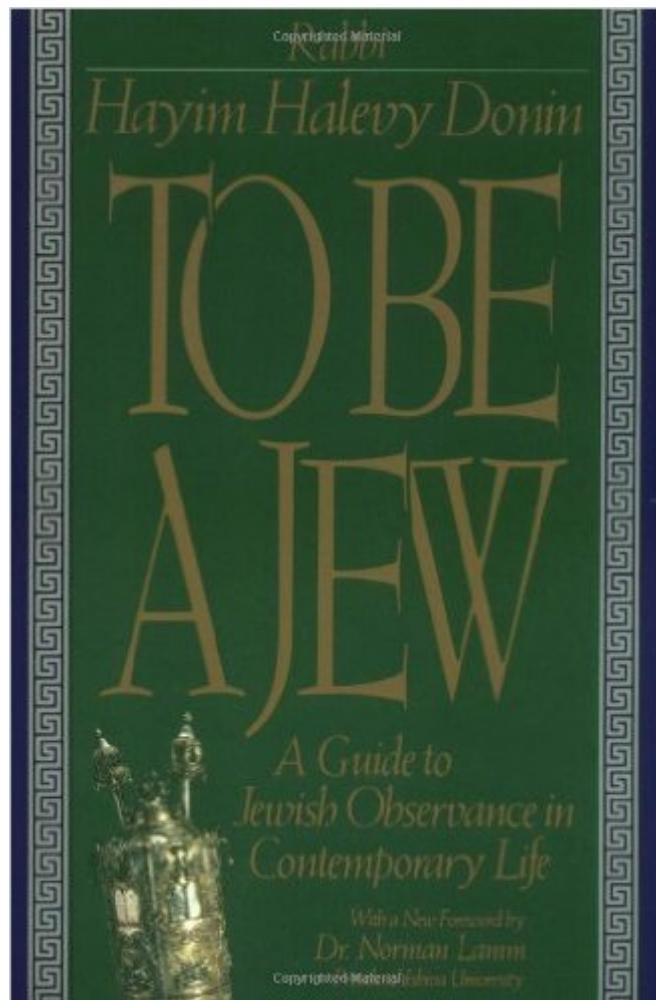


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To Be A Jew: A Guide To Jewish Observance In Contemporary Life



Synopsis

This indispensable volume has long been acknowledged as the classic guide to the traditional Jewish laws and customs as they apply to daily life in the contemporary world. The unique treasury of practical information and daily inspiration has long been acknowledged as the classic guide to the ageless heritage of Judaism; Jewish attitudes, Jewish philosophy, and Jewish law.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As a French Catholic who has made the decision to convert to Orthodox Judaism, I found this book invaluable, both as a learning source and as a source of solace and joy. Rabbi Donin tells us, in lovely language, just what everyday life is like for the Orthodox Jew. Unlike many other religions, Judaism is primarily a religion of action and not beliefs. Although certain basic beliefs do exist, much in Judaism remains open to personal interpretation. Judaism does not demand that other people convert; in fact rabbis are encouraged to make at least three vigorous attempts at discouraging the possible convert. Conversion is, nevertheless, possible, and it is important to remember that Abraham was a convert, as was Ruth, a descendant of King David. In To Be a Jew, Rabbi Donin gives an overview of the history of Judaism and tells us that it was Maimonides who explained that any human being who faithfully observes the Seven Laws of Noah earns a proper place in heaven, no matter what religion he follows. Additionally, The Torah of Moses is a truth for all humanity, whether Jewish or not. Therefore, if one is not prepared to embrace the Jewish religion fully, it would be far better for him to remain outside this beautiful faith. The Holy Temple, as well, did not benefit Jews only. When King Solomon built the Temple, he specifically asked the Creator to heed the prayers of the gentiles who came to the Temple to pray (Kings I 8:41-43). The Jewish prophet

refers to the Temple as a "House for all nations," (Isaiah 56:7). The Temple was the universal center of spirituality, a concentrated point where the consciousness of our Maker filtered down into the world.

When I was first interested in learning about Judaism I really didn't know much. This book was recommended to me, so I got it. I kind of liked the first part and found some good information, but I got very bogged down just over half way through when it started to get into the ritual a bit more. I didn't really understand what I was reading so I put it down. After some years and learning from other sources I picked this up again. I was amazed at how my perspective had changed. It suddenly had meaning and I find myself going back to it again and again for guidance and understanding in many areas. If you are new to Judaism, you might have a hard time with this book, like I did (I found "To Pray as a Jew" even harder), but if you know a bit from other sources and you are really interested in really understanding and remembering the details this is a very good source. Here is an excerpt to demonstrate how difficult it can be to understand, but how there are gems therein: "A Jewish definition of holiness may be put in these terms: Holiness does not lie in the ascetic, saintly withdrawal from life, or in excessive denial to oneself of all human pleasures, or in the repression of all human drives. It consists, rather, of full participation in the stream of human community life, sharing the joyous as well as the sorrowful experiences which life has to offer, denying to oneself no legitimate pleasures; but at the same time so developing one's sense of discernment as to be able to distinguish and choose the right from the wrong, the true from the false, the good from the bad, the sacred from the profane, the pure from the impure, and the clean from the unclean."

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