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Inspirational

High Holiday Stories: Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur Thoughts on Family, Faith and Food

By: Nancy Rips

Publisher: Frederick Fell Publishers, Inc.

Publication Date: July 2010

ISBN: 978-0-88391-191-4

Reviewed by: Pamela Victor

Review Date: August 13, 2010

Hey, that's me! Coincidentally, the first entry Nancy Rips writes in her remembrances of High Holidays past happens to be my own fondest religious memory from my childhood. "I loved sitting next to my dad during High Holiday services and playing with the fringes of his tallit," she writes. "I would braid them, count them, curl them, and roll them around my fingers. It was a comforting feeling to sit there in the enveloped warmth of my dad." Rips brings readers right back to the quiet moments when there is nothing more to do than sit next to your dad. A moment like this, and many of the others remembered in *High Holiday Stories*, encapsulates the spiritual observance of simplicity, often forgotten in today's busy world.

Nancy Rips presents a variety of quotes, witticisms and stories about the Jewish High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in this charming, little book. Some entries are profound. Some are silly. Some are more poignant than they first appear, like Michael Kors' memory of stealing yarmulkes, and taking them home to use them to make doll clothes. Refreshingly, not all the memories are feel-good. Some are sweet, but some are bitter too. Some of the quotes are by celebrities. Most are by the rest of us commoners. *High Holidays* is a book you can dip into to fish out a story sure to remind you to appreciate the gifts of life. Priorities. Family. Ritual. Atonement. Forgiveness. And food.

Rips organizes the entries into eight, related chapters of holiday memories, such as "Who Put the Rush in Rosh Hashanah?", "Fast Foods: How do you stop thinking about food when you aren't supposed to eat or drink for an entire 25-hour period?" and the humorous conclusion "Let My People Enjoy." In "Why Are these Holidays Different from All Other Holidays?" she presents a myriad of ways the High Holidays are observed – in Baghdad, in college, after a hurricane. According to one brief tale written by Rabbi Barbara Aiello, Jewish people in Italy have a Rosh Hashanah Seder. (Americans have the Seder at Passover.) On Italian Seder plates, they have dates, pomegranates, apples, pumpkin, scallions, and sometimes even a fish head. These stories remind us that it's not the exact ritual, but the intent behind it, that makes these holidays special.

High Holidays would make the perfect gift for that perfect someone in your life. Or get it for yourself, for when you need a little reminder or pick-me-up. After all, as Rips notes a Jewish proverb as saying, "Worries go down better with chicken soup than without."

Quill says: Spoon up a little matzo ball soup for the soul in this sweet, little book about the High Holidays.

For more information on *High Holiday Stories: Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur Thoughts on Family, Faith and Food*, please visit the author's website at: www.nancyrips.com