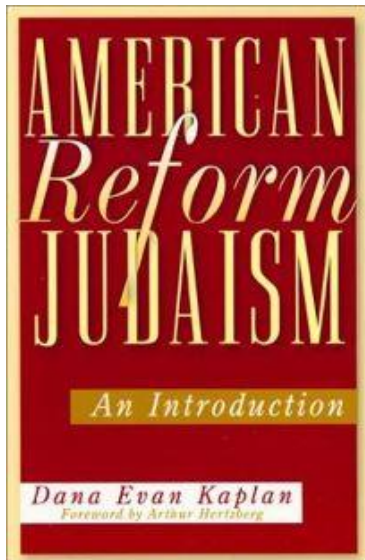




PUBLISHERS WEEKLY



AMERICAN REFORM JUDAISM: An Introduction

**Dana Evan Kaplan / Author, Arthur Hertzberg / Foreword by,
Eric H. Yoffie / Afterword by .**

Rutgers Univ. \$60 (288p)

ISBN 978-0-8135-3218-9 ISBN 978-0-8135-3219-6

A rabbi and a scholar, Kaplan combines his impressive background with diligent research and strong opinions to produce this lively account of Reform Judaism. Starting with history, he traces the roots of this denomination in Germany, but his emphasis is clearly on its development and current status in America. Kaplan examines the theology of Reform Judaism, stressing the do-it-yourself attitude that originally rejected Jewish tradition in favor of serving the needs of contemporary Jews. This approach, known as Classical Reform, has recently given way to increasingly successful efforts to restore traditional beliefs and practices. However, conflicts have arisen, not only with advocates of Classical Reform, but also with the liberal positions held by some leaders of the Reform movement. The latter have embraced ordination of women, acceptance of gays and lesbians and a degree of proselytizing, especially among the non-Jewish spouses in inter-marriages. According to Kaplan, these departures from Reform tradition contradict the simultaneous return to tradition, arguing that "Reform is moving in two directions at the same time." He concludes that "the Reform movement... is going to have to develop a coherent, effective strategy for reconciling autonomy and authority." While Kaplan's presentation focuses on Reform Judaism, his astute reasoning has value for all religious groups that struggle with maintaining their established beliefs in the face of the demands and challenges posed by modernity. (*June*)

DETAILS

Reviewed on: 05/12/2003

Release date: 06/01/2003

<http://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-8135-3218-9>