



Building A Jewish Library

Why these books?

- Great Jewish books...period. And if they aren't Jewish, parts of them certainly are.
- Books at all levels of learning
- Tried and tested...by me!
- Some are better as eBooks, other as print books. Get the right kind! Also, some books are books you should have all the time. Others, just for reading once or references. I will list what is what.
- Don't buy all of these at once!!! It will make you want to quit Judaism entirely.
- The goal of this class is to keep you from buying tons of books you will not read, that do not apply to you, and you are not actually interested in. This is the "bare bones" though.

Where To Find Books

- Synagogue Libraries: you might be surprised that the local shul has one
- Public Libraries
- University Libraries: does your college have a Jewish studies program?
- Hillel Houses
- Jewish Book Festivals
- Amazon.com
- eBay.com
- Utilize the internet and DVDs for anything else

"Why are there so few Jewish books?" Because Jews are afraid to buy them!

Conquering Jewish Book Fear

- These are your books, own them!
- To Converts: you may be smarter than the “born” Jew
- To the Born Jew: don’t let your lack of education intimidate you. You might be smarter than the person sitting next to you
- It is never too late to start and it is always too early to stop

Judaism 101

- To Life (Kushner, Harold)
 - Best 101 book ever written. Could also be considered a philosophy book
 - Conservative/Reconstructionist in approach (Kaplan was a big influence on Kusherner)
- Jewish Holidays (Strassfeld, Michael)
- If you must buy one of these kinds of books, this is the better one. Otherwise, Chabad.org has great resources on all holiday stuff.
- There is no need to buy Judaism 101 books ever. If you want to, check one out at the library. But online is much, much better.

Hebrew

- First Hebrew Primer (3rd edition)
 - Every good teacher uses this. Also, you MUST buy the flash cards and answer book. Buy them all at once on Amazon to save money and get free shipping.
- Keys to studying Hebrew
 - Take a class
 - Get a tutor (ideally someone you know personally and are very, very comfortable with)
 - Practice, practice, practice, practice, practice, practice, practice, practice, practice.
 - 30 minutes a day during the week, one hour on Shabbat. You will know Biblical Hebrew in a year fluently
 - There is no point in studying any of this without at LEAST the book and the tutor. Don’t bother if you aren’t going to do it

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Biblical

- Chumash (Torah and Haftarah): Etz Hayim Torah and Commentary (United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism)
- Also the The Stone Edition Chumash (Artscroll)
 - Buy printed versions of these! Must have.
- JPS 1917 Bible
 - Available for free at OneShul.org here: <http://oneshul.org/the-tanakh-hebrew-bible/>
- Anything by Robert Alter
- The Oxford Annotated Bible (“Old Testament“)
- Why? Because it gives a first century Jewish perspective of older texts. This edition was authored by Jewish scholars working for a Christian organization. Read it for the annotations. Note that this is required reading at HUC rabbinical school and suggested reading at RSI. Not a book to buy, just to check out.

I do not suggest using Chabad.org’s translations, as they are less linguistically accurate and more philosophical in translation. Unless you are interested in learning Torah from a strictly Chassid point of view, use Artscroll, JPS and USCJ instead.

Prayerbooks/Siddurim

- Mishkan Tefillah
 - New Reform book. Uses the Conservative service, less a few things. Translation, transliterated and Hebrew.
- Siddur Sim Shalom
 - Conservative siddur. Good “next step”
- Artscroll Siddur (with Transliteration, Sephardic)
 - Why Sephardic? Because most Ashkenazi Jews in the US and most converts daaven with the Sephardic pronunciation.

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Talmud

- The Soncino Talmud
 - All English. Available as a PDF download online. Great for beginners, but laid out poorly. More of a reference book than anything else.
- HaMafteach: The Key (Feldheim)
 - Reference index of the entire Talmud by subject. Gives the portions where different subjects can be found. Fairly detailed. Only costs \$35 or so. Great augment to online education.
- Code of Jewish Law (Ganzfried-Golden)
 - Reference book. Good compliment to what you read online, as it gives greater details of mitzvot. Also listed this under Talmud, as it is based on Shulchan Aruch.
- Buy an iPad and get the new Talmud App that is coming out in July for something better
- Mitzvot
 - Code of Jewish Law (Ganzfried-Golden)
 - Reference book. Good compliment to what you read online, as it gives greater details of mitzvot. Also listed this under Talmud, as it is based on Shulchan Aruch.
- Sefer Ha Hinnuch (Feldheim)
 - Shows you where mitzvot are found in the Torah with commentaries (Orthodox)

Everything else and “how to” type things are all in videos on the PunkTorah YouTube channel and others.

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Scholarship

- Hillel: If Not Now, When? (Telushkin, Joseph)
 - Buy this. In my top five best books I have ever read
- A History of God, In The Beginning: A New Interpretation of Genesis
 - Not a Jewish author, but both of these books do an excellent job of talking about Jewish history
- 101 Myths of the Bible (Greenberg, Gary)
 - Origins of early Jewish stories such as Creation, etc. This is the kind of book you check out from a library, not one to buy unless you happen to love it.
- Anything by or about Josephus, Abraham Joshua Heschel

Daily Life

- NewKosher.org Cookbook, Jewish Cocktail Party and Birkat HaMazon all available for free
- B'Kol Echad: <http://www.usy.org/resources/bkolechad/>
 - Learn Shabbat songs, kiddush, holiday songs and others. Costs \$5 including shipping. Must have. Transliterated and easy to use

Inspirational

- The Ten Rungs (Buber, Martin)
 - Chasidism in a simple, easy to read way
- When Bad Things Happen To Good People (Kushner, Harold)
 - The only book I would ever recommend buying several copies of. Also a scholarly book on Job.
- Anything by Kushner, Telushkin, Buber
- Way of the Boundary Crosser (Winkler, Gershon)
 - If Eugene Borowitz were a hippie, he would have written this book. Excellent book on all things progressively Jewish

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