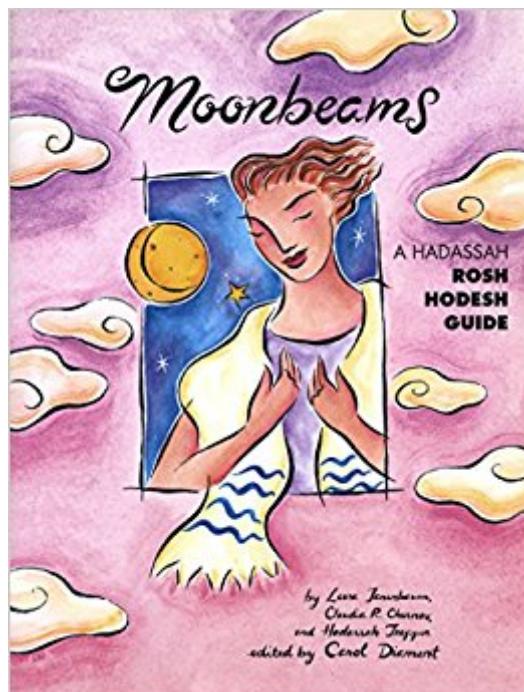


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Moonbeams: A Hadassah Rosh Hodesh Guide



Synopsis

This hands-on "idea book" focuses on Rosh Hodesh, the festival of the new moon, as a source of spiritual growth for Jewish women. A complete sourcebook which will initiate or rejuvenate women's study groups, it is also perfect for women preparing for bat mitzvah, those seeking to expand their Jewish education, or for anyone interested in learning more about Rosh Hodesh observance and what it has to offer. Set up to guide readers through nine months of study and contemplation during each new moon, it can be used for spiritual exploring on your own, or as a group workbook. The study texts, discussion questions, outline of a Rosh Hodesh service, Bible readings, poetry, suggested readings, and more combine to offer readers a bounty of information for learning about and incorporating this inspiring part of Judaism into their lives. Selected Contents: The History and Observance of Rosh Hodesh Kippah, Tallit, and Tefillin Claiming a Jewish Feminist Heritage Ba'a lot Teshuvah Women and Israeli Law Women Rabbis

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Customer Reviews

Rosh Hodesh, the celebration of the new moon, has been reinvigorated as a women's holiday in Judaism. For contemporary women who gather together for monthly prayer and spirituality, Diament's practical guide offers a specific nine-month course of study. The topics for each monthAmany tying in to the holidays that fall during that monthAcover an engrossing range of subjects: Jewish prayer garments, modesty, Jewish self-hatred, medical ethics, feminism, women and Israeli law, women rabbis and ba'lot teshuvah (women who "return" to Orthodox Judaism).

Diament, national education director of Hadassah, the international women's Zionist organization, acknowledges that some of these issues carry more urgency among Orthodox women than among the book's intended non-Orthodox audience, but, she asserts, "many Jews view Orthodoxy as a world apart," and "it is important... to gain access to that world and better understand it." That, she concludes, will help readers acquire insight into their own Jewish practice and thought. Each section begins with a personal essay, followed by a multidimensional selection of texts from classic to contemporary, then questions and activities. Although this handbook is geared to groups that affiliate with Hadassah, it can provide direction for women's study groups of all kinds. (Sept.)

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This is an innovative guide to Jewish experience and practice for women, using the festival of the new moon as a springboard. Editor Diament, National Jewish Education director at Hadassah, has prepared an excellent volume of texts, discussion questions, services, and readings for women preparing for bat mitzvah or renewing their engagement with their Jewishness. The choice of readings is excellent, and the work is notable for centering its observations in ritual, which is crucial to the understanding of the Jewish tradition. For most collections where there is a strong interest in Judaism or feminism. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

As one other reviewer here mentioned, one need not be a woman, much less devoutly Jewish, to appreciate the education provided in this book. The intended audience, of course, is women. And much of the material covers the Jewish and Hebrew calendars as they affect women. Nevertheless, the book's nine chapters will interest anyone eager to know about Jewish life, its calendar, or topics important to the Jewish community today. The nine educational programs more or less align with the nine Jewish months that feature major Jewish holidays. But the book is relevant to all months and years, since Rosh Kodesh, the Jewish welcome for a new month, is celebrated in every month, every year. Don't be confused: Although based on a lunar calendar, the Jewish, like the Gregorian year, includes 12 months---except during the 13th, or Jewish "leap" year, when an extra month is added, much like February 29 in every 4th Gregorian year. As noted by others, the book discusses the history and traditions of the "Rosh Hodesh," literally "The Head (or beginning) of the Month" and other important topics as traditional men's devotional garments (Kippah, Talit and Tefillin), which many Conservative and Reform Jewish women also now wear. I especially like the discussions on medical ethics and Jewish anti-Semitism. (Yes, unfortunately, Jewish Judeophobia is possible and occurs all too often.) But for those interested, the book also broaches female modesty, Jewish

feminism and its history, women within the Israeli legal system, Jewish feminism within Jewish Orthodoxy and women Rabbis. Many such books rely on a narrow range of scholarship. Not this one. Rather it references female, male, Jewish and non-Jewish authorities--both current and historical--all of them carefully documented to allow interested readers to study those highly varied sources too.

Moonbeams accompanies the Jewish woman through the year. Its 9 chapters are filled with ideas to think about and activities to engage in - like the 9 months of pregnancy Jews sing about at Passover. The topics: "History and Observance of Rosh Hodesh" grounds the reader in an ancient context; "Kippah Talit and Tefillin" (men's wear redefined). A potpouri of concerns as the woman develops over the 9 months - modesty (an injunction for Jewish women in a miniskirt age?), Jewish self-hatred (does it apply to me?); medical ethics (what would I do if the unthinkable occurred?); "claiming a Jewish feminist heritage (do Jewish women have a history outside the kitchen?); ba'alot teshuvah (how can a modern woman revert to pre-feminist ways?); women and Israeli law (what is happening over there?); and women rabbis (is there a difference with men rabbis?). A wonderful feature of Moonbeams is that each chapter has a large variety of sources - the words of men and women, Jew and non-Jew, past and present. Each excerpt is carefully footnoted so the reader can go on from there to many more years of intellectual and spiritual development as a Jewish woman. Shulamit Reinharz, Ph.D. Professor, Brandeis University

This book is primarily intended for those who celebrate Rosh Hodesh, the Jewish festival of the New Moon -- traditionally considered a woman's holiday -- with a women's group. But you don't have to celebrate Rosh Hodesh or belong to a women's group to appreciate this work. I highly recommend it simply for personal enjoyment and study. The topics are wide-ranging and include medical ethics, women rabbis, the treatment of women in Israeli law, and Jewish self-hatred, among others. Each topic is approached from a feminist point of view. This is a wonderful book to curl up with on a Shabbat afternoon.

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