

IMPORTANT DATES IN BIBLICAL, SECOND TEMPLE HISTORY

Rabbi Steven Morgen, Congregation Beth Yeshurun

Year	Event
1700 BCE (about)	Abraham
1290 BCE (about)	Exodus / Moses
1250-1200 BCE	Israelites Fight for the Land
1200-1020 BCE	Period of the Judges
1020-1000 BCE	Prophet Samuel & King Saul
1000-961 BCE	King David
961-922 BCE	King Solomon (After King Solomon dies, the Kingdom divides into Northern Kingdom = Israel, and Southern Kingdom = Judah)
745 BCE (about)	Prophet Hosea (in Northern Kingdom)
742-700 BCE	Prophet Isaiah (the First) in Southern Kingdom
722-721 BCE	Fall of Northern Kingdom (conquered by Assyrian Empire under Shalmaneser V and Sargon II) – 10 Tribes are “Lost”
722-701 BCE	Prophet Micah in Southern Kingdom
715-687 BCE	King Hezekiah (Sennacherib of Assyria attacks c. 701)
640-609 BCE	King Josiah (“Deuteronomic reform” c. 621; dies at Megiddo 609)
626-587 BCE	Prophet Jeremiah
c. 605 BCE	Prophet Habakkuk
586 BCE	Fall of Jerusalem to Babylonia; Jews deported to Babylonia
593-573 BCE	Prophet Ezekiel
c. 540 BCE	Prophet Isaiah (the Second)
538 BCE	Cyrus II of Persia announces edict that Jews can return to the Land. (539 Persia conquers Babylonia)
520-515 BCE	Building the Second Temple (Prophets Haggai and Zechariah)
500-450 BCE	Prophet Malachi
c. 458 or 428 BCE	Ezra the Scribe
445 BCE	Nehemiah arrives in the Land
336-323 BCE	Empire of Alexander the Great from Greece
323-285 BCE	Ptolemy in Egypt
312-280 BCE	Seleucus I in Syria/Mesopotamia (Israel under Egyptian control until about 200 BCE when Syrians take over)
168 - 140 BCE	Maccabean revolt against Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) (175-163)
63 BCE	Pompey captures Jerusalem – Beginning of Roman Rule
38-4 BCE	Hillel/Shamai (King Herod 37-4)

THE BOOKS OF THE JEWISH BIBLE

Rabbi Steven Morgen, Congregation Beth Yeshurun

Hebrew Name for the Bible: **Tanakh** = Torah + Nevi'im (Prophets) + Ketuvim (Writings) – The three parts of the Hebrew Bible as divided by the Jews.

I. Torah (AKA: The Five Books of Moses, AKA: *Humash* from Hebrew for 1/5)

ENGLISH NAME	HEBREW NAME
Genesis	(<i>Bereshit</i>)
Exodus	(<i>Shemot</i>)
Leviticus	(<i>Vayikra</i>)
Numbers	(<i>Bamidbar</i>)
Deuteronomy	(<i>Devarim</i>)

II. Prophets (Hebrew: *Nevi'im*)

"HISTORICAL" BOOKS	Joshua	Battle of Jericho (and other battles to conquer the Land)
	Judges	(<i>Shoftim</i>) (Stories of Samson, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, etc.)
	I Samuel	(<i>Shmuel</i>) (Kings Saul/ David)
	II Samuel	
	I Kings	(<i>Malakhim</i>) (King Solomon through the destruction of the Temple in 586. Stories of Elijah the prophet, Kings Hezekiah, and Josiah)
THE THREE "BIGGIES"	II Kings	
	Isaiah	Chapter 6: Vision of Heavenly Court (Holy, Holy, Holy)
	Jeremiah	Prophet during destruction of Jerusalem and Temple
THE 12 "MINOR" PROPHETS	Ezekiel	Prophet during Exile (Chapter 37: the original "Dry Bones")
	Hosea	MLK: 5:24; Acts of kindness 6:6 and Prayer 14:2 replace sacrifices)
	Joel	2:28 "your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions"
	Amos	
	Obadiah	
	Jonah	(Prophet who evades his duty and ends up in a "big fish")
	Micah	(6:8 "Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with God")
	Nahum	
	Habakkuk	
	Zephaniah	
	Haggai	
	Zechariah	(prophet of return from Exile)
Malachi		

III. Writings (Hebrew: *Ketuvim*)

"WISDOM LITERATURE"	Psalms	(<i>Tehillim</i>) (prayer poems)	
	Proverbs	(<i>Mishlei</i>) (aphorisms, or wise sayings to live by)	
	Job	(<i>Iyov</i>) (The story of a righteous man who suffers)	
THE FIVE "MEGILLOT" (in order of their use in Jewish calendar)	<u>Book or scroll</u>	<u>Hebrew name</u>	<u>Holiday on which it is read</u>
	Song of Songs	(<i>Shir Ha'Shirim</i>)	Passover
	Ruth		Shavuot
	Lamentations	(<i>Eikhah</i>)	Tisha B'av
	Ecclesiastes	(<i>Kohelet</i>)	Sukkot
Esther		Purim	
(POST EXHILIC)	Daniel	(Handwriting on the wall. In the Lion's Den. And more.)	
	Ezra	(A scribe who brings the Torah with him back from Exile)	
	Nehemiah	(Rebuilds the City of Jerusalem)	
("RERUNS")	I Chronicles	(Hebrew: <i>Divrei Ha'Yamim</i>)	
	II Chronicles		

Rabbinic Period

Rabbi Steven Morgen, Congregation Beth Yeshurun

IMPORTANT DATES

38-4 BCE	Hillel/Shamai
66-73 CE	Jewish War with Rome (Second Temple is destroyed and fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE) Fall of Massada 73 CE
134-138 CE	Bar Kokhba revolt (Rabbi Akiba 110-135 CE)
217 CE	Mishnah is completed
323 CE	Christianity becomes official religion of Roman Empire [Constantine's vision: "En Hoc Signo Vincens"]
400 CE	Jerusalem Talmud is completed
550 CE	Babylonian Talmud is completed

FAMOUS RABBIS/TEACHERS:

Shimon HaTzaddik – a High Priest. **Simeon the Righteous** is either [Simon I](#) (310–291 or 300–273 BCE), son of [Onias I](#), or [Simon II](#) (219–199 BCE), son of [Onias II](#). **“On three things the world stands: Torah, Avodah, Gemilut Hasadim.”**

Hillel (d. ~10 CE) and **Shammai** (d. ~30 CE) (Founded two schools of interpretation)

Yohanan ben Zakkai (escaped destruction of Temple, founded Academy in Yavneh). Students included: **Eliezer ben Horkenos**, and **Yehoshua ben Hananya**

Akiba (50-135 CE) and **Ishmael** (two later schools of interpretation)

Yehudah HaNasi (~135-217 CE, Judah the Prince – organized and edited the Mishnah)

Rav (AKA Abba Arikha; Sura/Ritual Laws) and **Shmuel** (Nehardia/Civil Laws) ~220 CE

LITERATURE OF SECOND TEMPLE AND RABBINIC PERIOD

I. APOCRYPHA/PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

- Books that didn't make it into our Bible but are found in some Christian Bibles) Includes Esdras I and II, Tobit, Judith, Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Ben Sirah), Wisdom of Solomon, Barukh, Bel and the Dragon, Maccabees I and II. Also, other books not even found in Christian Bibles.
- **ALSO** – Several books of the Bible were probably written during this period including: Zachariah, Malachi, Proverbs, Job, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemia, Ecclesiastes, Esther, etc.

II. MISHNAH/TALMUD

A. Mishnah.

Completed c. 200 C.E. Edited by Judah the Prince. Organizes early rabbinic traditions into a canon of 6 **Orders** [**Shishah sederim** = **ShaS**] of 63 **Tractates**. It is written in Hebrew in easily-memorized sentences recording many minority opinions as well as the rules accepted by the majority. The rabbis of this time-period are called "**Tannaim**" (which could be translated as "reciters").

Orders: **Zera'im** ("Seeds") – Generally, agricultural laws, but includes: **Blessings**. **Mo'ed** ("Appointed Season") – Laws relating to Jewish calendar. **Nashim** ("Women") – "Family" law. **Nezikin** ("Damages") – Civil Law and Court Procedures, includes **Avot**. **Kodashim** ("Holy

Things”) – Temple Worship (Sacrifices). **Toharot** (“Purities”) – how things become ritually pure and impure

B. Talmud.

After completion of the Mishnah, it became the book studied in the academies – both in Israel and in “Babylonia”. The discussions on the Mishnah were edited into a type of running “commentary” on the Mishnah called **Gemarah** (“Learning” in Aramaic – not related to the city Gemorrah which was destroyed). The Mishnah and the Gemarah together are called the Talmud.

1. There are actually two Talmuds.
 - a. The one edited in Israel is called the **Palestinian** or **Jerusalem Talmud** and was completed c. 400 C.E.
 - b. The one edited in Babylonia is called (oddly enough) the **Babylonian Talmud** and was completed c. 550 C.E.
 - c. When people speak of Talmud, they generally mean the Babylonian one since that is the one most often studied.
2. Both Gemaras are written in **Aramaic** (a language related to Hebrew), which was the commonly-spoken language of the time.
3. Rabbis of this time-period are called “**Amora'im**” (“speaker,” “lecturer” or “interpreter”).
4. Since the Gemara is a commentary on the Mishnah, the Talmud is organized into the same division of Orders and Tractates as the Mishnah itself. However, neither Talmud includes Gemara for all of the Tractates of Mishnah.
5. When people talk about twisting, complex Jewish reasoning, they are probably talking about the argumentation found in the Babylonian Talmud.

III. MIDRASH

A. Pardes. The four levels of textual understanding:

1. **P’shat**: simple level; exegesis: what did the text mean to the author
2. **Remez**: something hinted at in the text.
3. **Drash** (Midrash): something the text demands be interpreted; what does the text mean to me today; isogesis: what can we learn from the text?
4. **Sod**: The hidden/secret meaning; gamatria, mysticism, kabbalah

B. Generally, **midrash** is interpretation – or interpolation – of the Bible.

The Bible, and particularly the Torah, is composed of two types of literature: **Halakha** (Jewish law) and **Aggada** (story). So, midrash comes in two flavors: halakhic and aggadic.

1. Where a story seems to leave out some important information, the midrash comes to fill it in – like the story of Abraham smashing his father’s idols.
2. Where a law is unclear or not specified in enough detail, the midrash will help to explain it – like “A man his mother and father y’all shall fear.”

C. Midrash is most often composed around a specific difficulty in the text. The difficulty could be as subtle as a grammatical problem or scribal peculiarity (a large or a small letter, for instance, that is always copied in that peculiar manner).

Jewish History: The Middle Ages

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IMPORTANT DATES

570 – 632 CE	Life of Muhammed and origins of Islam
882-942	Saadia Gaon (see below)
950 – 1150	Golden Age of Spain – Solomon ibn Gabirol, Bahya ibn Pakuda, Abraham ibn Ezra, Judah HaLevi; Ends with Almohad invasion
c. 1000	Takkanot of Rabbeinu Gershom: (1) prohibition of polygamy; (2) ban on divorcing a woman against her will; (3) ban against reminding Jewish person who converted against his will after he returns to Judaism; (4) prohibition against opening correspondence addressed to another.
1040-1105	Rashi (see below)
1095-1099	First Crusade
1135-1204	Maimonides (see below)
1147-1272	Second Crusade 1147–1149, Third Crusade 1187–1192, Fourth Crusade 1202–1204, Fifth Crusade 1217–1221, Sixth Crusade 1228–1229, Seventh Crusade 1248–1254, Eighth Crusade 1270, Ninth Crusade 1271–1272
1194-1270 CE	Nahmanides – Disputation in Barcelona in 1263 (see below)
1242 CE	Talmud burned in France
1290 CE	Jews expelled from England
c. 1340 CE	Death of Jacob ben Asher (Author of the <i>Tur</i> c. 1330)
1437-1508 CE	Don Isaac Abarbanel (see below)
1488-1575 CE	Joseph Karo (Author of <i>Shulhan Arukh</i> c. 1564) (see below)
1492 CE	Jews expelled from Spain
1516	First Jewish “Ghetto” established in Venice
1530-1572 CE	Moshe Isserles (Author of <i>Mapa</i> on <i>Shulhan Arukh</i>)
1520-1522 CE	First Printed Edition of the Talmud by Bomberg in Venice
1626-1676	Shabbtai Tzevi – the false Messiah (who converted to Islam)
1654 CE	First Jews arrive in “New Amsterdam” (later called “New York”)

FAMOUS RABBIS/TEACHERS:

Saadia Gaon – Rationalist; b. Egypt; Head of academy at Sura, Babylonia; dispute with Exilarch; dispute with Karaites; Book of Beliefs and Opinions (*Sefer Emunot v’De’ot*); Siddur in Arabic

Rishonim – Scholars of period between 11th and 15th centuries (before the printing press). Generally, commentators on the Talmud

Rashi – AKA Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki, vintner in Troyes, France; learned from scholars of Worms, wrote commentary on entire Bible and nearly all of Talmud.

Rabbenu Tam/Rashbam – Rashi’s famous grandchildren; started school of Talmudic commentary called “Tosafot” (Additions).

Judah HaLevi (1075-1141) – Spanish physician, poet, philosopher and author of *The Kuzari* (About the Khazar king who converted to Judaism c. 740)

Rambam – AKA “Maimonides” or “Moshe ben Maimon.” Sephardic rationalist, philosopher, jurist, physician (for Saladin). Wrote three major works: commentary on Mishnah (which includes “*Shemoneh Perakim*” on ethics, and Thirteen Principles of Faith), *Mishneh Torah* a comprehensive restatement of all of Jewish law in 14 volumes, and *Moreh Nevukhim* – *Guide for the Perplexed*, a philosophical treatise for “enlightened” Jews of his time.

Ramban – AKA “Nachmanides” or “Moshe ben Nachman,” Commentary on Bible and Commentary on Talmud; disputes with Rambam; mystic; Disputation of Barcelona with Pablo Christiani

Jacob ben Asher (c. 1269 – 1343) – author of the *Arba’ah Turim*, the second major codification of Jewish law.

Don Isaac Abarbanel – commentary on Torah, Haggadah; financier for Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain

Joseph Karo – Kabbalist in Safed (Israel) after expulsion from Spain. Sephardic Jewish legal scholar who wrote a major commentary on the *Arba’ah Turim*, and then summarized it in his own work of Jewish law, the *Shulhan Arukh*.

Moshe Isserles – Polish (Ashkenazic) scholar who wrote glosses on *Shulhan Arukh* that highlighted the differences in Ashkenazic practices.

SELECTED LITERATURE OF MIDDLE AGES

Cairo Geniza

Rashi

Commentary on all the books of the Bible
Commentary on almost all tractates of Talmud

Rambam

Commentary on Mishnah c. 1168 – including Shemoneh Perakim and 13 Principles of Faith
Mishneh Torah (Code of Jewish Law) c. 1178 – 14 “Books” “*Yad HaHazarakah*”
Guide for the Perplexed – *Moreh Nevukhim* – c. 1185-1190 explains Jewish tradition in rational terms

Tur (Jacob ben Asher) – Code of Jewish Law – *Arba’ah Turim* (Four Columns)

Shulhan Arukh – Joseph Karo – “The Set Table” + Moshe Isserles “Table Cloth”

Dozens of other commentaries on the Bible and Talmud

Jewish History: The Modern Period

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IMPORTANT DATES

- 1654** **First Jews arrive in “New Amsterdam”** (later called “New York”)
- 1698-1760 Israel ben Eliezer (the **Baal Shem Tov**) begins the **Hasidic Movement**. Lithuanian Yeshiva rabbis condemn the movement. They are called “Mitnagdim” (the Opposers)
- 1789 **French Revolution; Emancipation of French Jews 1791**; Napoleon’s Sanhedrin 1807; Jews emerge from Ghetto
- 1881 **Pogroms in Russia** and beginning of massive East European Jewish immigration to United States
- 1875 **Hebrew Union College founded in Cincinnati, Ohio** (1883 first graduating class and *Treif Banquet*)
- 1880-1914 Approximately 2 million Jews immigrate to the United States from Russia and Eastern Europe. (before this wave of immigration Jewish population in US was about 250,000)
- 1887 **Jewish Theological Seminary founded in New York**; Solomon Schechter becomes President in 1902 when reorganized with Jacob Schiff’s help
- 1895** **Dreyfus trial in France** (and Emil Zola’s article “J’accuse”)
- 1897** **First Zionist Congress at Basle**
- 1907** **Galveston Plan** initiated by Jacob Schiff; 10,000 Jews participate
- 1913** **Leo Frank Case** and the establishment of the **Anti-Defamation League**
- 1917** **Balfour Declaration** (November 2)
- 1928** Yeshiva College founded “*Torah U’Madda*” (“Torah and Science”)
- 1933-1945** **Holocaust** (Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany January 1933; Kristallnacht November 9-10, 1938; Germany invades Poland September 1, 1939 and W.W. II begins; Warsaw Ghetto revolt (April 19, 1943 – first night of Passover till May 16)
- 1947** ***The Exodus - 1947*** (ship) 4,500 Holocaust survivors denied entry into “Palestine” by the British blockade; Leon Uris wrote book, then movie
- 1948** **Israel Declares Independence and Statehood** (May 14, 5 Iyar 5708) – beginning of War of Independence (cease-fire January 1949); **U.N. vote for partition November 29, 1947**)
- 1967** **Six Day War** (June 5-10)

1973	Yom Kippur War
1993	“Oslo Peace Process” Inaugurated
1995	Yitzhak Rabin Assassinated (November 4)
2000	July Camp David Summit : Arafat rejects offer of peace from Prime Minister Ehud Barak at Camp David. Second “Intifada” erupts in late September
2001	UN World Conference Against Racism held in Durban , South Africa August 31 – September 8. Singles out Israel (alone) as racist country. (Three days later is “9/11” attack on the United States.)

IMPORTANT EVENTS AND CONFLICTS

Hasidism vs. Mitnagdim

Traditional vs. Haskalah (“Enlightenment”) Judaism – and the beginning and development of “Reform” and “Conservative” Judaism

American Judaism grows and flourishes

Musar Movement (Israel Salanter)

Zionism – Political/Cultural/Religious – Religious Anti-Zionism (Neturei Karta, Satmar, etc.)

Holocaust

Birth of the State of Israel (Third Jewish Commonwealth) – and its unprecedented growth and development into a First World Country within 60 years, despite continuing conflicts with its neighbors. Peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan. Elusive peace with Palestinians. Modern Antisemitism in the form of Anti-Zionism.

Assimilation (intermarriage, low birth rates, and other causes of declining numbers of Jews in the United States)

IMPORTANT PERSONALITIES OF THE MODERN ERA

Baal Shem Tov (1700 – 1760) Founder of Hassidism

Vilna Gaon (Elijah of Vilna) (1720-1797) Leader of Mitnagid movement

Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) German Jewish Enlightenment philosopher

Samson Rafael Hirsch (1808-1888) Founder of Modern Orthodoxy

Israel Salanter (1810-1883) – Founder of the Musar Movement

Martin Buber (1878-1965) – Modern Jewish Philosopher; *I and Thou*

Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) – Modern Jewish Philosopher; Yom Kippur “Epiphany”; *Star of Redemption*; founder of *Frankfurt Lehrhaus* (Jewish Free University); do you wear tefillin? **“not yet.”**

Sholom Aleichem (1859-1916) Yiddish writer; *Fiddler on the Roof* (*Tevye and His Daughters*)

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) Founder of psychoanalysis which led to modern psychology

Albert Einstein (1879-1955) Physicist, Theory of Relativity, Atomic Bomb, proud Jew, pro-Zionist; “God does not play dice with the Universe.”

Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) – Founder of modern political Zionism. Convened First Zionist Congress in 1897 (“*Im tirtzu, ein zo agadah*” – “If you will it; it is no dream.”); *The Jewish State*

Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935) First “Chief Rabbi” of Israel (1921), hero of religious Zionism

Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858-1922) Founder of Modern Hebrew Language

Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952) Chemist; discovered inexpensive process for producing acetone – used in ammunition; influenced Lord Balfour to issue his famous Declaration; leader of Zionist movement, first President of Israel; founded Weizmann Institute, a leading scientific research facility

David Ben-Gurion (1886-1973) Leader of Zionist movement; first Prime Minister of Israel; made the declaration of Statehood for Israel May 14, 1948

Golda Meir (1898-1978) First woman Prime Minister of Israel (1969)

Solomon Schechter (1850-1915) Discovered Cairo Geniza and sorted out the thousands of documents there; became President of JTS in 1902; “Catholic Israel”

Mordecai Kaplan (1881-1983) Professor at JTS for decades; Founder of Reconstructionist Judaism; author of *Judaism and a Civilization*; first bat mitzvah was his daughter Judith

Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972) Hassidic heritage, modern education; marched with Martin Luther King, Jr.; author of *The Sabbath, Man’s Quest for God* (about prayer), *God in Search of Man* (on theology), and *The Earth is the Lord’s*;

Henrietta Szold (1860-1945) Founder of Hadassah; “Youth Aliyah” in 1930’s (saving 22,000 children from Holocaust); daughter of rabbi, studied at JTS, recited kaddish for her mother herself; translated many works into English

Louis Brandeis (1856-1941) Supreme Court Justice of the United States, supported Zionism

Joseph Soloveitchik (1903-1993) Pre-eminent Modern Orthodox Scholar, teacher, philosopher; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva University; author of *Halakhic Man*, and “Lonely Man of Faith”

Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986) Outstanding authority of Jewish law in Orthodox world – especially “right wing” Orthodoxy.

Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1903-1994) Head of Lubavitch (Chabad) Hassidic movement for decades (1950-1994). Transformed Lubavitch movement into powerhouse of outreach to non-traditional Jews.

SUGGESTED BOOKS FOR BUILDING A JEWISH LIBRARY

Rabbi Steven Morgen, Congregation Beth Yeshurun

1. GENERAL

Telushkin, Joseph *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know About Judaism* (William Morrow, 2008) (really excellent, comprehensive, overview of the most essential aspects of Judaism in the different possible areas of study)

Telushkin, Joseph *Jewish Wisdom* (William Morrow, 1994) (collection of quotations from a wide variety of Jewish sources on basic topics of Jewish interest, includes Rabbi Telushkin's useful comments and insights along the way)

Klagsbrun, Francine *Voices of Wisdom: Jewish Ideals and Ethics for Everyday Living*, (Jonathan David, 1980) (similar to *Jewish Wisdom*, with a different collection of quotations).

Robinson, George *Essential Judaism – A Complete guide to Beliefs, Customs and Rituals*

Eisenberg, Joyce and Ellen Scolnic *The JPS Dictionary of Jewish Words – another book of over 1000 terms. (202 pages) (Terms also listed by topic.)*

2. HISTORY

Scheindlin, Raymond P. *A Short History of the Jewish People: From Legendary Times to Modern Statehood*

Potok, Chaim *Wanderings*

Johnson, Paul *History of the Jews*

Seltzer, Robert M. *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*. (Macmillan & Collier 1980) (A well-organized, **thorough**, history – not an easy read like the first three.)

Jonathan Sarna *American Judaism: A History*

Walter Laqueur *The Changing Face of Antisemitism: From Ancient Times to the Present Day*

3. JEWISH PRACTICE

Cohen, Martin S., *The Observant Life: The Wisdom of Conservative Judaism for Contemporary Jews*. (Chapters on Jewish rituals including prayer, holiday, life cycle events and Jewish ethics such as citizenship, slander, taxes, wills, the courts, the work place and so much more.)

Klein, Isaac *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice* (a thorough one-volume resource on daily, life-cycle and seasonal practices – includes Conservative divergences from Orthodox practice)

Eisenberg, Ronald *JPS Guide to Jewish Traditions*

Greenberg, Irving *The Jewish Way* (modern Orthodox)

Donin, Hayim *To Be A Jew*

Diamant, Anita with Howard Cooper *Living a Jewish Life*

Kushner, Harold S. *To Life! A Celebration of Jewish Being and Thinking*

Zion, Noam Sachs ♦*A Day Apart: Shabbat at Home*, ♦*A Different Night: The Family Participation Haggadah*, ♦*A Different Light: The Hanukkah Celebration* (three wonderful books to help you celebrate Shabbat, Passover and Hanukkah. Available from www.haggadahrus.com)

Wolfson, Ron ♦*The Art of Jewish Living: The Shabbat Seder*, ♦*The Passover Seder*, ♦*Hanukkah*. (Three wonderful books with lots of ideas for how to make Friday night, the Passover Seder, or Hanukkah meaningful in your home.)

Lise Stern *How to Keep Kosher: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding Jewish Dietary Laws* (Written by a Conservative Jew, but presents both Orthodox and Conservative perspectives. She is also a cookbook author and food columnist, and in addition to the how's and why's of keeping kosher, she also provides recipes.)

4. PHILOSOPHY/THEOLOGY

Elliot Dorff, *Knowing God* (a personal exploration of theology by a contemporary, thoughtful Conservative Rabbi)

Neil Gillman, *Sacred Fragments* (discusses the major perspectives on key issues in Jewish theology)

- also ♦*The Death of Death: Resurrection and Immortality in Jewish Thought*, ♦*The Way into Encountering God in Judaism*, ♦*Doing Theology: God, Torah and Israel in Modern Judaism*

Borowitz, *Liberal Judaism*. (A **comprehensive** survey of liberal Jewish thought.)

David Wolpe, *Teaching Your Children About God* (an excellent book, even for adults)

- *Why Be Jewish?* (A simple, straightforward argument for the value and meaning of our heritage)

Abraham J. Heschel, *The Sabbath* (his famous essay on the subject; he presents a beautiful and inspiring picture of the sanctity of the Sabbath and a rationale for its observance)

- *God In Search of Man* (Heschel's poetic statement on Jewish philosophy)
- *Heavenly Torah* (Heschel's *magnum opus* on two schools of thought in Rabbinic Literature: the mystic and the rationalist)

Harold Kushner *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (A modern approach to understanding why evil seems to go unpunished in this world.) Kushner also wrote: ♦*Living a Life That Matters*, ♦*How Good Do We Have to Be?*, ♦*Who Needs God*

Seeskin, Kenneth *Maimonides: a Guide for Today's Perplexed* (Behrman House, 1991) (A modern and easy to understand interpretation of Maimonides' theology – appealing to modern rationalists)

5. BIBLE

The Jewish Study Bible by Oxford University Press (a *must have* book)

Etz Hayim (The new Conservative commentary on the Torah)

Telushkin, Joseph *Biblical Literacy* (William Morrow, 1997) (The basics on people, events and ideas in the Bible)

Plaut, *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* (The Reform Movement's commentary.)

JPS Torah Commentary. (Genesis - Deuteronomy) Excellent 5-volume modern commentary, presents modern literary and historical comments by top scholars. Also, *The Haftaret, Jonah, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Ruth*.

Friedman, Richard Elliot *Who Wrote the Bible?* (modern Biblical criticism, or the Documentary Hypothesis, made simple)

Brettler, Marc *How to Read the Bible*

Kugel, James *How to Read the Bible* (yes, the same title, different author!)

6. PRAYERBOOK

Hammer, Reuven *Entering Jewish Prayer*. (Schocken, 1994) Discusses history, development and meaning of our liturgy. (Also *Entering the High Holy Days* by the same author which does the same for the High Holy Day liturgy.)

Donin, Hayim Halevy *To Pray as a Jew* (Basic Books, 1980) (A how-to book covering all the basics.)

Heschel, Abraham Joshua *Man's Quest for God* (beautiful exploration of the meaning and purpose of prayer)

7. RABBINICS: JEWISH LAW, MIDRASH, TALMUD

Steinsaltz, *The Essential Talmud* (provides an introduction to the Talmud and its literature)

Montefiore and Loewe *A Rabbinic Anthology* (collection of quotations from Rabbinic literature that deal with ethical and spiritual issues, organized by topic with running commentary)

Michael Katz and Gershon Schwartz *Swimming in the Sea of Talmud* (a book that takes the reader through some passages of Talmud that have practical relevance for life today). Also, *Searching for Meaning in Midrash*, by the same authors, which does the same thing for Midrashic literature.

Kravitz, Leonard and Kerry M. Olitzky, *Pirke Avot: A Modern Commentary on Jewish Ethics* (URJ, 1993) (A modern commentary on the tractate of the Talmud called in Hebrew *Pirke Avot, Chapter of the Fathers* (or Sages). The tractate is a collection of sayings by the Rabbis concerning how to live your life: a book of maxims and aphorisms. – Other translations/editions include: ♦William Berkson, *Pirke Avot: Timeless Wisdom for Modern Life* (JPS, 2010), and ♦Rami Shapiro, *Ethics of the Sages: Pirke Avot*)

Elliot Dorff, *The Unfolding Tradition* (Elliot Dorff explores the views of various Conservative Jewish thinkers on the development and interpretation of Jewish law)

– *For the Love and God and People: A Philosophy of Jewish Law* (Elliot Dorff's personal approach to the development of Jewish Law)

8. HEBREW/YIDDISH

R. Alcalay *The Complete Hebrew-English/English-Hebrew Dictionary*. (A three-volume set) Paperback dictionaries that are also useful include: Lauden and Weinbach *Multi Dictionary* and Zilberman *The Up to Date English-Hebrew/Hebrew-English Dictionary*

Anderson, et.al., *Prayerbook Hebrew The Easy Way*. A good, simple introduction into basic Hebrew words and word forms designed specifically to teach prayerbook Hebrew.

Rosten, Leo *The New Joys of Yiddish* – a dictionary of Yiddish terms commonly used today, with funny anecdotes provided at no extra charge

Wex, Michael – *Born to Kvetch* (also ♦*Just Say Nu*)

(For suggestions for more advanced Hebrew books, see the instructor.)

9. ISRAEL AND ZIONISM

Laqueur, *The Israel-Arab Reader*. A collection of documents spanning the modern history of the conflict. (8th Revised updated edition, 2016)

– *A History of Zionism: From the French Revolution to the Establishment of the State of Israel*

Troy, Gil *The Zionist Ideas: Visions of the Jewish Homeland, Then, Now, Tomorrow*. The backstories, dreams, and legacies of more than 170 passionate Jewish visionaries, expressing the surprisingly diverse and shared visions for realizing Israel as a democratic Jewish state.

Bard, Mitchell *Myths and Facts: A Guide to the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (2016)

Ross, Dennis *The Missing Peace*

Gil Troy *Why I am a Zionist*

Sachar, Howard *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time* (3rd ed., revised and expanded 2013)

10. JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

Sandmel, Samuel, *We Jews and Jesus: Exploring Theological Issues for Mutual Understanding*. (Also: *A Jewish Understanding of the New Testament*, and *Judaism and Christian Beginnings*)

Cook, Michael J. *Modern Jews Engage the New Testament*

Frymer-Kensky, Tikva, David Novak, Peter Ochs, David Fox Sandmel, Michael A. Signer *Christianity in Jewish Terms* (modern Jewish scholars talk about Christianity)

Greenberg, Irving *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth - The New Encounter Between Judaism and Christianity*

11. CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

Dorff, Elliot N. *Conservative Judaism: Our Ancestors to Our Descendants* (United Synagogue, Dept. of Youth) An excellent sourcebook on the origins and philosophy of the Conservative Movement. **Very worthwhile for adults as well.**

- *Modern Conservative Judaism: Evolving Thought and Practice* (JPS, 2018)

Gillman, Neil *Conservative Judaism: the New Century* (Behrman House, 1993) A good, basic history of the movement.

12. ETHICS

Dorff, Elliot *Matters of Life and Death: A Jewish Approach to Modern Medical Ethics*

- *To Do the Right and the Good: A Jewish Approach to Modern Social Ethics*
- *Love Your Neighbor and Yourself: A Jewish Approach to Modern Personal Ethics*
- *Contemporary Jewish Ethics and Morality: A Reader* (with Louis Neuman)

Telushkin, Joseph *Code of Jewish Ethics* (multi-volume work, only first two volumes published so far)

- *The Book of Jewish Values*
- *The Ten Commandments of Character*
- *Words That Hurt, Words That Heal: How to Choose Words Wisely and Well*

Riemer, Jack *So That Your Values Live On - Ethical Wills and How to Prepare Them*

Slater, Jonathan *Mindful Jewish Living - Compassionate Practice* (Aviv Press, living a moral as well as a spiritual Jewish life)

Morinis, Alan *Everyday Holiness: The Jewish Spiritual Path of Mussar*

13. FICTION

Kemelman, Harry *Sunday the Rabbi Stayed Home* (and others in the series) Murder mysteries solved by Rabbi David Small

Michener, James *The Source* Historical fiction of the Jewish people from Biblical times to the present

Potok, Chaim *The Chosen* and *The Promise*, two books about two friends who are Jewish teenagers: one Hassidic and one Modern Orthodox/Conservative.

- *My Name is Asher Lev* – about a Hassidic young man who wants to be an artist and confronts the clash of cultures
- *The Book of Lights* – about a Conservative Rabbi who serves as a chaplain and has mystical encounters with his Talmud teacher

Uris, Leon *Exodus* about survivors of the Holocaust making their way to Palestine (Israel) against British law and the fight for independence in 1948.

- *Mila 18* about the Warsaw Ghetto uprising against the Nazi army.

Wiesel, Elie *Night* Technically a novel, but based very closely on the author's experience in Nazi death camps.

14. JEWISH FAMILY, PARENTING, LIFE CYCLE

Diamant, Anita *The New Jewish Baby Book: Names, Ceremonies & Customs, A Guide for Today's Families* (Jewish Lights, 1993) Also: *The New Jewish Wedding*

Gordis, Daniel *Becoming a Jewish Parent: How to Explore Spirituality and Tradition With Your Children* (Harmony Books, 1999)

Kushner, Harold S. *When Children Ask About God: A Guide for Parents Who don't Always Have All the Answers* (Schocken, 1989)

Mogel, Wendy *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee: Using Jewish Teachings to Raise Self-Reliant Children* (Penguin, 2001)

Wolpe, David J. *Teaching Your Children About God: A Modern Jewish Approach* (Henry Holt, 1993)

Kurshan, Neil *Raising Your Child to be a Mensch* (Atheneum, 1987)

Lynn Levy, *The Aleph-Bet of Marriage: Journeying Toward Commitment* (URJ Press)

Salkin, Jeffrey K. *Putting God On The Guest List: How To Reclaim The Spiritual Meaning Of Your Child's Bar Or Bat Mitzvah*

Brener, Anne *Mourning and Mitzvah: A Guided Journal for Walking the Mourner's Path Through Grief to Healing (with over 60 guided exercises)* (Jewish Lights, 1993)

Diamant, Anita *Saying Kaddish: How to Comfort the Dying, Bury the Dead and Mourn as a Jew* (Schocken, 1998)

Isaacs, Ron and Kerry Olitzky *A Jewish Mourner's Handbook* (KTAV, 1991)

Wolfson, Ron *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Comfort* (Jewish Lights, 1996)