

JEWISH PARENTING BOOKS

This annotated list was created by Havurah Shalom Education Director Deborah Eisenbach-Budner. Deborah found the books marked with ** especially helpful as a parent and as a Jewish educator.

ON BEING A PARENT

** *Parenting As a Spiritual Journey*, Fuchs, Nancy (or Fuchs-Kreimer, Nancy), Jewish Lights Publishing, 1998. Paperback. ISBN: 1580230164.

Originally published as *Our Share of Night, Our Share of Morning* by HarperSanFrancisco, 1996. Written by a Reconstructionist rabbi, this is a favorite book, which gets at the important big questions about parenting: What are our goals as parents? What do we learn? Who do we become? Based on interviews with parents of all aged kids and from various religious and secular orientations, this book is especially good for new parents overwhelmed by the tachlis (everyday details) of babyhood and child-rearing books. Short, accessible sections on topics such as Character, Wonder, Separation, Trust, Being versus Doing, and Bodies – perfect for reading during a nursing. Practical ideas and suggestions are tucked into this book, as well.

Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting, Kabat-Zinn, Jon; Kabat-Zinn, Myla, Hyperion, 1998. Paperback. ISBN: 0786883146.

Focusing on the practice of mindfulness as an antidote to the stress of parenthood and as a way to enhance and enrich parenting, this book explores the inner experience of parenting. There are exercises and intentions that guide one toward conscious parenting – by learning how to stay more present in each moment. Can be wordy, but especially helpful for folks interested in meditation or mindfulness. Beautiful stories and quotes, some practical suggestions for everyday life, also.

STRIVING TO CREATE A JEWISH FAMILY AND HOME

***The Blessing of a Skinned Knee: Using Jewish Teachings to Raise Self-Reliant Children*. Mogel, Wendy. Penguin Books, 2001. Paperback. ISBN: 0142196002.

This book more deftly blends Jewish teachings and parenting concerns than most Jewish parenting books. Rather than throwing in tidbits of Jewish culture and text, Mogel, a clinical psychologist and educator, strives to take essential values of Judaism and apply them to parenting. Her message is most appropriate for children being raised in middle and upper-middle class, liberal communities. However, the thought-provoking and sometimes very pragmatic suggestions can be applied universally.

***The Jewish Parents' Almanac*. Danan, Julie Hilton. Jason Aronson; 1997. Paperback. ISBN 1-568219-52-0.

Meant as a handbook for parents to rediscover or discover Judaism for themselves as they teach their children, this book is chock full of creative ideas, resources, and guidance for Jewish observance and celebration. It goes far beyond holidays and Jewish home-making to look at Values, mitzvot, Israel, God, Prayer, Jewish Cultural Literacy for children and adults. There are many resources from all denominations suggested and the important questions of “why be Jewish” are covered in addition to all the “how-to” guidance.

*****How to Be a Jewish Parent: A Practical Handbook for Family Life.*** Diamant, Anita; Kushner, Karen (Contributor). Schocken Books; September 2000. Paperback and Hardback Available. ISBN 0-805211-16-0.

Like all of Anita Diamant’s how-to books, this is an accessible, non-judgemental, affirming book, which is a perfect starting place for many families. It suggests ways to create Jewish space, community, and time with children, from a primarily liberal Jewish orientation. There are topics that modern families address (ex. Special needs, adoptions, etc.) and many helpful resources.

What Does Being Jewish Mean?: Read-Aloud Responses to Questions Jewish Children Ask about History, Culture, and Religion. Freedman, E.B.; Greenberg, Jan; Katz, Karen. Publisher: Prentice Hall, 1991. Paperback. ISBN: 0139627472.

This “answers” given in this book are fairly pedantic but they do give parents food for thought as they anticipate or think about how to answer real questions their children will/have raised.

*****Parents At Prayer*** (Tikkun Magazine, Volume 18, No. 4) by Jeremy Kalmanofsky

RAISING CHILDREN

Practical Parenting: A Jewish Perspective. Lipsitz, Gail Josephson, Ktav Publishing House; 1997. Paperback. ISBN 0-881255-36-X.

This is a practical guide to parenting, which sets out important issues and then gives some pragmatic suggestions (ex. Body image, diversity, when your child is “different”, money, generational issues). It is sprinkled with Jewish cultural or textual sources and directly addresses some issues such as dealing with anti-semitism and holidays.

Talking to Your child about God: A Book for Families of All Faiths. Heller, David. Bantam, 1990. Paperback. ISBN: 0553282298.

By a scholar/ psychologist, this book generically explores children’s spiritual development and their emotional, spiritual, psychological growth in ages 4-12, as it relates to their perceptions of God. It offers activities and exercises to initiate conversations about God with children so parents are not caught off guard. It discusses how parents’ feelings about God as well as media and culture impact children’s perceptions.

And God Cried, Too : A Kid's Book of Healing and Hope. Gellman, Marc. HarperTrophy, 2002. Paperback. ISBN: 0060098864.

Filled with easily readable stories that address some of the hard questions about loss, bad things in the world, comforting friends, etc., this book can be read aloud to 4-8 year olds or read by 3rd-6th graders. Good for starting family conversations.

Jewish Parenting: Rabbinic Insights, Abrams, Judith Z.; Abrams, Steven. Jason Aronson; 1994. Paperback. ISBN 1-568211-75-9.

This book is an interesting collection of rabbinic texts (Talmud, classical Midrash), put into context by scholar/rabbi Judith Abrams and pediatrician Steven Abrams. Topics include: Importance of Children in Rabbinic Tradition, Child Development, Birth Defects, Parent-child Relationship, Adolescence, History of Pediatrics and Rabbinic Medicine. Especially helpful as a sourcebook of rabbinic quotes.

An Allowance Is Not a Bribe: And Other Helpful Hints for Raising Responsible Jewish Children. Gonsher, Allan, Jacob Aronson; (2000) Hardcover. ISBN: 0765761335.

From a family and children's therapist, this book interweaves general concerns about childrearing with Jewish values, culture, traditional perspectives.

OTHER RESOURCES

Parenting and Partnering, The Reconstructionist: A Journal of Contemporary and Jewish Thought and Practice, volume 64, number 2 (Spring 2000). A wide array of thoughtful essays dealing with many aspects of family making.

From Torah Aura, the excellent publishing company which publishes Jewishly rich, thought-provoking educational materials, especially for families with children in grades K-3:

- *Jewish Parenting: Mensch Making* – 8 page lesson that offers parents stories, ethical questions and strategies to help their children become the best people they can be.
- *Jewish Parenting: Talking About God* – 8 page lesson designed to provide the resources and answers to help parents talk to their children about God. Gives parents stories and questions as a way to begin the conversation.

Mishpacha.org is an innovative on-line community, <http://www.mishpacha.org/indexparent.shtml> bringing together groups of people for on-line study and discussion, forming small ongoing virtual communities of Jewish parents — communities that continue long after the course has ended. The core of the Mishpacha program is a three-month course in Jewish life, designed to serve as a springboard for discussion and on-line conversation. Mishpacha is a project of the Memorial Foundation for

Jewish Culture, an organization composed of 58 Jewish groups including representatives from the Orthodox, Conservative and Reform movements, and other streams of Jewish life.

Resources for Jewish Parents: Raising Your Child to Be a Mensch

A Selected Bibliography from The Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education (ACAJE) of Greater Philadelphia.

Abramowitz, Yosef I. & Susan Silverman. *Jewish Family Life: Traditions, Holidays, and Values for Today's Parents and Children*. New York: Golden Books, 1997.

A user-friendly parent's guide which discusses various aspects of Jewish life and culture in order to help parents make Judaism relevant in their lives. The section on values emphasizes Jewish values in deeds of loving-kindness and acts of justice, respecting the human body, earth and nature and relationships to money and sexuality. First person narratives illustrate the values that are described.

Abramowitz, Yosef I., Editor. *Beyond Scandal: The Parents' Guide to Sex, Lies, and Leadership*. Newton, MA: Jewish Family Life Books, 1998.

Taking a positive approach to examining the recent troubles of President Clinton, this book encourages parents and educators to teach their children and students moral lessons. Short essays from educators, rabbis and psychologists, along with practical tips on how to put today's headlines into a Jewish values context, are included.

Adahan, Miriam. *Raising Children to Care: A Jewish Guide to Childrearing*. Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, Ltd., 1988.

The goal of this text is to help train parents and their children to become loving, self-disciplined and responsible. Using sources from the Bible and Talmud, the author weaves Jewish ethical teachings into the text as a guide for ethical behavior in modern family life. While addressed primarily to mothers, a short chapter to fathers touches briefly but forcefully on the marital relationship.

Artson, Bradley Shavit. *It's a Mitzvah: Step-by-Step to Jewish Living*. West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, Inc., 1995.

Jewish rituals and values come alive in this engaging guide to Jewish practice. Each of the eighteen chapters represents a mitzvah, explains its significance and then lists concrete ways of putting the mitzvah into practice. The accompanying leader's guide includes family activity pages.

Blitz, Shmuel. *Bedtime Stories of Jewish Values*. New York: Mesorah Publications, 1998.

This book has a number of short stories, each with a moral taken from Jewish virtues. There are several here that apply: honesty, loyalty, judging others and forgiveness.

Donin, Hayim Halevy. *To Raise a Jewish Child: A Guide for Parents*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1966.

A classic text for dealing with Jewish parenting issues from a modern Orthodox perspective. Includes a chapter entitled The Basic Values of Judaism: What Kind of People Do We Want Our Children to Be?, with sections entitled To Love and Revere God, To Love Our Neighbor, To Respect Human Dignity, etc.

Epstein, David & Suzanne Stutman. *Torah with Love: A Guide for Strengthening Jewish Values Within the Family*. New York: Prentice-Hall Press, 1986.

An exciting and practical guide to family Torah study with emphasis on using the Torah text for teaching Jewish values. It includes suggestions for discussions at the family table, teaching and drama techniques and insights into analyzing the Biblical text. Useful for both the beginner and experienced parent teacher. A teaching, not preaching, approach to parenting is presented.

Gellman, Marc. *"Always Wear Clean Underwear!" and Other Ways Parents Say "I Love You"*. New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1997.

Parents are their children's primary role models and guides in life. In this book, the big and little meanings of the universal do's and don't's parents tell their children are presented with humor and great insight.

Grishaver, Joel Lurie. *10 Things Which Tend to Turn Kids into Menschen*. Los Angeles, CA: Torah Aura Productions, 1995.

A short pamphlet which includes a practical how-to model to help one live a life guided by Jewish values as expressed by the midot tovot (good qualities) of the Musar (Ethics) Movement. A list of the midot tovot is provided.

Kurshan, Neil. *Raising Your Child to be a Mensch*. New York: Atheneum, 1987.

How to raise children to practice decency, generosity, kindness and integrity in an age of the success ethic. As a parent, the author shares his perspective about the priorities in Jewish family life.

Lickona, Thomas. *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*. New York: Bantam, 1992.

The author's twelve-point program offers practical suggestions and strategies designed to teach children respect, responsibility, hard work, compassion and other values needed in today's society.

Payne, Lauren Murphy. *We Can Get Along: A Child's Book of Choices*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, Inc., 1997.

Focusing on how children have the power to make choices, this book guides young people in their relationships with friends. It stresses kindness, respect, tolerance and responsibility.

Reuben, Steven Carr. *Raising Jewish Children in a Contemporary World: The Modern Parent's Guide to Creating a Jewish Home*. Rocklin, CA: Prima Publishing, 1992.

Written by a Reconstructionist rabbi, this is a guide for modern families who wish to raise their children with a positive Jewish self-image. It includes a chapter, How to Raise Ethical Jewish

Children, which stresses these three basic Jewish ideas: 1. What Judaism really means by holy, 2. Charity versus tzedakah (righteousness) and 3. Love your neighbor as yourself.

Rosenberg, Shelley Kapnek. *Raising a Mensch: How to Bring Up Ethical Children in Today's World*. Philadelphia, PA : The Jewish Publication Society, 2003.

A useful book for parents, imparting knowledge of middot and mitzvot in practical situations and through traditional tales.

Siegel, Danny. *Good People*. Pittsboro, NC: The Town House Press, 1995.

A book of stories about ordinary people who are performing exceptionally compassionate deeds. In doing so, they not only repair the world and bring it closer to perfection, but also provide readers with accessible, modern role models.

AND MORE

Becoming a Jewish Parent : How to Explore Spirituality and Tradition with Your Children. Gordis, Daniel. Three Rivers Press, 2000. Paperback. ISBN: 0609805266.

This book addresses questions such as: How do you instill a positive, vital sense of identity, religion, and heritage without turning off your kids or overwhelming them? How do you explain what it means to be Jewish if you are ambivalent about it yourself? How do parents who have little or no formal religious training themselves pass on rich, multilayered traditions that may have been missing from their own childhood experiences? It is filled with anecdotes, thoughtful information about the history, holidays, and traditions that shape Judaism, as well as a useful glossary and thorough reference section.

Teaching Your Children About God : A Modern Jewish Approach. Wolpe, David J. Perennial, 1995. Paperback. ISBN: 0060976470.

Rabbi David Wolpe shows Jewish parents how to openly explore the idea of God with their children. Through poignant anecdotes and practical exercises, Wolpe teaches how parents can guide children in the practice of prayer and create an atmosphere in which children feel comfortable questioning and wondering about God, life, and death. It asserts that parents who may feel something missing in their own spiritual lives can nourish their own souls even as they nurture their children's.

Jewish Parenting Wisdom, Rosman, Steven M.. Jason Aronson; 1997. Hardcover. ISBN 0-765759-69-1.

FROM AN ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVE

Cohen, Simcha Bunim. *Children In Halachah*. Artscroll Mesorah. Hardcover. [Laws relating to young children: Chinuch, Shabbos, Kashrus, Learning and much more.]

Donin, Hayim Halevy. *To Raise a Jewish Child: A Guide for Parents*. Basic Books; 1991. Paperback. ISBN 0-465086-35-7.

Wolpin, Nisson. *Timeless Parenting: Raising children in troubled times – understanding, coping, succeeding*. Artscroll; 2000. Hardback

Levi, Miriam. *Effective Jewish Parenting*. Feldheim, 1986. ISBN 0-873064-05-4. Out of print. [Mrs. Levi uses the principles of cognitive psychology to help parents (especially mothers) cope with their own feelings during the trials and tribulations of childrearing. The book is richly illustrated by examples from real life and should be read by husband and wife together in order to arrive at a harmonized treatment of children and thus eliminate a significant potential source of dissension.]

Radcliffe, Sarah Chana. *The Delicate Balance: Love and Authority in Torah Parenting*. Targum Pr; 1989. Hardcover. ISBN 0-944070-22-1.

ON THE WEB

From MYJEWISHLEARNING.COM

Parashat B'midbar, What Is Parenting? Transmitting Jewish culture by embodying Jewish practice is part of the responsibilities of Jewish parenting by Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson

Parenting: A View from Jewish Sources, Rabbinic readings of biblical stories suggest some pitfalls to be avoided in raising children by Rabbi Nachum Amsel

“Spirituality of Setting Limits: Reflections on Parenting and Discipline”