



For Your Book Club

Q&A with author Rabbi Deborah R. Prinz

How did you discover the connections between religion and chocolate?

I wandered into a chocolate store in Paris and happened to pick up a brochure that I fortunately was able to read in my high school French. It described that Jews brought chocolate making to France. This amazing morsel of history had been overlooked in my serious Jewish education. With further exploration I learned about the significant, provocative and intriguing chocolate stories of Mayans, Aztecs, Catholics, and Quakers.

How and where did you conduct your research and chocolate tasting?

Chocolate sleuthing occurred during my travels within the United States and to several other countries, including Austria, Belgium, England, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Mexico, Poland, Spain and Switzerland. My chocolate discoveries also were unearthed in numerous libraries and archives.

Did you discover a special connection to chocolate?

Yes, I call it *choco-dar*, my radar for chocolate experiences and findings. During my research and travel, my *choco-dar* kicked in.

What are a few of the more surprising findings from your research?

Here are some of my favorites:

- Chocolate makers in Bayonne, France, insist that Jews brought chocolate making to France.
- December chocolate coin customs melt into interfaith stories.
- Religious values such as honest and fair labor practices and saving our natural resources should be considered when selecting chocolate.
- Artists struggle with chocolate deities: Are they blasphemous or art?
- Secret Santas have been hidden in my chocolate maccabees.

Discussion Questions for Your Book Club

- What surprised you the most about the connections in the book between chocolate and religion?
- Do you agree with the criteria for selecting quality chocolate that Prinz lays out? Would you add anything else? Which certifications will you look for in your future chocolate purchases?
- Did you have any favorite chocolate rituals, customs or stories in your family or community?
- What do you see as the differences between Jewish, Quaker, and Catholic usages of and approaches to chocolate?
- Which of the several narratives about chocolate makers resonated most for you and why?
- What might these findings about chocolate and religion suggest about the future of inter-religious dialogue?
- Which future adventures might be on your personal chocolate trail?

Chocolate Tasting Suggestions for Book Clubs

- Prepare recipes from the book to share.
- Bring favorite chocolate treats or recipes.
- Invite a local chocolate maker(s) to contribute samples.

Rabbi Deborah R. Prinz's *On the Chocolate Trail* has been released in 2nd. Edition by Jewish Lights, 2017. Prinz lectures about chocolate and religion around the world. She blogs at *The Huffington Post*, *The Forward*, *On the Chocolate Trail* and elsewhere. She was awarded a Starkoff Fellowship and a Director's Fellowship from the American Jewish Archives as well as a Gilder Lehrman Fellowship from the Rockefeller Library to pursue this research. The book spans several cultures, countries, centuries, and convictions, unwrapping how faith traditions share consumption, ritual and business interests in chocolate.

Rabbi Deborah R. Prinz is available to speak. Topics include:

- Jews on the Chocolate Trail
- Questions Rabbis Ask About Chocolate – Text Study of Responsa
- Chanukah and Christmas Chocolate Melt into Gelt
- What is the Best Chocolate? Ethics Mix into our Chocolate Eating
- What Did Alexander Hamilton Drink? Colonial Traders Dip Into Chocolate

Full list of topics.