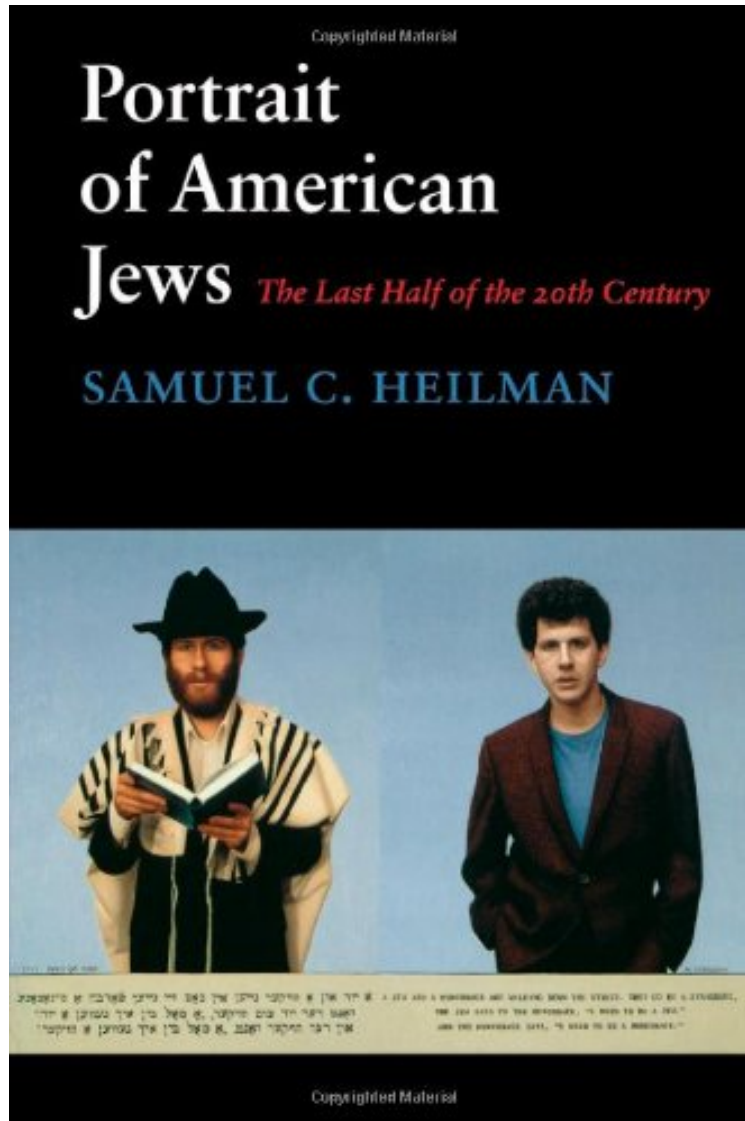


[Read and download] Portrait of American Jews: The Last Half of the Twentieth Century (Samuel and Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies)

Portrait of American Jews: The Last Half of the Twentieth Century (Samuel and Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies)

Samuel C. Heilman

*Download PDF | ePub | DOC | audiobook | ebooks



[Download](#) [Read Online](#)

#1338444 in Books 1995-11-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.00 x .52 x 6.00l, .69 #File Name: 0295974710208 pages | File size: 23.Mb

Samuel C. Heilman : Portrait of American Jews: The Last Half of the Twentieth Century (Samuel and Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Portrait of American Jews: The Last Half of the Twentieth Century (Samuel and Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Mitzvot cost gelt. Dated text. By Leib Gershon Mitchell This book was labeled (on) in a misleading way. One would believe that it was published in May of 2011. In point of fact, there is not a single reference from later than 1994 (nearly 20 years ago). The only point of this book is to test and see if some of the predictions/ speculations that Heilman made came true. And essentially it is this: Judaism today is the same thing as it was 19 years ago. Most are unaffiliated, Reform is the largest group, Conservative the second largest and Orthodox and Reconstructionist distant 3rd. The prose was not bad. But if you have to read something by Heilman, I would instead recommend either: *The Rebbe: The Life and Afterlife of Menachem Mendel Schneerson* or *Defenders of the Faith: Inside Ultra-Orthodox Jewry*. The most interesting part was at the end of the book when he got into discussion of factors that have limited Orthodoxy's taking over the world (of Judaism). One thing that he did mention is that: mitzvot cost gelt (it is so expensive to live an Orthodox life that people can't find enough donors to finance all the yehivot that they want. Nor can they afford to send all their children to Jewish day school if they have 12 of them per family). One thing that he didn't mention (and maybe this is because the research was not available-- but it is now in the NJPS) is that Orthodoxy has been constant [1] and that most people who are raised as Orthodox don't *stay* Orthodox [2]. There was some interesting discussion about the factors within Orthodoxy that might lead it to tear itself apart. And if not that, at least not to become a majority of Jews by Year X. As I think back over this book: It might have been on its strongest ground if it had gotten into some more discussion of aspects of Orthodoxy. Kiryas Joel got one single sentence. Three conclusions that I came away with were: 1. Judaism survived by negative pressure in the later years (=after Haskallah/ mass literacy). If people aren't forced (by life in a ghetto) or some other negative pressure to sustain an excessively burdensome rituals, then they won't do it. 2. Judaism as a race is in for people who are not religious. Judaism as a race is out for people who are religious. 3. Jewish people respond to the same incentives as anyone else. Most would opt for a less costly Judaism-lite, if given the choice (and, in fact, have when given the choice). Final verdict: Not recommended. And this is not because there is anything wrong with the book itself. Only because there are other, more current studies to answer the questions; theses that Heilman puts forth here.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A fascinating look at today's American Jews by a sociologist By A Customer This book efficiently, elegantly and in a highly readable way provides a close look at the situation of American Jews in the last five decades of the twentieth century. It covers the assimilationist trends of the 1950's the counterculture of the 1960's and 1970's and the division of the the 1980's and 1990's into a small core of committed Jews and a large periphery of Jews who are proud of their Jewish culture but barely attached to it. A must for anyone who wants to understand where today's American Jews have come from and where they are going.

Has America been a place that has preserved and protected Jewish life? Is it a place in which a Jewish future is ensured? Samuel Heilman, long-time observer of American Jewish life, grapples with these questions from a sociologist's perspective. He argues that the same conditions that have allowed Jews to live in relative security since the 1950s have also presented them with a greater challenge than did the adversity and upheaval of earlier years. The second half of the twentieth century has been a time when American Jews have experienced a minimum of prejudice and almost all domains of life have been accessible to them, but it has also been a time of assimilation, of swelling rates of intermarriage, and of large numbers ignoring their Jewishness completely. Jews have no trouble building synagogues, but they have all sorts of trouble filling them. The quality of Jewish education is perhaps higher than ever before, and the output of Jewish scholarship is overwhelming in its scope and quality, but most American Jews receive a minimum of religious education and can neither read nor comprehend the great corpus of Jewish literature in its Hebrew (or Aramaic) original. This is a time in America when there is no shame in being a Jew, and yet fewer American Jews seem to know what being a Jew means. How did this come to be? What does it portend for the Jewish future? This book endeavors to answer these questions by examining data gleaned from numerous sociological surveys. Heilman first discusses the decade of the fifties and the American Jewish quest for normalcy and mobility. He then details the polarization of American Jewry into active and passive elements in the sixties and seventies. Finally he looks at the eighties and nineties and the issues of Jewish survival and identity and the question of a Jewish future in America. He also considers generational variation, residential and marital patterns, institutional development (especially with regard to Jewish education), and Jewish political power and influence. This book is part of a stocktaking that has been occurring among Jews as the century in which their residence in America was firmly established comes to an end. Grounded in empirical detail, it provides a concise yet analytic evaluation of the meaning of the many studies and surveys of the last four and a half decades. Taking a long view of American Jewry, it is one of very few books that build on specific sociological data but get beyond its detail. All those who want to know what it means and has meant to be an American Jew will find this volume of interest.

From Publishers Weekly Basing his book on the lecture series he gave at the University of Washington, sociologist Heilman rehashes the problems of assimilation as it relates to the survival of American Jewry. Heilman discusses the postwar movement of Jews to the suburbs, the declines in Jewish birthrates, the rise in "outmarriage" and the "embarrassment and discomfort" of American Jews who felt "greater kinship to King Elvis than King David". Even as

he notes that a tiny minority of "actively Jewish Jews" sought renewed spiritual learning and observance through the Havurah movement, he realizes that most "Jewish-Americans" viewed those who kept up traditional observance as "trapped in... meaningless customs." Heilman sadly concludes that "Holocaust museums... and Jewish book fairs are not enough." This isn't news, really, having been covered in various studies, journals and books, but for those who are truly concerned about Jewish continuity, this alarm cannot be repeated enough, and Heilman's account will be a welcome roundup and addition to other evaluations of American Jewish life. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist This book is the offshoot of three lectures given by Heilman at the University of Washington in Seattle in 1993. Heilman calls it "a written record of my reflections on what choosing to be Jewish in America . . . since 1950 means." Insisting that the last four and a half decades of this century have been no less decisive than the first half, he maintains that this is a time when American Jews experience a minimum of prejudice, when almost all domains of life are open to them, but it is also a time of extraordinary assimilation and of large numbers of people ignoring their Jewishness completely. He concludes that Jews will turn in two directions: one toward Jewish life and the other--and larger group--toward a more secular life. He writes that the Jews' future is with those who return to Israel, "shining examples of what a Jew can be." To say the least, this is a stimulating and controversial work. George Cohen