

PREPARING A DVAR TORAH

GUIDELINES

AND

RESOURCES

Preparing a *dvar Torah* ¹

MANY PEOPLE WHO ARE ASKED TO GIVE a *dvar Torah* don't know where to begin. Below are some simple guidelines and instructions. It is difficult to provide a universal recipe because there are many different *divrei Torah* models depending on the individual, the context, the intended audience and the weekly portion that they are dealing with!

However, regardless of content, and notwithstanding differences in format and length, all *divrei Torah* share some common features and require similar preparations. The process is really quite simple- although the actual implementation is not always so easy. The steps are as follows:

Step One: Understand what a *dvar Torah* is

Step Two: Choose an issue or topic (and how to find one)

Step Three: Research commentators to explore possible solutions

Step Four: Organize your thoughts into a coherent presentation

¹*Dvar Torah*: literally, 'a word of Torah.' Because *dvar* means 'a word of...!' (in the construct form), please don't use the word *dvar* without its necessary connected direct object: Torah. Instead, you can use the word *drash*, which means a short, interpretive exposition.

INTRO

First clarify what kind of *dvar Torah* are you preparing. Here are three common types:

1. Some shuls / minyanim have a member present a *dvar Torah* in lieu of a sermon. This is usually frontal (ie. no congregational response is expected) and may be fifteen to twenty minutes long.
2. Other shuls / minyanim have a member present a *dvar Torah* as a jumping off point for a discussion. This is usually shorter- maybe ten to fifteen minutes followed by ten to fifteen minutes of discussion. (See 'Running a Torah discussion')
3. Many meetings (Board meetings, for example) begin with a short *dvar Torah*. This is probably no more than ten minutes long so the business of the meeting can proceed without unnecessary delays.

OK, you're ready to start. So what makes a good *dvar Torah* anyway?

HOW A DVAR TORAH WORKS

Ben Bag Bag says, *Turn it, Turn it, for all is in it.* (Pirke Avot 5). The beauty of Torah is that this ancient text somehow speaks to us today. Gershom Scholem explains that according to the Rabbis, “Truth is given once and for all, and it is laid down with precision.” In other words, the scholar or darshan, simply needs to “uncover” or re-discover truths that may have been neglected or hidden. Rabbi Harold Kushner once related, 'The Torah is like a mirror. Every person looks into a mirror and sees a different face.'

The beauty of a *dvar Torah* is that every individual can help others “see a new and different face” that they may have never noticed or thought of in that exact way before. There is no “right answer” (or even “right question”) in any *dvar Torah*. Interpretations of Torah and Torah itself, exist on multiple levels. As Joel Rosenberg has said, “The true sacredness of a text, then, rests in its power to generate interpretation.” Don't be afraid of finding or saying something “new.”

In summary, a successful *dvar Torah* both has insight into the Torah text AND insight into our lives today. If people say, “Wow, I didn't know why some people have blue threads in

their *tzitzit* (tallit's fringes)” (and where they come from), AND, 'Wow, I never thought about how the performance of *mitzvot* evolve,' or 'Hmmm, when and how do I identify myself as 'Jewish' by the things I wear?' then the *dvar Torah* has worked on both levels.

What it is

- not preaching; but sharing your study.
- any Jewish text can be used, but it is customary to connect with the week's (upcoming) Parashah.
- multiple ideas; synthesis; bridge personal (scientific, contemporary, or professional) and textual.
- a *dvar Torah* can include questions, not only answers but real (open-ended) questions, not guess-what-I'm-thinking questions.
- it is not uncommon (depending on your audience and time frame) to include (often begin with) a SHORT summary of the parashah (but don't let the summary take the entire time of your *d'var Torah*!).

Some general guidelines

- prepare; take it seriously
- KISS: consider one word, one verse, one paragraph at most that you find pivotal
- consider your audience; a *d'var Torah* should address, inspire, repair, even challenge or provoke, but not hurt.

- examine traditional sources and critical scholarship
- don't be afraid to disagree with tradition, but take tradition seriously; (relate new idea to tradition)
- recognize multiple levels of interpretation; try different approaches
- don't be afraid to include non-Jewish perspectives (but identify them as such)
- dig deeper, dig for the less obvious; what else can you say about the text; what psychology/philosophy do you find beneath a law; what is the relationship between some legal material and a parallel narrative, for example
- consider non-traditional delivery: art form, journal entry, etc...

Although anyone can give a good *dvar Torah* (regardless of their training or background), preparing a *dvar Torah* does take some serious work. You can't expect to do a good job if you spend fifteen minutes preparing. A good *dvar Torah* is not just reading something you “find on the Net,” although of course, the Internet is an amazing resource which can be extremely helpful (see resources at the end).

So how to begin? First, you have to identify an issue.

QUESTIONS

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Analysis: What to say and how to find it

The first thing is to identify the topic or the issue for your *dvar Torah*. One way to start is if there is an issue relevant to the community, or to recent current events or of particular interest to you because of specialized knowledge. You may be able to find a 'hook' to the topic in the Torah portion. The other approach is to find something unusual, troubling or interesting in the parashah.

Read the parashah

Whether you're looking for a grain of sand or a hook, the first thing you should do is read the entire parashah.

How do you know the parashah in six months from now? Use a Jewish calendar to find out what the parashah is (Typically one gives a *dvar Torah* on the upcoming parashah).

Check what immediately precedes the parashah and what follows also. Sometimes these 'links' serve as jumping off points.

Eg. Immediately after the Akedah (Binding of Isaac) the next week's Parasha begins, 'And Sarah died.' In the Rabbi's fertile imagination, Sarah died when she learned of Isaac's [near] death experience. This opens a whole discussion about Sarah's relationship to Isaac and Abraham, or how involved we are with our parents/children.

Similarly, glance at the Haftarah (Prophetic reading) which the Rabbis paired with the weekly Torah reading. There is always a thematic or linguistic link between the two readings. Maybe there is some material there that will be useful. Why did the Rabbis choose a passage from Zechariah that says, "Not by might, Not by power, but by My spirit, says Adonai" for the Shabbat in Chanukah?

Understanding the Parashah

Maybe there is something that calls out for investigation. As you read the text, try to work out what the text is about. Generate as many questions as you can about the text. Here are some general questions that apply to probably every portion to get the ball rolling:

Context: What is the context to the story or issue in the text?

Characters: Who are the central characters/ Who is missing?

God: How is God involved/or not?

Resolution: How does the text end: what is questioned, learned or resolved?

Alternatives: How else could we read this/what other ways could it have turned out?

Laws: What laws/rituals are derived from the portion?

Principles: What moral/ethical lessons can be learned here?

Grains of Sand

The rabbis read the biblical text with a magnifying glass! By that I mean they were extremely sensitive to not only *what* the text says, but *how* the text says it. In addition, there are biblical Hebrew words that are no longer understood, passages that are ambiguous, and narratives that are morally problematic. Because the Rabbis assumed that the text, authored by God, was perfect, any apparent ambiguity, duplication, omission or contradiction was an opportunity for “midrash.”

Here are some textual features/problems that the rabbis explored that you might also investigate:

- *Meaning:* A word or verse that we don't understand. Words that only appear once in the Torah (*hapax legomenon*) or difficult grammar.
- *Missing Information:* Something is missing; a word, sentence or important detail is not told. This is very common.

- *Duplication*: The Torah tells us the same thing twice, or tells us something we already know.
- *Theme/Number Word*: A key word repeated 7 or 10 times in one story.
- *Extraneous Information*: The Torah includes information that doesn't seem important.
- *Compare & Contrast*: The Torah (or a character) repeats what happened or what was said with small but important differences (omissions, additions or changes).
- *Ambiguity*: The Torah says something that could be understood in more than one way.
- *Contradiction*: The Torah says one thing here, another thing there.
- *Metaphor*: The Torah uses a word or a phrase that isn't meant literally, but is figurative.
- *Echo*: A word or phrase repeated in two stories that link the two stories.
- *Something Wrong*: The Torah tells us something that is morally problematic or a character does something that isn't right.
- *Juxtaposition*: Two seemingly unrelated topics follow one after another. A new idea is created by the juxtaposition of the two verses or stories.
- *Symmetry*: The Torah writes words or verses in a symmetrical pattern (sometimes like an X).
- *Out of Order*: The sequence of events is unclear or out of order.

Hooks

Every portion will relate to one or more themes or issues. Here, for example, are a few of the kinds of issues that a typical portion might relate to:

interpersonal dynamics and psychological insights
our relationship to the environment
good and evil
role of ritual

Here are some trigger questions that might apply to your parashah:

How does this section/prohibition relate to modern times?

Eg. Does the prohibition of mixing diverse seeds relate to bio-genetic engineering?

What does the Torah say about cloning?

How has this observance changed?

Eg. Why do we have white threads in our *tzitzit* when the Torah clearly states 'a blue thread?' or Why do we have two sets of dishes when the Torah says, 'Do not seethe (boil) a kid in its mother's milk?'

How can we relate to a text that conflicts with our values or modern ideas?

Eg. Women's vows should be subject to a male relative's approval.

Once you've collected a whole bunch of questions, problems, and issues, the next stage is to narrow down the field. Which of these is the most interesting right now? Is there one issue that relates to your life? (Save the extras for another time; a common mistake of many divrei Torah is that they try to cover too much.)

When you feel like you have identified a key issue to talk about, the next step is to find some answers?!

The Pearl and the grain of sand vs. The hang your coat on the hook

There are two very distinct methods for finding an issue in a given Torah portion. I call the first, the pearl and the grain of sand method. As you know, a grain of sand irritates the oyster which coats it with nacre (mother of pearl) and forms a pearl. The 'irritant' is responsible for this beautiful pearl. Similarly, textual, linguistic, or philosophical problems within the biblical text may 'prompt' a question and the

exploration that you will guide the listeners will serve as an illuminating *dvar Torah*. In this method, one “finds a problem in the text.” We will discuss in detail how exactly one does this below.

The *second method* is the hang your coat on the hook method. The premise of a *dvar Torah* is that the Torah speaks eternally, so the weekly Parashah includes a message regarding an important issue being dealt with by the Board, a theme of the upcoming holiday, or some relevant current event that has effected the world or your particular community. Or, the individual may bring some specific expertise or interest in a particular topic that relates to the parashah. I have heard interesting *divrei Torah* given by lawyers, real estate agents, and psychologists/family therapists who used their specialties to find new insight into the Torah's narrative. The trick is to take something you are passionate about, or that you are thinking about, a message that is important and worthwhile, that you can link or “find” somehow in the Torah. That's the “hook.” For this method, take a few minutes before you begin to decide if there is something “on your mind/on your community's mind” that you think might be appropriate for consideration.

Either method is equally valid, and both were used by the Rabbis of old. Take a minute to decide whether one approach or the other seems more appropriate.

(And often the two methods interact. You might say, hmmm, not much going on, let me look in the parashah for something, and then some issue jumps out of the text that makes you actually reflect on a current issue. Don't be concerned with 'which method you're using- it's just helpful to understand the two approaches.)

COMMENTARY

The Research, or Tools to help you

Read Several Translations

As you begin to think about your *dvar Torah*, read as many translations or commentaries as you can. (see *Resources at the end*). These may help identify an issue if you haven't yet, or help you understand what others have said about it.

Note: when translations differ wildly from one another, that is a red flag that indicates that scholars disagree about the biblical text's meaning. Especially if you don't know Hebrew, comparing multiple translations is a handy way to get a better feel for the possible nuances of the Hebrew. Two languages never have a one-to-one correspondence. One Hebrew word may not always be best translated by the same English word. The Hebrew “zera” can might be best translated as seed, sowing, semen, descendant, line depending on the context.

Some translations lean toward the idiomatic: *David said to himself* (I Sam. 27:1); others lean towards the literal: *And David said in his heart*. Speiser's excellent and scholarly translation of Genesis (Anchor Bible) is a good example of the former; Fox's highly recommended translation "The Five Books of Moses" (Schocken) is a good example of the latter. You can even use this (Christian) Internet site to see multiple translations side by side. Look how the phrase: *ezer k'negdo* (Gen 2:18) is translated:

NIV The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

RSV Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

KJV (and **OLD JPS 1917**) And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

DBY And Jehovah Elohim said, It is not good that Man should be alone; I will make him a helpmate, his like.

YLT And Jehovah God saith, 'Not good for the man to be alone, I do make to him an helper – as his counterpart.'

KAPLAN God said, 'It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a compatible helper for him.'

FOX Now YHVH God said, 'It is not good for the human to be alone, I will make him a helper – corresponding to him.'

NEW JPS The LORD God said, “It is not good for man to be alone; I will make a fitting helper for him.”

ANCHOR God Yahweh said, `It is not right for that man should be alone, I will make him an aid fit for him.'

Another strategy to understanding the biblical text is to find other places in the Bible that mention the same word/issue. What information do they add? A biblical concordance can help you find every occurrence of a particular word; now Bibles can be searched on CD or over the Internet.

Eg. the word *melachah* translated as *work* only appears in three contexts: in the creation of the world, the work not allowed on Shabbat and the building of the Mishkan, or Tabernacle. What does that say about the relationship between those three?

COMMENTARIES

In addition to translations and the notes that most modern translations include, (Plaut's *Torah Commentary* and the new

Conservative *Etz Hayyim* have excellent essays and explanatory notes) traditional and contemporary commentators are extremely valuable.

Luckily, many of the classical medieval commentators, (Rashi, Ramban, Ibn Ezra and Sforno) are available in English. Probably the most helpful and important volume available in English that analyzes these commentators is Nechamah Leibowitz's 6 volume *New Studies in the Pentateuch*. However, do not limit yourself to her examples. Harvey Field has also edited a wonderful 3 volume anthology called *A Torah Commentary for our Times*). Collections of *midrashim* and the Talmud exist in English (and on CD ROM) which are searchable and can add interesting spice to your *dvar Torah*.

Note that a commentary may contradict the plain meaning of the text, or what everyone assumes the plain meaning to be. This can often help get the “ball rolling.”

Ask yourself:

- What is the question the commentator is trying to answer? (It is most often not explicitly stated; you have to play a sort of 'Jeopardy'; the commentary is the answer, what is the question?)

- What is the commentator's logic and on what evidence (textual, historical) is the argument based?
- Is there a problem with the commentator's point of view? Here, different commentaries/*midrashim* can be helpful as they often present opposite/different conclusions and refute the earlier opinions. Ramban often starts his commentary (after quoting Rashi) with “and Rashi is wrong because...”
- What lesson is the commentator trying to teach? Does this help your question from Part One?

Now that you've collected enough opinions, ideas and solutions to your problem, it is time to put it together.

PRESENTATION

By this point, you should have some new ideas/questions/answers based on your reading and thinking. You now have to synthesize this material into a coherent unit, and tie the questions and answers from the text into a message that relates directly to you (and your listeners) and your/their life.

Some questions to consider are:

What most interests me about this text?

How do I feel about what this text is about?

How do I make sense of the traditional commentaries on this text?

How does this text relate to me and my world today?

Try to weed your material down to one main issue or topic. Save the extras for the next time.

Present an open-ended “problem” that invites a solution, and suggest different solutions based on your reading and thinking. Don't pick anything too simple or obvious (Are we in favor of justice?) too personal (what was your worst

experience?) or too narrow (What does the Torah have to say about stamp collecting?).

Organize your points into a logical sequence.

Remember that a *dvar Torah* should go somewhere. You aren't expected to give “the definitive answer,” but should give some answer(s). A good *d'var Torah* would not be “the historical background of kashrut” (which might be a fine lecture topic) unless it also asked “what does keeping kosher mean anyways?” or “Is *kashrut* worth it?/What are the pro's and con's of keeping kosher?” (By the same token, a *dvar Torah* should include /build on some content and analysis and not simply be a discussion of feelings).

Decide if it is a formal *dvar Torah* where you present both a problem and answer(s), or a Torah discussion, where you frame the question, give some historical background and then moderate attempts to find answers (see running a Torah Discussion).

Keep focused. Too rambling and diffuse a presentation is difficult to follow and listeners will lose interest. Make a list of points you wish to make.

Try to keep levels separate. As you may jump from the Torah, to the Rabbis to contemporary scholars, make sure people know whose insight is whose. (There is a tradition to name the scholar you are quoting. If you learned something

from your childhood rabbi, you should say, I learned this from Rabbi X when I was a child...).

Be specific: In Exodus the fourth commandment is 'Remember Shabbat' and in Deuteronomy it says 'Observe Shabbat,' is better than 'different versions for the commandment for Shabbat are found in different places.'

Your delivery should walk through the same three stages of your preparation: help your listeners understand the problem; use your research from commentators to explain it fully; and personalize it for you and for them.

Here is a seven stage *outline*:

- Background: put the text in context; a **short** summary of the parasha is often included here.
- Text: read in English and/or Hebrew the relevant text
- Ask your questions
- Explain some commentaries
- Give your input
- Interrelate everything
- Wrap it up

Delivery

- A short joke or personal anecdote is a good warm up- but get down to business fairly soon. Don't spend ten of your fifteen minutes on your introduction.

- Short is better than long. As someone used to say...."In order to be immortal it need not be eternal."
- The 3X rule: *Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, then tell them what you told them.* (In other words: introduce a topic; say what you want about it; summarize.) People with no notes in front of them are relying on your presentation, so a little repetition is necessary in order to keep them from getting lost, but try to make each point sound a little different each time.
- Try to wrap it up so it doesn't just end. Summarize the main point, and remember to wish everyone "Shabbat Shalom" (if appropriate).

RUNNING A TORAH DISCUSSION

If you are giving a *dvar Torah* that includes a discussion, your role will be to not only present a topic, but to moderate a discussion afterwards as well. Although the main points about finding, researching and presenting before a Torah discussion are the same as for any *dvar Torah*, there are a number of additional points that should be kept in mind.

Float your basic idea/problem/topic

Present one idea, not many. (But have other problems or questions in reserve in case the first doesn't catch on). Resist the temptation to present

too much material/raise too many issues which leads to an unfocused discussion.

As explained above, share why you've chosen to focus on this issue, and share some (but not all - see below) of the insights you've collected from commentators etc.

State or rephrase your question, and open the floor

If there is no immediate response, don't panic. People may need a minute or two to think about what you've presented. Try rephrasing the question from another angle. If it is clear that this is not working, you may want to ask another question.

Try to keep the discussion focused

Use your position as discussion leader to pull the comments back to the main point. The more focused the discussion, the more likely people will pay attention. On the other hand, if the discussion goes off in a direction you hadn't anticipated, but people are interested in it and it is lively, go with the flow.

End it

Don't just let the discussion die. At the appropriate time (ie. after twenty minutes, or at

11:30, or whatever) or when it seems the discussion hits a natural break, wrap it up. This is where you can pull out of your sleeve one concluding commentary that you saved. Pull everything together by summarizing some of the main points, point out what the group raised, or what issues remain unresolved, and wish everyone *Shabbat Shalom*.

RESOURCES

Torah study is a lot like playing a musical instrument. There are some basic skills you need to know, its good to have a teacher, and a study partner, but after that, the real secret is Practice! Luckily, our tradition has a built in mechanism for weekly and yearly review. Many find Shabbat a conducive time to open the weekly parashah. Here are some tools to help in that study.

Table of Contents

1. Online Resources
 - a. Google
 - b. Divrei Torah
 - i. Divrei Torah Websites
 - ii. “How to Write a Dvar Torah” Websites
 - c. Divrei Tefillah
 - i. Divrei Tefillah Websites
 - d. Additional Online Resources
 - i. Primary Sources
 - ii. Background Information on Torah and Judaism
2. Publications Useful for Writing a *Dvar Tefillah* (not available online)
3. Selected *Siddurim* and *Sifrei Kodesh*

Online Resources

The Almighty Google (www.google.com)

Divrei Torah

Dvar Torah sites: (Sites with a weekly Dvar Torah as well as an archive of previous Divrei Torah. They provide great leads for ideas and sources.)

- Yeshivat Har Etzion: www.vbm-Torah.org/parsha.htm
- Reconstructionist <http://www.jewishrecon.org/divrei-Torah>
- Orthodox Union: www.ou.org/Torah/archive.htm
- OU parasha summaries:
www.ou.org/Torah/tt/aliyaharchive.htm
- United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism:
www.uscj.org/torah_sparks_weekly5467.html
- Jewish Theological Seminary:
www.jtsa.edu/Conservative_Judaism/JTS_Torah_Commentary.xml
- Bar Ilan University: www.biu.ac.il/JH/Parasha/eng
- Kolel: The Adult Centre for Liberal Jewish Learning:
blog.kolel.org
- Aish HaTorah: www.aish.com/tp

- American Jewish University:
judaism.ajula.edu/Content/InfoUnits.asp?CID=1701
- Torah.org
www.torah.org/learning/parsha/parsha.html
- Shamash: shamash.org/tanach/dvar.shtml
- Torah Online: www.jr.co.il/hotsites/j-Torah.htm
- Divrei Torah from British Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks:
www.chiefrabbi.org/CR_Covenant_Conversation.aspx

‘How to Write a Dvar Torah’ Sites:

- United Synagogue Youth:
www.usy.org/yourusy/reled/dt/how.asp
- Tips from Jewcy.com:
www.jewcy.com/faithhacker/so_you_want_to_write_a_dvar_torah_that_doesnt_suck
- National Federation of Temple Youth:
www.nfty.org/resources/rc/writingdvreitorah

Divrei Tefillah

Dvar Tefillah Websites

- Tifereth Israel Congregation:
www.tifereth-israel.org/DvarTfila/DvarTefila.html

- Webyeshiva:

<http://blog.webyeshiva.org/category/halacha/tefillah>
h (videos on tefillah and halacha)

- Chabad:

www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/862308/jewish/Jewish-Prayer.htm

- Donin, Hayim Halevy, *To Pray as a Jew: A Guide to the Prayer Book and Synagogue Service*

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[4wo&hl=en&ei=T3PKSuvNFM-](http://books.google.com/books?id=OcQu8NRoWFMC&dq=Shemoneh+Esrei+feuer&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=q5E9BpEEYX&sig=cehH3gOoDtj-V-6A5-fuuqv-4wo&hl=en&ei=T3PKSuvNFM-rlAfly7SSAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false)

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[um=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false\)](http://books.google.com/books?id=OcQu8NRoWFMC&dq=Shemoneh+Esrei+feuer&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=q5E9BpEEYX&sig=cehH3gOoDtj-V-6A5-fuuqv-4wo&hl=en&ei=T3PKSuvNFM-rlAfly7SSAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false)

- Hoffman, Lawrence, A., *My People's Prayer Book: Traditional Prayers, Modern Commentaries*

(books.google.com/books?id=knOzNBFD8ROC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Lawrence+Hoffman&ei=9QPKSqgkCpGCNJORgN8D)

- NOTE: This version for Shabbat is the tenth of ten volumes Hoffman has written on the subject – search Google books for “My People’s Prayer Book” for other volumes available online
- Zahavy, Tzvee, *Studies in Jewish Prayer* (www.zahavy.com/studies.html)

Additional Online Resources

Primary sources:

- Mechon-Mamre - JPS 1917 edition of the Tanach: www.mechon-mamre.org
- Soncino Online Talmud: www.come-and-hear.com/talmud
- E-daf Talmud (page by page, in GIF format): www.e-daf.com
- Shulchan Aruch (Jewish law): www.torah.org/advanced/shulchan-aruch
- Snunit: www.snunit.k12.il (a Hebrew portal for educational information, full text of a lot of rabbinic literature)

- Mikranet (primary and secondary sources in Hebrew:
www.mikranet.org.il)

Background information on Torah and Judaism:

- www.myjewishlearning.com
- www.jewfaq.org
- www.jewishencyclopedia.com
- www.chabad.org
- www.askmoses.com
- www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org
- www.halakhah.org

Publications useful for writing a Dvar Tefillah

not available online. Some of these are available at the library.

- Hammer, Reuven, *Entering Jewish Prayer*
- Hammer, Reuven, *Or Hadash, A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom*
- Hoffman, Lawrence A., *The Way Into Jewish Prayer*
- Kirzner, Yitzhak, *The Art of Jewish Prayer*
- Mandelkern, Solomon, ed., *Concordance of the Bible*
- Steinsaltz, Adin, *A Guide to Jewish Prayer*

Selected Siddurim and Sifrei Kodesh

- The Artscroll Siddur
- Siddur Sim Shalom (w/ commentary)
- Koren Siddur (w/ commentary)
- Mikraot Gedolot (Biblical text with numerous commentaries)
- Tehillim Rabbah (Midrashic commentary on the book of Psalms)

Bible Translations

- New JPS Translation of the Torah, Philadelphia, 1985
- Anchor Bible Series: Genesis, E.A. Speiser. Doubleday and Company, New York, 1964.
- The Five Books of Moses. Everett Fox. Schocken Books, New York, 1990.

English Translations online

- Kaplan <http://www.bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp>
- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|------|
| | Old | JPS | 1917 |
| http://www.breslov.com/bible/bible.htm | | | |
- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----------|-------------|
| | Compare | multiple | (Christian) |
| http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/ | | | |

Reference Tools

Concordance

- Learning Torah. Joel Grishaver. UAHC, New York, 1990
- Bible by Joel Rosenberg, in Back to the Sources. Barry Holtz (ed.) Summit Books, New York, 1984.
- Encyclopedia Judaica: articles on Bible, and a variety of other topics.

Midrash

- The Midrash (or Midrash Rabbah). Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon (ed. and tr.). Soncino Press, London, 1977.
- Legends of the Jews. L. Ginzburg
- Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation. Menahem Kasher. American Biblical Encyclopedia Society. New York

Rabbinic Commentaries

- Mikraot G'dolot
- Pentateuch with Rashi's Commentary. Dr. A. M. Silverman (ed.) Jerusalem, 1929
- Ramban Commentary on the Torah. Rabbi Dr. Chavel (tr.) Shilo, New York, 1971
- Sforno Commentary on the Torah. Rabbi R. Pelcovitz (tr.) ArtScroll Mesorah, Brooklyn, 1987

- Ibn Ezra's Commentary on the Pentateuch. H. N. Strickman & A. M. Silver. Menorah Pub. New York, 1988

Modern Commentaries

- Etz Hayyim
- The Torah, A Modern Commentary. W. Gunther Plaut (ed.) UAHC, New York, 1981
- Studies in Genesis (Exodus,...) N. Leibowitz, WZO, Jerusalem, 1976
- A Torah Commentary for our Times. Harvey Fields (ed.) UAHC, New York, 1990
- Understanding Genesis. Nahum Sarna, Schocken Books, New York, 1966
- Exploring Exodus. Nahum Sarna, Schocken Books, New York, 1986
- The JPS Torah Commentary. N. Sarna, Milgrom, Levine, Tigay (ed.) (5 volumes) JPS, 1991



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