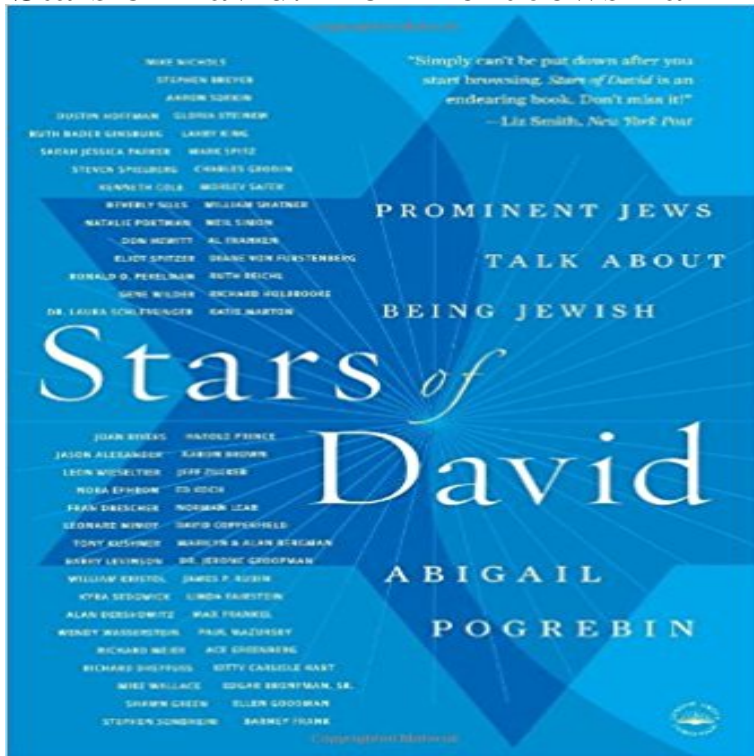


Stars of David: Prominent Jews Talk About Being Jewish



Sixty-two of the most accomplished Jews in America speak intimately 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 authors' 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 Its a heritage to be proud of. And then, too, its something that you cant escape because the world wont let you; so its 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, youre put in a position of defending Israel because you know how much is at stake. Natalie Portman Jewish introspection and Jewish humor is a way of surviving . . . if youre not handsome and youre not athletic and youre not rich, theres still one last hope with girls, which is being funny. Mike Nichols I felt not only this enormous pride at being a Jew; I felt this enormous void at not being a better Jew. Ronald O. Perelman American Jews, like Americans, have a very consumerist attitude toward their identity: they pick and choose the bits of this and that they like. Leon Wieseltier I thought if I had straight hair and a perfect nose, my whole career would be different. Sarah Jessica Parker Ive always rebelled a little when people say, My Jewish values lead me to really care about the poor. I know some Christians who care about the poor, too. William Kristol There were many times when I kept silent about being Jewish as I got older, when Jewish jokes were told. William Shatner Jew bastard was something I heard a lot. Leonard Nimoy. I always liked shikshas. Larry King It specifically says in the Torah that you can eat shrimp and bacon in a Chinese restaurant. Jason Alexander Yom Kippur is something I do alone, with nobody else, because I believe that my relationship with God is mine and mine only. Diane von Furstenberg

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