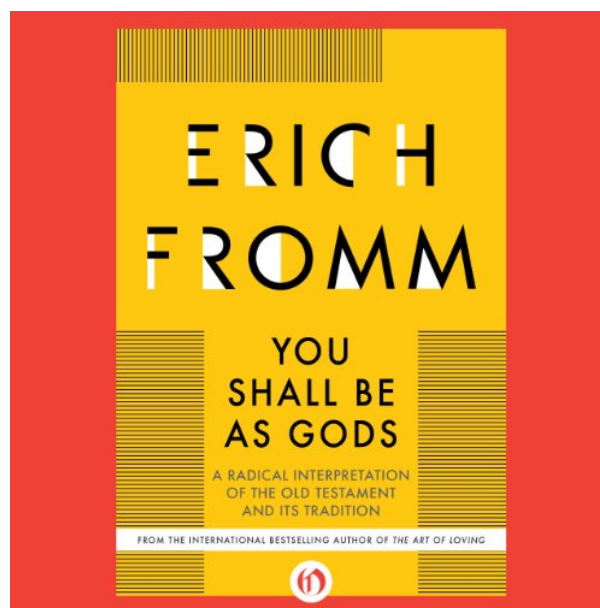
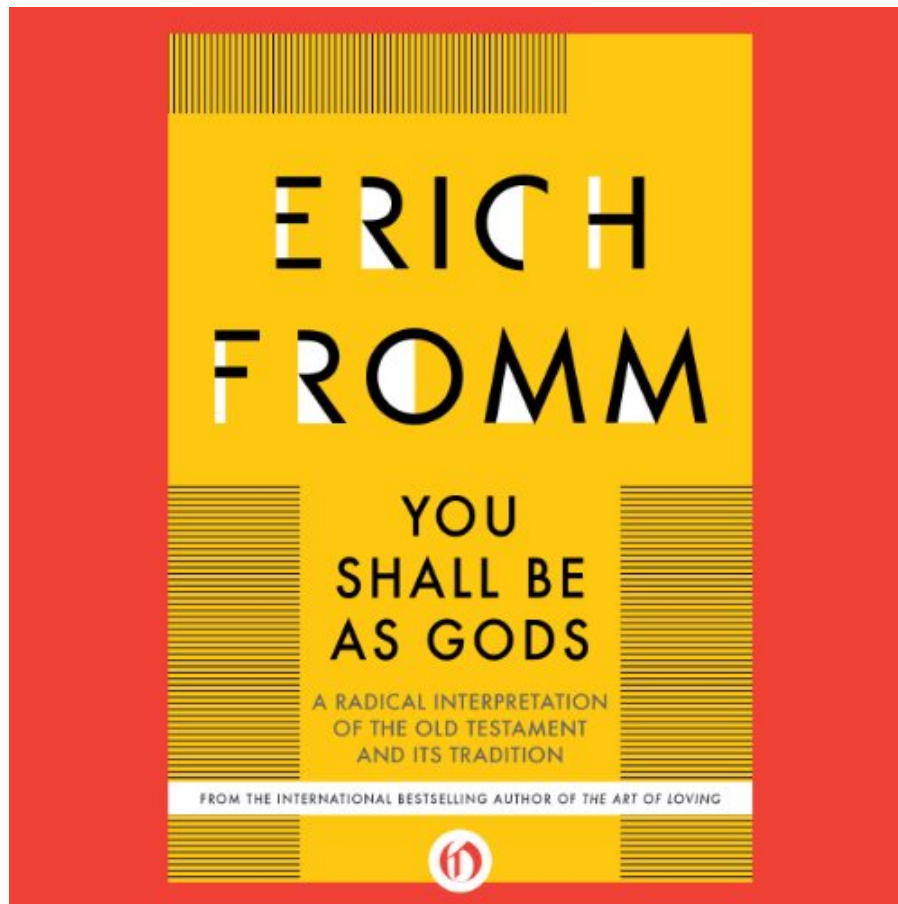


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YOU SHALL BE AS GODS: A RADICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AND ITS TRADITION BY ERICH FROMM PDF

Erich Fromm's innovative analysis of the Old Testament as a striking early example of radical humanism. The Old Testament is one of the most carefully studied books in the world's history. It is also one of the most misunderstood. This founding text of the world's three largest religions is also, Erich Fromm argues, an impressive radical humanist text. He sees the stories of mankind's transition from divided clans to united brotherhood as a tribute to the human power to overcome. Filled with hopeful symbolism, *You Shall Be as Gods* shows how the Old Testament and its tradition is an inspiring ode to human potential.

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- Original language: English
- Running time: 493 minutes

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Eric Fromm is insightful as usual

By John Brandenberger

Erick Fromm's exploration and explanation of the old testament is very interesting. He supports his thesis which centers around an interpretation that man will reach God when he accepts and acts in a Godly manner. Although many part are a bit antiquated in terms of the progress of humans and their acceptance of others, it is an insightful look behind the concepts that both the modern and conservative Jews still ponder and debate. If you want to understand some of the driving concepts of Judaism then pick up this quick read.

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

"Cheap Grace" vs. Ultimate Values

By James E. Egolf

Erich Fromm (1900-1980) wrote a facinating study of the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament. His book *YOU SHALL BE AS GODS* is an interesting view of Old Testament literature. Fromm focused on the concepts and convictions of the Old Testament as opposed to formality and fixation on traditions. Fromm's book was an attempt to integrate such ideas as compassion, kindness, mercy, etc. with traditions to make the Old Testament literature a call to action rather than comfortable apathy. Fromm cited interesting quotes from the Rabbinical Midrash and Talmud.

The beginning sections of the book provided an interesting study of interpretations of God. Fromm argued that God changed from an unrestrained tyrant to a constitutional monarch Who was bound by His own convenents and rules. For example, even God repented re the Flood Story when He repented via Genesis

9:11. When Abraham confronted God re Genesis 18, Abraham bluntly asked God if God would act unjustly by condemning the innocent with the guilty. Fromm cited Moses' attempt to undermine God's wrath. An interesting interpretation of these confrontations is intimacy with the Supreme Being. Closeness to God and His "laws" is a thoughtful analysis.

Yet, Fromm was clear that closeness to God was NOT an attempt to define God. The phrase in Exodus 3:14 that, "I AM WHO I AM" was attempt to deter idol worship. Fromm noted that idols are dead while God and people are creative and active. Men and woman should act and should act according to God's commands and rules. Basically, as Fromm knew, the Ancient Hebrews had different views of God. God could be tied to the land and race of the Hebrews. Or God could be universal as suggested in the narrative re Noah when God made a covenant with the human race. The Hebrew Prophet Habakkuk was probably the first to separate the concept of God from the land and race. Supposedly King David's father was Hebrew, but his mother was a Moabite woman.

Not only did Fromm write about the concept of God, Fromm wrote about the concept of man (men and women). Fromm cited the Creation Story in that everything God created was good except man. God created men and women in His Image, and Fromm interpreted this view that people had to the capacity for good or evil. The goal was for people to live according to the Image of God, but people had freedom to make a choice. God's call that people should be a "Holy Nation" meant that men and women should be better than their current status.

Are men and women predestined? According to Fromm the answer was "No." As Fromm noted, a difference exists between predictions and predestination. In other words, careless behavior and evil acts will eventually result in terrible consequences. Since people are free to make decisions, their acts have consequences-good or evil. Much of The Decalogue dealt with social relationships such as murder, theft, adultery, etc. Fromm alerted readers that some of the Old Testament "heroes" had serious character flaws. Noah was confused. Cain was irresponsible. Abraham was a coward when he let the men of Sodom and Gomorrah violate his wife and daughters. King David committed unforgiveable crimes. In other words, men and women can overcome their evil inclinations if willing to recognize their weaknesses and their potential to be better people.

One of the last sections of the book dealt with the Psalms. Fromm categorized the Psalms into four types of poetry. He explained a one mood Psalm as one where the mood did not change. The first Psalm is one of self righteousness. The 23rd. Psalm is one of contentment. The 137th. Psalm is one of bitter hatred. Fromm described a dynamic Psalm as one with a sudden mood change such as the sixth and eighth Psalms. A messianic Psalm is one that is optimistic about the future such as the 90th Psalm. A hymnic Psalm is one of praise such as the 150th Psalm.

The Epilogue of the book dealt with the 22nd. Psalm and Christ's Passion. Fromm argued that he found the usual interpretation unsatisfactory. Yet, as G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936) noted, Christ's despair was as radical statement as could be, and God was complaining to God. This is obviously a matter of interpretation, and this writer will leave the theologians to debate the issue.

Fromm's book is a good book especially for those readers who are not familiar with the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament. Fromm provided what may be a radical assessment of the Old Testament, but such assessments can force people to carefully read and think which was Fromm's intention.

James E. Egolf

August 21, 2013

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.
This is Fromm's thought at its most advanced. I ...

By Gwyn Singer

This is Fromm's thought at its most advanced. I don't understand why it apparently isn't much read in our day.

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