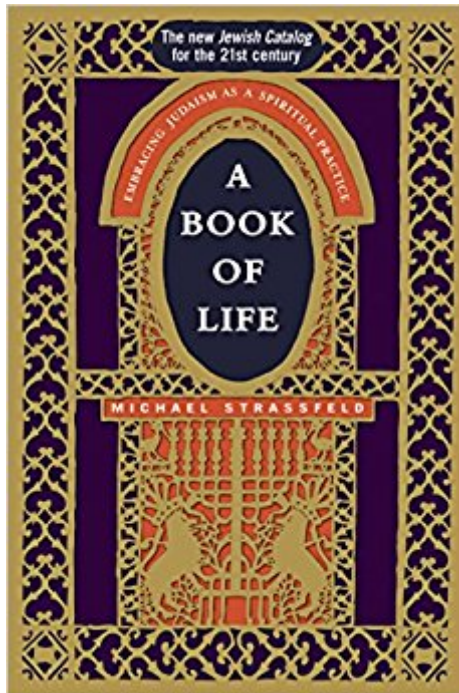




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# A Book Of Life: Embracing Judaism As A Spiritual Practice



## Synopsis

A book that charts a clear path to a more spiritually rich practice of Judaism—  
from the coauthor of the best-selling Jewish Catalog volumes. For all the cycles of life, best-selling author Rabbi Michael Strassfeld presents traditional Jewish teachings as a guide to behavior and values. Where the tradition is replete with rituals (for example, the Sabbath), he describes them and shows how they can enrich spiritual living. Where rituals are sparse or nonexistent (for example, returning home at the end of the workday), he suggests new ones gleaned from his own study and experience. Strassfeld also brings the principles of "insight meditation" to Jewish life, using this practice to recover and reconstruct Judaism's spiritual dimension. He describes a Judaism that encourages within us a spiritual awareness as we participate in both traditional Jewish practices and the mundane activities of daily life. By engaging with Jewish tradition in ways that recapture its original kavanah, or intention, we will, Strassfeld maintains, achieve the two fundamental goals of Judaism—to become better human beings and to be in God's presence. (Hardcover published in 2002 by Schocken Books, ISBN 0-8052-4124-8.)

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The author of this outstanding book is the rabbi of the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, the New York synagogue where Mordecai Kaplan started the Reconstructionist movement in 1922. He is also one of the authors of The Jewish Catalog, the bestselling handbook for Jewish practices, first published nearly 20 years ago. This follow-up is a far more sophisticated and comprehensive guide that adds meditation to traditional Jewish rituals. As he explores his thesis that "Judaism is meant to

be a spiritual discipline," Strassfeld displays his considerable erudition by providing explanations based on Talmudic and Midrashic texts as well as Hasidic and mystical stories. Appropriately, the book opens with Jewish behavior prescribed for the beginning of the day and continues with prayers for the rest of the day, along with proposed meditations. After a thorough discussion of Shabbat rituals (to which Strassfeld suggests adding an environmental orientation), he analyzes Torah study, prayer and deeds of loving-kindness the three pillars on which the world rests, according to Judaism. This is followed by a detailed survey of Jewish holidays in which Strassfeld acknowledges differences among the Jewish denominations, as he spells out the customs and processes associated with each festival. He offers an ingenious and global examination of the life cycle, placing it in the context of the five books of Moses. Strassfeld writes clearly, making complicated matters comprehensible. This valuable book needs to be read and reread by all Jews, and by non-Jews who want to understand their Jewish neighbors. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Rabbi Strassfeld examines life as a spiritual path from morning to night, from one full year to a lifetime, believing that being a good Jew is to live a life of goodness and holiness. In this guide to behavior and values, Strassfeld explores such topics as sabbath laws and practices, speech (it can heal or damage), work ethics, and keeping kosher. In a section entitled "The Three Paths," the author discusses the study of Torah, the kinds of prayer (this includes a brief guide to Jewish liturgy), and deeds and loving-kindness. The author also describes the Jewish festivals, examines the ways to live a life of holiness, and discusses what he calls a "new religious Zionism." His sources include the Bible, Midrash, Talmud, and other Jewish writing, and the book is filled with prayers and blessings for every occasion. An invaluable study of Jewish law and rituals. George Cohen Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A well-written, comprehensive introduction to Judaism. Strassfeld manages to respect tradition while allowing for innovation and greater inclusiveness. It covers the fundamentals of Judaism in a way that is inspiring, including what it means to live a day in a truly Jewish way, the three paths of study, prayers, and loving-kindness; the holy days; an effective survey of the five books of Torah; and what it means to live in the Promised Land.

This book tells it like it is. You don't need a rabbi, you have to attend every event at the synagogue,

and you don't have to have every blessing memorized to be a good Jew. This really highlights the spirituality of the Judaism and helped me when I was disappointed with the politics/nonsense going on at the synagogue, etc. I recommend it to anyone - and it should be required reading for anyone who is thinking about or in actually converting to Judaism.

Rabbi Strassfeld is a Re-constructionist who has written a book that can be read by most people looking to learn about various facets of Jewish life. He covers many facets of the Jewish faith and the viewpoints of the major streams of Judaism today. Worth reading for a beginners' look at Jewish life and the faith traditions.

This was one of the books required for my conversion class but even if it hadn't been required reading, I would've read it. It has information about many aspects of Jewish life, including holidays and the reasoning behind them. I bookmarked the pages with blessings on them. Definitely a book I come back to time and time again. I even really enjoyed the little blurb things at the bottom of the pages to go along with the reading.

I must be open and upfront by letting you know that this review is not by a Jew. But that really. Doesn't matter when you begin to read such profound truth. To me it is so reassuring to read about things that are ancient and go beyond modern philosophy, which is situational and diluted. I wish I was jewish, but we can have everything.

The book itself is phenomenal. Two stars because there doesn't appear to be any glue on the second half of the spine. The book split when I opened it for the first time. Waste of money for a non functioning book.

I keep going back to this book and reading some portions again. Good book!

a passionate writer who cares about living his faith communicates the possibility to others in a way that can alter their religious practices and influences their lives.

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