

**JUDAISM FOR  
EVERYONE ...**  
*without DOGMA*



**BERNARDO SORJ**

## Judaism for Everyone ... without Dogma

*“Judaism for Everyone ... without Dogma represents a major contribution to the advancement of contemporary Judaism. It argues for a secular Judaism rooted in Jewish culture and humanistic and democratic values, for Jewish communities that respect pluralism, for a dialogue between Diaspora and the State of Israel that fosters the richness, and diversity of the Jewish people. For all these reasons, I strongly recommend this book.”*

—Yossi Beilin, Former Israel MP (Member of the Knesset), Minister of Religious Affairs, Justice, Economics and Planning, and leading participant in both the Oslo Accords and the Geneva Peace Initiative.

*“Bernardo Sorj has powerfully articulated the historical, and cultural grounding of the movement of Secular Humanistic Judaism. From the beginnings of Jewish evolution to today’s Jewish diversity, his insightful analysis of the modern Jewish experience, and his message of acceptance will resonate with cultural Jews worldwide.”*

—Rabbi Adam Chalom, Dean, North America, International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism.

*“Judaism for Everyone ... without Dogma offers a brilliant new approach to the future of an ancient people. Prof. Bernardo Sorj’s deep acquaintance with Jewish history, Jewish tradition, and the state of Jews around the world today, led him to the conclusion, that the way to save Judaism from extinction is to take the keys of the*

*gates to Judaism from the religious establishment. New Judaism should be pluralistic, democratic, and open to everyone."*

—Nahum Barnea, Political Scientist and Journalist, awarded with the Israel Prize for Communication in 2007.

*"Sorj positions humanistic Judaism as an antidote to irrationalism and dogma. He tells how humanistic Jews can embrace the past, without allowing it to dominate the present, by showing how we can simultaneously develop ties to tradition while becoming increasingly open to embracing all of humankind."*

—Roy Speckhardt, Executive Director, American Humanist Association.

*"Judaism for Everyone ... without Dogma provokes deep thinking for Jews and non-Jews alike by exploring the balance between emphasizing universal human aims and preserving the value of unique Jewish cultural history and tradition".*

—Yaakov Malkin, Author, and Professor of Aesthetics and Rhetorics at Tel Aviv University (Ret).

*"This is a most important book for Jews, and others from varied religious heritages, who wish to transcend narrow denominational viewpoints or have an archaic jaded view of Judaism. It brings Judaism to a level consistent with what we actually believe, and not what we are told to accept. It represents a most articulate, and informative way of thinking of twentieth century western Jewry. I would heartily recommend this work."*

—Al Steiner, Judaic History Scholar

Copyright © Bernardo Sorj, 2010  
Copyright for the English editions  
© The International Federation for Humanist & Secular  
Judaism and Bernardo Sorj  
All rights reserved

ISBN 0-615-35287-1  
ISBN13: 978-0-615-35287-9

Adapted from the original Spanish and Portuguese  
versions by Bernardo Sorj  
Translated by Bernardo Sorj, Alexandra Forman and  
Timothy Thompson

English version edited by Jeanette Friedman,  
Wordsmithy, LLC

Logo design in text: Iftach Maas

BISAK Identity: REL040000 Judaism/General with  
sub-categories: 1) Humanistic Judaism, 2) Jews —  
identity, 3) Judaism — history-philosophy

Library of Congress cataloging-in-Publication Data (a  
humanistic history and anthology of Judaism's mores,  
customs and heritage)

Published by the International Federation for Secular &  
Humanistic Judaism  
(0-615-35287-1) WWW.IFSHJ.ORG  
6 Drake Lane 1777 T Street, NW  
Chester, NJ 07390 Washington, D.C. 20009

Printed in the United States of America

# CONTENTS

Foreword

Introduction

Part I: A Culture in Transformation

- What Is a Jew?
- Biblical Judaism
- The Greco-Roman Period and the Varieties of Judaism
- Talmudic Judaism
- The Talmudic World of the Middle Ages
- Jews, Christians, and Muslims
- Modernity: The Return of Philosophy, History, and Politics
- Cultural and Political Movements in Modern Judaism

Part II: Contemporary Judaism

- The Holocaust, Memory, and Politics
- The State of Israel: The Challenge of Creating a Secular Democracy
- Postmodernity, Diaspora, and Individualized Judaism
- National Judaisms
- Judaism as Endurance, Cognitive Dissonance, and Collective Guilt

Part III: Challenges Facing Judaism

- Who Speaks for the Jews: Rabbis? Plutocrats? The Israeli Government?
- Who is Jewish? Weddings and Burials
- Anti-Semitism and the Relation between *Yidn* and *Goyim*
- The Future of Judaism
- The Future of Humanistic and Secular

Judaism

Appendix: World Jewish Population

Glossary

Acknowledgments