



Stars of David: Prominent Jews Talk About Being Jewish

Abigail Pogrebin

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Sixty-two of the most accomplished Jews in America speak intimately—most for the first time—about how they feel about being Jewish. In unusually candid interviews conducted by former *60 Minutes* producer Abigail Pogrebin, celebrities ranging from Sarah Jessica Parker to Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, from Larry King to Mike Nichols, reveal how resonant, crucial or incidental being Jewish is in their lives. The connections they have to their Jewish heritage range from hours in synagogue to bagels and lox; but every person speaks to the weight and pride of their Jewish history, the burdens and pleasures of observance, the moments they've felt most Jewish (or not). This book of vivid, personal conversations uncovers how being Jewish fits into a public life, and also how the author's evolving religious identity was changed by what she heard.

- Dustin Hoffman, Steven Spielberg, Gene Wilder, Joan Rivers, and Leonard Nimoy talk about their startling encounters with anti-Semitism.
- Kenneth Cole, Eliot Spitzer, and Ronald Perelman explore the challenges of intermarriage.
- Mike Wallace, Richard Dreyfuss, and Ruth Reichl express attitudes toward Israel that vary from unquestioning loyalty to complicated ambivalence.
- William Kristol scoffs at the notion that Jewish values are incompatible with Conservative politics.
- Alan Dershowitz, raised Orthodox, talks about why he gave up morning prayer.
- Shawn Green describes the pressure that comes with being baseball's Jewish star.
- Natalie Portman questions the ostentatious bat mitzvahs of her hometown.
- Tony Kushner explains how being Jewish prepared him for being gay.
- Leon Wieseltier throws down the gauntlet to Jews who haven't taken the trouble to study Judaism.

These are just a few key moments from many poignant, often surprising, conversations with public figures whom most of us thought we already knew.

“When my mother got her nose job, she wanted me to get one, too. She said I would be happier.”—Dustin Hoffman

“It’s a heritage to be proud of. And then, too, it’s something that you can’t escape because the world won’t let you; so it’s a good thing you can be proud of it.”

—Ruth Bader Ginsburg

“My wife [Kate Capshaw] chose to do a full conversion *before* we were married in 1991, and she married me as a Jew. I think *that*, more than anything else, brought me back to Judaism.”—Steven Spielberg

“As someone who was born in Israel, you’re put in a position of defending Israel because you know how much is at stake.”—Natalie Portman

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