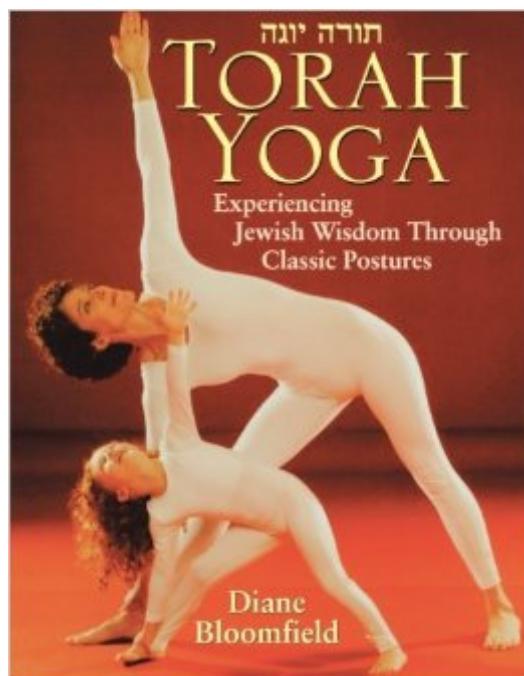


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Torah Yoga: Experiencing Jewish Wisdom Through Classic Postures



Synopsis

This highly original book introduces a fascinating new approach to yoga and Torah by combining the practice of classic yoga postures with traditional and mystical Jewish wisdom. Each chapter begins by presenting a central Jewish spiritual concept that engages readers of all faiths on a personal level. It offers an in-depth exploration of the concept, quoting and commenting on sacred Jewish texts from the Pentateuch (Five Books of Moses) and other sources. It then guides its readers with mastery and clarity through a meditation and a set of fundamental yoga postures--clearly illustrated by beautiful photographs--for both beginning and advanced yoga students. The Torah concept is actualized and experienced through the practice of these postures. Torah Yoga helps to heighten awareness of body, mind, and spirit?it illuminates the heart of Jewish wisdom.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Bloomfield touches the depths of one's body and soul in this beautifully written guide to studying both Torah and Yoga. There is a sense of ease and comfort in her wisdom and her teachings. The Yoga postures are easy to replicate and the photos enhance the warmth of the book. Whether a novice or a master, this book will want you coming back for more...a must read for anyone who embraces and desires to expand their essence.

Raised as a Presbyterian, a competitive swimmer, and a mathematician (order not important), I am not naturally drawn either to spiritual mysticism or yoga. This beautifully written and interesting

book, however, has helped me to understand how one could be drawn to those things. My thanks to the author, who obviously cares very deeply about her subject.

Diane offers several suggestions for how to read her book, *Torah Yoga*. My choice has been to read and reread the introduction. I love Diane's emphasis on first things: the word, the breath, attending to the foundation before moving into postures and finding the origins of our life journeys. As a midwife, I work with women and families embarking on the life journey of pregnancy. Today in the U.S., a lot of technology is available to evaluate the status of pregnancy. As a guide for pregnant women, I try to encourage them to trust their own intuition and the strength of their own bodies. Diane has given me the tools to promote this concept with women. I've had the privilege to take *Torah Yoga* classes with Diane, I can hear her voice when I read the explanation of postures in her book. The directions are easy to follow. Perhaps I only want to read the introduction because I don't want to come to the end of the book. But the book is a guide to a journey. Diane has given me and everyone else who reads her book the encouragement we need to become our own guides.

I certainly appreciate the existence of a book on the relationships between Yoga and Jewish practice - and, in fact, there are others. I got this because I was teaching a yoga class at a synagogue and wanted some ideas on how to do "Jewish yoga". The reflection pieces are great. The poses are fine, yet for a yoga practitioner they are nothing out of the ordinary. I think what I'm looking for is more creative ways to integrate Jewishness into the practice, and maybe this is where I need to contribute: together, we came up with a dynamic movement which expresses the dictum: "for me the world was created; I am but ashes and dust"; chanted "shema" through dynamic triangle; did a "snow angel" on the mat; and closed the class with three "shaaaaalooooooms". These are the type of thing I'm looking for and will continue to search out. That said, Bloomfield's text was worth the money, I'm happy to have it in my collection, and I will continue to peruse it for ideas.

Torah Yoga tries to weave together overly simplified, and uselessly simplistic, ideas from Jewish mysticism with hatha yoga practice and philosophy. The result reads like those affirmations Al Franken used to do on SNL. Yes, you may be a spark of God's infinite light, and that may lead to a warm and fuzzy feeling, but it won't deepen your understanding of Kabbalah or improve your downward-facing-dog. In my admittedly limited understanding, both Kabbalah and yoga philosophy are demanding and intricate doctrines. They deserve careful study. This book, though

well-intentioned, infantilizes both topics. If you want a book to enhance your yoga practice, there are many, many titles that far surpass this. I'm sure the same is true if you want to grapple with the rigors of Hinduism or Jewish mysticism. Superb hatha yoga books that are gentle and user-friendly include Donna Farhi's "Yoga Mind, Body and Spirit," and Erich Schiffman's "Moving Into Stillness." I'd spend the money on either one rather than this.

"Yoga is as vast and varied as the ocean" says Diane Bloomfield in her book, and judging by the diversity of practitioners in the world today, she is right. Diane's Torah yoga adds another voice to the field, a radiant Jewish voice, and provides further proof that spiritual practice can transcend race and religion and also be practical, helpful, even necessary in modern life. Diane writes of the Torah as "black fire on white fire", an allegory for the dancing letters of Hebrew against the plainness of the manuscript, or the discipline of words and study against the receptivity of yogic practice and meditation. It is a summary of her unique and compelling attitude, which is to deliberately pursue higher consciousness whilst catering for a very real need to include and care for the body as a spiritual instrument. In how many ways do we ignore or denigrate the body in modern society? Countless ways! Diane paints a vivid alternative with serene strokes of language that resonate with truth and sincerity. Her approach in this book is definitely personal, but there are enough erudite nuggets in there to satisfy a theosophile without losing the flow to mere doctrine. A manual for yoga it is not, indeed, the poses are shown in an order that I would be hesitant to recommend as a guide for practice. While I am not familiar with the Torah, Diane's enthusiasm for her faith is evident and infectious. For example, I enjoyed reading her (brief) exposition of the unspeakable Hebrew name for God, YHVH, which when pronounced by its individual letters sounds just like a breath, and when written vertically looks like a stick-figure human. What a beautiful connection between her faith and yoga, which promises a stairway to the Divine made of breath and physical discipline! I put down this book knowing a little more about the Jewish faith and no more about yoga, but that is not its value. It made me recognise the hunger I see in my yoga students, whether they know it or not: that unspeakable longing to reside even for a moment in the strength and light hidden within each one of us and frustratingly out of reach amidst the noise of modern living. Diane quotes the first chief Rabbi of Israel, Rav Kook, and leaves us in no doubt as to why she wrote this book: "All existence whispers to me a secret: I have life to offer - take it, take it... Arise, and live, and sing to beauty and to life... Draw delight unending from the dew of heaven." With yoga, you can hear your own breath and body whispering to you: I have life to offer - take it, take it." I commend her example, as I commend her book.

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