

***Interreligious Heroes: Role Models and Spiritual Exemplars for Interfaith Practice.* Edited By Alon Goshen-Gottstein. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2021. viii + 442 pp. ISBN: 978-1-6667-0960-5. \$38.95, paper.**

In this book, editor Alon Goshen-Gottstein brings together a collection of writers aimed at describing their “interfaith hero.” With no attempt made at defining “interfaith hero,” authors were free to choose both their subject and writing styles. This gives the book a breath of fresh air in that there is no overly complex endeavor at some philosophical chain trying to hold it all together. Such a reflexive approach in writing as the means to share about the reflexive nature of interfaith gives further credit to Goshen-Gottstein as an editor. But, for those looking for a textbook or biography you will rather find story starters. Among the different writing styles and brief intros to the various heroes, the reader is invited to investigate them further; I myself have bought more books as a result.

Alon Goshen-Gottstein describes the starting idea for this book coming from a desire to celebrate his friend’s Rabbi David Rosen’s seventieth birthday. Two streams come from this non-academic background. First, that interfaith is a result of friendships. All the authors contended within this book have in some way been in relation with Rabbi David and his work at the Elijah Interfaith Institute. Such connectivity highlights the foundational key of caring for others across religious lines. The second stream leaves the reader, quite honestly, wondering who even is Rabbi David? Having no framework of who he is or what the Elijah Interfaith Institute is about, I felt a bit as an outsider in need of investigating Rabbi David’s work before I could adequately read *Interfaith Heroes*.

Thankfully, this initial feeling passed as I finished editor Goshen-Gottstein’s introduction and got into the book itself. In chapter after chapter, I found an authentic voice of those who have set the standard for interfaith practice--life lived as the means, it could be said, of the diverse range of individuals, which is the main theme carried throughout the book. Because the authors were given a wide berth of who they could write on, and in parallel to knowing Rabbi David Rosen, this book is not an exhaustive list of interfaith heroes; as noted by the editor in his introduction.

In deciding how to layout the book, editor Goshen-Gottstein opted for a more thematic method, opposed to more mundane alphabetic list. The first of seven categories titled “Spiritual Inspiration and Precedent,” focuses on “old, great teachers and models” that still inspire believers to this day. Next is the self-explanatory chapter on “Academic and Philosophical Foundations,” Moving onwards, the following sections include: “Revisiting Theological Foundations,” “The Spiritual Quest,” “Increasing Understanding,” “Engaged and Peace Activism,” and lastly, “Fathers and Children.”

One interesting category is the “Transforming the Catholic Church.” This seemingly special status of religious group comes in part due Rabbi David Rosen’s “broadest network of friends and associates [coming from] within the Catholic Church.” Even more so, Rabbi Rosen’s view that the Catholic Church is “responsible for the single greatest transformation in teachings in the relation to other religions that humanity has ever seen.” Referencing the proclamation of *Nostra aetate* and its wide-reaching effect on interfaith practice.

Although *Interreligious Heroes* started off as a way to pay tribute to a dear friend, editor Goshen-Gottstein brings out a larger success in his natural approach to the reality of human and faith complexities. This book does very well in sharing interfaith through story, a method often lost in the high halls of academia. I found a groundedness in how these heroes were not displayed as perfect, but rather simply, as aligning their person convictions with daily lived practice. This leaves the reader with a calling to do the same. Interfaith cannot exist in theory alone; it must produce results to have any foundation of meaningful impact in the lives of others. *Interreligious Heroes* serves as an excellent source of inspiration in not only what it talks about but how it goes about doing it.

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