

The best books of 2024: Top picks on Judaism, Israel, and global issues

written by David M. Weinberg | 27.05.2025

I enjoy sharing books with others, which was the genesis of this annual list. Six previous reviews have included monographs by Rabbis Asher Weiss, Haim Sabato, Jonathan Sacks, and Steven Pruzansky, and thinkers or public figures such as Benjamin Netanyahu, Gil Troy, Henry Kissinger, Natan Sharansky, and others. Here is my new selection of recent best reads.

The best books of 2024, ranked

Judaism: A Love Story by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin (Koren-Maggid). Through storytelling and passionate argumentation, Riskin takes readers on a journey into “the enduring love story between the Jewish people and their compassionate God.” He traces the roots of Jewish ethics through biblical narratives, which he argues are the basis for the moral justice and compassionate righteousness that is the nation’s mission. In many ways, this book caps Riskin’s unique career and character.

Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Jew: Learning to Love the Lessons of Jew-Hatred by Rabbi Raphael Shore (Beverly House). An exploration of antisemitism for those who seek a just and moral world. Shore wants Jews to deepen their Jewish commitments with confidence and optimism as an antidote to antisemitism. His powerful new documentary film, *Tragic Awakening*, starring Arab human rights activist Rawan Osman, is based on the book.

Torah Topics: A Series of Essays by Prof. Nathan Aviezer (Ktav). This professor of theoretical physics has published four famous books reconciling science and religion. Here, he offers 21 brilliant Torah-based homilies on topics that range from the central Shema prayer and the Exodus from Egypt to the problematics of prophecy.

Conceived in Hope by Dr. Chana Tannenbaum (Koren-Maggid). This Torah scholar looks at infertility in the Bible to study women, mothers, societal roles and

expectations in male-dominated societies, issues of lineage and inheritance, and more. Book chapters are alternately painful and uplifting, with deep psychological and theological insight.

In a Yellow Wood: Selected Stories and Essays by Cynthia Ozick (Everyman's Library/Penguin Random House). Ozick is the most illustrious American writer of today and a Jew of piercing and daring insight who is still active at age 97. Here, she collates a selection of her 60-plus years of publishing – novels, short stories, essays, criticism, poetry, and plays – marked by her trademark mix of myth, memory, illusion, and social commentary wrapped in soaring language. I celebrate her as a penetrating critic of contemporary attitudes to Jews and Israel and as a cherished friend.

When the Stones Speak: The Remarkable Discovery of the City of David and What Israel's Enemies Don't Want You to Know by Doron Spielman (Center Street). This is the story of the rediscovery of the ancient City of David in Jerusalem and the powerful evidence that proves the Jewish people's historical and indigenous connection to the Holy Land. It offers compelling pushback against Palestinians and other denialists and is a gripping read.

The Assault on Judaism: The Existential Threat Is Coming from the West by Gol Klevy (Post Hill). The author argues that the assault on Judaism from the West is rapidly turning into a threat to US national security and global stability. He offers a paradigm shift, a recommitment to Herzlian Zionism as the core of Jewish faith, that can both protect Judaism and benefit the world.

On Democracies and Death Cults: Israel and the Future of Civilization by Douglas Murray (Broadside). Murray is one of the great, heroic defenders of Israel over the past two years. He contrasts Israel's democracy with the authoritarianism, extremism, and love of death over life that characterizes Hamas and its Western backers and shows how Islamists use the humanity of the West to spread their propaganda. A difficult, harrowing, and necessary read.

The Builder's Stone: How Jews and Christians Built the West – and Why Only They Can Save It by Melanie Phillips (Wicked Son). This brilliant Briton argues that Christianity and Western civilization can survive division, decadence, and demoralization only if they learn lessons in resilience and faith from Judaism and the State of Israel. Otherwise, they fall to radical secularism and Islamic

barbarism is not far off.

The Battle for the Jewish State: How Israel – and America – Can Win by Victoria Coates (Encounter). This former Trump administration national security official (now at the Heritage Foundation) skewers the Biden administration for abandoning Israel and the grand civilizational fight and argues, like Melanie Phillips, that we are in a broader military and cultural war that must be won for the sake not only of Israel but also of the US.

Israelophobia: The Newest Version of the Oldest Hatred and What to Do About It by Jake Wallis Simons (Constable). This superb writer (who was editor of The Jewish Chronicle in London) analyzes prejudiced coverage and intense scrutiny of Israel that so often veers into obsession and outright demonization and traces its origins from medieval European and Stalinist antisemitism to the present day. His next book, *Never Again? How the West Betrayed the Jews and Itself*, will be published in September.

Hamas's Human Shield Strategy in Gaza by Maj. Andrew Fox and Salo Aizenberg (Henry Jackson Society). This critically important report, almost book-length, exposes Hamas's exploitation of Gaza's civilian population over the past 19 months to fuel a global information war against Israel. The authors emphasize that turning Gaza's urban landscape into a battleground designed to maximize civilian harm and delegitimize Israel on the world stage is not incidental but a core tenet of Hamas's military doctrine.

The Titans of the Twentieth Century: How They Made History and the History They Made by Prof. Michael Mandelbaum (Oxford). One of the great US foreign policy experts and political historians of our day, Mandelbaum offers eight historical portraits of the most influential figures of the twentieth century: Woodrow Wilson, Vladimir Lenin, Adolf Hitler, Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Mohandas Gandhi, David Ben-Gurion, and Mao Zedong. Fascinating and incisive.

The Man Who Would Be King: Mohammed bin Salman and the Transformation of Saudi Arabia by Karen Elliott House (Harper, forthcoming in July). Based on lengthy and exclusive interviews with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and dozens of his associates and opponents, this eye-opening biography captures MBS's calculating, controversial, and confident character. The writer, a

former *Wall Street Journal* publisher who has covered Saudi Arabia for more than 45 years, reveals a Saudi leader “who is both Peter the Great and Ivan the Terrible.” (I received advance book excerpts).

The Power and the Money: The Epic Clashes Between Commanders in Chief and Titans of Industry by Tevi Troy (Regnery). This noted presidential historian takes readers on a journey through the biggest battles between CEOs (like John D. Rockefeller, Mark Zuckerberg, Katherine Graham, and Elon Musk) and the president of the US. The book reveals an intricate web of power, where business leaders need presidents, and presidents need business leaders, and each must step carefully or risk collateral damage. A perfect read for the current Trump moment.

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