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Judaism All-in-One For Dummies®

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Introduction

We're amazed by how many people have become interested in Judaism in recent years. Some people interested in Judaism are in search of meaningful connections to the past. Some have a hunger for deeper understanding and ritual, a longing for something precious to pass on to their children, something nourishing and loving to live by. For many Jews (and non-Jews, too), this interest has meant exploring the rich tapestry of Judaism — some discovering the religion for the first time, others re-examining the lost or forgotten traditions from their youth.

Whether you're Jewish or not, you may be curious about the many aspects of Judaism. With that in mind, we offer you *Judaism All-in-One For Dummies*. Wherever you're coming from — whether you're interested in the religion or the spirituality, the culture or the ethnic traditions — this book offers you a taste of Judaism, right down to the Jewish cooking recipes!

About This Book

Judaism All-in-One For Dummies offers you a glimpse into Judaism. You find out what Jews generally believe and discover the special days they celebrate. You even get a quick primer on the Hebrew language and popular Jewish recipes.

Although this book doesn't cover everything about Judaism, you find out the basics so that the next time you're invited to a holiday celebration, Jewish wedding, or synagogue, you know why it's happening, what to expect, and what food you might be eating. You can even talk intelligently about the Torah, the Talmud, and the Kabbalah.

Even better, we've packaged all this great information in six easy-to-read mini-books that are organized in easy-to-access chapters:

- » Book 1: Judaism
- » Book 2: The Torah

- » Book 3: The Talmud
- » Book 4: The Kabbalah
- » Book 5: Hebrew
- » Book 6: Jewish Cooking

Foolish Assumptions

When writing this book, we assumed that our readers didn't know anything about Jews and Judaism. Toward that end, we explain all the rituals, ideas, and terms that you need to know in a way that you can understand, even if you're reading about these things for the first time.

We also don't assume that you're Jewish, nor do we assume that you want to be or want to adopt every practice, custom, and rituals.

If you fit into any of these assumptions, this book is for you:

- » You feel pretty educated as a Jewish person, but you never really understood what the Torah or Talmud is all about.
- » You know nothing about the Torah or Talmud, or you're aware of some common misconceptions about them that you want to clear up.
- » You want to find out more about Judaism, but you don't want to struggle through an academic book about it. Instead, you want a friendly, informal, but accurate treatment of the subject.
- » You've heard about the Torah and are curious about it because you know that it's the central book and foundation of Judaism.
- » You're a spiritual seeker, and you've heard that the Torah is the cornerstone of the Jewish path and the hiding place of all the secrets of Kabbalah.
- » You're Jewish but realize that you never received a good Jewish education or you want to supplement, enrich, broaden, and expand your Jewish knowledge.
- » You're not Jewish, but you want to understand more about Jewish life, including that of your Jewish friends and neighbors.
- » You've attended a synagogue service, and you'd like to know more about it.

Whatever the reason for your journey, we're happy you're here — and hopefully, you'll leave this book with a lot more knowledge that what you opened it with, no matter where you are on your path!

Icons Used in This Book

All *For Dummies* books feature icons (little pictures that grab your attention) in the margins to serve you well. Think of them as road signs pointing to different kinds of information in the chapters.



TIP

This icon points out useful tidbits to help you make more sense out of something.



REMEMBER

This icon highlights ideas you should keep in mind as you explore or practice Judaism.



WARNING

The text next to this icon helps you steer clear of any road blocks or mistakes.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

When we present interesting, but not essential information, we use this icon.

Beyond the Book

In addition to the abundance of information that we provide in this book, you get access to even more help and information online at *Dummies.com*. Check out this book's online Cheat Sheet. Just go to www.dummies.com and search for "Judaism All-in-One For Dummies Cheat Sheet."

Where to Go from Here

This book is a reference, meaning that you don't need to read it in order like a bestselling novel. You don't have to read these minibooks or even the chapters in order — you can skip directly to what interests you.

Our suggestion is to start with what interests you. If you know nothing about Judaism, you may want to start with Book 1. If you want to prepare a Jewish dish to share, check out Book 6. And if you're heading to your first synagogue, check out Book 2, Chapter 4.

If you're not sure where to start, flip through the Table of Contents or index, find a topic that piques your interest, and flip to the book or chapter. No matter where you choose to start, you can find enough to get started in your exploration of Judaism.

About the Authors

Rabbi Ted Falcon, PhD, one of the pioneers of Jewish spirituality within the Reform Jewish context, was ordained in 1968 from the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, in Cincinnati, Ohio. He received a doctorate from the California School of Professional Psychology in 1975. He is a nationally recognized lecturer and teacher, and the author of *A Journey of Awakening: A Guide for Using the Kabbalistic Tree of Life in Jewish Meditation*. Since 2001, Rabbi Falcon has worked with Pastor Don Mackenzie and Imam Jamal Rahman, together known as the Interfaith Amigos. With them he has authored *Getting to the Heart of Interfaith: The Eye-Opening, Hope-Filled Friendship of a Pastor, a Rabbi, and an Imam*, and *Religion Gone Astray: What We Found at the Heart of Interfaith*. Rabbi Falcon founded Makom Ohr Shalom, a Synagogue for Jewish Meditation in Los Angeles, and Bet Alef Meditative Synagogue in Seattle. He is a speaker, a writer, and a spiritual therapist in private practice.

David Blatner is an award-winning, best-selling author of 15 books on a wide range of topics — from aviation to digital imaging to the number pi (π). Known for his easy-to-read and humorous style of writing about difficult subjects, Blatner is a Seattle-based writer whose books have sold over a half-million copies and have been translated into 14 languages. He has presented seminars in North America, Australia, Asia, the Middle East, and Europe and can be found online at 63p.com. Mr. Blatner has been a Jew his whole life.

Arthur Kurzweil is a writer, teacher, magician, and public speaker. He is a direct descendant of Rabbi Chaim Yosef Gottlieb (1790–1867), Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz (1555–1630), and Rabbi Moses Isserles (1530–1572), three illustrious and revered rabbis and teachers of Torah.

Arthur is the author of *The Torah For Dummies* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.); *The Talmud For Dummies* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.); *Kabbalah For Dummies* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.); *Jewish History For Dummies* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.); *On the Road with Rabbi Steinsaltz: 25 Years of Pre-Dawn Car Trips, Mind-Blowing Encounters, and Inspiring Conversations with a Man of Wisdom* (Jossey-Bass); *Pebbles of Wisdom from Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz* (Jossey-Bass); and *The Persistence of Memory: My Father's Ukrainian Shtetl — A Holocaust Reckoning* (Ben Yehuda Press). He's also the author of the best-selling classic *From Generation to Generation: How to Trace Your Jewish Genealogy and Family History* (Jossey-Bass) and *My Generations: A Course in Jewish Family History* (Behrman House).

Arthur is the recipient of the Distinguished Humanitarian Award from the Melton Center for Jewish Studies at The Ohio State University for his unique contributions to the field of Jewish education. He has also received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies

for his trailblazing work in the field of Jewish genealogy. His six-days-a-week blog, *Let My People Know*, has over 3,500 entries.

A member of the Society of American Magicians and the International Brotherhood of Magicians, Arthur frequently performs his one-man show “Searching for God in a Magic Shop,” in which he blends the performance of magic tricks with a serious discussion of Jewish theological ideas. He and his wife, Bobby, share 8 children and 13 grandchildren.

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Jill Suzanne Jacobs is a writer and educator and the author of *Hebrew For Dummies*. She holds a graduate degree in Israel Education from George Washington University and an MA in Jewish Education from Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion. She writes and educates from Southern California, where she lives with her daughter — a second-generation Diaspora Hebrew speaker — and their dog, who knows some Hebrew (and some Yiddish) too.

She has lived in the capitals of the United States, Israel, and France, the countries with the world’s largest Jewish communities, and has written cook-books in three languages — English, Hebrew, and French.

In addition to *Jewish Cooking For Dummies*, **Faye Levy** is the author of 1,000 Jewish Recipes (Wiley Publishing, Inc.), deemed by The New York Times “a culinary bible” and referred to by the Los Angeles Times as “the joy of Jewish cooking.” She is also the author of *The Low-Fat Jewish Cookbook* (Potter), and *Faye Levy’s International Jewish Cookbook* (Warner Books).

A four-time award winner, Levy won the James Beard Cookbook Award for Faye Levy’s *International Vegetable Cookbook* and earned awards from the International Association of Culinary Professionals for *Vegetable Creations*, *Chocolate Sensations*, and *Classic Cooking Techniques*.

Growing up in a traditional Jewish family, Levy began her Jewish schooling at the Hebrew Academy of Washington, D.C., and continued at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and at Tel Aviv University, graduating magna cum laude in sociology and anthropology. Living in Israel and discovering the exciting Mediterranean Jewish cuisine was for young Levy a culinary awakening and a powerful inspiration for her career. Levy then trained as a professional chef at the Parisian cooking school La Varenne, where she spent six delicious years.

For over ten years, Levy has been a nationally syndicated cooking columnist for the Los Angeles Times Syndicate. Over the same period, Levy has also been the main cooking columnist for Israel’s leading English newspaper, The Jerusalem

Post, where she focuses on Jewish and kosher cooking. She has written articles on Jewish holiday cooking for many major U.S. newspapers and for *Gourmet* and *Bon Appétit* magazines and enjoys teaching Jewish cooking classes. Faye Levy loves cooking, eating, and celebrating with her husband, Yakir Levy, at their home in Woodland Hills, California.

Kelly Ewing is a writer, editor, instructional designer, and certified Pilates instructor who has created more than 50 eLearning courses, authored or coauthored more than a dozen publications, and edited more than 300 books. Her goal is to make learning easy, empowering people of all ages and in all settings.

Kelly lives in Fishers, Indiana, with her college sweetheart and husband, Mark. In her spare time, Kelly enjoys spending time with her four adult children and her dogs and grand-dogs. She also enjoys camping, cooking, running, and practicing Pilates.

Dedication

Kelly Ewing: To my mom and biggest cheerleader, Judy Steadham. I miss you but know you're in a better place. And to Mark, Kate, Carter, Paige, and Mia — you are my world and mean so much to me. I love you always and forever.

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