

A Time to Every Purpose

letters to a young jew

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Letters to a Young Jew

Jonathan D. Sarna

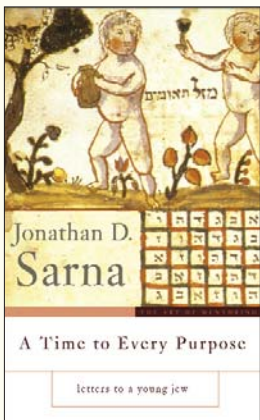
Preminent scholar Jonathan D. Sarna reflects on identity, family, and faith in this accessible introduction to the American Jewish experience.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the central question confronting Jewish leaders in America is simple: Why be Jewish? Jonathan D. Sarna, acclaimed scholar of American Judaism, believes this is the wrong question. He argues that Judaism is not so much a “why” as a way of life that is best experienced through doing. The more Judaism one does, the more one comes to appreciate what Judaism is. Using the Jewish calendar as his starting point, Sarna reflects on the major themes of Jewish life as expressed in a full year of holidays, from Passover in the spring to Purim eleven months later. Passover, for instance, yields a discussion of freedom; Shavuot, a discussion of Torah; Yom Kippur, the role of the individual within the Jewish community; Chanukah, issues of assimilation and anti-assimilation. Sarna provides an essential and brief introduction to the major practices of Jewish life as well as the many complexities of the American Jewish experience.

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JONATHAN D. SARNA is Joseph H. and Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University and chairs the Academic Board of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives. He is the author of *American Judaism: A History*, as well as the chief historian of the National Museum of American Jewish History and of the 350th commemoration of Jewish life in America, 1654–2004.

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