

I am a Jew

Mel Waldman

World Audience (2008)

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Reviewed by Paige Lovitt for Reader Views (3/08)

In “I am a Jew,” Dr. Mel Waldman shares a collection of essays, memoirs, short stories, poems and plays that he has written. The underlying theme involves his exploration of his belief in God and his Jewish roots. Raised as an Orthodox Jew, his studies into other beliefs and faiths takes him on a journey where he has to decide what he really believes. His mother provided him with a kind and loving home. His father was emotionally abusive to him. He appeared to be jealous of his son’s relationship with his wife. To escape from the abuse, Dr. Waldman retreated into his studies.

By sharing his writings, we get a glimpse into his world. His musings about God and his Jewish faith teach us about Judaism, the traditions and the conflicts that are causing divisions among the followers. Some of his writings, especially the Jewish Haiku teach us about the horrors caused by the Nazis. He also questions the presence of God and evil that is in this world.

People of the Jewish faith will appreciate Dr. Waldman’s exploration into his Jewish roots. As a non-Jew, his writings made me contemplate my own beliefs. I enjoyed learning about Jewish mysticism and the Kabbalah. I found the writings about the Nazis and the suffering that they brought about on innocent people to be very painful to read. I fully understand people’s need to question the existence of God when such evil as this has been allowed in the world. I appreciate that the author shared his in-depth musings on this subject. By taking a risk and sharing his questions and doubts, he helped me to admit my own doubts to myself. I realized that these thoughts exist within me, yet they do not override what my true spiritual beliefs are. By airing them, I am able to move on from them.

“I am a Jew” is an excellent book to read. It is fine for the reader who is enjoying a solitary journey; however, I would recommend it to reader’s groups. I think that it will stimulate some fascinating conversations. It would also be a great resource for people to use who are studying World War II and the horrific acts of the Nazis.