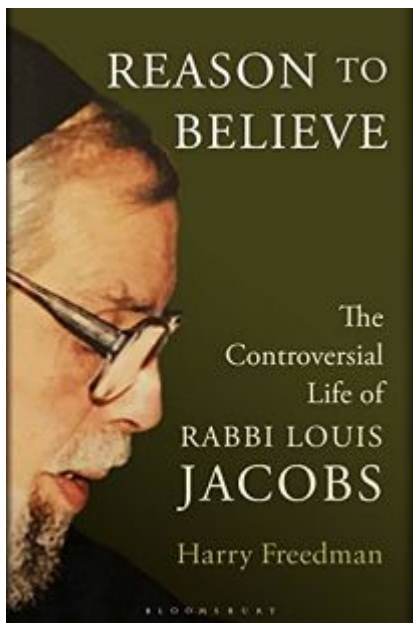




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Reason to Believe: The Controversial Life of Rabbi Louis Jacobs

Harry Freedman. Bloomsbury Continuum, \$35 (304p) ISBN 978-1-4729-7938-4

MORE BY AND ABOUT THIS AUTHOR

British historian Freedman (*Kabbalah*) gives his late teacher Rabbi Louis Jacobs (1920–2006) his due in this definitive biography. Despite Jacobs's upbringing as a traditional ritually observant British Jew and ordination as an Orthodox rabbi, he lived his life committed to finding a confluence between his faith and the critical questions he had about sacred texts; that approach led him to credit the documentary hypothesis, which attributed the Hebrew Bible to multiple human sources, rather than being the literal word of God. Jacobs had pulpits at Manchester Central Synagogue and London's New West End Synagogue before becoming moral tutor at Jews' College, London, where he taught Talmud and homiletics. But, despite his growing renown, it was his defense of the documentary hypothesis that led to controversy in 1961 when Jacobs was invited to assume the helm of Jews College—the Orthodox United Synagogue's rabbinical seminary. He never did so, thanks to Israel Brodie, then the U.K.'s chief rabbi, who strenuously objected to Jacobs's views. The Jacobs Affair became news outside the Jewish world, and revealed deep schisms in Anglo-Jewry about the power of the chief rabbinate, as well as what Orthodox Jews could believe. This engrossing, richly detailed look at a major British religious leader will appeal to any academic reader interested in modern Judaism. (*Feb.*)

DETAILS