



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 how Jews were 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 genetic connection to chocolate?

Yes, I call it *choco-dar*, my radar for chocolate discoveries and experiences. During my research, I discovered a Jewish proclivity to *choco-dar* as well.

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.
- In eighteenth century Amsterdam, Jews were known as chocolate specialists.
- North American Jewish Colonial traders such as Aaron Lopez and Daniel Gomez were involved in the American chocolate trade.
- Jewish values such as *oshek* (honest and fair labor practices) and *baal tashchit* (saving that which has potential for future use) should be considered when selecting chocolate.
- A Jew was the first to bring coffee and chocolate to England via Oxford.

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?
- The Catholic Church exhibited ambivalence toward chocolate. Why do you think there was less ambivalence in the Jewish community?
- 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 local chocolate maker(s) to contribute samples.

Rabbi Deborah R. Prinz's *On the Chocolate Trail* was published in 2013 by Jewish Lights (quantity discounts available) and is in its third printing. Rabbi Prinz lectures about chocolate and religion around the world. Prinz blogs at The Huffington Post, The Forward, On the Chocolate Trail and others. 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. It spans several cultures, countries, centuries, and religions and unwraps how faith traditions share consumption, ritual and business interests in chocolate.

Rabbi Deborah R. Prinz is available to speak on the following topics

- 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? Jewish Ethics Mix into our Chocolate Eating
- North American Jewish Colonial Traders Dip Into Chocolate