

The New Reform Judaism

Kaplan, Dana Evan
Publishers Weekly
Book Review
October 14, 2013
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The New Reform Judaism: Challenges and Reflections

Dana Evan Kaplan. Univ. of Nebraska/Jewish Publication Society, \$39.95 (392p) ISBN 978-0-8276-0934-1

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The stresses that challenge Reform Judaism, America's largest Jewish denomination, are examined by Kaplan, a Reform rabbi and author of three previous books. Now the rabbi of a congregation in Kingston, Jamaica, Kaplan was previously the rabbi of a temple in Albany, Ga. After chapters on the need for a Reform Jewish theology and the history of the Reform movement, Kaplan explores its confrontation with contemporary issues of worship, practice, values, and ethics. He argues for theological clarity—an impossible objective, according to the introduction by Eric H. Yoffie, president emeritus, Union for Reform Judaism. An afterword by current president Rick Jacobs sides with Yoffie, questioning the need for a "unifying theology." Kaplan critically considers congregational membership, patrilineal descent, conversion, Humanistic Judaism, Messianic Jews, Jubus (Jews interested in Buddhism), meditation, Jews for Jesus, "virtual congregations," creative spirituality, and wilderness Judaism. He concludes by asserting that Reform Judaism is the best form of ethical monotheism. (Nov.)

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