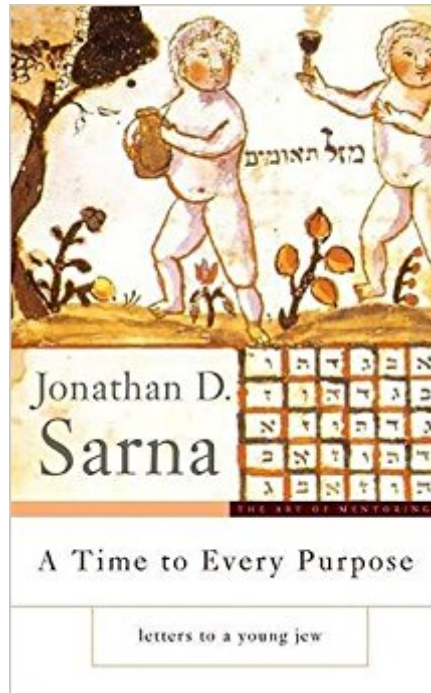


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A Time To Every Purpose: Letters To A Young Jew



Synopsis

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the central question confronting Jewish leaders in America is simple: Why be Jewish? Jonathan D. Sarna, acclaimed scholar of American Judaism, believes that "Why be Jewish?" is the wrong question. Judaism, he believes, is not so much a "why" as a way—a way of life, a way of marking time, a way of relating to the environment, to human beings, to family, and to God. Judaism is experienced through doing—doing things Jewish, doing things for fellow Jews in need, doing things as a Jew to improve the state of the world. The more Judaism one does, the more one comes to appreciate what Judaism is. Using the Jewish calendar as his starting point, Sarna reflects on the major themes of Jewish life as expressed in a full year of holidays—from Passover in the spring to Purim eleven months later. Passover, for instance, yields a discussion of freedom; Shavuot, a discussion of Torah; Yom Kippur, the role of the individual within the Jewish community; Chanukah, issues of assimilation and anti-assimilation. An essential brief introduction—or reintroduction—to the major practices of Jewish life as well as the many complexities of the American Jewish experience, this book will be essential reading for American Jews and the perfect gift for the holiday season.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In these 13 letters to his daughter, the author discusses the major themes of Jewish life as expressed in a year of holidays—from Passover in the spring to Purim 11 months later. He explains the origins of the holidays and the issues that each illuminates. The holidays include Passover (freedom), Yom ha-Shoah (the Holocaust), Shavout (the Torah), Rosh Hashanah (judgment), Yom

Kippur (the individual and the community), Sukkot (making choices and improving the world), Hanukkah (assimilation and anti-assimilation), and Purim (continuity and happiness). Sarna expresses his views on various contested issues and also offers other points of view. He hopes this may help readers understand and confront the many challenges facing contemporary Jews.

--George Cohen

Jonathan D. Sarna is Joseph H. and Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University, and chairs the Academic Board of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives. Author of *American Judaism: A History*, he is also the chief historian of the National Museum of American Jewish History and of the 350th commemoration of Jewish life in America, 1654–2004. He lives in West Newton, Massachusetts.

most Jewish holidays explained. Pesach (passover) is omitted. great book for new learner or one studying for conversion

Those familiar with Jonathan Sarna's previous works will be pleasantly surprised by the format and content of his latest book, *A Time to Every Purpose*. Written as a series of loving letters to his daughter, Sarna draws on his roots as an eminent historian to present the conflicting choices facing young people (and older folks, too) about being Jewish in contemporary America. Taking us through the Jewish calendar, Dr. Sarna writes introspective and personal "seasonal" letters which not only provide specific information about each holiday but challenge the reader to consider how the stories and ritual of each holiday shape our spiritual and religious lives. This is not a book with didactic solutions to the question of Jewish continuity but with open-ended choices. "Will you study Judaism, practice Judaism, and then transmit Judaism, someday, to your own children?" The underlying message to his daughter and to us is that "the Jewish future rests in your hands." This wonderful book, probably the shortest of all his titles, has the greatest potential to reach a large and diverse audience. While written from the heart to a beloved child, this book should be required reading for anyone - teenager, parent, or potential convert - curious about what it means to be Jewish in America today. Norm Finkelstein

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