

'The Book of Jewish Knowledge': An Ambitious New Publishing Project

By Jonathan Feldstein

Reviewing: "The Book of Jewish Knowledge" by The Rohr Jewish Learning Institute. Jewish Learning Institute; Deluxe Edition. 2022. Hardcover. 496 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1636680125.

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. As far as I know that's not a Jewish adage, but it is one that's accurate and that the publisher of The Jewish Book of Knowledge learned and understood well.

When I opened the book, my first thought was "stunning." Everything about it screams high quality—the paper, the pictures, the charts, the cover and even the binding. Yes, I checked.

But before cracking the book itself, first I had to get to it. It comes as a beautiful presentation, in a fitted box, a high-end sleeve into which it is housed, and even a branded book-mark. It's not just a book. It's an experience.

On the surface it looks like a beautiful coffee table book, but it's much more. When you open it, while the pictures are magnificent, you'll do

much more than flip the pages admiring the images. When you begin to dig in, the substance is so significant that it gives the feeling of reading the most beautiful encyclopedia ever. It's the opposite of a page turner. There's so much information on each page,

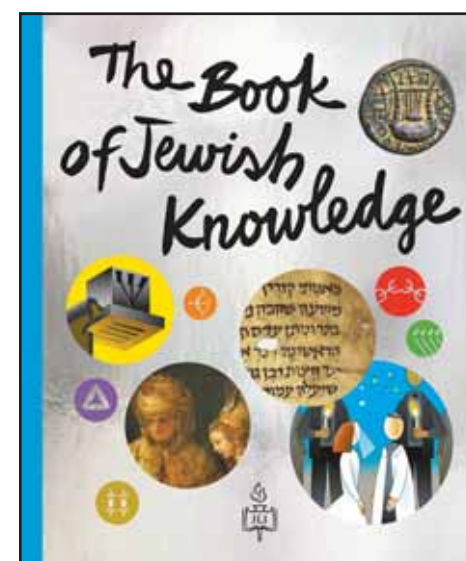
you want to stay on each one for a while, to read, digest and learn.

In nearly 500 pages, your eye is drawn to the incredible graphics, pictures, and charts. But these are interspersed among meaningful content, and all the citations are listed in a vast array of sources, ranging from John Quincy Adams to the Zohar.

One of the most impressive of the graphics was a list of all the 613 mitzvot. It was the first time I've seen such a clear presentation of this, an arrangement of the commandments by category, with the positive and negative commandments sorted by simple color coding. The thought behind both the substance and layout is evident throughout the book.

Under Shabbat, I especially liked how the editors not only sought to provide knowledge, but to also make it experiential by including recipes from a traditional Jewish home. Someone's grandmother is kvelling!

Living in Israel, I was drawn to the section "In the Jewish Homeland." It is rich in history from the return of the Jewish people after our slavery in Egypt, including of course the modern State of Israel. Even if only subtly, that's important because it draws a link to our Biblical connection and how that is connected to the rebirth of the State in 1948.



We had guests for Shabbat the week after the book arrived. I had it in easy reach, and at one point people were actually competing to look. The praise for the content and presentation was universal, validating my immediate response.

The book is divided into five chapters, perhaps corresponding to the five books of the Torah: Jewish History, Jewish Teaching, Jewish Practice, The Jewish Year and Lifecycle Milestones. The truth is that each chapter could be its own book. There's great content throughout; however, there's so much more that could be expanded upon in each topic. But The Jewish Book of Knowledge is

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Killing Babies Is Anti-Jewish, Saving Babies Is Not Anti-Semitic

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Jewish abortion advocates and their confederates have reconstructed Judaism into their image of a baby killing cult deserving constitutional protections. This deceit provides cover for scurrilous charges of anti-semitism and racism targeted at Christian pro-life activists and educators, and in legal challenges to life saving legislation. Notable are Audrey Clare Farley's "The Anti-Abortion Movement Is More Conspiracy-Addled Than Ever," (The New Republic, December 13, 2022), a tweet posted by AOC on December 20, 2022, "So many faiths' like Judaism permit abortion, so shut up, theocratic 'fundamentalist Christians, and the legal challenge to Indiana's SB1 by Hoosier Jews for Choice. These attacks are dangerous and indefensible, and must be repudiated.

Christian pro-lifers are not anti-Jewish. Instead, they want to save unborn Jewish babies from torture and death. They are not racist, pointing out that abortion profiteers disproportionately target babies of color for destruction. During my 16 years as founder and president of the Jewish Pro-Life Foundation, I have found that Christian pro-lifers cherish and embrace Jewish tradition and its focus on protecting innocent life. They welcome Jewish allies because they know from reading their Bible that Judaism (the faith tradition in which Jesus was raised) was the first religion in human history to sanctify human life and to prohibit child sacrifice. Thousands of years later, Jewish teachings still provide both the cultural and theological foundations for protecting innocent human life in the womb; pro-life principles upon which people of faith believe and depend.

The fountainhead is Genesis 9:6-7, which the rabbis elaborate upon as forbidding abortions to be performed

by both Jews and gentiles. "He who spills the blood of man within man shall have his blood spilt, for in the image of G-d, He made man. And you, be fruitful, and multiply on the earth, and increase upon it." Rabbinic consensus in the Talmud interpreted "the blood of man within man" to be a growing human being in the womb of its mother. The penalty of having 'his blood spilt' is death by the hands of Heaven.

Judaism prohibits destroying the life of innocent children in the womb, permitting it (not requiring it, as some falsely claim) only in very rare cases where the pregnancy threatens the mother's physical life. Today, this situation occurs in less than 1% of cases. Every pro-life law includes this exception. This fact invalidates the claim that legal protections for unborn citizens threaten Jewish religious practice. Judaism believes every life is precious and that God has a plan for each of us. Every person has value from conception to natural death. Frequent biblical references acknowledging the humanity of pre-born babies and their vital role in Jewish posterity occur throughout the Jewish bible. So, too, do references that forbid destroying unborn children. God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply. (Genesis 1:28). God told Jeremiah that he knew him in the womb and weaved him to be a prophet to the people. (Jeremiah 1:5). God commanded do not sacrifice your children to Moloch. (Leviticus 18:21). God directed us to choose life. (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Many rabbinic prohibitions against abortion can be found in "Marital Relations, Birth Control, and Abortion in Jewish Law," by Rabbi David Feldman (copyright 1987). Rabbi Feldman points out that both Judaism and Christianity forbid abortion for economic reasons. Most

abortions today are done for that very reason, or used as birth control to avoid parental responsibility. Many women are pressured to use abortion against their natural instincts and will. This grave situation is all the more reason for a Jewish/Christian alliance to protect children and their mothers. We stand with our Christian brothers and sisters in defending life.

Life saving modern medical treatments and abundant help during pregnancy and after birth are available to women and families today. To insist that Jewish women will die because they lack access to legal child killing contradicts the reality that more Jewish lives are at risk from abortion than from laws that protect the lives of unborn children and safeguard the beauty of a mom giving birth to her child. Aggressive attacks from Jewish abortion crusaders incite violence toward all Jews, not just those in their mother's womb. We strongly denounce irresponsible rhetoric coming from anti-semitic, racist abortion promoters who secretly celebrate every time a minority baby perishes. Jews and people of color must stop perpetuating generational genocide. They must stand for life. Our matriarch, Rachel, suffered hard travail when giving birth to Benjamin. Rather than having her son killed to save her own life, she gave him life. By choosing life, she gave us life. We are obligated to do the same. "Do what is right and just; rescue the wronged from their oppressors; do nothing wrong or violent to the stranger, orphan or widow; don't shed innocent blood in this place." (Jeremiah 22:3). Any Jew who suffers after an abortion experience is welcome to attend our healing program, Tikvat Rachel.

Cecily Routman www.jewishprolifefoundation.org