

The Wondering Jew

As we approach the Holy Day of Shavuot - so small in terms of length (after all it is only 1 day in Israel, 2 days elsewhere) compared to the week long celebrations of Pesach and Sukkot, and minus the elaborate rituals of a Seder or a Sukkah - it is easy to underestimate the significance of it. But perhaps its minimalist nature is a hint to its grandeur; after all it celebrates the giving of Torah to the Jewish people. Without which there would be no such thing as a 'Jew'.

Often religious texts are seen as the domain of the religiously observant alone. To many it is far fetched to imagine someone who isn't orthodox studying Talmud, Maimonides, Halachah, or Tanach in a regular fashion. But this is where Micah Goodman's book comes in...and dissects a particularly Israeli dilemma and opportunity. You see for many Jews outside of Israel these texts are ignored in part because of language barriers, but in Israel that is not the case. Israeli identity - forged from and through Hebrew language - is drawn into classic Jewish texts because of their linguistic, cultural, political and increasingly musical impacts on Israeli life. To Goodman, the classic archetypes of "Secular" and "Religious" in Israel are increasingly anachronistic and for the Israeli classic religious texts are as much "religious" as they are simply "Jewish". To understand what it is to be Israeli and Jewish is to understand what these texts are saying for this present moment. Not for the sake of observance, but for the sake of understanding. The claim of ownership to these remarkable books, Goodman argues, cannot be left to the observant alone. They are the treasure of the entire people.

A great read: <https://fathomjournal.org/book-review-the-wondering-jew/>

Enjoy and *Chag Sameach!*

Aaron Flanzraich
Senior Rabbi,
Beth Sholom Synagogue