



# The Chosen Peoples: America, Israel, and the Ordeals of Divine Election

*Todd Gitlin, Liel Leibovitz*

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**The Chosen Peoples: America, Israel, and the Ordeals of Divine Election** Todd Gitlin, Liel Leibovitz  
Americans and Israelis have often thought that their nations were chosen, in perpetuity, to do God's work. This belief in divine election is a potent, living force, one that has guided and shaped both peoples and nations throughout their history and continues to do so to this day. Through great adversity and despite serious challenges, Americans and Jews, leaders and followers, have repeatedly faced the world fortified by a sense that their nation has a providential destiny.

As Todd Gitlin and Liel Leibovitz argue in this original and provocative book, what unites the two allies in a "special friendship" is less common strategic interests than this deep-seated and lasting theological belief that they were chosen by God.

The United States and Israel each has understood itself as a nation placed on earth to deliver a singular message of enlightenment to a benighted world. Each has stumbled through history wrestling with this strange concept of chosenness, trying both to grasp the meaning of divine election and to bear the burden it placed them under. It was this idea that provided an indispensable justification when the Americans made a revolution against Britain, went to war with and expelled the Indians, expanded westward, built an overseas empire, and most recently waged war in Iraq. The equivalent idea gave rise to the Jewish people in the first place, sustained them in exodus and exile, and later animated the Zionist movement, inspiring the Israelis to vanquish their enemies and conquer the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Everywhere you look in American and Israeli history, the idea of chosenness is there.

*The Chosen Peoples* delivers a bold new take on both nations' histories. It shows how deeply the idea of chosenness has affected not only their enthusiasts but also their antagonists. It digs deeply beneath the superficialities of headlines, the details of negotiations, the excuses and justifications that keep cropping up for both nations' successes and failures. It shows how deeply ingrained is the idea of a chosen people in both nations' histories—and yet how complicated that idea really is. And it offers interpretations of chosenness that both nations dearly need in confronting their present-day quandaries.

Weaving together history, theology, and politics, *The Chosen Peoples* vividly retells the dramatic story of two nations bound together by a wild and sacred idea, takes unorthodox perspectives on some of our time's most searing conflicts, and offers an unexpected conclusion: only by taking the idea of chosenness seriously, wrestling with its meaning, and assuming its responsibilities can both nations thrive.

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