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Our Lives As Torah: Finding God In Our Stories



Synopsis

In this powerful book, Carol Ochs shows us how to develop a personal theology by examining our life stories, learning to recognize God at work in them, and bringing them into conversation with Torah. Using timeless biblical texts as lenses to see the present, she helps us understand who we are and who God is for us by exploring the tightly interwoven basic elements of our lives--our love, suffering, work, bodies, prayer, community, and experiences of death. Through the process of seeing our experiences in relation to Biblical stories, we begin to recognize our lives as part of the ongoing story of the Jewish people--as Torah. This insight allows us to see these experiences as meaningful, not accidental, and opens us to recognizing God's power in and through all that happens to us. Rather than a collection of random events, our lives are part of the Jewish people's ongoing adventure. Armed with our personally shaped theology, we can face this adventure of living in the vanguard of history with awareness and confidence.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ochs, coordinator of graduate studies at Hebrew Union College in New York, posits a creative thesis: that interpreting our lives as sacred texts, "as if they are Torah," shapes them into experiences as revelatory as the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai. That outlook can help us understand why we live, gives coherence to our daily lives and "allows us to recognize how often we stand on holy ground." She extends the metaphor by calling all our important relationships "covenants" with our spouses, our children, even our work and our bodies. To live by the revelation that God is as present in our lives as at Sinai, each of us needs a "working theology" that

encourages a positive view of daily events. Ochs defines theology as a way of life, a system of thought and action that answers three basic questions: Who am I? What can I know? What can I hope for? Ochs argues that stories comprise the central component of our theologies, and biblical and contemporary stories reflect our own quests for meaning. Chapters on love, suffering, work, our bodies, prayer, community and death illustrate aspects of life that can be infused with God. Ochs attempts profundity and sometimes achieves it, but it is often cloaked in dense and circular language that obscures her point. Despite that shortcoming, her book can open the way for readers who want to understand life's journey in a new yet ancient context. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

This book advocates a personalized approach to Judaic living and dying. Ochs convincingly maintains that "the Torah is played out over and over again in the events of our lives." To support that theory, she provides a diverse array of stories related by ordinary Jews discovering the presence of God in the minutiae of their daily lives. Paralleling those individual accounts with both Hebrew Scriptures and Jewish culture, the author is able to present a contextual blueprint for Jews endeavoring to establish a more intimate relationship with God. A thoughtful celebration of the gift of God in love, in work, in communal life, in joy, in suffering, and in death. Margaret FlanaganCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Our Lives As Torah instructs Jews on how they can adopt and develop a personal theology by connecting their life stories with the larger history of the Jewish people. From the Torah's central themes and its connections to personal spiritual experiences to Biblical foundations for living, this makes some important points on living a life with knowledge of Jewish history and meaning.

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