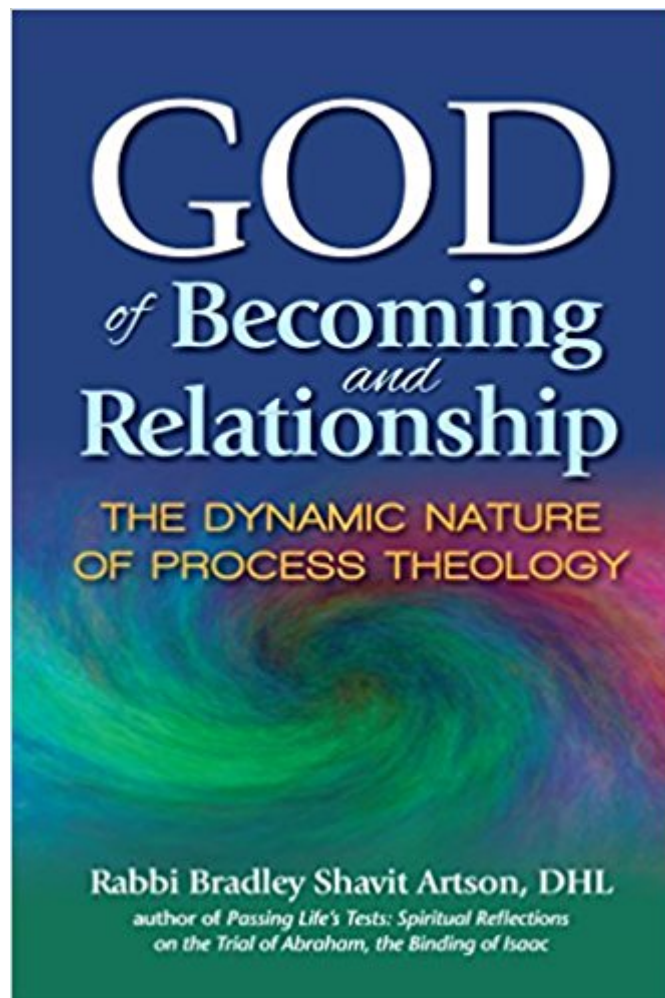




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God Of Becoming And Relationship: The Dynamic Nature Of Process Theology



Synopsis

You no longer have to choose between what you know and what you believe. This is an accessible introduction to a theological game-changer. "I wrote this book for you if you want to be able to locate your life in a single, encompassing story, one that includes everything from the first moment the universe began until yesterday, a narrative that embraces deepest personal meaning, a yearning to love and be loved, a quest for social justice and compassion." —from the Introduction

Much of what you were told you should believe when you were younger forces you to choose between your spirit and your intellect, between science and religion, between morality and dogma: unchanging laws of nature vs. miracles that sound magical; a good God vs. the tragedies that strike all living creatures; a God who knows the future absolutely vs. an open future that you help to shape through your choices. This fascinating introduction to Process Theology from a Jewish perspective shows that these are false choices. Inspiring speaker, spiritual leader and philosopher Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson presents an overview of what Process Theology is and what it can mean for your spiritual life. He explains how Process Theology can break you free from the strictures of ancient Greek and medieval European philosophy, allowing you to see all creation not as this or that, us or them, but as related patterns of energy through which we connect to everything. Armed with Process insights and tools, you can break free from outdated religious dichotomies and affirm that your religiosity, your spirit, your mind and your ethics all strengthen and refine each other.

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Customer Reviews

Rabbi Artson introduces "process theology" to explain how Judaism is not an either/or assumption that asks believers to choose between their spirituality or their intellect. Process theology, we learn, derives from process thought, "a way of accounting for the cosmos as a dynamic, evolving unity." Accounting for the cosmos leads to a God who allows good things to happen to bad people and vice versa. After his son's diagnosis of autism, Artson was unsatisfied with conventional religious answers about how such a thing could happen to his family. In contemplating this phenomenon, he develops a complex view of reality, one in which God is both "dynamic and vulnerable, his role being to push his creations toward making the best choices for their lives. Yet the freedom God has granted allows humans to shape their own futures, though past choices inevitably affect future realities. Artson discusses process theology in relation to suffering, the afterlife, and religious practice, among other topics, all within a framework of both normative and mystical Judaism. Crisply written, this volume offers delicious food for thought and will be accessible to followers of various religions. --Ilene Cooper --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

"Through honesty, openness and erudition, Rabbi Artson teaches of a God who whispers 'grow' to each of us. A beautiful and soulful exploration." Rabbi David Wolpe, Sinai Temple, Los Angeles, California; author, *Why Faith Matters* "Offers us a new way to see ourselves, our world and our God. We no longer have to choose between our faith and our intellect. What a joy and what a relief it is to be able to integrate these seeming disparities. This important work invites us into a relationship with a God who is dynamic and loving. This is a book that can heal our souls." Rabbi Naomi Levy, spiritual leader, Nashuva; author, *Hope Will Find You, Talking to God, and To Begin Again* "Shows how Process Theology can give us the language and understanding to forge a moral and compelling Judaism for ourselves.... If you have wrestled with the presence of evil in the world and suffering in your private life if you have struggled to find a belief in God that is scientifically tenable and an approach to Torah that is intellectually credible then this book is for you. It will inspire and nurture your soul." Rabbi Irving Greenberg, founding president, the Jewish Life Network; author, *The Jewish Way* "I wept for joy reading this book. So many of us are wounded by conventional vocabulary when we think and talk about God our language is stuck, and we are stuck. Artson, one of the most inspiring Jewish leaders and theologians of our time, redeems the ancient covenant of formulating anew our conversation about God." Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum, founding rabbi, Zion: An Eretz Israeli Community in Jerusalem "The truth

of the matter is: After reading this book you will want to become Jewish, if you aren't already. Or, to be more exact, a Jew with a Process perspective. The insights from this book come so naturally and flow so freely from its pages, weaving together Jewish wisdom and Process philosophy, that you are drawn to a way of living that is deeply loving, deeply traditional, deeply creative and deeply faithful, without leaving your mind at the door or your heart on a shelf.... I plan to use this book again and again in the classroom, sharing it with people of many faiths and no faith.... An exciting achievement.

—Jay McDaniel, PhD, author, *Of God and Pelicans: Theology of Reverence for Life and Living from the Center: Spirituality in an Age of Consumerism*; editor, *Jesus, Jazz, and Buddhism* (www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org)

“A pioneering exploration of collaborative ecumenical thinking. Illustrates the complementary and contrasting features in Judaism and Process Theology. In broadening the horizons of the search for wholeness, Artson opens a fantastic adventure of ideas.

—Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis, author, *Conscience: The Duty to Obey and the Duty to Disobey*; founder, Jewish Foundation of the Righteous and the Jewish World Watch

“Extraordinary ... speaks to the real-world experience of many people who find a fixed set of religious beliefs and teachings incompatible with what they know.... Explicates a twenty-first-century Judaism that is dynamic, constructive, ethical and deeply meaningful; offers ways for us to think about prayer, ritual and Israel, and about what we must do to create greater justice.

—Ruth W. Messinger, president, American Jewish World Service

“With personal, persuasive prose ... skillfully presents a theology to live with and live by. It may change the way that you think about God, Judaism and your being in the world.

—Sue Levi Elwell, PhD, rabbinic director, East Geographic Congregational Network Union for Reform Judaism

“Undertakes the daunting challenge of spelling out a theology that will speak to the mind and soul of the modern reader, and succeeds.

—Rabbi Harold Kushner, author, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*

“An amazing combination of personal narrative, introduction to Process Thought and integration of Jewish theology with the two. It should open up to a whole new community the fruitfulness of thinking about God, life and Judaism through Process perspectives.

—Thomas Jay Oord, author, *The Nature of Love and Defining Love*

“Both a lovely, poetic introduction to Process Theology, and a vivid sense of Rabbi Artson's private journey as a believer, a Jewish leader, a father, a teacher and a Jew.... His enthusiasm and compassion are on every page, inviting you to learn from him and with him.

—Laurie Zoloth, director, Center for Bioethics, Science and Society, Northwestern University

“Brings to pass a confluence of Process Theology and Judaism

hitherto only hinted at. The vibrant Jewishness of his sources, practices and rhythms of interpretation yield an unsurpassed introduction to the God of becoming—*for all children of Sarah, Hagar, Abraham.* Catherine Keller, professor, theology, Drew University; author, *On the Mystery: Discerning Divinity in Process.* “The most comprehensive exposition of a Jewish Process Theology yet written. Jews and Gentiles alike are indebted to Rabbi Artson for the intellectual-theological-emotional achievement this book represents.” Rabbi David Ellenson, president, Hebrew Union College—*Jewish Institute of Religion* “[A] work of honest struggle by a fellow-seeker for a believable Jewish theology in our day.... Don’t miss it!” Arthur Green, rector, Rabbinical School, Hebrew College “With sensitivity, wit and profundity, Rabbi Artson makes it possible for those who long ago abandoned the jealous-coercive-angry-old-man God to forge a new path to spiritual depth and holiness.... Simply said, with this book, [he] gives us God back.” Rabbi Sharon Brous, founding rabbi, IKAR “Until now it has been chiefly Protestants who have profited from the brilliant work of Alfred North Whitehead in reformulating ideas about God, the world and our inner lives. Now, in using Whitehead to revitalize Jewish life and thought, Brad Artson outdoes and inspires us all.” John B. Cobb Jr., professor emeritus, Claremont School of Theology “If you own only one book on Jewish Process Theology, this should be [it]. Accessible, persuasive and richly rooted in Jewish texts, Artson’s theology is warm and inviting where Mordecai Kaplan’s is cold and distant.” Rachel Adler, David Ellenson Professor of Modern Jewish Thought, Hebrew Union College --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

It’s a new day for Process Theology. Rabbi Artson’s beautifully written book is a fresh birthing of process thought--and in the most natural place of all: Judaism. But this book is not just for Jews! As a non-Jewish process thinker (from the Protestant tradition of John Cobb and Marjorie Suchocki), I not only appreciate Rabbi Artson’s insightful interpretation of process theology, but have gained a deeper appreciation of the Jewish tradition. In fact, I am convinced after reading this book that the Jewish faith is inherently process. But it took someone like Rabbi Artson with his keen intellect, accessible writing style, and deep faith to scrape off the heavy weight of Greek philosophy and get back to a fresh, living, breathing Judaism. What a gift he has given to the world! For example, seeing *mizvot* (commandments) through the eyes of a God whose power is persuasive rather than coercive, whose very essence is relational love, will liberate many Jews (and others) who seek an authentic spirituality. The last chapter of the book--which you might want to read first--will leave you

deeply moved and brush away any doubt that process theology is a way forward for Jews and non-Jews alike who yearn for an intimate and authentic spirituality. Whatever your perspective on religion, this book will change the way you see God and the world. Especially if you are dealing with trauma or grief or agonizing over how to believe in God in a world filled with evil and suffering, you will find comfort and love here--the kind that does not bypass your mind or innate moral sense. (If you resonated with Rabbi Harold Kushner's classic book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, then you will love Rabbi Artson's book, too.) In *God of Becoming and Relationship*, Rabbi Artson has made a significant contribution to the community of diverse faiths in the belief that Process Thought is "a way to build communities that are robust in their pluralism and rooted in their streams of wisdom." Bravo, Rabbi Artson!--Patricia Adams Farmer, author of *Embracing a Beautiful God: Tenth Anniversary Edition* and featured writer for the on-line magazine *Jesus, Jazz and Buddhism: Process Thinking for a More Hospitable World*.

God of Becoming and Relationship: The Dynamic Nature of Process Theology by Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson, applies ideas of process theology and thought toward Judaism, in an attempt to reformulate some time honored Jewish practices and ideas. Process theology is taken from various streams of pragmatic thought, involves the interconnectedness of all things, and how nothing exists in isolation of other things. In process theology, this includes God. Rabbi Shavit Artson presents some fine ideas here, and no doubt there is a great deal to take away from process theology. I tend to be more eclectic in my Judaism, preferring to think or imagine God as process, as thought, as Love, as Father or Mother or energy, when and how I need it. This book tends to be a bit more ridged in its approach. But for someone wanting to expand their notions of what God and Israel mean, this is a fine book to broaden one's understanding.

Rabbi Artson has presented the concept of "Process Theology" in a clear, exciting way. I have already attempted to engage others in discussions concerning "Partnership in Creation," as inspired by Artson's reasoning and examples. Attempting to bridge the gap between literal understanding and metaphor-for-understanding and application, this study resonates well with today's want-to-be scholar.

Rabbi Artson is not only a great Rabbi, educator and speaker. He is a great writer. If you are truly interested in examining a religious philosophy that frames life as it is and makes no excuses for life bumps, bruises and disappointments and presents an acceptable God view, Read Artson.

Well written

One of the best discussions of process theology I have read. As a retired Christian minister it drew me closer to Rabbi Artson and to his family and helped to unite a common faith. I am very grateful and expect to read this book often over the years.

It's an excellent way to learn about a more interactive relationship with G-D and not just believe in a Lord/Servant type of relationship.

Finally--a Jewish treatment of process theology. I would have preferred an engagement with the theology without the personal/family stories, though.

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