

A Wild FAITH

Jewish Ways into Wilderness,
Wilderness Ways into Judaism

What You Wouldn't Expect to Find in *A Wild Faith*, but You Will

by Rabbi Mike Comins

One might not think that a primer on spiritual Jewish practice in wilderness is a good choice for a book group or useful in an adult education class. But everyone experiences the joy of seeing a beautiful flower, the calming effect of sitting in a favorite spot in the garden, and awe in the face of an earthquake, blizzard, or hurricane. *A Wild Faith* provides lively, concise presentations on numerous topics relevant to everyone's practice of Judaism, including:

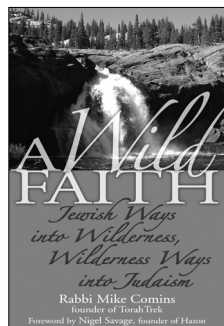
- "Do I Have to Believe In God?" (p. 15), a chapter addressed to Jewish atheists and agnostics.
- A practical approach to *teshuvah* (repentance) (p. 151).
- An excellent, short description of "I-Thou" that makes sense of Martin Buber's philosophy (p. 35).
- The dramatic, personal story of how a committed rationalist, the author, became a practicing mystic, and thinks it a most reasonable choice indeed (p. 30).
- How Rabbi Comins maintains "A Personal Relationship with Impersonal God" Who answers personal prayer (p. 104).
- An insightful presentation of Judaism as a holistic spiritual path that balances listening for and speaking to God, introspection and study, mindfulness and prayer (p. 43).
- A discussion of why the spiritual quest—including creative, innovative, cutting-edge spiritual practices—is best conducted in the framework of a tradition such as Judaism (p. 102). In a chapter entitled, "But Rabbi, Is This Jewish?" Rabbi Comins discusses the benefits and perils of adapting spiritual practices from other traditions (p. 176).
- A response to global warming and our need for cultural resources to change our relationship with the natural world. *A Wild Faith* presents Judaism as a religious "deep ecology." Following Jewish mystics, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Martin Buber, we relate to nature on the basis of loving, genuine

relationship rather than prudential calculations (p. 20).

- Fresh understandings of the dynamics of *kedushah* (holiness, in chapters 8 and 9).
- A. J. Heschel's assertion that awe is the root of Jewish faith. In response to William James's "Will to Believe" theology, Heschel counters that what we really need is a "will to wonder" (p. 21).

- A discussion of God's immanent presence in the animate earth. Rather than succumb to the either/or of pagan beliefs or God as purely spiritual, Rabbi Comins follows our biblical ancestors and Jewish mystics in finding transcendent God, not behind or above, but *in* the material world (p. 25, 181).

A study guide to these topics is available free at www.awildfaith.com.



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