



The Pity of It All: A History of the Jews in Germany, 1743-1933

Amos Elon

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From an acclaimed historian and social critic, a passionate and poignant history of German Jews from the mid-eighteenth century to the eve of the Third Reich

As it's usually told, the story of the German Jews starts at the end, with their tragic demise in Hitler's Third Reich. Now, in this important work of historical restoration, Amos Elon takes us back to the beginning, chronicling a period of achievement and integration that at its peak produced a golden age second only to the Renaissance.

Writing with a novelist's eye, Elon shows how a persecuted clan of cattle dealers and wandering peddlers was transformed into a stunningly successful community of writers, philosophers, scientists, tycoons, and activists. He peoples his account with dramatic figures: Moses Mendelssohn, who entered Berlin in 1743 through the gate reserved for Jews and cattle, and went on to become "the German Socrates"; Heinrich Heine, beloved lyric poet who famously referred to baptism as the admission ticket to European culture; Hannah Arendt, whose flight from Berlin signaled the end of the German-Jewish idyll. Elon traces how this minority-never more than one percent of the population-came to be perceived as a deadly threat to national integrity, and he movingly demonstrates that this devastating outcome was uncertain almost until the end.

A collective biography, full of depth and compassion, *The Pity of It All* summons up a splendid world and a dream of integration and tolerance that, despite all, remains the essential ennobling project of modernity.

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