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Through The Door Of Life: A Jewish Journey Between Genders (Living Out: Gay And Lesbian Autobiog)



Synopsis

National Jewish Book Award Finalist for Memoir Professor Jay Ladin made headlines around the world when, after years of teaching literature at Yeshiva University, he returned to the Orthodox Jewish campus as a woman—Joy Ladin. In *Through the Door of Life*, Joy Ladin takes readers inside her transition as she changed genders and, in the process, created a new self. With unsparing honesty and surprising humor, Ladin wrestles with both the practical problems of gender transition and the larger moral, spiritual, and philosophical questions that arise. Ladin recounts her struggle to reconcile the pain she experienced living as the “wrong” gender with the pain of her children in losing the father they love. We eavesdrop on her lifelong conversations with the God whom she sees both as the source of her agony and as her hope for transcending it. We look over her shoulder as she learns to walk and talk as a woman after forty-plus years of walking and talking as a man. We stare with her into the mirror as she asks herself how the new self she is creating will ever become real. Ladin’s poignant memoir takes us from the death of living as the man she knew she wasn’t, to the shattering of family and career that accompanied her transition, to the new self, relationships, and love she finds when she opens the door of life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"On the face of it, *Through the Door of Life* is the story of how Jay Ladin, the author and an English professor at Yeshiva University in New York City, transitioned into living as Joy Ladin. But it's

Ladin's relationship with Judaism that anchors this book and makes it stand out. . . . Orthodox Jewish leaders should thank Ladin for refusing to hide out, for reminding us how human beings should relate to one another." — •The Huffington Post

"Not only a memoir of transgender experience, this is also a story of family heartbreak and family love; of growth as a teacher and writer; and, not least, of a self deeply connected to God and Judaism throughout a life lived across genders." — •Rabbi Jill Hammer, director of spiritual education at the Academy for Jewish Religion

"In painstakingly and painfully constructing her new self, Ladin is fully aware of the societal conventions and privileges of which she makes use. . . . But there seems to be a poignancy, of which Ladin is exquisitely aware, that precisely because what Ladin wants is so normal, her efforts to obtain it are so fraught with pain." — •Lambda Literary Review

"Joy Ladin's book succeeds so well because it is anything but a trans tract; it is a fierce story of regular old human life: hideous choices, endless repercussions, occasional glory, frequent humiliation, abiding difficulty. It could have happened to us. She makes us believe it." — •Kay Ryan, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry

"Readers will be rewarded not only with an expanded understanding of a complicated choice but also a compelling and moving story of a person transitioning, not only from male to female but from a numb, suicidal 'nonexistence' to opening the 'door of life.'" — •Publishers Weekly (starred review)

"This is an emotionally intense, deeply personal memoir of self-discovery." — •PFLAG

Joy Ladin, the David and Ruth Gottesman Professor of English at Stern College for Women of Yeshiva University, is the first openly transgender employee of an Orthodox Jewish institution. She is the author of six books of poetry, including *The Definition of Joy* and *Coming to Life*.

Joy Ladin's journey is more than just a Jewish journey or a transgender journey — it's a human journey about coming into one's truth of being that's universal in its triumphs and heartwrenching suffering. And it's not just that this story is remarkable — Joy's brutally, nakedly honest narrative strips away all defenses and goes straight to the heart and the gut. Her prose sings and screams, weeps and dances, and makes me want to reach out through time and space to give her a hug and tell her someone out there cares. As for all the haters out there who wrote mean reviews of this book personally judging Joy for her decision (and frankly her incredible courage!) to live her truth — I WILL be going through the reviews carefully when I get a chance, and flagging any hate speech I find. Passing judgement on an author is not a proper book review, and there is no room for hate on this forum. To be truly alive we each have to

fully live our own truths, whether or not they match what society would like to be true about us. That's the point of this wonderful, wonderful book, which I couldn't recommend more highly!

This book helped raise my consciousness about the challenges of the trans-community. Joy's courage to suffer enormous pain so that she could grow into who she is created to be as a human being inspires me. Her ability to stay focused on Love, which flowed from her relationship with God, is what saves her as she continues to suffer pain and challenge. For me, personally, the book gave me the opportunity to reflect on my own judgement(s) of the trans-community, and more importantly, trans-individuals. My level of compassion has increased as has my desire for deeper understanding.

One would expect that a published poet and English professor would write engaging prose, and this is a beautifully written book. She describes in great detail the turmoil she experienced in deciding to transition, the impact on her family and the loss of her marriage. For anyone struggling with gender identity, or those who know and/or love someone in the throes of this struggle, this book is an honest portrayal of how powerful and overwhelming gender dysphoria can be.

What an amazing story. The author had a long road to travel with many bumps in the road. He could not remain a man, but had to be a man for his family's sake in the beginning. At the end of the book, when the decision was finally made to go from Jay to Joy I breathed a sigh of relief because I felt that she had finally reached a place in her life where she could be happy and accepted by others.

Joy Ladin is a fine writer. She seems to cover almost all aspects of the daily trials of changing her gender in her life. We learn about what happens in her marriage, with her children, and at her job at a Orthodox Jewish facility where she is hoping to receive tenure. At times I became restless with the intensity and the non-stop focus on Joy's every thought but I would say that how the story was written was mostly justified. This is an unusual story and one would learn a lot about this subject.

Extraordinary account of a life well-lived. Book was exactly as described, and delivery went smoothly. I would use and recommend this seller again.

This is an important book with some beautiful passages. It's also far too long and at times like an essay, not a memoir. Worth reading though.

I wanted to love this book and at times I did. Joy's story is fascinating, especially in 2013 as the focus on understanding trans-gender issues is in the spotlight. This is a hard review to write as I am so glad I read the book and understand her journey. This memoir has allowed me to read other articles and listen to a recent powerful NPR hour on trans-gender with much greater understanding. At times I thoroughly enjoy the writing and at other times there were either too many details, or not enough. It just didn't flow as I would have hoped being written by an English professor. I wanted to understand more about her relationships with her friends, colleagues and children. I found it interesting how the last 1/3 of the book felt like it was not written by the same person and perhaps the spiritual truth was that she was a different person. That being said, I gave it 4 stars, because it is important to read.

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