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Arthur Hertzberg

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A controversial examination of the Jewish success story in America that questions notions of identity, assimilation, and ethnicity.

From Publishers Weekly "Jews in America, in Hertzberg's contentious, continually surprising history, faced deep-rooted anti-Semitism. By overcoming it, partly through assimilation, he asserts, American Jews have nearly lost their spiritual identity," PW commented. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal This insightful and provocative volume reinterprets the American Jewish experience, stressing continuities through time, the uneasiness of the Jewish encounter with America, the community's poor, uncultured, and antireligious roots, and the development of "Jewishness" in place of traditional Judaism. Hertzberg, a historian and intellectual, writes engagingly and presents American Jews with a "usable past." He eschews filiopietism and implicitly challenges the "at-home-in-America" theme that characterizes previous one-volume accounts. But much is left out of this history; some broad generalizations demand serious qualification; and--worst of all--errors abound. Not only are names, dates, and details wrong, but a major episode, a supposed 1854 court suit by Isaac M. Wise, never happened. While this is a stimulating work that raises significant questions, it must be used with caution. Still, for most libraries. Jewish Book Club main selection.-- Jonathan D. Sarna, Hebrew Union Coll. Jewish Inst. of Religion, Cincinnati Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. A useful and scrupulously fair account of what is a true American epic. (The New York Times Book) A trenchant history.... Arthur Hertzberg is sounding an alarm that no Jew can afford to ignore if he cares about the survival of American Jewry. (The Boston Globe) [Hertzberg's] book, which is a product of lived experience as well as wide reading, springs from dedication rather than detachment. It is certainly an affectionate narrative of achievements and of the notable Jews identified with them. (New York of Books)