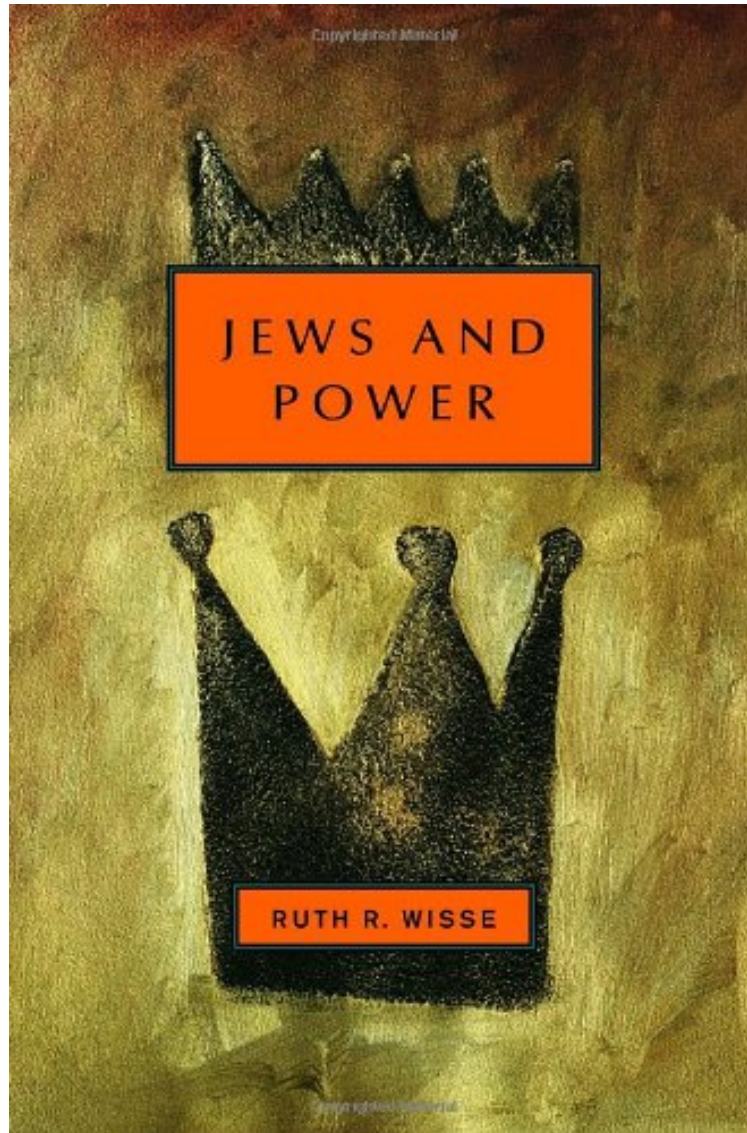


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Jews and Power (Jewish Encounters Series)

Ruth R. Wisse

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Ruth R. Wisse : Jews and Power (Jewish Encounters Series) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Jews and Power (Jewish Encounters Series):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Wisse's Revelation About Jews and their Relationship to Power By Nadene Goldfoot I just finished this marvelous small book of 184 pages of powerful thoughts about the history of Jews and how they got to re-establish Israel once again. It's a book written on a very high level so must be read slowly and thoughtfully or ideas will be missed. Ms. Wisse has a background of Yiddish literature as well as Jewish history and

blends facts in to prove every thought she brings out just like a debator. She brings out the fact that my Jewish ancestors had to learn the skill of accomodation in the hostile environments that they lived in after losing their land and bounced from one country to another in trying to be accepted. The author is two years younger than myself and was born in Central Eastern Europe so faced a life of being a refugee. Her family had only 3 years to manage to get out of Europe before it was too late as the door closed by May of 1939 for the majority. Since the book was printed in 2007, I would love to read a follow-up to see what she thinks of these past six years. Her thoughts have been right on target with mine in the book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Jewish Politics By Jordan As the saying goes: Two Jews, three opinions. Jewish politics has a long history, as Wisse explains in her thought-provoking analysis and reflection on the Jewish relationship to political power through the ages. Her discussion of Jewish self-blame piqued my interest: According to the theory, Jews have found a way to criticize themselves for their political failings since the Babylonian Exile 2,500 years ago as a way to maintain their moral agency through history and ward off a sense of hopeless victimhood. Consequently, this tendency to be self-critical has prepared them to flourish in liberal democratic societies. Taken to an extreme, however, it has blinded generations of Jews from seeing that sometimes, there are real, external threats over which Jews have little or no control. The last third of the book gets a little polemical in an attempt to shift the blame game of the Arab-Israeli conflict in favor of the Jewish perspective, but overall, a great read. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting and insightful analysis of Jews' way of dealing with ... By Customer Interesting and insightful analysis of Jews' way of dealing with their powerlessness over the two millenia that they were in exile, and how that experience is manifested in modern day Israel. The book, while short, is somewhat difficult to read and I found taht i needed to reread some paragraphs several times in order to absorb the meaning.

Part of the Jewish Encounter series Taking in everything from the Kingdom of David to the Oslo Accords, Ruth Wisse offers a radical new way to think about the Jewish relationship to power. Traditional Jews believed that upholding the covenant with God constituted a treaty with the most powerful force in the universe; this later transformed itself into a belief that, unburdened by a military, Jews could pursue their religious mission on a purely moral plain. Wisse, an eminent professor of comparative literature at Harvard, demonstrates how Jewish political weakness both increased Jewish vulnerability to scapegoating and violence, and unwittingly goaded power-seeking nations to cast Jews as perpetual targets. Although she sees hope in the State of Israel, Wisse questions the way the strategies of the Diaspora continue to drive the Jewish state, echoing Abba Eban's observation that Israel was the only nation to win a war and then sue for peace. And then she draws a persuasive parallel to the United States today, as it struggles to figure out how a liberal democracy can face off against enemies who view Western morality as weakness. This deeply provocative book is sure to stir debate both inside and outside the Jewish world. Wisse's narrative offers a compelling argument that is rich with history and bristling with contemporary urgency.

From Publishers Weekly This survey of Jewish history highlights the political aspect of Jewish experience, beginning with the observation that in the Hebrew Bible, Jewish power came through military heroics. By the time of the Roman conquest in A.D. 70, the Talmudic rabbis changed the narrative, blaming defeat on internal dissension, thus elevating the need for political discipline above military power. A Harvard professor of Yiddish and comparative literature, Wisse is keen to study how the politics of Jews occasions the politics of what she terms anti-Jews. For instance, she asserts that Allied leaders entered WWII not to save Europe's Jews but in order to defeat the Nazis, who were also anti-Jews. Similarly, the author says, President Bush was provoked to fight anti-Jewish terrorists by 9/11. Yet in both cases, isolationists accused the administration of caving in to Jewish demands that damaged American interests. Even the founding of Israel, she implies, has not normalized Jews' political position in the world. Palestinians, she says, have forged a national identity in obsessive opposition to Israel, and other nations have exploited Israel for their own political ends. Although her prose is sometimes opaque, Wisse is in fine form with well-reasoned, self-assured arguments bound to provoke heated debate among interested intellectuals. (Aug. 28) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist Wisse believes that Jews figure more prominently in the study of religion than they do in the study of government or political theory. To address this deficiency, she writes, this book highlights the political aspect of Jewish experience. In particular, Wisse says, she wants to "see how the politics of Jews occasions the politics of anti-Jews. The tendency of Jews to seek fault in themselves is part of the harmful pattern I hope to expose." This is a difficult thesis to examine, but Wisse gets her points across in a clear and convincing way. This is the eighth volume in the Jewish Encounters series, and 18 more titles are forthcoming. Wisse, the author of *The Sehlemiel As Modern Hero* (1984), *The Well*, and *The Shtetl and Other Modern Yiddish Novellas* (1986), is a professor of comparative literature at Harvard University. Cohen, George Praise for Ruth Wisse's *Jews and Power* In an era of deepening political and moral confusion, Ruth Wisse supplies a voice that is both clarion and courageous. Hers is a vital message for anyone who cares about Israel's fate and the future of the Jewish people. *Jews and Power* is a book for our times and a cogent call for clarity. Michael Oren, author of *Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present* Wisse's brilliantly discerning analysis

supplies insights so historically striking, and so currently indispensable, that no honest thinker can do without them. Cynthia Ozick, author of *Heir to the Glimmering World* "A book . . . that celebrates the Jewish return to sovereign power, in all its promise and complexity, is as unusual as it is welcome. Wisse has written such a book . . . [Jews and Power is] a good, fighting book that contains much information in few pages." *New York Times Book Review* "Challenging, erudite and penetrating. . . Wisse shows no fear in these pages in saying exactly what she thinks, and you can't help but be impressed with her chutzpah, even if you totally disagree with her . . . Jews and Power makes no claim for objectivity, but it is an elucidating book. It will cause liberals to question their self-consciousness about Israel, since Wisse's argument about Jewish apologism challenges liberal ideas of victimhood. For conservatives, the book offers an intellectual understanding of what otherwise might seem to be only tribalistic loyalties." *Los Angeles Times*