

Daniel Gordis – Biography

Dr. Daniel Gordis is Senior Vice President and the [Koret Distinguished Fellow](#) at [Shalem College](#) in Jerusalem. He writes a regular column — “A Dose of Nuance” — for the *Jerusalem Post*, and is also a regular columnist for [Bloomberg View](#). The author of numerous books on Jewish thought and currents in Israel, and a winner of the National Jewish Book Award, Dr. Gordis was the founding dean of the [Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies](#) at the University of Judaism, the first rabbinical college on the West Coast of the United States. Dr. Gordis joined Shalem in 2007 to help found Israel’s first liberal arts college, after spending nine years as vice president of the Mandel Foundation in Israel and director of its Leadership Institute.



Gordis is widely cited on matters pertaining to Israel. During the Gaza War of 2014, Bloomberg Views asked him to [become a columnist](#) explaining Israelis’ views of the conflict to the world at large. Professor Alan Dershowitz has called him “one of Israel’s most thoughtful observers,” while Jeffrey Goldberg of the Atlantic [has written](#), “If you asked me, ‘of all the people you know, who cares the most about the physical, moral and spiritual health of Israel?’ I would put the commentator and scholar Daniel Gordis at the top of the list.” Leonard Fein has written that Gordis is “perhaps the single most popular speaker on Israel to American Jewish audiences.” The *Forward* [has called him](#) “one of the most respected Israel analysts around.” In 2014, the *Jerusalem Post* [listed him](#) as one of the world’s 50 most influential Jews.

Since moving to Israel in 1998, Dr. Gordis has written and lectured throughout the world on Israeli society and the challenges facing the Jewish state. His writing has appeared in magazines and newspapers including the *New York Times*, the *New Republic*, the *New York Times Magazine*, *Moment*, *Tikkun*, [Azure](#), *Commentary Magazine*, *Foreign Affairs* and *Conservative Judaism*. Gordis’ books have received numerous awards. He won the National Jewish Book Award for *Saving Israel*, and both *Becoming a Jewish Parent* and his book (co-authored with Dr. David Ellenson of the Hebrew Union College), *Pledges of Jewish Allegiance: Conversion, Law, and Policy-Making in 19th and 20th Century Orthodox Responsa* (published by Stanford University Press in 2012) were Finalists for the National Jewish Book Award. *The Promise of Israel: Why Its Seemingly Greatest Weakness is Actually Its Greatest Strength*, was published by Wiley in August 2012 and was named by *Jewish Ideas Daily* as one of the “best Jewish books of 2012.”

Gordis’ biography of Israel’s sixth Prime Minister, appeared in March 2014 and is entitled *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel’s Soul*. *Commentary Magazine* [has](#)

called it “the gold standard in Begin studies,” The Jewish Review of Books called it “a fine contribution to the study of [Begin’s] character.” When the Hebrew edition of his Begin biography appeared in July 2015, it quickly became an Israeli national best-seller.

Gordis’ newest book is a history of the State of Israel entitled ***Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn***. Ambassador Dennis Ross, reflecting on the book, wrote, “When I am asked ‘Is there one book to read about Israel?’ I now have an answer.” Ari Shavit wrote, “Like Israel itself, Daniel Gordis’s *Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn* is audacious, intensive and unique.” Yossi Klein HaLevi wrote, “Daniel Gordis has written a luminous history Gordis gives us the soul of Israel, and helps explain why the most hated country on the planet is also among the most beloved.”

His books to date are

1. *God Was Not in the Fire: The Search for a Spiritual Judaism* (Scribner, 1995)
2. *Does the World Need the Jews: Rethinking Chosenness and American Jewish Identity* (Scribner, 1997)
3. *Becoming a Jewish Parent: How to Explore Spirituality and Tradition with Your Children* (Random House, 1999)
4. *If a Place Can Make You Cry: Dispatches from an Anxious State* (Crown/Random House, 2002)
5. *Home to Stay: One American Family’s Chronicle of Miracles and Struggles in Contemporary Israel* (Random House, 2003)
6. *Coming Together, Coming Apart: A Memoir of Heartbreak and Promise in Israel* (Wiley, 2006)
7. *Saving Israel: How the Jewish People Can Win a War That May Never End* (Wiley, 2009)
8. *Pledges of Jewish Allegiance: Conversion, Law, and Policy-Making in 19th and 20th Century Orthodox Responsa* (with David Ellenson, Stanford University Press, 2012)
9. *The Promise of Israel: Why Its Seemingly Greatest Weakness Is Actually Its Greatest Strength* (Wiley, 2012)
10. *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel’s Soul* (Nextbook, 2014)
11. *Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn* (Ecco/HarperCollins, 2016)

Dr. Gordis received his B.A. from Columbia College (Magna Cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa), an M.A. and Rabbinic Ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and his Ph.D. from the University of Southern California.

Gordis is now writing a book on American Jews and their relationship to Israel, which will be published by Ecco/HarperCollins in 2019. He and his wife, Elisheva, live in Jerusalem. They are the parents of three children, two of whom are married, and the grandparents of a *sabra* granddaughter.