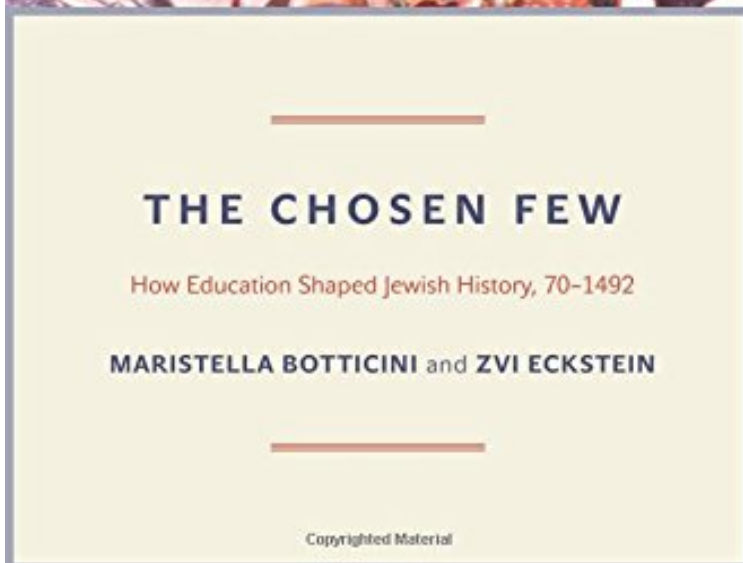


(Download ebook) The Chosen Few: How Education Shaped Jewish History, 70-1492 (The Princeton Economic History of the Western World)

The Chosen Few: How Education Shaped Jewish History, 70-1492 (The Princeton Economic History of the Western World)

Maristella Botticini, Zvi Eckstein
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Maristella Botticini, Zvi Eckstein : The Chosen Few: How Education Shaped Jewish History, 70-1492 (The Princeton Economic History of the Western World) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Chosen Few: How Education Shaped Jewish History, 70-1492 (The Princeton Economic History of the Western World):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A model with strong explanatory power
By Joel in Somerville
One of the best history books I have ever read. Up there with *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. The authors state their thesis early in the book, and my initial response was profound skepticism. I thought the thesis sounded okay, but I assumed that the dearth of information we have today about life 1500 years ago would make this book nothing more than an exercise in unfounded speculation. However, the authors were quite thoughtful about substantiating their claims, and I thought in particular their usage of the Cairo Geniza manuscripts was fascinating. *The Chosen Few* starts by examining the era of Jewish history that followed the destruction of the Second Temple, and describes choices made by Jewish leaders at that time in response to the upheaval. These choices, which radically altered Jewish culture and education, impacted the migration patterns and occupational choices made by Jews for the next thousand years. If you're interested in pursuing this topic further, there's a chapter in a book by Thomas Sowell that I think ties in well with *The Chosen Few*. The book is called "Black Rednecks and White Liberals," and despite the weird title, it contains a really interesting chapter on Jewish history.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A brilliant new perspective on Jewish history and culture and excellence
By John V. Baumgold
Worthy reading for anyone interested in intellectual history. A lucid explanation of Jewish excellence rooted in culturally enforced literacy. The presentation is even-handed. In addition to the boon the problems and destructiveness of this cultural norm are presented unflinchingly. For example there were times when the Jewish population in the world shrank because many families could not meet the financial cost of a male child going to school rather than going to work. The conflict between financial necessity and the demands of culture resulted in substantial abandonment of Judaism and religious conversion. The cultural norm was uncompromising and an illiterate Jew was labeled an "am ha'aretz"; a perniciously degrading epithet. Don't miss this volume; it is excellent.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Very insightful and educational
By Erica J Woolf
I have been thinking about all the times that Jews have been persecuted and ejected from countries starting in ancient times. I started looking for books explaining how they became who they are and why they were treated so badly over the centuries. This book gave some very interesting information and brought to light the happenings from the destruction of the second Temple up to 1492. I found it fascinating and very educational. I did have a problem, with two chapters where the authors used algebra to explain various timeframes. I actually had to skip those chapters. - way too deep to get through.

In 70 CE, the Jews were an agrarian and illiterate people living mostly in the Land of Israel and Mesopotamia. By 1492 the Jewish people had become a small group of literate urbanites specializing in crafts, trade, moneylending, and medicine in hundreds of places across the Old World, from Seville to Mangalore. What caused this radical change? *The Chosen Few* presents a new answer to this question by applying the lens of economic analysis to the key facts of fifteen formative centuries of Jewish history. Maristella Botticini and Zvi Eckstein offer a powerful new explanation of one of the most significant transformations in Jewish history while also providing fresh insights into the growing debate about the social and economic impact of religion.

Winner of the 2012 National Jewish Book Award in Scholarship
One of Jewish Ideas Daily.com's 40 Best Jewish Books of 2012 "[A]mbitious . . . systematically dismantle much of the conventional wisdom about medieval Jewish history."--Jonathan B. Krasner, *Forward* "[W]here so many have simply taken as a given universal literacy among Jews, [Botticini and Eckstein] find that a majority of Jews actually weren't willing to invest in Jewish education, with the shocking result that more than two-thirds of the Jewish community disappeared toward the end of the first millennium. . . . The astonishing theory presented here has great implications for both the Jewish community and the broader world today."--Steven Weiss, *Slate* "[E]ventually, *The Chosen Few* will have changed the course of history in the Middle East . . . as part of a broad reinterpretation of the history of the peopling of the world, underway for a century and a half, that has begun gathering force since the 1990s. . . . This may be the first you have heard about *The Chosen Few*, but I pretty much guarantee you that it will not be the last."--David Warsh, *Economic Principles* "[P]rovocative."--Choice "Botticini and Eckstein's simple yet sophisticated human capital analysis provides new insights into Jewish history for the fourteen centuries covered in this book. . . . [Their] methodology yields a very convincing Cliometric analysis that we can expect to inform all future economic histories of the Jews between 70 and 1492."--Carmel U. Chiswick, *EH.net* "I found *The Chosen Few*, a book on Jewish economic history by Maristella Botticini and Zvi Eckstein, enormously enlightening and relevant to the draft-the-Haredim debate."--Shlomo Maital, *Jerusalem Report* "If you've ever wondered how the Chosen People survived the vagaries of history, reading *The Chosen Few* will give you answers you cannot find anywhere else."--Huffington Post "This is a trailblazing, original, illuminating and horizon-broadening book."--Manuel Trajtenberg, *Haaretz* From the Back Cover "Maristella Botticini and Zvi Eckstein have written a remarkably interesting book with a new hypothesis about the occupational structure of the Jews. The authors adduce serious evidence for their hypothesis, which lays stress on the requirement introduced nearly 2,000 years ago for universal male literacy among the Jews. This is a fascinating and persuasive combination of history and economics, worth reading by all, even the unhappy few who like neither history nor economics."--Stanley Fischer, governor of the Bank of Israel "The Chosen Few is a masterpiece: an ambitious, informed, and inspirational

reinterpretation of Jewish social and economic history."--Avner Greif, Stanford University

"In this bracing work of economic history, Maristella Botticini and Zvi Eckstein demonstrate how literacy and contract law combined to give Jews a competitive advantage in urbanizing societies. Sure to generate controversy, *The Chosen Few* takes on one of the truly big questions in Jewish history and sheds intriguing new light on it."--David Biale, University of California, Davis

"Botticini and Eckstein are changing the way economic historians think about Jewish history, and this seminal book will also change the way historians, Jewish studies scholars, and general readers think about the subject. Indeed, the importance of this book can scarcely be exaggerated. An excellent example of economic history that is accessible to general readers, *The Chosen Few* makes a compelling case for an exciting new perspective that will inspire much further research and be the focus of attention for years to come."--Carmel Chiswick, George Washington University

"This is a mature, original, and significant new attempt to answer one of the most vexing problems in Jewish and economic history. For the general reader it provides an incisive view of the salient facts of Jewish economic history. For the economic historian it opens up a challenging new thesis. And for historians of Judaism and religion it provides a new interpretation of the social and economic impact of religion."--Michael Toch, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

About the Author
Maristella Botticini is professor of economics, as well as director and fellow of the Innocenzo Gasparini Institute for Economic Research (IGIER), at Bocconi University in Milan. Zvi Eckstein is dean of the Arison School of Business and of the School of Economics at IDC Herzliya in Herzliya, Israel; Judith C. and William G. Bollinger visiting professor in the Finance Department at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania; and emeritus professor in the Eitan Berglas School of Economics at Tel Aviv University.