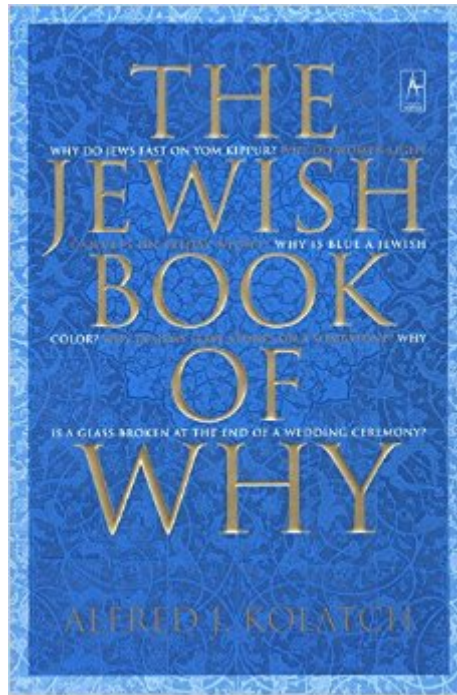


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# The Jewish Book Of Why



## Synopsis

Why do Jews eat gefilte fish? Why is a glass broken at the end of a Jewish wedding ceremony? Why must the chapter of curses in the Torah be read quickly in a low voice? Why are shrimp and lobster not kosher? Why do Jews fast on Yom Kippur? Why are some Matzot square while others are round? If you've ever asked or been asked any of these questions, *The Jewish Book of Why* has all the answers. In this complete, concise, fascinating, and thoroughly informative guide to Jewish life and tradition, Rabbi Alfred J. Kolatch clearly explains both the significance and the origin of nearly every symbol, custom, and practice known to Jewish culture—from Afikomon to Yarmulkes, and from Passover to Purim. Kolatch also dispels many of the prevalent misconceptions and misunderstandings that surround Jewish observance and provides a full and unfettered look at the biblical, historical, and sometimes superstitious reasons and rituals that helped develop Jewish law and custom and make Judaism not just a religion, but a way of life. L'chaim!

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book's question-and-answer format makes for easy reading, and should be of equal interest to both Jews and non-Jews alike. Want to know about Jewish marriage, divorce and family life? How about holidays, rituals, differences between orthodox and reform branches, or after affects of the Nazi holocaust? The answers are found here in this slightly dated book, one that was soon followed by a sequel (the *Second Book of Jewish Why*). This is an informative and nicely readable reference - one can only hope that authors from other religions and traditions will write books with a similar format.

My wife and I use The Jewish Book of Why as a reference book for Jewish beliefs, customs, and holidays. We often give the book as part of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah present. We also give it to friends and family to encourage their interest in Judaism. It is extremely well-written and understandable.

I have a grand-niece who is Jewish; I recently attended her Bat Mitzvah. The ceremony was beautiful but it left me with many questions about Judaism. This book was recommended to me by my niece (the girl's mother). It answers many questions and leads me to want to read more.

While volunteering at my Temple Gift Shop, I started reading the hardcover of this book. I found it fascinating and brought up even more questions than I originally had. This is NOT light reading, but a scholarly resource as to why we Jews do what we do. Fascinating. Something to keep in your library for information and context.

I am currently very interested in learning everything that I can learn about the Jewish Faith. This particular book was absolutely wonderful!!! It explained everything in perfect detail. I learned so much! I couldn't put the book down. Once I started really getting into the book, I found the Jewish Faith to be very interesting. I can guarantee anyone that buys this book will enjoy it. Gina

This book provides well-researched answers to questions that come up as life is lived and is also just fascinating to sit and read for pleasure. It's an excellent source for Jews who don't know why we do what we do, and for non-Jews to understand why we do what we do. I have my own copy so this recent purchase was a gift for a friend. Highly recommended. Brooke

B"H -Although written by a Conservative Rabbi, this is a good book for a beginner, or a reference text for the observant Jew. Under my opinion, this should be revised by an Orthodox Rabbi, and it would be a staple in Orthodox Homes worldwide.

I really like these books and the way they are written. The question and answer format make it easy to use it as a "reference" and also allows one to read a few pages at a time. The question and answer format is also wonderful because a lot of what Judaism is about is questions. "Question Everything" must have been the eleventh commandment. What is missing are important topics. I wrote to the author in 1996 and he was kind enough to reply to my question. I wrote: "I enjoy reading

your book . . . However, there is a major omission that I need to ask about. Why is the subject of War (and violence) not covered? Your biography says you were/are active as a military chaplain. I imagine that your role as chaplain and advisor to chaplains would put you in a great position to speak to the question of war and Jewish Law. Perhaps you wrote about this in another book? If so, could you direct me to that source or perhaps some other Jewish writer has expanded on the subject." A week later I got this reply from Mr. Kolatch; "I wish I knew how to answer your letter of February 7th. The best I can say is that the subject of war did not fit the theme of The Jewish Book of Why. No, I haven't written anything on the subject, nor is there a book I can recommend." So you can see, this very important subject was left out, even though Mr. Kolatch was surrounded by military people for most of his career. What a lost opportunity. How sad for us all. His revisions in 2000, didn't answer my questions either. I hope Mr. Kolatch will write about this concern in his next book. As I said in my letter to him: "What learning about violence is there to pass on to my 5 sons?"

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