

RABBI'S MESSAGE

Let My People Read

While we remain socially safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, we might as well expand our minds with some good reading material. Once a year or so, I like to offer recommendations for inspiration...with a wide variety of choices. Hopefully, something for everyone. Enjoy!

I am Jewish, Personal Reflections Inspired by the Last Words of Daniel Pearl, edited by Judea and Ruth Pearl. When Wall Street Journalist, Daniel Pearl was murdered in Pakistan, many Jews were particularly touched by his last words affirming his Jewish identity. His parents assembled dozens of contemporary comments from a smorgasbord of well-known Jews, including political leaders, judges, entertainers, athletes, religious leaders, authors and more. These insightful commentaries are wonderful inspirations for our own identity exploration.

Everyday Holiness, the Spiritual Path of Mussar, by Alan Morinis. Alan Morinis is a lifelong teacher of disciplines that make up positive qualities that help us remain balanced and help individuals balance the world. Each chapter includes practical life lessons inspired by Jewish sacred texts.

Finding God, Selected Responses, by Rifat Sonsino and Daniel Syme. Two Reform rabbis bring together the teachings of ancient philosophers as well as modern day teachers to present a wide spectrum of individual thought. This book is a welcome reminder that, while God is One, each of our individual experiences of God is personal and unique.

40 Things You can Do to Save the Jewish People, by Joel Lurie Grishaver. Grishaver is a modern educator who understands contemporary, American Jewish life. His frank discussion poses the question many parents may not articulate: "How much can we get away with and still raise fully Jewish children, who will, in turn, raise fully Jewish children?"

Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence, by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. The former Chief Rabbi of England, Rabbi Sacks was one of the most modern respected scholars in the world prior to his recent death in November, 2020. As an expert in several religions, Rabbi Sacks puts forth logical arguments from each religion's perspective that condemn the idea that "holy war" is justifiable.

The Essential Jewish Stories, collected, annotated & retold by Seymour Rossel. Rabbi Rossel (who presented at TBT Lunchtime Learning this year) has compiled an exhaustive list of Jewish stories from multiple categories, complete with sources (Torah, Talmud, Midrash and Folklore) and usage. It will bring you laughter, tears and learning!

The Storyteller, by Jodi Picoult. For those who enjoy novels, this work of fiction is gripping in its realistic possibilities. It includes a classic story within a story, as well as first person perspectives from a Holocaust survivor, her granddaughter, a former Nazi commandant and a Nazi hunter. Personally, I was on the edge of my seat through the whole book!

Happy January, and I hope the New Year brings you all the inspiration you seek.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Dan Gordon