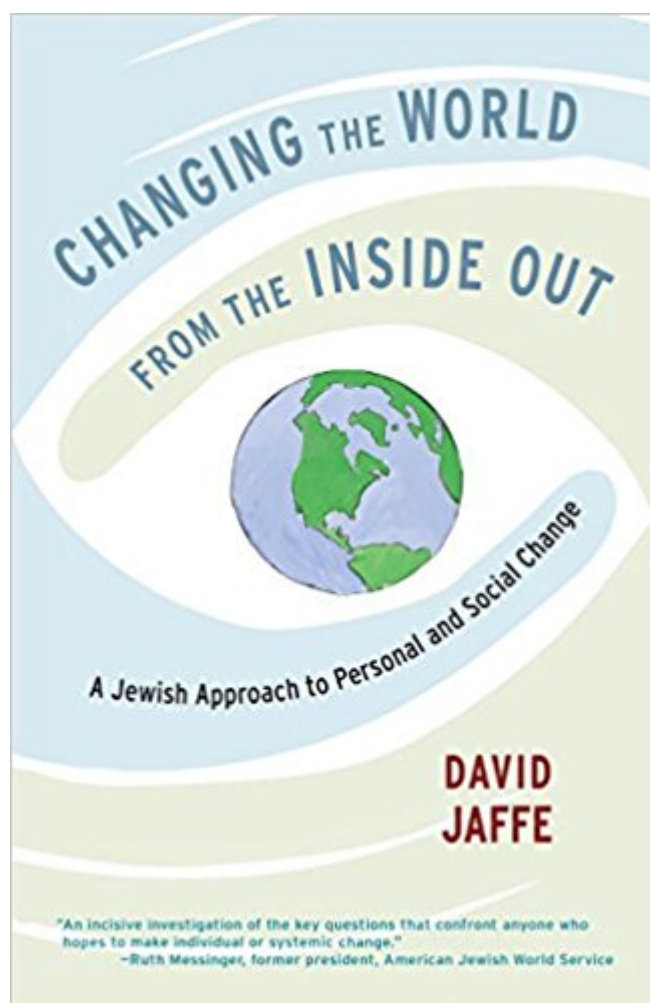


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Changing The World From The Inside Out: A Jewish Approach To Personal And Social Change



Synopsis

WINNER OF THE 2016 JEWISH BOOK COUNCIL AWARD FOR CONTEMPORARY JEWISH LIFE AND PRACTICE
An inspiring and accessible guide, drawn from Jewish wisdom, for building the inner qualities necessary to work effectively for social justice. The world needs changing—and you are just the person to do it! It's a matter of cultivating the inner resources you already have. If you are serious about working for social justice and change, this book will help you bring your most compassionate, wise, and courageous self to the job. Bringing positive social change to any system takes deep self-awareness, caring, determination, and long-term commitment. But polarization, the slow pace of change, and internal conflicts among activists and organizations often leads to burnout and discouragement among the very people needed to make a difference. *Changing the World from the Inside Out* distills centuries of Jewish wisdom about cultivating and refining the inner life into an accessible program for building the qualities necessary to accomplish sustainable change. Through explorations of deep motivation, inner-drive, and traits like trust and anger, this book engages the reader in a journey of self-development and transformation, demonstrating that sustainable activism is indeed a spiritual practice. Jaffe offers accessible and meaningful guidance for this journey—with exercises, contemplations, and discussion points that can be used individually or in a group.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“This wise book is essential reading for anyone who recognizes that the world's problems demand spiritual solutions, because it is we who must change before we can expect to

change the world. Rabbi Jaffe draws on deep and time-tested Jewish wisdom to guide us to become more effective activists by bringing our highest truth to bear on public issues. He shows us how to tap the wellsprings of motivation, channel emotions, and align our behavior with our highest values to make us more effective in serving the public good. Changing the World from the Inside Out is full of valuable lessons that will help ensure that your holy light shines like a beacon in these dark times, when we need it so much.

—Alan Morinis, author of *Everyday Holiness*

“David Jaffe offers an incisive investigation into the key questions that confront anyone who hopes to make individual or systemic change. He encourages us to understand our motivations and drives and how to use these to move toward the change we want, to help others move with us, and to not burn out in the process.”

—Ruth W. Messinger, former President of the American Jewish World Service

“Changing the World from the Inside Out combines sweeping, idealistic visions to repair the planet with practical, realistic approaches that enable this to get done, one step at a time. It offers a path with directions how to repair oneself and grow into a kind, understanding, nurturing partner in progress.”

—Rabbi Yitz Greenberg, President Emeritus, The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership

An inspiring integration of musar (inspirational) literature and practice with numerous examples of how one can take the insights of that “inner discipline and use it to make a difference in the world.”

—Raddi Sid Schwarz, New York Jewish Week

DAVID JAFFE is a rabbi, a social worker, and an educational consultant to many major Jewish institutions in North America. He’s a nationally recognized leader in the field of Mussar and applied Jewish ethics, and he is a frequent speaker at synagogues and Jewish conferences around the country. He’s spent twenty-five years teaching and working in various areas of social justice outreach, including homelessness and interfaith community organizing.

— www.rabbidavidjaffe.com

Rabbi Nancy Fuchs Kreimer, Associate Professor, Reconstructionist Rabbinical College

Ever since I began the study of Mussar, fourteen years ago, I have asked my teachers to help make a connection between this traditional Jewish practice of character cultivation and today’s social justice activism. Imagine my thrill to discover Rabbi David Jaffe’s work! We needed someone to write this book, and Rabbi Jaffe was the perfect candidate. He is a learned and deep Mussar teacher and practitioner; he is also an experienced and thoughtful activist. Rabbi Jaffe brings all this together in

a work that can guide both beginners and experts in both fields. Needless to say, in our present moment in this country, we need this wisdom more than ever. I read this book aloud with my husband, a law professor. As we discussed the rich ideas in each chapter, we knew we were girding ourselves for the battles ahead. Thank you, thank you, Rabbi Jaffe!

This is a very fine book. The author describes how as a young Jewish college student and frat member a life changing incident made him realize that there is a world out there whose injustices needed fixing. He began to explore the Jewish concepts of morality, civilized behavior and concern for others embodied in the Jewish documents across the centuries: the Talmud (ca 200-400 AD), the morality teachings of the medieval scholars and later, and the Hasidic traditions. He became a rabbi and an activist in social concerns. Well written, touching in many places. My only reservation is that at the end of chapters there are short questionnaires for the reader to ask himself or herself instances of where the chapters contents were reflected in the reader's life. I didn't expect that, and I skipped over it. Minor quibble. Others might find these little quizzes interesting. Book is highly recommended.

The next few years are likely to be especially challenging for social change activists. Being able to draw on inner strength and being able to focus one's activist impulses wisely will be increasingly important. Drawing on traditional Jewish wisdom, David Jaffe has written a book that can nourish and sustain social change activists as they work to make the world more just. The key, Jaffe argues and illustrates through numerous examples, is developing and practicing a set of what Jewish teaching calls middot, character traits or virtues, like humility, patience, dignity, and trust, and learning how to guide our passions in constructive directions. By linking personal and social change we can build a more robust and resilient platform for tackling the world's problems. *Changing the World From Inside Out* is not only a gateway into an under-appreciated body of profound Jewish teaching about how we become fully human, it's a practical primer in how to develop the mindsets and behaviors that make for effective activism. If you're committed to building a better world and in it for the long term, take the time to read this book. It will leave you with new insights and inspiration.

Rabbi David Jaffe transforms the spiritual-theoretical into timely, real-world wisdom and advice for social activists and concerned citizens alike. *Changing the World from the Inside Out* distills Jewish mystical, populist, and ethical teachings into a very down to earth conversation about what it means to try and make the world we live in a better place. Rabbi Jaffe recognizes that we enter into the

work of repairing the world with grand visions and motivations, AND that in order to realize those visions and motivations we really need to reinforce the work internally with regard to our own way of being and relating to others. For anybody who wonders what religion might have to offer humanity in a chaotic postmodern world, Rabbi Jaffe makes an excellent case that it has the potential to facilitate the sort of character development that truly makes the world a better place, one person at a time.

Wise and insightful. This book is beautifully written and is full of wisdom regarding how to manage one's inner life as an activist, idealist, and change agent. Jaffe mixes personal insights and vivid stories with deep Jewish philosophy and practices. For Jews, it's a window into a long tradition of Jewish approaches to spiritual development. For activists of any faith, it's a guide to understanding how to stay involved in the struggle to create change without burning out. The book is a gift that shares hard-earned wisdom gained over more than three decades as a scholar/ activist.

David Jaffe presents a book that as fun to read as it is rewarding. Drawing on classic mussar teachings as well as his own personal experiences building a life pursuing spirituality and social justice, Jaffe provides a solid ground for anyone looking to advance, or understand, the intersection of these two worlds. His stories are compelling and accessible, his descriptions of classic Jewish wisdom deep and also accessible, and his use of specific examples and practice points left me thinking days after I put the book down. I highly recommend it!

This is the book we need RIGHT NOW. Reading this book has saved me from despair and helplessness each day. For social justice activists, Rabbi Jaffe's insights, stories, and accessible practices provide the encouragement, nourishment, and honest self-assessment to sustain us in difficult times. For spiritual seekers, the book helps us open our hearts and strengthen our resolve to make a difference in the world. Drawing from the deep well of Jewish teachings, from the insights of neuroscience, and from the wisdom of his own experience in the trenches, Rabbi Jaffe is a true teacher of our times.

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