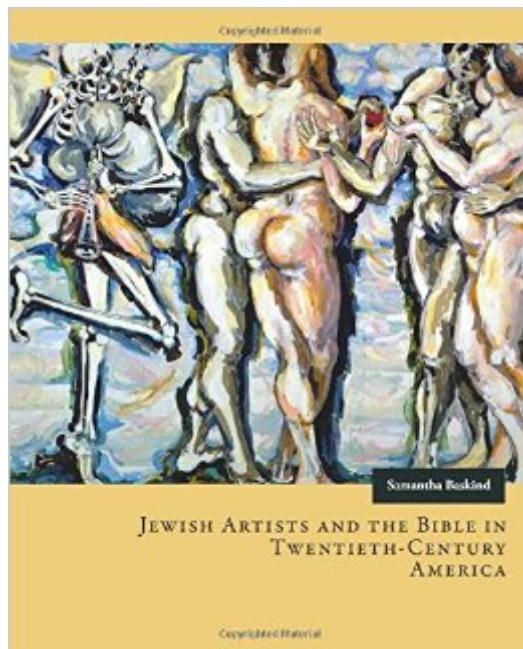


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# Jewish Artists And The Bible In Twentieth-Century America



## **Synopsis**

Jack Levine, George Segal, Audrey Flack, Larry Rivers, and R. B. Kitaj have long been considered central artists in the canon of twentieth-century American art: Levine for his biting paintings and prints of social conscience, Segal for his quiet plaster figures evoking the alienation inherent in modern life, Flack for her feminist photorealist canvases, Rivers for his outrageous pop art statements, and Kitaj for his commitment to figuration. Much less known is the fact that at times, all five artists devoted their attention to biblical imagery, in part because of a shared Jewish heritage to which they were inexorably tied. Taking each artist as an extensive case study, *Jewish Artists and the Bible in Twentieth-Century America* uncovers how these artists and a host of their Jewish contemporaries adopted the Bible in innovative ways. Indeed, as Samantha Baskind demonstrates, by linking the past to the present, Jewish American artists customized the biblical narrative in extraordinary ways to address modern issues such as genocide and the Holocaust, gender inequality, assimilation and the immigrant experience, and the establishment and fate of the modern State of Israel, among many other pertinent concerns.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

I enjoyed the author's study of Raphael Soyer, an iconic 20th Century New York City immigrant artist, the first book on him since the Abstract Expressionists came to dominate the contemporary art scene. ( A number of his own books were published during that period). What she had to wrestle with there was the fact that during his lifetime he adamantly refuted and rejected any characterization of him as a "Jewish" artist, including cooperation with authors seeking to include

him in books designated as studies of Jewish artists or Jewish art. (See his correspondence on the Smithsonian site with one such author, and the prior letter to him from Leon Kroll, some fifteen years older and a native born American, who was of the same mind on the subject. In this book, Baskind briefly reviews the life and work of five significant 20th Century American artists, who were Jewish by birth and secular by faith, but who reflected, in a significant segment, no matter how small, of their work, biblical themes and images. The artists are, in order of treatment: Jack Levine, George Segal, Audrey Flack, Larry Rivers and Ron Kitaj. All were born between 1915 and 1932, only Flack survives. Treatment of each of the artists is limited to a brief biographical study as relevant to the topic. In addition, there are more detailed analyzes of their use of Biblical imagery and of the commentary and reflections upon biblical subjects which have these writings a living document applicable to the lives of the Jewish people over the more than 23 centuries of their existence. Within the context of her treatment of each artist, reference is also made to other Jewish artists as an indicator of the fact that the conceptualizations by these few are not unique manifestations by a small handful.

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