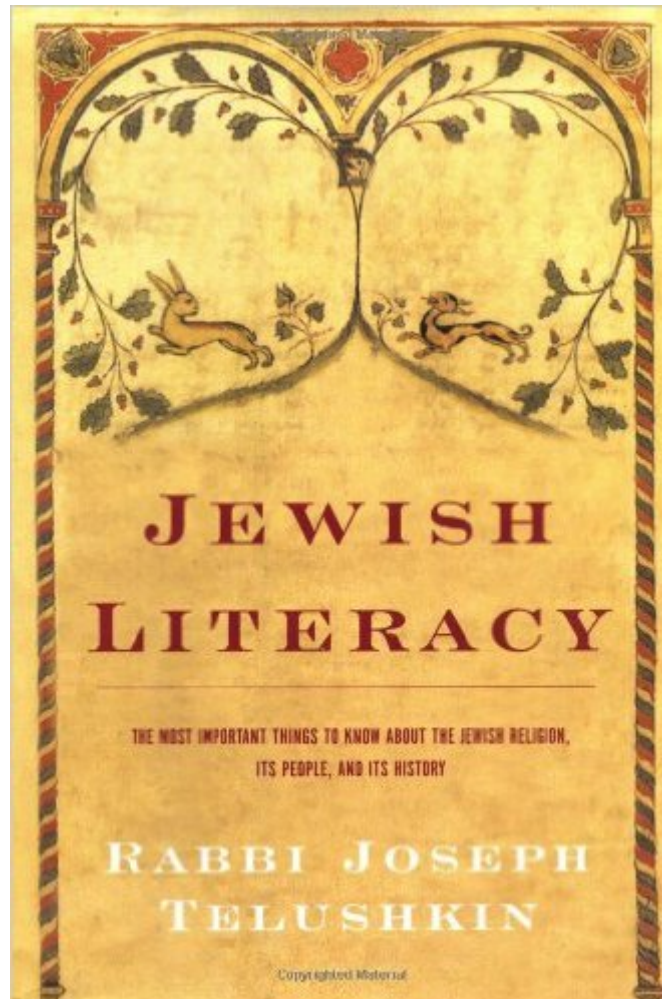


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Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things To Know About The Jewish Religion, Its People And Its History



Synopsis

How much do you know about Judaism? How did the Ten Lost Tribes become lost? Are circumcisions performed on the Sabbath? Which country first granted Jews equal rights? When was polygamy outlawed for Jews? Why does Jewish law compare gossiping to murder? You'll find the answers to these questions -- and much more -- in this insightful and comprehensive guide. Written by esteemed rabbi and bestselling author Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy* has become one of the most respected and widely used reference books on Jewish life, culture, religion, and tradition. Now revised and updated, this fascinating volume distills a vast body of scholarship into 348 short, readable chapters, making the rich and complex history of Judaism accessible to any reader. Organized by subject, the book's fifteen sections include: History and Contemporary Life From the biblical and Talmudic periods through the Spanish Inquisition to modern times, with special sections on the Holocaust, Israel, and American-Jewish life. Beliefs, Ethics, and Rituals From monotheism to Judaism's views on the afterlife, "chosenness," and human relations with God; ethical concerns ranging from the proper treatment of animals to the real meaning of "an eye for an eye"; along with explanations of the major prayers and synagogue practices. Jewish Holidays and Life Cycle The origins and distinctive customs of each holiday, and the rites sanctifying every major life event from circumcision and baby naming to burial and mourning. Answers to the questions from the front flap: They were dispersed when the Kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.E. (see Chapter 45). The United States (see Chapter 203). Around 1000 C.E., when it was proscribed by Rabbi Gershom; however, most Sephardic Jews did not accept the ban (see Chapter 95). Because gossip, like murder, can do irrevocable damage (see Chapter 271).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This volume is commonly given to Jewish Confirmants, and with good reason. It covers, in a compact and well-written fashion, Jewish history, religion, and culture. There are 15 parts: 1) Bible, 2) The Second Commonwealth, the Mishna, and the Talmud, 3) Early Medieval Period: Under Islam and Christianity, 4) Late Medieval Period, 5) Modern Period--Western and Eastern Europe, 6) Zionism and Israel, 7) The Holocaust, 8) American-Jewish Life, 9) Soviet Jewry, 10) Antisemitism, 11) Jewish Texts, 12) Jewish Ethics and Basic Beliefs, 13) The Hebrew Calendar and Jewish Holidays, 14) Life Cycle, and 15) Synagogue and Prayers. This volume is much easier to read than an alphabetically-organized encyclopedia. The author is a member of the Modern Orthodox movement (which combines traditional Talmud study with secular study). His work treats quite fairly the three largest denominations of Judaism (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform), but the section on Mordecai Kaplan and Reconstructionist Judaism is rather weak--a much better summation is given by Emanuel S. Goldsmith in the Preface to Dynamic Judaism (pp. 15-30). Humanistic Judaism isn't treated at all. The typography is very good; I found just two typos (p. 345, "statue" instead of "statute"; p. 364, "Orthodox rabbits" instead of "Orthodox rabbis"). The index is fine, but there is no glossary of terms. One glaring omission in the history section is a table of famous, accomplished Jews in the areas of mathematics, science, engineering, business, philosophy, music, and sports. (The history section is really very gloomy and disturbing; it ignores the lives of many high-achieving and happy Jews.) Leon Trotsky is covered, but Ayn Rand isn't! The section on theodicy discusses supernaturalism and atheism, but not transnaturalism.

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