

LIVING A JEWISH LIFE: FINDING PURPOSE THROUGH REFLECTION

Note:

This lesson includes more texts than can be covered in a 90-minute session. We encourage you to explore the texts not covered in class on your own time.



TEXT 1

RABBI SHIRA STUTMAN, [WHAT IT MEANS TO BE JEWISH](#) (2017)

(b. 1973) Ordained at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, her work focuses on cross-denominational Jewish experiences.

(The video is hyperlinked to the title above.)



TEXT 2

LEVITICUS (VAYIKRA) 18:1-4; 20:26

Chapter 18

1 GOD spoke to Moses, saying: **2** Speak to the Israelite people and say to them:

I the ETERNAL am your God. **3** You shall not copy the practices of the land of Egypt where you dwelt, or of the land of Canaan to which I am taking you; nor shall you follow their laws. **4** My rules alone shall you observe, and faithfully follow My laws: I the ETERNAL am your God.

Chapter 20

26 You shall be holy to Me, for I GOD am holy, and I have set you apart from other peoples to be Mine.

וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה, א-ד; כ, כו

א וַיִּדְבֹּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר. ב דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם. ג כַּמַּעֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁבֹּתֶם בָּהּ לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וְכַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְבִיא אֲתָכֶם שָׁמָּה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וּבְדַקְתֵּיהֶם לֹא תֵלְכוּ. ד אֵת מִשְׁפָּטֵי תַעֲשׂוּ וְאֵת דִּקְוֹתֵי תִשְׁמְרוּ לִלְכֹּת בָּהֶם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.

כו וְהִיִּיתֶם לִי קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אֲנִי ה' וְאַבְדֹּל אֲתָכֶם מִן הָעַמִּים לְהִיּוֹת לִי.



TEXT 3 DEUTERONOMY (*DEVARIM*) 4:5-8

5 See, I have imparted to you laws and rules, as the ETERNAL my God has commanded me, for you to abide by in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. **6** Observe them faithfully, for that will be proof of your wisdom and discernment to other peoples, who on hearing of all these laws will say, “Surely, that great nation is a wise and discerning people.” **7** For what great nation is there that has a god so close at hand as is the ETERNAL our God whenever we call? **8** Or what great nation has laws and rules as perfect as all this Teaching that I set before you this day?

דְּבָרִים ד, ה-ח

ה רָאָה לִמְדַּתִּי אֶתְכֶם חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוֵּינִי ה' אֱלֹהֵי לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם בָּאִים שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ. ו וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם וַעֲשִׂיתֶם כִּי הוּא חֻכְמַתְכֶם וּבִינְתְּכֶם לְעֵינֵי הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר לִשְׁמָעוֹן אֶת כָּל הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה וְאָמְרוּ רַק עִם חֻכֶּם וְנִבְוֹן הַגּוֹי הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה. ז כִּי מִי גוֹי גָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ אֱלֹהִים קְרִבִּים אֵלָיו כֹּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּכָל קְרָאֵנוּ אֵלָיו. ח וּמִי גוֹי גָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים צְדִיקִים כָּל הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לִפְנֵיכֶם הַיּוֹם.



TEXT 4 ISAIAH (*YESHAYAH*) 42:5-7

5 Thus said the ETERNAL God,
Who created the heavens and stretched them out,
Who spread out the earth and what it brings forth,
Who gave breath to the people upon it
And life to those who walk thereon:
6 I GOD, in My grace, have summoned you,
And I have grasped you by the hand.
I created you, and appointed you
A covenant people, a light of nations—
7 Opening eyes deprived of light,
Rescuing prisoners from confinement,
From the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

לְשׁוֹנָה מִב, ה-ז

ה כֹּה אָמַר הָאֵל ה' בּוֹרֵא הַשָּׁמַיִם וְנוֹטִיָּהֶם רִקְעַת הָאָרֶץ וְצִאֲצָאֶיהָ נָתַן נִשְׁמָה לָעָם עָלֶיהָ וְרוּחַ לַהֲלָכִים בָּהּ.
ו אֲנִי ה' קִרְאֲתִיהָ בְּצִדְקָה וְאַחֲזֶק בְּיָדָהּ וְאַצְרֶהָ וְאַתְנֶנָּה לְבָרִית עִם לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם. ז לִמְקֹמָה עֵינִים עוֹרוֹת לְהוֹצִיא מִמִּסְגֵּר אֲסִיר מִבֵּית כָּלָא יִשְׁבִּי חֶשֶׁךְ.



TEXT 5 ISAIAH (YESHAYAH) 2:1-3

1 The word that Isaiah son of Amoz prophesied concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

2 In the days to come,

The Mount of GOD's House

Shall stand firm above the mountains

And tower above the hills;

And all the nations

Shall gaze on it with joy.

3 And the many peoples shall go and say:

"Come,

Let us go up to the Mount of GOD,

To the House of the God of Jacob;

That He may instruct us in God's ways,

And that we may walk in God's paths."

For instruction shall come forth from Zion,

The word of GOD from Jerusalem.

לְשׁוֹנָה ב, א-ג

א הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר חָזָה לְשׁוֹנָהוּ בֶן אַמּוּץ עַל יְהוּדָה וְיִירוּשָׁלַם. ב וְחָזָה בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים נִכּוֹן יִהְיֶה הַר בֵּית ה'
בְּרֹאשׁ הַהָרִים וְנִשְׂאָה מִגְבָּעוֹת וְנִהְרֹוּ אֵלָיו כָּל הַגּוֹיִם. ג וְהָלְכוּ עַמִּים רַבִּים וְאָמְרוּ לָכוּ וְנַעֲלֶה אֶל הַר ה' אֶל
בֵּית אֱלֹהֵי עַקֵּב וְיִרְנֹו מִדְּרָכָיו וְנִלְכָּה בְּאַרְחֹתָיו כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא תוֹרָה וְדָבָר ה' מִיִּירוּשָׁלַם.



TEXT 6

RABBI SHIMSHON RAPHAEL HIRSCH, *ISRAEL* (1836)

(1808–1888) German Orthodox rabbi and scholar.

From the beginning of the passage of Isaiah you have comprehended the place which Israel should occupy in the course of the history of the nations. Because men had eliminated God from life, and even from nature, they found the basis of life in possessions and its aim in enjoyment. They deemed life the product of the

5 multitude of human desires, and looked upon nature as the product of a multitude of gods. Thus it became necessary that one people be introduced into the ranks of the nations which, through its history and life, should declare that God is the only creative cause of existence, and that the fulfillment of His will is the only goal of life. This people was to bear as the motive and the incentive for its unity the revelation of

10 His will, rejuvenated and renewed for its own sake, unto all parts of the world. This mission required for its execution a nation, poor in everything upon which the rest of mankind reared the edifice of its greatness and power; externally subordinate to the nations armed with proud self-sufficiency, but fortified inwardly by direct reliance upon God, so that, by the suppression of every enemy force, God might reveal

15 Himself directly as the sole Creator, Judge and Master of nature and history.

Despite its position of political dependence, however, this people was to receive from the hands of its Creator all the means of both individual and national existence and prosperity, in order that it might dedicate all its wealth of resources to one sole

20 purpose – the fulfillment of the will of God . . .

Such a mission imposed upon this people another duty, the duty of separation, of ethical and spiritual separateness. It could not join in the doings of the other peoples lest it descend to their level and perish in the abyss of their worship of wealth and

25 pleasure. It must remain alone and do its work and live its life as a separate entity until, refined and purified by Israel's teachings and Israel's example, humanity as a whole might turn to God and acknowledge God as the sole Creator and Ruler. Once that is attained, Israel's mission will have been accomplished.

Hirsch, S. R. 1969. *The Nineteen Letters on Judaism* (Prepared by Jacob Breuer, based on the translation by Rabbi Dr. Bernard Drachman). Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 54–55.



TEXT 7

THE CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY *MUSSAR*, *CULTIVATING THE SOUL: A CONTEMPORARY GUIDE TO MUSSAR PRACTICE AND UNDERSTANDING*

The autonomous individual was enshrined by the 18th century Enlightenment, which also gave birth to the Constitution and the legal system of the United States. In this Western world, we generally speak of rights, rather than responsibilities, of efficiency and productivity, rather than virtue. In a world where we see many things

5 valued far above caring for others (such as material success and the drive that is required to achieve it), it is no wonder that many are turning back to the covenantal ethics of Torah to find a moral center. In a time that celebrates and even idolizes the self, *Mussar* is that necessary corrective . . . another meaning of the word *Mussar* is correction, and this is why each generation must define its own *Mussar* in order to

10 correct its flaws . . . Torah, broadly understood, offers, through its weave of law and narrative, a set of standards for individual behavior.

Cultivating the Soul: A Contemporary Guide to Mussar Practice and Understanding.
Philadelphia, PA: Center for Contemporary *Mussar*, 2020.



TEXT 8

RABBI MORDECAI KAPLAN, *BELIEVING, BEHAVING, BELONGING*

(1881–1983) American rabbi and founder of the Reconstructionist movement.

. . . Kaplan used to teach that there are three possible ways of identifying with a religious community: by behaving, by believing, or by belonging. Kaplan himself insisted that the primary form of Jewish identification is belonging – that intuitive sense of kinship that binds a Jew to every other Jew in history and in the

5 contemporary world. Whatever Jews believe, and however they behave as Jews, serves to shape and concretize that underlying sense of being bound to a people with a shared history and destiny. When that connection disappears, Judaism too will disappear.

Gillman, N. 1990. *Sacred Fragments: Recovering Theology for the Modern Jew.*
Philadelphia, PA: JPS, xvii.



TEXT 9

GIL MANN, *THE E.S.P. OF THE JEWISH WAY OF LIFE*

Contemporary journalist and lecturer whose writing addresses questions about Jewish identity.

Judaism is a way of life consisting of these three separate sacred components: E.S.P. – ethics, spirituality, and peoplehood. They overlap like this . . . like the Olympic rings.

- 5 At first glance, this might seem complicated, but it's really not. It's like three interlocking pieces of art. Each piece or circle stands alone. Together, they add to each other's beauty. I think of it as richness. Judaism gives you a lot of wonderful options for finding meaning.
- 10 You can choose to enter the Jewish way of life through any of these circles. And from each circle you can access the other two circles. You can even spend most of your time in one of these circles and still be considered a Jew.
- . . . I think most Jews most easily sense their Jewishness in the peoplehood circle.
- 15 In other words, by feeling that they belong to a people or a community. Even the most unaffiliated Jews seem to feel this sense of belonging if there is a hint of anti-Semitism in the air Even without anti-Semitism, I think the peoplehood circle is the easiest to access and to find some meaning for yourself. But there are still two other circles. You can find meaning in the Jewish code of ethical behavior – like
- 20 how Jews are supposed to treat a disadvantaged person – or as your parents used to say, “The Jewish thing to do.” Finally, and the hardest for me, you can also find it through your belief or spiritual searching. . . . The simple part is that in Judaism there are just three components . . . The complex part is that you can choose to emphasize or deemphasize any or all of the three and still be considered a Jew.
- 25 Plus, because the circles intersect and overlap, you can end up with a number of combinations that give Judaism meaning For me, directly entering the spirituality circle is a challenging thing to do. It's hard for me to understand and relate to God. On the other hand, I have an easy time entering the peoplehood circle. I mean, it's easy for me to feel I belong to the Jewish people. Sometimes, through
- 30 my feeling of belonging to the Jewish people, I can also access the spirituality

circle. A good example is attending a large Jewish rally or community celebration. For me, there is often an aura about these gatherings that is powerful and beyond explaining. To me it feels spiritual . . . Judaism says we're supposed to do nice things for other people – like visit someone who's sick. Even though I certainly do
 35 not enjoy going to the hospital or, worse yet, a nursing home to see a friend or relative, something about making the effort is uplifting – at times I'd even call it spiritual. And if I am visiting a Jewish nursing home, I can also feel that I am part of the peoplehood circle. I can feel all three circles overlapping . . . My point is that, alone or together, they are each considered sacred. Plus, they each can lead to
 40 or overlap one or both of the other two circles. Alone or together they can provide meaning.

Mann, G. 1996. *How to Get More Out of Being Jewish*. Minneapolis, MN: Leo & Sons Publishing, 28–30.



TEXT 10

RABBI BACHYA IBN PAKUDA, *CHOVOT HALEVAVOT* (DUTIES OF THE HEART), GOD'S UNITY, INTRODUCTION

(First half of the 11th century) Spanish rabbinical court judge and philosopher.

When we inquired as to what is the most necessary among the fundamental principles of our religion, we found that the wholehearted acknowledgement of God's unity – the root and foundation of the religion – is the very first of the Torah's gates. It is the acknowledgement of God's unity that separates the believer from the
 5 non-believer. It is the central truth of the religion. Whoever deviates from it will be unable to practice [his religious duties] nor will he retain his beliefs. For this reason, God's first words to us on Mount Sinai were: "I the ETERNAL am your God . . . Do not have any other gods" (Exodus 20:2–3), and later on [God] exhorted us through [God's] prophet, saying: "Hear, Israel: The ETERNAL [that] is our God [is]
 10 one God" (Deuteronomy 6:4).



TEXT 11

MIDRASH RABBAH, *LAMENTATIONS (EIKHAH)*, *INTRODUCTION 2*

Midrash Aggadah to the book of Lamentations (*Eikha*); compiled 5–6th century in the Land of Israel.

Rav Huna and Rabbi Yirmiyah said in the name of Rabbi Chiyah son of Abba, It is written (Jeremiah 16:11), “They have abandoned Me, and they have not observed My Torah” – if only they would have abandoned me but continued to observe my Torah, for through their involvement with it, its inner light would have returned them to the good [way].

אֵיכָה רַבְתִּי, פְּתִיחַתָּא דְחַפְיָמִי ב

רַב הוֹנָא וְרַבִּי יִרְמְיָה בְּשֵׁם רַבִּי חֲזִיָּא בְּרַ אָפָא אָמְרִי כְּתִיב וְאַתְּ תוֹרָתִי לֹא שָׁמְרוּ הֲלוֹאִי אוֹתִי עָזְבוּ וְתוֹרָתִי שָׁמְרוּ מִתּוֹךְ שִׁהְיוּ מִתְעַסְקִין בָּהּ הַמְּאֹר שְׂבָה הָיָה מִחֲזִירָן לְמוֹטָב.



TEXT 12

PROFESSOR YESHAYAHU LEIBOWITZ, *RELIGIOUS PRAXIS: THE MEANING OF HALAKHAH* (1953)

(1903–1994) Israeli philosopher and scientist known for his outspoken, often controversial, opinions on Judaism, ethics, religion, and politics.

The uniqueness of Judaism, the characteristic which distinguishes it from other faiths and religions, [is] namely, its embodiment in the Torah and the Mitzvoth . . . Judaism was embodied not in an abstract set of beliefs attained by many who had never heard of Abraham or of the Mosaic Torah, but in the Torah and the Mitzvoth . . .

. . . It was thus not beliefs or opinions that determined the identity of Judaism. Its continuity was that of its religious praxis. This is why the Hassidic movement, which neither intended to create a new *Halakhah* nor did so in fact, remained an integrated and live member of the Jewish body, despite the psychic distance and

- 10 **abyss of enmity which separated Hassidim from their opponents, who went so far as to attempt to excommunicate them. Compare this with the fate of the Sabbatean movement, which, owing to its defection from observance of Mitzvot, was ejected from the body of Jewry, its ideology remaining beyond the pale.**

Leibowitz, Y. 1992. *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State*.

Trans. by Eliezer Goldman, Yoram Navon, Zvi Jacobson, Gershon Levi, and Raphael Levy. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 5–6.



TEXT 13

RABBI JESSY DRESSIN, *ON HERSELF*

(b. 1980) American Reform rabbi and Director of Repair the World, Baltimore.

I believe that Judaism just offers an incredible platform of particular rituals, frameworks and obligations that help [people] to interact with the broader world and allows me to act within the world in a [beneficial] way.

- 5 **I've always felt that Judaism has three goals: 1.) a sense of purpose and personal meaning; 2.) the imperative to be part of a collective community; and 3.) the responsibility to help make the world a better place. For me, everything about my Judaism is in pursuit of those three goals. I appreciate the kind of timelessness of those ideas, but [also the] generational interpretations and individual interpretations**
- 10 **of how to work towards those goals.**

J. Dressin. 2019. "Getting to Know . . . Rabbi Jessie Dressin." Interview by S. Kligman, *Baltimore Jewish Times*, 14 April. Available online at jewishtimes.com. Viewed June 2020.



TEXT 14

DR. MAURICE M. MIZRAHI, *THE MISSION OF JUDAISM*

(b. 1949) Earned a PhD in theoretical physics, worked in the U.S. Defense Department, Jewish educator, and author of a series on the Torah portion and Jewish holidays.

Perhaps Torah is intentionally vague about the mission of Judaism so all of the above might apply, in proper balance: [spread Jewish teachings; excel for the benefit of humanity; perform tikkun olam].

- 5 Perhaps the most important thing is for Jews to continue to feel strongly that God chose them for **SOME** mission, so they can live their lives fully and passionately, and, with the help of Jewish observance and values, perform for the betterment of all mankind.

- 10 The Talmud summarizes it beautifully:

Lo 'alecha hamlacha ligmor, v'lo atta ven chorrin lehibatel mimmeh

[לא עליך המלאכה לגמור ולא אתה בן חורין לבטל ממנה]

You don't have to complete the task, but you may not desist from it entirely either.
[Pirkei Avot 2:21]

Dr. Maurice Mizrahi, Congregation Adat Reyim, Lunch and Learn, Sept. 2011.



TEXT 15

RABBI DR. ABRAHAM TWERSKI, *ON PURPOSE* (2009)

(1930-2021) American Hasidic rabbi, scion of the Chernobyl Hasidic dynasty, and a psychiatrist specializing in substance abuse.

(The video is hyperlinked to the title above.)

KEY TERMS

Mussar. This term covers a field of study defined by the terms “ethics” and “morals.” In the 19th century, Rabbi Yisrael Salanter established the Mussar Movement, an effort to introduce into the regular course of yeshiva study a rigorous study of texts devoted to Mussar topics. The ultimate aim of Mussar Movement was putting the study into practice. At the height of the original Mussar Movement, there were three developed schools of thought, each espousing its own approach to the topic, the way it was to be studied, and how it was to be put into practice.

Tikkun Olam. “Repair of the World.” This concept, originating in the Mishnah, and in recent years becoming a primary guiding principle for the more liberal Jewish Movements, seeks to achieve social justice goals through religious (halakhic) legislation and through community-wide activism.

KEY NAMES

Rabbi Bachya Ibn Pakuda. (First half of the 11th century) Spanish rabbinical court judge and philosopher, he was the author of the first Jewish system of ethics written in Arabic in 1040 under the title *Al Hidayah ila Faraid al-Kulub* (Guide to the Duties of the Heart), and translated into Hebrew by Yehudah Ibn Tibbon in the years 1161–80 under the title *Chovot HaLevavot* (Duties of the Heart), a work studied to this day. Nothing is known about his life.

Dressin, Rabbi Jessy. (b. 1980) American Reform rabbi recognized for her innovative approach to Jewish community engagement and education. She was ordained at the Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles in 2012. She founded Charm City Tribe, a nationally recognized model for young adult engagement. She also served as the Director of Jewish Life for the JCCs of Greater Baltimore. Later, as the Senior Director of Jewish Education for Repair the World, she played a central role in integrating Jewish learning with service initiatives, aiming to inspire a lifelong commitment to social justice among Jewish young adults.

Hirsch, Rabbi Shimshon (Samson) Raphael. (1808–1888) German pulpit rabbi and writer, and leading exponent of Neo-Orthodoxy, which attempted to combine European culture with strict adherence to traditional Judaism. The Neo-Orthodox movement advocated that a knowledge of Western culture and a certain degree of integration into German society, along with a commitment to *halakhah*, are both necessary for a meaningful Jewish life in modern times. Hirsch's writings include a commentary to the Torah, *Horeb: Essays on Israel's Duties in the Diaspora*, and *Nineteen Letters on Judaism*.

Isaiah (Yeshayah). 8th century BCE prophet in the Kingdom of Judah (Yehudah). He made his first public appearance as a divinely inspired prophet in the year of King Uzziah's affliction with leprosy, and he ministered to the people for some sixty years, during the reigns of kings Uzziah, Jotam, Achaz, and Hezekiah. He preached justice and charity at a time of immoral behavior. He also preached courage and fortitude at a time when there was great fear from the threat of the new Assyrian Empire. He described in glowing terms the future glory of Israel, a vision that has sustained the faithful throughout the years of exile and oppression.

Jeremiah (Yirmiyah). (645–582 BCE) Prophet during and following the last years of the monarchy of the Kingdom of Judah (609 BCE–586 BCE). He foretold the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and was ostracized by much of the nation as a result. He also prophesied to the Jews about the theological significance of the exile and forecast their return to the Land.

Kaplan, Rabbi Mordechai M. (1881–1983) Essayist and Jewish educator, ideologue of the Reconstructionist Judaism movement. In 1889, he immigrated with his mother and sisters to the United States to join his father in New York. From 1893 to 1902, he studied at the Jewish Theological Seminary and began his career as an Orthodox rabbi. From 1934 until 1970 he wrote a series of books in which he expressed his Reconstructionist ideology, centered on the “concept of Judaism as a civilization.” He was a prolific writer, keeping a journal throughout most of his life.

Leibowitz, Professor Yeshayahu. (1903–1994) Born in Riga, Latvia, he studied chemistry and philosophy at the University of Berlin. After completing his doctorate in 1924, he went on to study biochemistry and medicine, receiving an MD in 1934 from the University of Basel. He immigrated to Mandatory Palestine in 1935 and settled in Jerusalem, joining the faculty of Hebrew University the following year. He became a professor of biochemistry in 1941 and was promoted to the position of senior professor of organic chemistry and neurology in 1952. After retiring in 1970, he continued to teach philosophy and the history of science. Aside from his scientific career, he is known primarily for his philosophical and religious writings, along with his scathing critique of Israeli values and national policy.

Mann, Gil. American author, journalist, and lecturer renowned for his engaging discussions on Jewish identity and contemporary issues. He has authored several books, including “How to Get More Out of Being Jewish Even If: A. You Are Not Sure You Believe in God; B. You Think Going to Synagogue Is a Waste of Time; C. You Hated Hebrew School” (1996) and “Sex, God, Christmas & Jews: Intimate Emails About Faith and Life Challenges” (2006). Through his writings and lectures, he addresses the complexities of modern Jewish life, aiming to make Jewish traditions and beliefs more accessible and relevant to diverse audiences.

Mizrahi, Dr. Maurice. (b. 1949) Egyptian-born Jewish scholar, author, and physicist who earned a Ph.D. in theoretical physics from the University of Texas at Austin and subsequently built a 34-year career as a defense analyst in the U.S. Defense Department. Beyond his scientific endeavors, he has been deeply involved in Jewish education since 1984, teaching Judaism to teenagers and adults. He has authored a series of biblical commentaries titled “Commentaries on the Weekly Torah Portion and the Jewish Holy Day.”

Stutman, Rabbi Shira. (b. 1973) Nationally recognized faith leader and change-maker with over two decades of experience in motivating and inspiring diverse groups. She graduated from Columbia University and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, where she was a Wexner Graduate Fellow. She is the founder of Mixed Multitudes, an organization dedicated to exposing diverse groups of Jews and fellow travelers to Jewish life. She has been named one of “America’s Most Inspiring Rabbis” by *The Jewish Forward*.

Twerski, Rabbi Dr. Abraham Joshua. (1930–2021) An American Hasidic rabbi, scion of the Chernobyl Hasidic dynasty, he was a psychiatrist that specialized in substance abuse. He founded and directed the Gateway Rehabilitation Center, Pittsburgh; was clinical director of the Department of Psychiatry at St. Francis Hospital in Pittsburgh; associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Medicine; and the founder of the Shaar Hatikvah rehabilitation center for prisoners in Israel. He was a prolific writer of Jewish books and was co-spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Jehudah with his father from ordination until 1959.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Ariel, D. 1996. *What Do Jews Believe? The Spiritual Foundations of Judaism*. New York: Schocken.

Blech, B. 1991. *Understanding Judaism: The Basics of Deed and Creed*. London: Jason Aronson Inc.

Borowitz, E. 1984. *Liberal Judaism*. New York: UAHC.

Dorff, E. I. 1998. *Contemporary Jewish Theology: A Reader*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Fackenheim, E. L. 1999. *What Is Judaism? An Interpretation for the Present Age*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Hirsch, S. R. 1969. *The Nineteen Letters on Judaism*. (Prepared by Jacob Breuer, based on the translation by Rabbi Dr. Bernard Drachman). Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers.

Mann, G. 1996. *How to Get More Out of Being Jewish*. Minneapolis, MN: Leo & Sons Publishing.