



Abraham: The World's First (But Certainly Not Last) Jewish Lawyer (Jewish Encounters Series)

Alan M. Dershowitz

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Part of the Jewish Encounter series

One of the world's best-known attorneys gives us a no-holds-barred history of Jewish lawyers: from the biblical Abraham through modern-day advocates who have changed the world by challenging the status quo, defending the unpopular, contributing to the rule of law, and following the biblical command to pursue justice.

The Hebrew Bible's two great examples of advocacy on behalf of problematic defendants—Abraham trying to convince God not to destroy the people of Sodom, and Moses trying to convince God not to destroy the golden-calf-worshipping Children of Israel—established the template for Jewish lawyers for the next 4,500 years. Whether because throughout history Jews have found themselves unjustly accused of crimes ranging from deicide to ritual child murder to treason, or because the biblical exhortation that “justice, justice, shall you pursue” has been implanted in the Jewish psyche, Jewish lawyers have been at the forefront in battles against tyranny, in advocating for those denied due process, in negotiating for just and equitable solutions to complex legal problems, and in efforts to ensure a fair trial for anyone accused of a crime.

Dershowitz profiles Jewish lawyers well-known and unheralded, admired and excoriated, victorious and defeated—and, of course, gives us some glimpses into the gung-ho practice of law, Dershowitz-style. Louis Brandeis, Theodor Herzl, Judah Benjamin, Max Hirschberg, René Cassin, Bruno Kreisky, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Irwin Cotler are just a few of the “idol smashers, advocates, collaborators, rescuers, and deal makers” who helped to change history. Dershowitz's thoughts on the future of the Jewish lawyer are presented with the same insight, shrewdness, and candor that are the hallmarks of his more than four decades of writings on the law and how it is (and should be!) practiced.

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