



John Lennon and the Jews

Ze'ev Maghen

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In a post-modern world, where identities blur and traditions give way to globalization, "why be Jewish?" has become the most urgent question for Jewish survival. With wit, irreverence, and more than a little old-fashioned hutzpah, Ze'ev Maghen presents the most compelling, outrageously funny defense of Jewish identity in our time.

John Lennon and the Jews Details

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Author : Ze'ev Maghen

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From Reader Review John Lennon and the Jews for online ebook

Gil Troy says

This is a superb book, a fun reading roller coaster, truly, as the author calls it, a philosophical rampage. The book is a must read for Jews, explaining the joy of Judaism, with all its delightful idiosyncrasies, celebrating the power of tribalism, of belonging, of being a part of an historical people. The book is a must read for non-Jews too, in that it tackles the false god of universalism, proving that when there's no heaven or hell, no countries, no allegiances, no loyalties, we're all, as John Lennon sang, just living for today-ay-ay, with no anchors, no ballasts, no meaning. It's an eloquent warning against what I call in my book "The Age of Clinton" - the Republic of Nothing and the Republic of Everything. We actually need to belong to a Republic of Something, we need a home base that stands for some ideals, for key values, we need as humans connections beyond the individual but not so broad as to be global.

Maghen's riff on loving everyone so much that you love no one at all is the highlight of the book -- with a vividly rendered scene of a proposal without what he calls "preferential love" -- you say, I love you, I love you, I love, I love you as much as that person walking by, as anyone in the area, etc, and, of course, you've made a mockery of love. So too with nationhood, which is why Zionism, American nationalism, these kinds of affiliations still work and still satisfy even in our postmodern world, and without squelching individualism.

Jonathan Meola says

Just finished reading this book, and my first reaction was that the author must have written it during a series of late-night coffee & cigarette fueled rants... The text vibrates with that kind of manic energy. What Professor Maghen does manage to do is illustrate the follies of adapting universalism and rationalism as a guiding philosophy for life, while managing to advocate the unique particularism that is being a part of the Jewish people/nation. Hazak u'Baruch!

Barbara says

"John Lennon and the Jews" is Ze'ev Maghen's answer to the question of what it means to be Jewish in today's world. I enjoyed the overall messages and themes for the reasons outlined below, but ultimately was never really able to get truly absorbed.

The Good:

- As a reader, this book/author made me think, and did not only raise religious questions, but ethical and philosophical ones as well.
- The parts where the author shares his own stories were great and really sped up the whole book. For example, the intro where he met his muses at the airport, his love for matzah and his stories surrounding it, etc., were easily most enjoyable parts.
- Thoughtful, organized and well argued; it's hard not to agree with every point the author makes.

The Bad:

- For what was supposed to be a modern take, many parts were overly academic and unnecessarily wordy, frequently bordering on rambling. This was taking me so long to read that I was able to skim full paragraphs and not miss out on the point that the author was trying to make.

Overall, what this book lacked in interest it made up for in education; thank you to the publisher/Goodreads giveaway for my copy!

Toniann says

Best expressed by Masha Rifkin, managing editor of JointMedia News Service.

John Lennon and The Jews: A Philosophical Rampage

Using bits of philosophy, history, and logical deduction, Maghen argues that Lennon's dream, universalism -- the desire for the world to live "as one" with no differentiating characteristics -- actually spells out the destruction of what is at the core of being human.

To illustrate this point, Maghen speaks directly to you, a tone consistent throughout the book, and asks what you value most in life. Pre-empting the excuses and circumventions most of us would take to get around the question, Maghen focuses us, asks the question again, and delivers the answer we may have already known subconsciously: love.

More...<http://www.soundlyjewish.org/index.ph...>

Tabitha Jones says

10 out of 5 stars. A million out of 5 stars.

A must read.

Agwi says

Wah!

Phyllis Krall says

The author shows us how the universalism that John Lennon "imagined" with "no religion" would create a nothingness in the world. Judaism cannot persevere unless its people continue to carry on their beliefs,

passion and love continually.

The book is serious but is also written with humor and passion, describing the traditions of the Jewish people, which have survived from century to century. The vines of Judaism must be nourished in order to keep the religion eternal.

I received this book from Goodreads in exchange for an honest review. It was very enlightening and enjoyable to read, and taught me many things about my faith.

cameron says

This may not be the greatest book on what it means to be Jewish, but it is certainly amusing and passionate and unique and makes interesting arguments. Answering John Lenin's lyrics to "Imagine", he begs to differ with the idea of all of us being one, no wars or boundaries, no religion too.

However, it's funny as hell discussing familial Jewish traits and serious and intelligent making a case for people taking joy in their separateness.

Short book. Worth the read, though I don't agree with all of it. I look forward to the inevitable and endless discussions it will provoke.

Andrew Pessin says

This is a stunningly excellent book, that every Jew should read, and most non-Jews too. Maghen essentially creates a whole new genre of writing -- the rampage -- and he (and it) are brilliant -- very funny, very moving, very insightful, yet covering serious and substantive issues ... In brief this book explains why, if you're Jewish, you should BE Jewish -- how to deal with the fact that it seems so irrational, anti-universalist, even backwards to feel affiliated to a tribe -- you'll come out of this just loving Jewishness (and Maghen) no matter where you enter with respect to your Jewishness ... Read it just for the humor, the writing, the insight -- the substance is like a bonus!

Michael Connolly says

This is one of a very small number of books that I have found that argues in favor of preferential love. The author disparages universal love for all of humanity, where one loves everyone equally, as a false ideal. Maghen instead advocates preferential love for ones family and friends as the most important thing in life. Maghen also criticizes reason as being cold and heartless. What Maghen objects to is not reason based on common sense, but rather recent philosophical perversions of reason such as determinism and reductionism. The third theme of the book is that it is morally acceptable for Jews to exhibit tribal loyalty.

Adam says

This is a must-read for anyone who thinks about Jewish identity in the modern world.

Toby Press says

From Foreword Reviews: <https://www.forewordreviews.com/reviews/john-lennon-and-the-jews-a-philosophical-rampage>

Reviewed by Jeff Fleischer
May 27, 2015

Humor, pop-culture references, and personal anecdotes turn this philosophical analysis of Judaism into a thoughtful, relatable critique.

Ze'ev Maghen's *John Lennon and the Jews: A Philosophical Rampage* covers a lot of philosophical territory and crafts arguments against universalism and rationalism and in defense of religion. This new edition serves as a conversational take on a range of religious and philosophical issues.

Despite the title, John Lennon is only the book's jumping-off point. Maghen considers the lyrics of Lennon's classic "Imagine" and its vision of utopia, a dangerous notion. Maghen compares the song with a conversation he had with a trio of Hare Krishnas, and he organizes his book around responses to specific points they raised. Ultimately, Maghen is arguing in favor of group identity rather than universalism, focusing specifically on the bonds that hold together the Jewish community. For example, he rejects the notion of loving everyone equally, arguing that it is the specificity of love that makes it important and earned. He isn't arguing for his religion or community above any other, but for taking a classic "salad bowl" approach, in which differences are important and worth celebrating.

Magen writes well with casual style that makes use of devices like humor and pop-culture references to make the more ponderous philosophical musings feel less ponderous. The best parts of the book are his real-life anecdotes. Maghen is a natural storyteller, at his best when he's relating working overnight in a matzo factory and having to maintain the strict controls to keep the bread kosher, or experiences from his time in the Israel Defense Forces.

As for the philosophy, the book is more interesting than convincing, as Maghen explores a number of points in prose that often feels like a smart writer musing aloud. The book does sometimes have a tendency to get hung up on semantics; for example, a long section critiquing the word "Judaism" is based on its historical origins. The book often sets up straw men or ascribes assumptions to the reader. Still, Maghen is thoughtful and funny—the book is an enjoyable read.

Katrina K says

Goodreads win. Will read and review one received.

This was an interesting read. It was quick to get through. I would recommend it to all Jewish and non-jewish people. The author did a great job of writing this book. I loved how the author was basically talking to the reader. A definite must read.

Jonathan Meola says

Just finished reading this book, and my first reaction was that the author must have written it during a series of late-night coffee & cigarette fueled rants... The text vibrates with that kind of manic energy. What Professor Maghen does manage to do is illustrate the follies of adapting universalism and rationalism as a guiding philosophy for life, while managing to advocate the unique particularism that is being a part of the Jewish people/nation. Hazak u'Baruch!

Becky says

I mostly read this book because my friend read it and the title was catchy. Maghen made some good points about universalism, and I enjoyed his explanation as to why Judaism isn't a religion. However, I got kind of tired of (or worn down by) the pace of the book, so after a hundred pages or so, I skimmed the rest. I've never particularly enjoyed philosophical discussions, so I probably wouldn't have bitten off this book had I known what it's about to begin with. Don't judge a book by its title or cover (oops).
