



# **With an Outstretched Arm: A memoir of love and loss, family and faith**

*B.J. Yudelson*

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# With an Outstretched Arm: A memoir of love and loss, family and faith

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What do you do when it's late on a Friday afternoon, you're a practicing Orthodox Jew, and your father lies dying in a hospital?

This is the dilemma that opens *With An Outstretched Arm*. The directive to "honor your parents" and the injunction to "guard the Sabbath" become metaphors for the conflict between the author's lifelong desire to please her father and her more recent commitment to ancient traditions that he disdains.

With *An Outstretched Arm* recounts the author's journey from the liberal, southern Reform Judaism of the 1940s and '50s to the warm embrace of a more traditional Orthodox Jewish life. It relates how chance encounters propelled her, people and books inspired her, and tragedy tested her, challenging her to ask difficult questions.

How can she balance the ethical and ritual sides of Judaism? Will she always feel like an outsider? How can she overcome the existential loneliness that follows her young daughter's death? Where can she find God's outstretched arm?

*Advance Praise:*

"Written with honesty, intelligence, and grace, *With an Outstretched Arm* will break your heart and put it back together again. B.J. Yudelson's writing captivates and enlightens, but most of all, resonates. A story for us all."

- Sonja Livingston, author, *Ghostbread*

"B.J. Yudelson has written a sensitive, heartfelt, deeply engaging account of her spiritual journey and family life. Honest, open, and very real as she describes tragedy, she comes through with her love for her life and her family intact. I was gripped throughout."

- Stephanie Wellen Levine, author, *Mystics, Mavericks, and Merrymakers: An intimate journey among Hasidic girls*

"B.J. Yudelson's *Outstretched Arm* smites and embraces. An extraordinary writer faces the joys and tragedies and existential questions of her life without flinching and has produced one of the most honest and moving memoirs one could read. It is not only the story of a search for Jewish identity and meaning on the broadest of American landscapes; it is a fearless voyage of self exploration - searching for whatever meaning and solace we can take from our suffering and our joy."

- Rabbi Shmuel Klitsner, author, *Wrestling Jacob*

"Original, interesting, compelling, and important for the light it sheds on this slice in the history of American Judaism and American religion."

- Zachary Braiterman, professor of Jewish studies, Syracuse University

"The compelling story of one woman's journey through life. B. J. Yudelson's memoir reminds us that the One who created us will see us through the complexities of this journey and that often our family of faith becomes the living reality of the grace, love, and support of the One."

- Ronald A. Domina, pastor, Bethel Christian Fellowship, Rochester, N.Y.

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