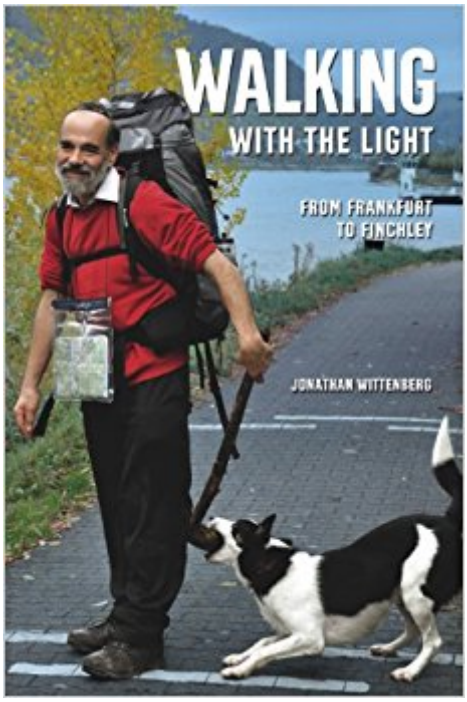
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Walking With The Light: From Frankfurt To Finchley



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Synopsis

In 2010, with his dog Mitzpah by his side, Rabbi Wittenberg walked from his grandfather's Frankfurt synagogue to his own, in Finchley, carrying the Ner Tamid - its Eternal Light - to co-shine forever in the newly built synagogue in North London. A film crew covered most of the trip and even Mitzpah wrote a blog, describing his experiences on the epic journey. Colleagues and friends accompanied them for some of the route and their discussions also contributed insights into the spiritual, social and political concerns that occupied the Rabbi's thoughts as he continued to meet many people along the way. Readers of Jonathan Wittenberg's other books already know the humane, insightful and often profound observations and thoughts that preoccupy him. Walking with the Light: From Frankfurt to Finchley will both delight and stimulate a whole new audience. Few religious writers can combine the humour and incidence of walking across northern Europe with cogent arguments for moral justice, a process perhaps to accept Europe's horrific past and show why a belief that tolerance and true understanding of the past is the only way to improve the future.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Jonathan Wittenberg is Rabbi of the New North London Synagogue and Senior Rabbi of the Assembly of Masorti Synagogues UK. He has worked passionately and tirelessly in the interfaith arena trying to promote cooperation and understanding between faiths. He is a strong advocate of inter-faith dialogue, striving to promote co-operation and partnership between different faiths. He has broadcast for the BBC on Prayer for the Day, and on Al Mustakillah television.

This remarkable book describes Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg' camping trip, accompanied by his faithful canine companion Mitzpah, to bring back the flame of the Ner Tamid (Eternal Light) --from its original location in his grandfather's erstwhile West End Synagogue in Frankfurt am Main - to his own congregation in the recently rebuilt new North London Synagogue in Finchley. I first got to know Jonathan through his grandfather Rabbi Dr. Georg Salzberger, who, before he took up his Frankfurt pulpit, was one of the approximately thirty Feldrabbiner (Jewish chaplains) in the First World War German army. Rabbi Salzberger's war diaries appear (translated in English) in my upcoming book on the subject and shed further light on his personality.Jonathan has succeeded in combining the existential tragedy of the Holocaust, especially as it touched his own family, with deep insights about Judaism and its attitude to light and darkness, hope, consolation, and eternal rebirth, as well as the enormous contribution of Jews to German culture. His book is informed by a deep understanding, not only of Jewish tradition, but also of English and High German culture. Torah and Talmud sit comfortably next to Lessing's Nathan der Weise, Moses Mendelssohn's Kantian/Jewish philosophy, Heine's acid alienation, and English romanticism. The book also contains deeply personal insights into what it was like to be orphaned at a very early age, and to grow up in a `refugee' German-Jewish atmosphere in England. A beautiful and poetic image of the autumnal Rhine valley, its towns, abbeys and castles, and the remnants of their Jewish communities, emerges, written with deep compassion and love, not least with Mitzpah's blog which describes everything from a canine point of view. The very idea of a rabbi and his faithful hound was a new idea for me, reared with unbending orthodox South African rabbis with little ability to deal with anything beyond their own narrow horizon.Jonathan is uncompromising dealing with the causes and effects of the Holocaust, including the Jewish experience in Holland (a trip through Dutch wind, rain and storms end his hiking trip) and the equivocal role of the Dutch in the murdering of 70% of Dutch Jews, counterposed with their heroism in protecting countless Jews at risk of life and limb. There is also a moving description of the difficulty of hidden Dutch children and also children of the English Kinderstransport in adapting to life after the war.I recommend this book to anyone who wishes to renew faith in the human condition - with love, compassion, and tolerance for all -- in the present angry, tumultuous world.Peter Appelbaum

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