

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: Jennifer Rataj**  
Telephone: (802) 457-4000  
Fax: (802) 457-4004  
publicity@jewishlights.com

**PROFOUND, PERPLEXING AND POWERFUL—  
*UN'TANEH TOKEF*  
A PRESCRIPTION FOR REDEMPTION**

The recitation of *Un'taneh Tokef*—one of the most beloved, prominent and controversial pieces in the Ashkenazi High Holy Day liturgy—defies easy understanding for many people. To be fully engaged when reciting this awesome and fearful prayer, you must first understand the meaning behind it and how it came to be. A true understanding of its moral challenge, fatalistic theology, call to human responsibility and prescription for redemption can enlighten and enrich the High Holy Day experience.

“If it is the High Holy Days, we are to leave with the conviction that we are indeed mortal beings; that we do balance good and evil sometimes giving in to the latter at the expense of the former; that there is indeed a divine presence before whom we stand; and that we can, with proper repentance and resolve, wipe the slate clean and begin anew with all the promise of a world re-created, a child reborn, a mind reformed, and a conscience reawakened,” writes Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, PhD, in **WHO BY FIRE, WHO BY WATER—*Un'taneh Tokef*** (Jewish Lights / May 2010 / Hardcover / \$24.99). “This series aims at such a liturgical reawakening.”

Over forty contributors who span three continents and all major Jewish denominations examine *Un'taneh Tokef's* theology, authorship and poetry through a set of lively commentaries. Men and women, scholars and rabbis, artists and poets trace the history of *Un'taneh Tokef* and connect the prayer to its biblical and rabbinic roots. They wrestle with the personal and community impact of its deeply moving imagery, probe its haunting message of human mortality, and reflect on its call for sanctity, transformation and renewal.

**WHO BY FIRE, WHO BY WATER—*Un'taneh Tokef*** is the first volume in the Prayers of Awe series that will explore High Holy Day liturgy. It is designed to enrich the praying experience for everyone—whether experienced worshipers or guests who encounter Jewish prayer for the very first time.

**Contributors:** Merri Lovinger Arian • Rabbi Tony Bayfield, DD • Rabbi Sharon Brous • Dr. Marc Brettler • Dr. Erica Brown • Rabbi Ruth Durchslag, PsyD • Rabbi Edward Feinstein • Rabbi Elyse D. Frishman • Rabbi Andrew Goldstein, PhD • Dr. Joel M. Hoffman • Rabbi Delphine Horvilleur • Rabbi Elie Kaunfer • Rabbi Karyn D. Kedar • Dr. Reuven Kimelman • Rabbi Lawrence Kushner • Rabbi Noa Kushner • Rabbi Daniel Landes • Rabbi Ruth Langer, PhD • Liz Lerman • Rabbi Asher Lopatin • Catherine Madsen • Rabbi Jonathan Magonet, PhD • Rabbi Dalia Marx, PhD • Ruth Messinger • Rabbi Charles H. Middleburgh, PhD • Rabbi Rachel Nussbaum • Rabbi Aaron Panken, PhD • Rabbi Or N. Rose • Rabbi Marc Saperstein, PhD • Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso • Rabbi Jonathan P. Slater, DMin • Rabbi Brent Chaim Spodek • Rabbi David Stern • Rabbi David A. Teutsch, PhD • Rabbi Gordon Tucker, PhD • Dr. Ellen M. Umansky • Rabbi Avraham Weiss • Rabbi Margaret Moers Wenig, DD • Dr. Ron Wolfson • Rabbi David J. Wolpe • Rabbi Daniel G. Zemel • Dr. Wendy Zierler

### **About the Editor:**

**Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, PhD**, has served for more than three decades as professor of liturgy at Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. He is a world-renowned liturgist and holder of the Stephen and Barbara Friedman Chair in Liturgy, Worship and Ritual. His work combines research in Jewish ritual, worship and spirituality with a passion for the spiritual renewal of contemporary Judaism.

He has written and edited many books, including *My People's Prayer Book: Traditional Prayers, Modern Commentaries*, winner of the National Jewish Book Award; and he is coeditor of *My People's Passover Haggadah: Traditional Texts, Modern Commentaries* (all Jewish Lights), a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award.

Rabbi Hoffman is a developer of Synagogue 3000, a transdenominational project designed to envision and implement the ideal synagogue of the spirit for the twenty-first century.

### **WHO BY FIRE, WHO BY WATER**

#### ***Un'taneh Tokef***

*(Prayers of Awe Series)*

*Edited by Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, PhD*

Jewish Lights (Woodstock, VT); [www.jewishlights.com](http://www.jewishlights.com); 800-962-4544

Hardcover / \$24.99 / 272 pages / May 2010 / ISBN 978-1-58023-424-5

**Praise for**  
**Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, PhD**

“Hoffman uncovers the depth of holiness and life affirmation.... In a seamless web, he weaves together past and present, ancient sacred scripture and contemporary spiritual reflection.”

—**Rabbi Irving (Yitz) Greenberg**, president, the Jewish Life Network;  
author of *The Jewish Way*

“Rabbi Hoffman’s book will enrich your soul.”

—**Rabbi David J. Wolpe**, Sinai Temple, Los Angeles; author of *Why Be Jewish?*

“An indispensable resource as we envision effective modes of prayer for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century synagogue.”

—**Dr. Ron Wolfson**, co-developer, Synagogue 3000, author, *The Art of Jewish Living* series

“An outstanding addition to the literature of Jewish life.”

—**Rabbi Louis A. Reiser**, Church & Synagogue Library Association

“Everything you ever wanted to know about the Passover haggadah, from multiple perspectives: biblical, historical, theological, legal, rabbinic, mystical, feminist—and then some.... The plurality of voices lends richness to the reader’s understanding.... [An] illuminating resource.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“Offers great wisdom about the way religious rituals can help people make sense of their lives.... This book is for all Jews and Christians who hope for religious ritual that speaks to deep human hungers and helps people discover God’s presence in their daily experience.”

—**Rev. Ruth Duck**, associate professor of worship art, Garrett-Evangelical  
Theological Seminary

*Who by Fire, Who by Water—Un’taneh Tokef* (6” x 9”, 272 pp, Hardcover, ISBN 978-1-58023-424-5, \$24.99) is available from Barnes & Noble, Borders, Books-a-Million, Indigo/Chapters, Waldenbooks, B. Dalton, amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com, and many other booksellers, or directly from Jewish Lights Publishing, P.O. Box 237, Woodstock, VT 05091; Tel: (802) 457-4000; Fax: (802) 457-4004; www.jewishlights.com. For credit card orders, call (800) 962-4544. Add \$3.95 shipping and handling for the first book, \$2.50 for each additional book.