



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

By Melvin Konner

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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:

Allison Stiffler:

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 information inside this publication incredible fresh, you will get details which is getting deeper you actually read a lot of information you will get. This kind of *The Jewish Body: An Anatomical History of the Jewish People (Jewish Encounters Series)* without we recognize teach the one who reading it become critical in pondering and analyzing. Don't possibly be worry *The Jewish Body: An Anatomical History of the Jewish People (Jewish Encounters Series)* can bring once you are and not make your tote space or bookshelves' grow to be full because you can have it in your lovely laptop even mobile phone. This *The Jewish Body: An Anatomical History of the Jewish People (Jewish Encounters Series)* having very good arrangement in word and layout, so you will not sense uninterested in reading.

David Marx:

Nowadays reading books are more than want or need but also become a life style. This reading habit give you lot of advantages. The huge benefits you got of course the knowledge the rest of the information inside the book in which improve your knowledge and information. The details you get based on what kind of publication you read, if you want send more knowledge just go with schooling books but if you want truly feel happy read one together with theme for entertaining like comic or novel. Often the *The Jewish Body: An Anatomical History of the Jewish People (Jewish Encounters Series)* is kind of guide which is giving the reader erratic experience.

Ruth Williams:

Reading a book for being new life style in this 12 months; every people loves to learn a book. When you read a book you can get a lot of benefit. When you read books, you can improve your knowledge, due to the fact book has a lot of information onto it. The information that you will get depend on what sorts of book that you have read. If you would like get information about your review, you can read education books, but if you want to entertain yourself you can read a fiction books, such us novel, comics, along with soon. The *The Jewish Body: An Anatomical History of the Jewish People (Jewish Encounters Series)* provide you with new experience in reading through a book.

Daniel Downey:

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