

The way into...Tikkun Olam (Repairing the World)

by Elliot N. Dorff.

A Book of Life - Embracing Judaism as a Spiritual Practice

by Michael Strassfeld.

Both published by Jewish Lights Publishing 2006.

The latest in Jewish Lights' excellent 'Way Into' series takes the subject of Tikkun Olam, repairing the world, or the concept of social action as it is most commonly understood today. According to the author's introduction, at least 50% of American Jewry considers Tikkun Olam to be the hallmark of their Jewish identity and I suspect that this would be replicated throughout the non-Orthodox communities of the world.

Elliot Dorff concentrates on Tikkun Olam in terms of human beings and their interactions with each other, pointing out that its incarnation with regard to conservation, habitat depredation and environmentalism is to be handled by another volume in this series. He divides his book into three sections, Tikkun Olam in theory, Tikkun Olam for Individuals and Society, Tikkun Olam within Families. Each is replete with stories, texts and guidance for individuals to put the concept into practice. This is a lucid, clear and inspirational text and also implicitly acknowledges that the acts of Tikkun Olam that we perform have to be underpinned by a spiritual dimension as well.

In his introduction Dorff also notes that only 13% of American Jews chose religious observance as the defining characteristic of their Jewish identity.

It is to increasing this percentage that Michael Strassfeld's wonderful new book, *A Book of Life*, is subliminally devoted. Strassfeld writes with a clarity, warmth and tangible spirituality that are both attractive and inspirational, covering all the bases that make for a rich and vibrant Jewish existence. *A Book of Life* is divided into 5 sections, *Awakening to the Day*, *The Three Paths*, *Living through the Year: The Festivals*, *Living a Life of Holiness*, *After Deuteronomy: Living in the Promised Land*.

This is a rich text that can be read cover to cover, or a section at a time; whichever way it is read it is a book that will not only make for a deeper and more satisfying Jewish life but provide the means for a life whose nature will actively contribute to Tikkun Olam.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh