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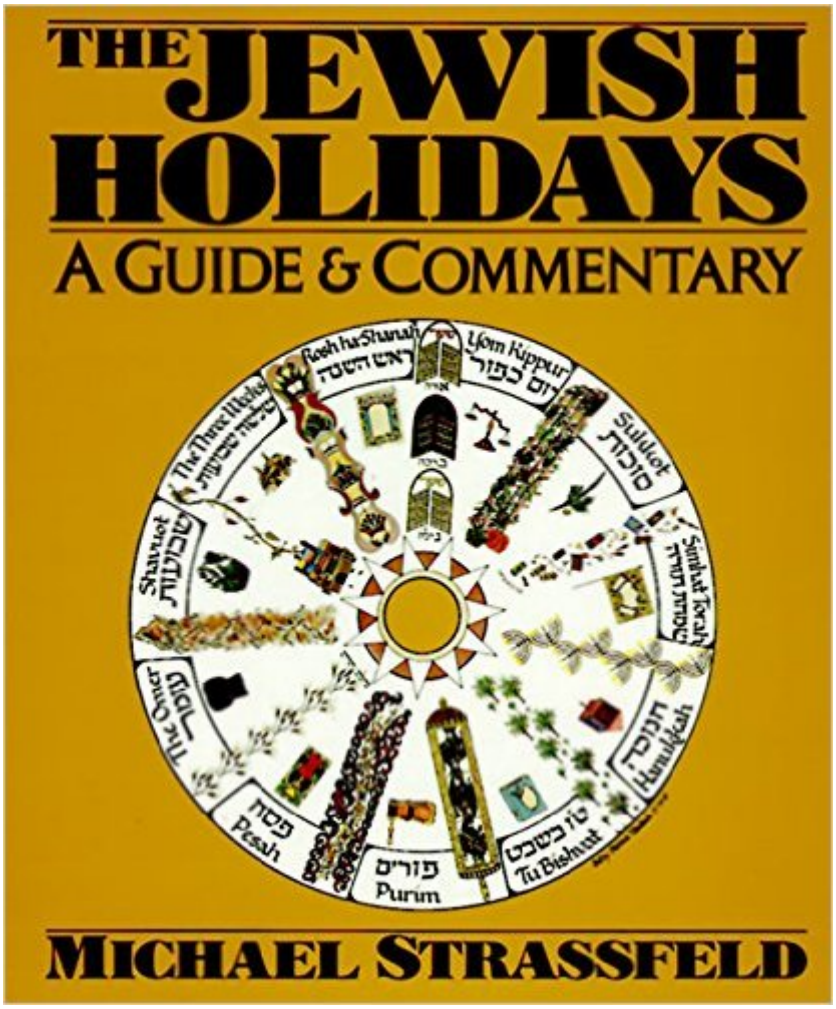
The Jewish Holidays



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Synopsis

The coeditor of the enormously popular Jewish Catalog "help[s] readers understand more fully the meaning of our holidays and thereby to observe these festivals . . . with a greater devotion and joy."--Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As a non-Jew, I found this book very informative, not only about Jewish holidays per se, but also aspects of Jewish history and trends in Jewish thinking. What's more, this book has helpful appendices, including a glossary of Hebrew terms. Interestingly, the author of this book does not feel the need to dispense with BC and AD in favor of BCE and CE.This book provides information on such things as the Passover Seder meal. We learn that celebration of the New Year (Rosh Hashanah) had a late start owing to the onetime association of New Year celebrations with pagan festivities. The book raises the question of the origins of Hanukah (to what extent a successful military revolt and to what extent a rejection of Hellenizing tendencies), and whether or not this relatively minor holiday has assumed the status of a Jewish answer to Christmas.History is seen as cyclic and linear, in effect combined into a spiral. Thus, each year's observance should see a person on a higher plane of spirituality than the last such observance.Theological questions are raised in this book. For instance, at Rosh Hashanah, there is the custom of throwing bread crumbs into a body of water to symbolize the fact that God drowns our sins in the deepest sea. Some rabbis raised concern that people may misuse this ritual as an actual removal of sin in place of genuine repentance (p. 102). (This recounts the fear among Christians of "easy believism".)New Jewish observances are also discussed, including Yom Ha-Shoah. Some traditional rabbis oppose this

holiday.

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