

Best Books of the Year, as Selected by Mosaic Authors

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Observation

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About the authors

Elliott Abrams is a senior fellow for Middle Eastern studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and is the chairman of the Tikvah Fund.

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Neil Rogachevsky teaches at the Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought at Yeshiva University and writes a monthly column for *Mosaic*.

Michael Weingrad is professor of Jewish studies at Portland State University and a frequent contributor to *Mosaic* and the *Jewish Review of Books*.

Ruth R. Wisse is a *Mosaic* columnist, professor emerita of Yiddish and comparative literatures at Harvard and a distinguished senior fellow at the Tikvah Fund. Her memoir *Free as a Jew: a Personal Memoir of National Self-Liberation*, chapters of which appeared in *Mosaic* in somewhat different form, is out from Wicked Son Press.

David Wolpe is rabbi of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles and the author of, among other books, *Why Be Jewish?* and *Why Faith Matters*. He can be found on Twitter [@RabbiWolpe](#).

To mark the close of 2017, we asked a handful of our writers to name the best two or three books they read this year, and briefly to explain their choices. Their answers are below. (All books were published in 2017 unless otherwise noted.)

Peter Berkowitz

K.C. Johnson and Stuart Taylor, Jr., *The Campus Rape Frenzy: The Attack on Due Process at American Universities* (Encounter, 370pp., \$27.99). The authors methodically expose the threat to liberty embodied in colleges' and universities' determined efforts to eviscerate due process in campus sexual-assault proceedings, and systematically refute the fraudulent factual claims used to justify these efforts. In so doing, they remind their readers that liberal education requires not only study of the principles of freedom but also practice in living in accordance with those principles.

Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Past and Present: The Challenges of Modernity, from the Pre-Victorians to the Postmodernists* (Encounter, 256pp., \$23.99). With rare elegance, learning, and sobriety, this collection of essays, spanning 65 years, demonstrates the power of history in the hands of a master historian to illuminate contemporary cultural dilemmas and public-policy concerns. My review of it for *Mosaic* is [here](#).

Micah Goodman, *Catch-67: The Ideas Behind the Controversy that is Tearing Israel Apart* (Dvir, 222pp., NIS 96, so far in Hebrew only). This short, indispensable book, which became an instant bestseller last spring in Israel, examines the combination of religious belief, political ideology, and identity that has led Israelis—and Palestinians, too—to a dead end in thinking about the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Goodman explains why comprehensive solutions—of the sort championed by Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama—are, at least in the short run, doomed to make matters worse. It would be more reasonable and just, he convincingly contends, for diplomats to pursue partial steps informed by lowered expectations that aim at increasing Palestinians' control over their lives while providing for Israeli national security.

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