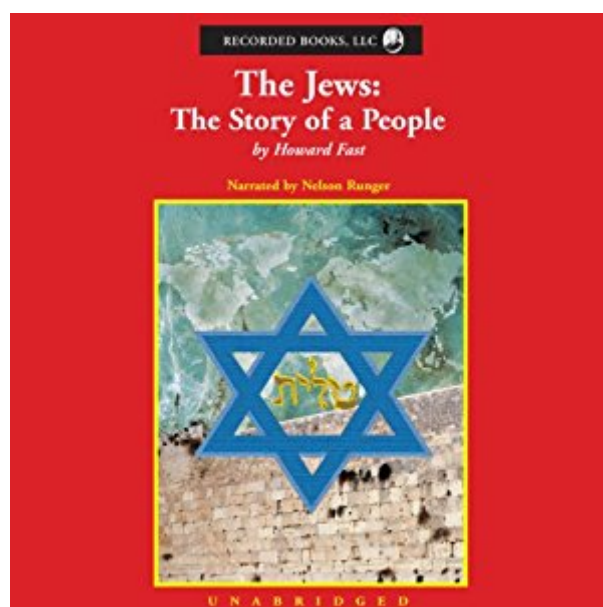


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The Jews: Story Of A People



Synopsis

"There is no human being on the face of this earth exempt from the Jewish influence. For as long as there has been history, the Jew has wandered through it, shaping it at times, riding the current silently at other times, but always leaving his mark. History without the Jew? It is inconceivable."-Howard Fast. His popular history brings the history of the Jewish people into focus, from Genesis to contemporary times.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 12 hours and 17 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Recorded Books

Audible.com Release Date: July 20, 2011

Language: English

ASIN: B005DIZA90

Best Sellers Rank: #102 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism

#953 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > History #1332 in Books > History > World > Religious > Judaism

Customer Reviews

Howard Fast's "The Jews: Story Of A People" tells the magnificent story of the Jewish nation. Covering thousands of years in a 360 pages, Fast paints in broad strokes, emphasizing themes and movements, highlighted by exceptional individuals. Beginning with Moses, he carries the story through the period of the Judges, the Kingdom of David and Solomon, the divided kingdom, the exile, the Diaspora and the establishment of the state of Israel. Throughout this history, Fast highlights several turning points in the Jewish story. Moses' role in the establishment of the Jews as a people provides a beginning point. The status of the Davidic Kingdom is placed in perspective among the neighboring realms. The crucial role of the Babylonian Exile in defining the Jewish idea and the Jews' relationship to the Samaritans aids the reader's understanding. The explanation of the Diaspora which occurred during Biblical times and after the destruction of Jerusalem helps the reader appreciate the new status of the Jews as a people living outside of their homeland. The narrative of the role of the Jews in Europe during the centuries of the Christian era makes for fascinating reading. Their role as physicians and in the transmission of knowledge of medicine other

professions helps place them in the saga of European civilization. Fast does a good job of explaining the shifting locations and distinctive traits of Jewry in Spain, Germany and Eastern Europe over the centuries. Much attention is directed to the role of the United States in the history of the Jews. Early American Jews are examined as well as the role of America in molding the Jewish identity.

'The Jews, Story of a People' by the very well known novelist and screenplay author, Howard Fast, is not a straightforward history covering every dot and whittle of Jewish religious and political history. That task would require a far larger volume, and I suspect many such books have been written to cover just such an account. The narrative in this book, however, is strictly based on historical and archeological findings. It's story of the Jews from the dawn of history to the beginning of true history writing, from about 1200 BCE to the time of the historian, Josephus, in 60 CE is NOT based on retelling the stories of the Jewish Testament, the 'Law, the Prophets, and the Wisdom writings'. It is also not a fictionalized history, as one sees from the pen of Gore Vidal on parts of American history. With some trepidation, I might liken it to Truman Capote's 'non-fiction novel' approach of 'In Cold Blood'. That is, it recounts history with the novelist's skill in narrative. The book covers all major events in Jewish history from the age when it was a collection of nomadic tribes traveling back and forth from one pasture to another to the Holocaust, but it concentrates on the highpoints. Whole centuries such as the time between the end of Solomon's reign in 931 BCE and the start of the Babylonian captivity of Judea in 586 BCE are glossed over. And, major figures such as Isaiah seem to get practically no treatment at all. That does not mean this is a 'bad' book. It only means that it is good for some purposes and not good for other. Fortunately, it fit my purposes perfectly, as I wanted a good general summary of Old Testament Judaism in order to present a historical introduction to a class of people studying parts of the New Testament.

The Jews : Story of a People by Howard Fast Howard Fast was a most brilliant author. I have read his novels that revolve around the history of Ancient Israel: My Glorious Brothers; Moses, Prince of Egypt and Agrippa's Daughter. In this work, published in 1968, he puts his pen to the service of documenting the history of the Jewish Nation. The result is compelling and fascinating, in the incredible style of Howard Fast. The first three chapters deal with his theory as to the origin of the Hebrew people, and cannot be said to be really history. It is simply theory - which largely departs from the Biblical narrative- without any real proof or substance. Yet it is an interesting theory nonetheless. He deals comprehensively with Israel at the time of Herod and Hillel, and the life of

Yehoshuah Ben Yosef (Jesus) and the birth of Christianity, under the ideas of Saul of Tarsus (Paul). Fast writes at length about how the Church planted the seeds of hatred that lead to the centuries of anti-Semitic terror and bloodshed against the Jewish people in Europe. He documents the Diaspora of the Jews when most of them were forced out of their homeland of Eretz Yisrael (Land of Israel), by the Roman Empire, into the Mediterranean Lands the Balkans, Spain, Greece and Italy, and from there into Germany, France and England and then into Poland, Russia, the Baltic Lands, Belarus and the Ukraine. The story of the Jews is a long and tragic tale of suffering and bloodshed of a people separated from their homeland for so many centuries and unable to determine their own future...

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