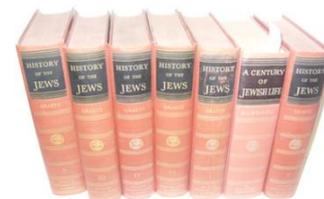


The Jewish Non-Fiction Book Club

Books selected for presentation

between September 2012 and January 2019



Book presentations have covered the following themes:

- general Jewish history;
- Israel/Middle East;
- anti-Semitism/Holocaust;
- religion and culture; and
- biography.

As the list below shows, we have covered a wide range of topics from many well-known authors.

Title	Author	Description
1. Shtetl: The history of a small town and an extinguished world	Eva Hoffman	A history of 2 communities (Jews and Poles) side by side for centuries. Seeds of possible disappearance already by end of the 19 th century.
2. The invention of the Jewish people	Shlomo Sand	Concocted a fantastic theory about how most of the Jews have arisen from conversions during Greco-Roman times; ancient Israel was never 'exiled'.
3. In my father's court: The memoirs of Isaac Bashevis Singer	Isaac Bashevis Singer	Paints a wonderful portrait of what life was like in small towns in the Pale of Settlement before WW1.
4. The promise of Israel	Daniel Gordis	Argues for a nation state looking after its people is better than the pipe dream of universalism and the abandonment of particularism.
5. Rethinking the holocaust	Yehuda Bauer	An excellent review of a number of major themes concerning the holocaust, including the theological position.
6. The dignity of difference	R. Jonathan Sacks	Not only must we be tolerant in order to avoid a clash of civilisations, we must believe in the right of people to be different. Religion should teach us this.
7. The era of the Mishnah and Talmud. In: A history of the Jewish people	HH Ben-Sasson (ed)	Comparing post-second Temple Israel with the Babylonian diaspora.
8. The pity of it all: A portrait of Jews in Germany 1743 - 1933	Amos Elon	A heart-rending tale of the emancipation and then flowering of German Jewish civilisation before the abyss.

Title	Author	Description
9. In Ishmael's house: A history of Jews in Muslim lands	Martin Gilbert	Anti-Semitism did occur in north Africa and the Arab world prior to modern Zionism, although it was never as bad as in Christendom.
10. Ordinary men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the final solution in Poland	Christopher Browning	A study of how 'ordinary' people can do monstrous things in certain circumstances.
11. A tale of love and darkness	Amos Oz	The poignant autobiography of modern Israel's greatest writer set in Jerusalem during the War of Independence.
12. The case for Israel	Alan Dershowitz	Written in a manner befitting a lawyer in which numerous common accusations against Israel are methodically 'refuted'.
13. New beginnings: From Japanese prison camps to aliyah	Shoshanna Lehrer	One of the 'Write your story' series from the Lamm Library of Australia, this one deals with Lehrer's escape from Vienna to the Dutch East Indies during WW2 and her subsequent life journey.
14. Jews in the early modern era. In: A history of the Jewish people	HH Ben-Sasson (ed)	Covers the era of the rise in anti-Semitism at the same time as the granting of emancipation in Europe, and the development of Zionism, Bundism and other left-wing movements.
15. The misunderstood Jew: the church and the scandal of the Jewish Jesus	Amy-Jill Levine	Explores the Jewish origins of Jesus and the relationship between early Christianity and Judaism. This has important ramifications for today.
16. Anti-Semite and Jew: an explanation of the etiology of hate	Jean-Paul Sartre	Sartre believed that man is completely free to make choices, including constructing views about Jews that leads them to become anti-Semitic. He was one of the first to explore the reasons behind 'the oldest hatred' immediately after WW2.
17. Secret city: The hidden Jews of Warsaw 1940 - 1945	Gunnar S Paulsson	More Jews survived for some time on the Aryan side of Warsaw, i.e. outside the ghetto, during WW2, than has generally been recognised. Paulsson calls this 'the secret city'.
18. My promised land: The triumph and tragedy of Israel	Ari Shavit	Describes the flaws and virtues of modern Israel. Appears lovingly but brutally honest, though some of his chapters, in particular the one on the 'expulsion' of Arabs from Lydda in 1948, are highly controversial.
19. Hellenism. In: A history of the Jewish people	HH Ben-Sasson (ed)	These chapters explain how a number of Jews were lured by Hellenism although they remained faithful to their religion. This dilemma of following the dominant culture or remaining 'different' remains true to this day.

Title	Author	Description
20. Yiddish: A nation of words	Miriam Weinstein	Tells the 1000 year story of Yiddish, from its origins most likely in the Rhineland, to its near demise in the Shoah, and its small-scale resurrection among the ultra-orthodox.
21. Like dreamers	Yossi Klein Halevi	The story of the Israeli paratroopers who reunited Jerusalem in 1967 and subsequently went into different ideological directions (left, religious, etc.)
22. Ben-Gurion: Father of modern Israel	Anita Shapira	Political and personal biography of the founder if modern Israel.
23. The Talmud: a biography	Harry Freedman	The meaning and the history of the Talmud, from 2000 years ago to now.
24. Between dignity and despair: Jewish life in Nazi Germany	Marion Kaplan	Focusing on the fate of families, especially women's experiences, in Nazi Germany.
25. Sacred trash: The lost and found world of the Cairo geniza	Adina Hoffman and Peter Cole	The story of the rediscovery of the geniza in the synagogue in old Cairo during the 19 th century, and its contribution to our knowledge of the Jewish middle ages.
26. The question of Palestine	Edward Said	The Palestinian 'narrative' told from their side. Essentially, the Palestinian Arabs are the natives and the Jews are invading colonists (in the spirit of colonialism).
27. The fiftieth gate	Mark Baker	A study of history and of memory which explores a son's confrontation with the terror of his parents' childhood. The story moves from Poland and Germany to Jerusalem and finally Melbourne.
28. The periodic table	Primo Levi	A collection of short autobiographical episodes from his early life, his internment in the Nazi camps, and post-war life as an industrial chemist.
29. Why be Jewish?	Edgar Bronfman	The author was a wealthy American businessman, philanthropist and president of the World Jewish Congress. The book promotes the benefits of secular Judaism. It promotes a love of the Jewish cultural, literary and intellectual tradition.
30. Emancipation	Michael Goldfarb	The liberation of Europe's Jews from the ghetto and how this led to revolution and renaissance. Essentially, the story of Jewish emancipation in the context of the enlightenment.
31. Jewish pirates of the Caribbean	Edward Kritzler	How Jews funded piracy to advance their religious and financial freedom in the New World, especially in the Caribbean.
32. Resurrecting Hebrew	Ilan Stavans	The story of Eliezer Ben-Yehudah and how he created modern, spoken Hebrew.
33. Rav Kook	Yehudah Mirsky	The biography of the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Israel (then Palestine). A philosopher, mystic and community leader.

Title	Author	Description
34. The Aleppo codex	Matti Friedman	The story of the oldest existing manuscript (codex) of the Tanach, from its origins among the Masoretes of the Galilee region of northern Israel, to its long sojourn in Aleppo, Syria, to its final resting place in modern Israel.
35. Outwitting history	Aaron Lansky	The adventures of a young man who rescued a million Yiddish books in America.
36. Walter Rathenau	Shulamit Volkov	Biography of the German foreign minister of the 1920s under the Weimar Republic.
37. Glueckel of Hamelin	Glueckel	The family memoir of Glueckel who was a female, German writer of the late 17 th and early 18 th centuries.
38. Menachem Begin	Daniel Gordis	Biography of the leader of the right wing movement and ultimately government in Israel.
39. The crisis of Zionism	Peter Beinart	Controversial examination of the crisis of Zionism among Jews in America.