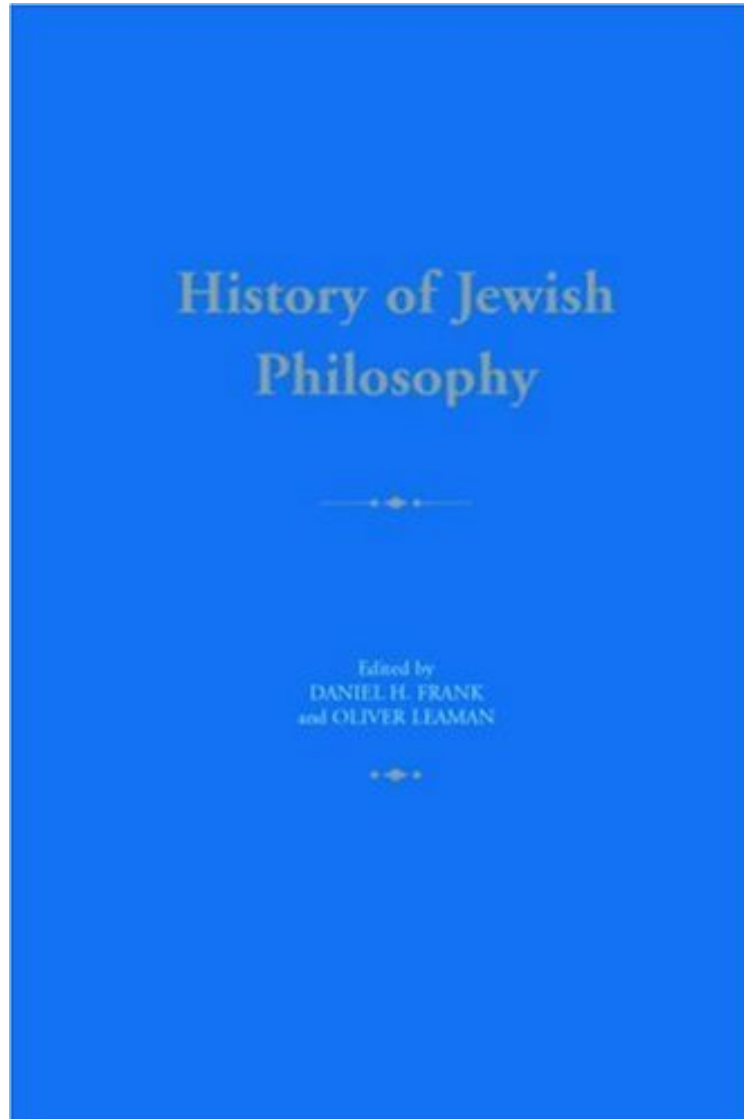


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From Brand: Routledge : History of Jewish Philosophy (Routledge History of World Philosophies) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised History of Jewish Philosophy (Routledge History of World Philosophies):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Frank's History of Jewish Philosophy By Jerry Newman A well written text on the complexities of historical Jewish philosophers and their philosophies. The text looks at each period

in light of the historical events happening and the philosophies of other religions that were happening around it. As with any in depth study of philosophy, it is not an easy read, but certainly an excellent text on it's difficult subject. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Excellent scholarly history of Jewish Philosophy By Greg To the outsider, Jewish philosophy, like the religion of Judaism itself, can seem somewhat mysterious. Yet in the 20th century, many of the greatest philosophers came from Jewish backgrounds, such as Edmund Husserl, Edith Stein, Walter Kaufmann, Hannah Arendt and many others. Philosophy has had an interesting if complicated relationship to the Jewish faith and way of life, yet Philosophy is strongly indebted to the meditations of people like Philo, Moses Maimonides, Spinoza and others when it comes to deep philosophical questions, especially relating to the Philosophy of Religion. This volume contains a number of essays written by leading scholars on Jewish philosophy, and ranges from Jewish Philosophy in the time of Philo Judeaus to Jewish philosophy in the 20th century. Scholars and students in philosophy, theology, comparative religion or those who are interested in Judaism will have a rich addition to their knowledge of Jewish culture and Philosophy. 11 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Takes a lot of knowledge for granted By Ralph Blumenau This massive book, consisting of contributions from 35 scholars, is obviously a valuable and learned resource for anyone interested in Jewish philosophy, and it contains much illuminating material. However, that it is "accessible to general readers as well as to scholars", as one of the blurbs on the back cover of the book reads, is true of only a few of its 39 chapters. The bulk of the book is certainly not suitable for anyone who is not already familiar with philosophy in general, with technical philosophical vocabulary in particular, or has a good knowledge of Judaism. In no way is this book comparable in approach and style with books written for the general public, such as Bertrand Russell's History of Western Philosophy (or, for that matter, my own Philosophy and Living). Indeed, the style of writing can sometimes only be described as constipated. True, it is difficult (though not impossible) to write lucidly for the general public about medieval philosophy. The medieval chapters account for some 400 of the 900-odd pages of the book; and very tedious they are, as philosophers debate over and over again such questions as whether the world was created ex nihilo or not, whether God has attributes or not (some thinkers considering attributes a derogation to God's unity), and how Free Will can be reconciled with God's foreknowledge. The trouble lies in the relationship between Philosophy and Theology. Aquinas differentiated between, on the one hand, "Revealed Theology", which starts with Revelation about God as an indisputable given and as the basis of Faith from which Reason then makes certain deductions, and, on the other, "Natural Theology", which starts with the experience of nature or created things and uses Reason to argue from that experience - a process which, for Aquinas, aims at - and, rightly used, must lead to - an intellectual knowledge of God. Many medieval Islamic and Jewish philosophers took the same line. Philosophy and Theology will part company when philosophers not only do not accept (as most medieval philosophers did) that the knowledge of God is the aim of philosophy, but actually use Reason to challenge the truth of revealed knowledge, including in extreme cases, the truth of the existence of God. Until that happens, however, it is not always easy to tell whether a certain argument is theological or philosophical. The book under review raises this difficulty on occasions, but is then prepared to discuss as philosophy some positions which, to me at least, cannot be called philosophical at all. The most outstanding of these is the mysticism of the Kabbalah, the subject of a particularly obscure chapter (chapter 19) in the book. It is a legitimate philosophical position to show that certain parts of the Torah lend themselves to metaphorical interpretation so that they can correspond with Reason; likewise there is a legitimate philosophical case to be made that we need to allow for mystical experiences which are not subject to Reason. But to go beyond that and to describe as philosophical an exegesis of Biblical texts which depends on numbers or on letters to which numerical values are given is, to say the least, a distortion of the rational procedures which philosophy requires. And what does it mean to describe any philosophy as specifically Jewish? It is most obviously Jewish when it concerns itself with matters that are peculiar to Judaism, such as the nature of God's Covenant with Israel. It is less uniquely Jewish when it applies the same philosophical concepts to Jewish sources (the Jewish Bible, the Talmud etc.) as Islamic philosophers apply to the Koran, the hadiths and the sharia. And what if the author is known to have been a Jew, irrespective of any specifically Jewish content in his philosophy? What about Spinoza, excommunicated by the Jewish authorities, consequently (as the chapter on him shows) evincing bitterness and hostility to Judaism, and developing a philosophy which has nothing to do with Judaism? Spinoza arguably draws less on the thinkers of other traditions than any of the other philosophers mentioned in the book. I would argue that he is one of the four Jewish-born thinkers whose originality has massively influenced European civilization. (The other three, Marx, Freud, and Einstein, are not included in this book, the first two presumably because they are not considered philosophers.) What the book brings out very strongly is how all the other major post-biblical Jewish thinkers were influenced by the non-Jewish environment in which they lived and so by the thought of non-Jewish philosophers. It traces the influence of Hellenism on such as Philo of Alexandria; of the Islamic Aristotelianism of Al-Farabi, Avicenna and Averros on Maimonides and the Maimonideans; of the Enlightenment on Moses Mendelssohn; of Hegelianism on the Wissenschaft des Judentums; of Kant on Samuel Rafael Hirsch and Hermann Cohen; of Herder and nationalism on Zionism. Only Maimonides, though himself influenced by Arabic philosophy, in turn exercised an appreciable influence over Thomist Christianity; and Spinoza, as I have already said, was central in shaping the Radical Enlightenment. Spinoza could do this because in Holland the Jews were emancipated. Likewise there was

briefly some relaxation of persecution in Renaissance Italy, in which context the Jewish Kabbalah was taken up by Pico della Mirandola and led to the development of a Christian Cabbalah. But these were exception between the time of Maimonides and that of Mendelssohn. During that period hardly any intellectual interaction between Jews and non-Jews took place. It was during that period that the Jews in most European countries were ghettoized and to some extent also ghettoized themselves intellectually, in that the rabbis at the time welcomed and reinforced this isolation. Although the ghettos still existed in the time of Mendelssohn, he was himself accepted by the philosophers of the German Enlightenment; and once the ghettos were abolished by the French Revolution, the fruitful interplay between Jewish and non-Jewish thought could again resume.

Jewish philosophy is often presented as an addendum to Jewish religion rather than as a rich and varied tradition in its own right, but the History of Jewish Philosophy explores the entire scope and variety of Jewish philosophy from philosophical interpretations of the Bible right up to contemporary Jewish feminist and postmodernist thought. The links between Jewish philosophy and its wider cultural context are stressed, building up a comprehensive and historically sensitive view of Jewish philosophy and its place in the development of philosophy as a whole. Includes: Detailed discussions of the most important Jewish philosophers and philosophical movements Descriptions of the social and cultural contexts in which Jewish philosophical thought developed throughout the centuries Contributions by 35 leading scholars in the field, from Britain, Canada, Israel and the US Detailed and extensive bibliographies

"This anthology of articles on Jewish philosophy is organized under four chronological periods ... This volume is well conceived, and it is obvious that the editors worked hard to shape the individual contributions into a coherent research tool that will be useful to scholars, students, and laypersons for years to come."-"Choice, May 1997 "The clarity of the writing style in many of the essays makes the book accessible to general readers as well as to scholars. "History of Jewish Philosophy is an indispensable reference that brilliantly captures in one volume the broad range of Jewish philosophy. Libraries should be urged by their Jewish patrons to acquire this essential volume.."-Dade Jewish Journal, 16-22 May 1997 About the Author Daniel H. Frank is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Kentucky and editor of Commandment and Community (1995). Oliver Leaman is Zantker Professor of Judaic Studies at the University of Kentucky and co-editor of The History of Islamic Philosophy (1996). With Charles H. Manekin, they are the editors of the Jewish Philosophy Reader (Routledge 2000), a sourcebook of primary text complementing this history.