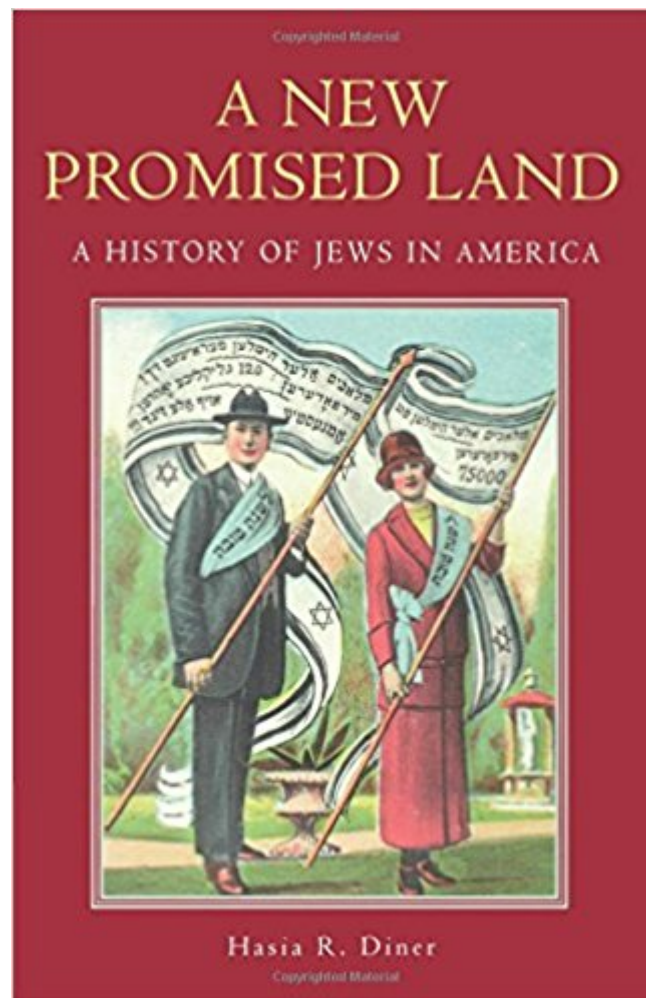




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# A New Promised Land: A History Of Jews In America (Religion In American Life)



## Synopsis

"An excellent Afikoman gift for the teen or young adult at the seder... Diner...writes in a clear style that pulls together that diverse entity known as the American Jewish community."--The Chicago Jewish Star  
An engaging chronicle of Jewish life in the United States, *A New Promised Land* reconstructs the multifaceted background and very American adaptations of this religious group, from the arrival of twenty-three Jews in the New World in 1654, through the development of the Orthodox, conservative, and Reform movements, to the ordination of Sally Priesand as the first woman rabbi in the United States. Hasia Diner supplies fascinating details about Jewish religious traditions, holidays, and sacred texts. In addition, she relates the history of the Jewish religious, political, and intellectual institutions in the United States, and addresses some of the biggest issues facing Jewish Americans today, including their increasingly complex relationship with Israel.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Begins in 1654 with the arrival of 23 Jews in New Amsterdam and follows the changes in Jewish-American life up to the present day.... Clear and lively. A host of archival photos and reproductions enhance the presentation. The author does a good job of explaining the basic tenets of Judaism... The glossary, index, chronology, and suggestions for further reading are useful for reports, but the tone of the narrative is conducive to pleasure reading as well."--School Library Journal  
"Concise overview... informative history... This panoramic view of Jewish American history will interest and inform teen readers and researchers."--Booklist  
"An excellent Afikoman gift for the

teen or young adult at the seder... Photographs and an attractive design invite both perusal and more in-depth reading... Diner...writes in a clear style that pulls together that diverse entity known as the American Jewish community."--The Chicago Jewish Star"Tells the fascinating story of how an ancient faith, despite trials, flourished and was reshaped in a new land..."--The Christian Science Monitor"Diner... addresses political and religious change with an unusual combination of clarity and complexity.... A good textbook provides the outlines of a broad history while laying the foundations for more detailed study. Jews in America does both very well. The book incorporates most of the figures, and many of the primary texts, that a student would encounter in a college-level survey of American Jewish history, yet it is neither convoluted nor cluttered. [It]... would also complement and enrich a more general class on American history or American ethnicity."--Religious Studies in Secondary Schools

Hasia R. Diner is Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Professor in American Jewish History at New York University. She is the author of *Hungering for America : Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration*, *Jewish Americans: The Immigrant Experience*, *Jews in America* (OUP, 1999), *In the Almost Promised Land: American Jews and Blacks, 1915-1935*, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880* and *Her Works Praise Her: A History of Jewish Women in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (with Beryl Lieff Benderly).

I am still reading this book. It is fascinating.

I didn't learn much new and encountered a pronounced bias in favor of Orthodox Judaism. I was interested in learning more about Jews in very early America and I did learn a little. I had heard there was a rabbi at George Washington's inauguration. This book mentions George Washington four times in connection with Jews and even mentions a letter from a Virginia congregation congratulating him on his inauguration but it never mentions a rabbi at the official ceremony. I began to think maybe it was an urban legend, but no, if you research elsewhere, you will find that there was a very prominent American-born rabbi, Gershom Mendes Seixas, at the inauguration, which I think is an important piece of American history in these days when so many people say the U.S. is a Christian country. I think Diner skips over him because he was not traditionally ordained. Diner says Irving Berlin "ceased to be a Jew." That was news to me and in fact it's not true. It's just that to DINER he ceased to be a Jew because he married a Gentile woman and his children were raised as Christians. While Berlin was not an observant Jew, there is no evidence that he renounced

Judaism and it is my understanding that he would be considered Jewish even by Orthodox standards. Berlin received honors from the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the New York YMHA. Diner tends toward broad generalizations such as saying the only ones who could prevent the Holocaust were American Jews (p. 88). She often makes it sound like all Jews were of a one mind politically/socially/philosophically, other than differences in religious observance. She never ever mentions Palestinians living in the area that Zionists wished to settle, never mentions the refugee problem. For all the depth with which she covers the Civil Rights movement and Jewish involvement and parallels, I think there should have been at least a brief explanation of slavery in America. This book has some value but I would not give it to a young person because I feel it is very skewed.

What Ms Diner covers, she covers well, but there are some omissions in this book that make it less than scholarly. Any comprehensive history of Jews in America ought to at least touch on Judah P Benjamin, yet he is strangely absent. This book focuses very narrowly on the Northeast, especially New York. While that does cover a lot of the Jewish experience in America, it's not the whole story.

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