

ב"ה - לה' הארץ ומלואה מספרי בתיה רובין



Bassie's Book of Books

Elul 5777 / August 2017

ABOUT A BOOK OF BOOKS

We are a family of mostly girls and for our Bas-Mitzvah projects we each did something that connected with the timing of our birthdays or something that we especially enjoy. It's no secret that I love reading.

We took the cover photo—an archway made of books—on a Sukkot visit to Albany Airport's third floor art gallery a few years ago. The book-arch is a good symbol for the way books can be a doorway to open up new worlds and adventures, a portal to all kinds of information, learning and entertainment, too. It's fitting for an airport, too, you can fly away in a good book, and get lost on a cloud.

My Hebrew name Basya comes from the daughter of Pharaoh who stretched out her arm to rescue baby Moshe from the Nile River—and the rest is history, as they say. Books and reading can be a way to go beyond our own reach, outside of our comfort zone to explore and learn.

I'm named for my great-grandmother Risha's (who passed away this year) grandmother Basha. We don't know much about Basha, but we know that Bubbe Risha loved to read and in her older years eagerly took advantage of opportunities to study that she didn't have as a Jewish girl back then in communist Russia. She needed to hold a magnifying glass to read books but that didn't keep her from reading more and more.

The Gemorah Megillah 31b says that by reading about the Korbanos it is as if we brought the sacrifice even though we no longer have the Temple and can't do it practically. Similarly the Midrash learns from the verse in Hoshea (14:3) about "the offerings of our lips" to be about reading and reciting as a substitute for the actual sacrifice. Books have that power to accomplish things in a kind of way even if you can't actually do them.

So this is a book of books about the Seforim (Torah texts/Judaic books) that are in our home. We browsed our own bookshelves and learned some more about the books. It's only a start, but isn't that how you get into any book?

Bassie Rubin and Rabbi Mendel & Raizy & family

A SIDTUR IS INDEED A BOOK OF BOOKS

A Siddur is the most accessible and comprehensive Jewish book. It's mostly a prayerbook, but there's lots more in a Siddur book-wise than you might realize!

It may be a Siddur but it has plenty of **Chumash** (5 Books of Moses): the story of the Akeida, Korbanos readings, and Az Yashir song at the sea is in the morning prayer, the weekday Torah readings are in back, and more.

Think of how much of **Tehillim** (Psalms) is in your Siddur! So much of the Pesukei D'Zimra (the morning praises) comes from Tehillim, as do the Shir Shel Yom (song of the day). Some Siddurim even have the whole Tehillim printed in back!

There's **Mishna** in a Siddur! You can find Pirkei Avot (which is from the Mishna) after Shabbos Mincha, and there are Mishnayos in the Korbanos section (said before Shacharit and Mincha). Chabad Siddurim also have Mishna printed in the back of a Siddur for a mourner to learn before he says the Rabbanan Kaddish.

There are selections from **Neviyim** (Prophets), too! Some of the prayers come from the prophets in their entirety, others just as a few lines.

Not only does a Siddur have **Bentsching** (grace after meals) but it also has the variations for Chanukah and Purim, for a Bris-Milah or a wedding, it has add-ons and special mentions...

Some pages in a Siddur are used daily, others only for special occasions, some pages are only used a couple of days a year. A Siddur helps you count the Omer, shake your Lulav, and make an Eruv Tavshilin if Yom Tov falls right before Shabbos the way it does this year. It has a prayer for the moon, and blessings for thunder and lightning. There are parts you can only say with a Minyan or in proximity of a Torah, but most of the Siddur can be said by anyone, anywhere, even alone.

And a Siddur has the actual Davening (prayers) of course!

DAILY LEARNING IN CHABAD

CHITAS (or in modern Hebrew CHITAT) is a word in Chumash Breishis that in Chabad is an acrostic for 3 Books:

1) CHUMASH—each Torah portion is divided into 7 readings, one for each day of the week, along with the classic Rashi commentary

2) TEHILLIM—is divided into 30 days of the month, a few chapters each day complete the entire 150 chapters of Tehillim (Psalms) each month.

3) TANYA—this is the classic book of Chabad Chassidism, written by the Alter Rebbe and divided up into daily readings.

This set of daily learning known as “Chitas” was first established by Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (6th Rebbe of Chabad 1880-1950) continued and encouraged by his successor, the 7th Rebbe, Rebbe Menachem Mendel (1902-1994). In fact, a “Chitas book” is a traditional Bar or Bas-Mitzvah gift in Chabad, sometimes even leather-bound, it is one small handy thick book that has all these 3 books inside it.

RAMBAM (or Maimonides—my school’s namesake). In the 1980’s the Rebbe made a campaign to study the Rambam’s “Mishne Torah”, which is the only comprehensive book of Halacha to detail ALL of the 613 Mitzvos sorted and organized by topic, even those not applicable nowadays (such as Temple laws, and impurities etc). There’s a 1-year cycle of 3 chapters each day, or a 3-year cycle of 1 chapter per day. And then there’s “Sefer HaMitzvos” a 1-year cycle which is a much shorter version, and more accessible for kids.

HAYOM-YOM—is a pocket calendar filled with short tidbits of Chassidic inspiration that the Rebbe compiled from his father-in-law’s writings for the year 1942-1943. So there is a teaching for each day.

MORE OPTIONS FOR DAILY LEARNING

DAF YOMI is a widely spread system of learning 1 double-sided page of Talmud each day to complete the entire Talmud in 7 1/2 years. This was originally instituted by Rabbi Meir Shapiro of Lublin and is now studied all over the world, including Albany NY!

MISHNA YOMI A daily page of Talmud can be a lot for most people, even with the very helpful newly translated Talmuds. Some prefer to learn two Mishnas a day, but keep at it consistently until they complete all Six Orders of the Mishna, in less than six years.

NACH YOMI—There are study schedules to complete all of the Prophets and Writings by studying one chapter per day.

DAY AND NIGHT—Regardless of what specific Torah text or subject we choose to study, there is a Torah commandment to study some Torah every day. In fact there's a Mitzvah to study at least a little bit each morning (daytime) and evening (nighttime).



CHITAS



SEFER HAMITZVOS



HAYOM YOM

SPECIAL OCCASION BOOKS

In contrast to a Siddur which is used daily, or one of the daily study books that might be part of your routine, there are some Jewish books which we only use once or twice a year.

MACHZOR—literally means cycle but refers to special prayerbooks for special occasions. Most of the time a Machzor refers to the prayerbook for the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. True, we do a lot of davening on those 3 days, but it's only those 3 days a year.

HAGGADAH—may have the record of the most different editions of the same Hebrew text, and is done in so many different styles, but it is only used two nights a year at the Seder table, and in Israel only once!

MEGILLAH—is read twice each Purim, but that's only one day a year.

SELICHOT—is a book of extra prayers called supplications that are said leading up to Rosh Hashanah, and also on the Fast-Days.

KINOT—is only used on Tisha B'Av, and may we never need to use it again with the hopeful rebuilding of the Third Beis HaMikdash.

TIKKUN LEIL SHAVUOT—many have the custom to stay up late or all night on Shavuot. There is a custom to read selections from all of Torah, and this is prepared in a special way in the book called "Tikkun" for short.

SEASONAL ALL YEAR

Haggadah is only timely on Pesach, and Pirkei Avot is traditional in the summer months. But not to my Zeide Rubin! He studies both these things all year long, has collected hundreds of commentary books on each and

wrote his own books on them—

"Marbeh L'Saper" on one paragraph of the Haggadah and continues to add and grow his Pirkei Avot commentary gradually being published as booklets.



CLASSIC CHUMASH COMMENTARIES

The **Mikraot Gedolot Chumash** is a set of the 5 Books of Moses printed with a dozen or so classic commentaries ranging from the Targumim dating back 2,000 years, Rashi nearly 1,000 years ago and Kli Yakar of the 17th century and Ohr HaChaim of the 18th century. It is a Chumash designed for in-depth learning, and in my school you start using it a little in middle school but more so in high school. Until then the Chumash you use only has Rashi.

ONKELOS—(35-120) was a nephew of Hadrian who converted to Judaism (there's a famous Mezuzah story about that) and wrote a classic translation of Torah into Aramaic that's printed in nearly every Chumash.

RASHI—(1040-1105) studied in Worms and lived, worked and taught in Troyes, France. He is THE classic commentator on all of Torah, as he wrote on all books of Tanach (the Jewish Bible) and also on all the tractates of the Talmud. All this without a computer, not even a ball-point pen, and without a proper library as he lived before the printed book. His style is concise and simple, he conveys much depth in the clearest manner, his goal is to help the beginner student but has much for an advanced student to decipher as well. While Rashi sticks to literal, he draws heavily on Midrash and often glimpses of inspiration as well.

IBN EZRA—(1089-1167) was very into grammar, he examines words and their literal meaning and context. His first name was Avraham, he was a philosopher and poet, mathematician and astronomer and commentator who lived in Spain.

RAMBAN—(1194-1270) Rabbi Moshe Ben Nachman (not to be confused with RambaM, who is Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon) lived most his life in Spain until he moved to Israel. His is a classic commentary that is often similar to Rashi but much more elaborate, he might explain Rashi or disagree with him. He includes more Midrash and Kabbalah in it, too. Ramban argued against the more rational approaches of the Rambam and the Ibn Ezra.

MORE CLASSIC CHUMASH COMMENTARIES

BAAL HATURIM—(1269-1343) Rabbi Yaakov ben Asher (his father was known as the Rosh, printed in back of the Gemorah) grew up in Germany (Ashkenaz) and later moved to Toledo Spain (Sefarad). His masterpiece was the Tur on Halacha (upon which Karo's Shulchan Aruch is based) but on the Chumash his Baal HaTurim work is mostly based on Gematria (numerical value) and acrostics that add connection and layers of meaning to the words and phrases in the Torah text.

CHIZKUNI—(mid-13th century) lived in Northern France and wrote his Chumash commentary (a collection of earlier commentaries as well as his own interpretation) as a tribute to his father who lost his right hand in the sanctification of G-d's name.

SFORNO—(1475?-1550) Obadia Sforno was an Italian Rabbi and doctor who wrote a commentary on the Torah. He has a practical approach.

SIFSEI CHACHOMIM—(first printed in 1680) is an explanatory commentary on Rashi that is printed in condensed form in the Mikraot Gedolos Chumash. It was written by Rabbi Shabse Bass and includes early works like Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrachi (the Rohm).

KELI YAKAR—(1550-1619) Shlomo Efraim Luntschitz was Rabbi of Prague, successor to the famous Maharal. His Chumash commentary can be inspirational or psychological, finding insight and connections and deeper meanings beyond the literal text.

OHR HACHAIM—(1696-1743) Chaim Ibn Attar was born in Morocco and passed away in Jerusalem, after heading a Yeshiva in Livorno Italy along the way. His rich commentary weaves mysticism, Halacha, Talmudic references into a much deeper understanding of the verses of the Torah.

All these commentaries on this page and the page before are found in a Mikraos Gedolos Chumash set.

AND EVEN MORE ON CHUMASH...

ME'AM LOEZ—(1700's) Rabbi Yaakov Culi lived in Constantinople and wrote an encyclopedic yet easy to read commentary, filled with Midrash and many interesting details and interpretations. It was originally written in Ladino to be as accessible as possible for the Jews of his time, later translated into Hebrew by Rabbi Shmuel Yerushalmi, more recently into English by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan (who lived for a short time here in Albany). Rabbi Culi passed away in middle and others helped finish it.

MIDRASH SAYS and the **LITTLE MIDRASH SAYS**—have been recently published to make Midrash accessible, readable and enjoyable by kids and adults alike. They often use these books for Parsha class in the younger grades at my school and other Jewish schools.

PARSHA BOOKS—So many books that can enrich the study of Chumash or the Parsha of the Week. Some have short explanations, others connect the Parsha with stories, some are deep and more complicated. There are sets like Vidibarta Bam, Parsha Parables, or a single-volume Once-Upon-A-Chassid with story matched to verse, or Torah-Studies by Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks with full-length Rebbe sichos for each Parsha.



THE TORAH TIMES—is my grandfather Rabbi Yisroel Rubin's creative Parsha Newspaper where the text comes alive as if it is (and indeed it is) the news of the day, with headlines, news stories, letters to the editor and advertisements all based on the Chumash and Midrash. The Rebbe was very encouraging and supportive of its publication, and sometimes we have classes with him at school to develop it further.

MORAH ROCHEL'S SHEETS—My Bubbe (principal at Maimonides) makes 100's of excellent Chumash worksheets that we use.

CHABAD.ORG has tons of material on the weekly Parsha, from their nutshell page to original texts and translations to inspiring contemporary relevance and insight from the Parsha's messages.

SHUL CHUMASH EDITIONS

STONE CHUMASH—or the “Blue Chumash” published by Artscroll may be the Chumash most used by congregations. It has the clearest print (the Hebrew font-type is “Hadassah” that’s a block sans-serif with just a little bit of serif added). The detailed commentary while pretty informative is not especially rich, deeply meaningful or inspirational.

ARTSCROLL RASHI—This is a 5-volume set, with for each Chumash with a detailed translation and interpretation of Rashi’s commentary. This is great for Chumash class review and homework, its in demand by the children of our family and very helpful for Rashi study. We also have some volumes of the pre-Artscroll old blue Rashi interlinear Chumash around the house, but its more of a translation than a commentary.

GUTNICK CHUMASH—This set (or one-volume) is orange in color, and has much more in-depth commentary, long sichos of the Rebbe in translation, that are meant more for learning than for following the Chumash when Torah is read. The sichos chosen often have detailed Rashi questions and technical detailed learning. But it also has nice tidbits and highlights that are quite interesting and thought-provoking.

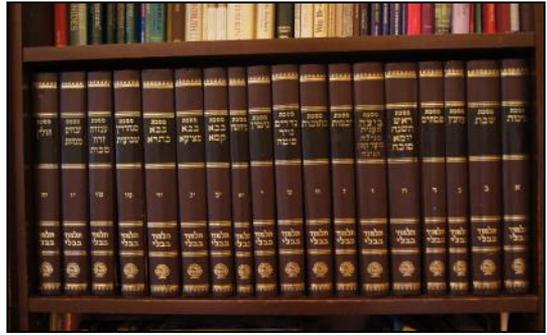
MICHAN EDITION—This blue Chumash has orange accent on the cover, its published by Chabad House Publications of California and Kehot, its commentary is rich and deep, inspiring and thought-provoking but there isn’t as much of it. The translation is interpolated (literal & interpretative within the translation by using bold and regular print) and the pages quite thin, so it’s a little harder on the eyes than the blue Artscroll.

LIVING TORAH—the purple or lavender Chumash by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan. This translation is least literal, he restructures sentences for better readability in translation. Most notable is that unlike Artscroll he actually translates those nouns that Artscroll avoids by transliterating them, and he provides an interesting blend of scientific and Midrashic research in the footnotes.

EXTRA TALL BOOKS

There are two big sets on our bookshelves that are especially tall:

GEMORAH—also called The Talmud. We have a shorter set (with many more



volumes) of the translated Artscroll Talmud upstairs, and the taller set of Talmud downstairs, that's the set that my mother bought my father when they got married. Some Talmud books have a few tractates in one volume (like Rosh Hashanah, Yoma and Sukkah—which are all shorter tractates) but then you have Gemorahs like Bava Basra which is the longest at 176 double-sided Gemorah pages (called Blatt in Yiddish or Daf in Hebrew) plus all the commentaries in the back.

SHULCHAN ARUCH—This is the Code of Jewish Law. We actually have a few types of Shulchan-Aruch books, but this big tall set is the original by Rabbi Yosef Karo (from Spain, Turkey & Israel) with interspersed notes by Rabbi Moshe Isserles (who was from Krakow Poland) both of the early 16th century, and flanking commentaries around their center texts that include the Shach (father of the “Adopted Princess” story), the Taz (short for Turei-Zahav), the Magen-Avraham,

Speaking of Shulchan Aruch, even though these sets/books aren't tall:

More Shulchan Aruch Sets—There are later editions and styles of the Code of Jewish Law. We have the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch, also called Shulchan Aruch HaRav, there's the Mishna Berurah by the Chafetz Chaim, and the beginner-friendly abridged Shulchan Aruch called the Kitzur by Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried (his descendent Heshy Fried lived in the old 320 before we built the new Shabbos House). And there are many modern books that help explain the Halacha or apply it to modern everyday situations.

EXTRA SMALL BOOKS

Some books are specifically printed as a smaller book...

BENTSCHERS—for grace after meals. Most editions also have the Shalom Aleichem, Kiddush and Havdalah and songs to sing at the Shabbos meals. They are printed small enough to hold in the palm of one hand, and so as not to obstruct on the table.

TANYA—There are many larger editions of Tanya, but it is often printed as a pocket-size edition as well, especially those which the Rebbe encouraged to be printed in Jewish communities large and small all around the world. This explains Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev’s exclamation: “Wow! Such a great G-d in such a small book!”

SEPHARDIC SIDURIM—For some reason, at least the Sephardic Siddurim we have at Shabbos House are all printed in a shorter profile, small but thick format.

MINCHA-MAARIV—These afternoon and evening prayers are the shortest prayers of the day and are often said while people are away at work or in school, so they have thin pocket-sized printings of these prayers as a stand-alone Siddur.

TEHILLIM—There can be large format Tehillim’s too, but its often printed Bentscher-size to make this informal prayerbook more accessible.

RAZIEL HAMALACH—There’s a segulah-omen to have this Kabbalistical book in homes to protect from harm (specifically fire). It’s often printed in tiny format, even on a keychain!

CHAYENU/DVAR-MALCHUS—these are full-size but printed on newprint-type paper that can roll up in a pocket or bag to take along with you for learning anywhere you go: subways, waiting-rooms, etc. Chayenu is the English version, Dvar Malchus is a Hebrew one, and they have all the Chabad daily learnings (weekly Chumash and Rashi, Tanya with commentary, daily Rambam study), plus more learning options—all for one week at a time. (There is a special discounted Chayenu subscription for college students).

GEMORAH PAGE COMMENTARIES

The way Talmuds are printed, the Gemorah text is on the inside, and is flanked by two major commentaries on nearly every page:

RASHI—Rashi is the Gemorah commentary that's printed closer to the binding of the book. Rashi's commentary is on all of the Written Torah (all of Tanach) and all of the Oral Torah (all Mishna and Gemorah)! His goal is to provide a basic

explanatory commentary to aid the learner, but hidden within his terse, concise style is incredible depth for the advanced Talmudist. Rashi lived in Troyes, France, and worked as a vintner, while writing all of this commentary. He had three scholarly daughters, whose children led the many Rabbis of the Tosefos School which often argues with Rashi's interpretation.

TOSEFOS—Tosefos is a team of Gemorah commentators led by Rashi's grandsons, also from France. Their commentary is always printed on the outside of the page, away from the binding. While Rashi comments on the entire page of Talmud, Tosefos only comments on select issues, but goes into it in further depth, with questions and answers and comparison to other pages of Talmud. Unlike Rashi's one-man show, Tosefos is a team of scholars, whole academies, there are about half-dozen Tosefos Rabbis who are mentioned by name with some regularity, including Ri, Rabbenyu Tam, Rashbam, R' Yaakov of Orleans...

Other short commentaries on the Talmud page: Notes that reference any biblical sources mentioned in the Talmud by book and chapter, another notes Halachic mentions and tell you where to find it in Rambam and Shulchan Aruch, and the Bach notes typos or different versions of the text.

These are just the commentaries on the page of Talmud itself, but there are some ore in back of the book, and many many more each printed in their own sets of books that can be found in a Talmud library.



THE REBBE'S BOOKS

LEKUTEI SICHOS—collection of the Rebbe's talks (edited by the Rebbe on specific parts of Torah study according to the Torah portions of the year and the holidays. This is the classic set (39 volumes) of the Rebbe's talks with a rich mix of in-depth Torah learning and Jewish life inspiration.



TORAS MENACHEM—this is a large set (60 volumes and still in process of publication) of complete unedited Rebbe's farbrengens published in chronological order and in Hebrew. It captures more of how the Rebbe spoke, it is more of an oral transcript than Lekutei Sichos.

SEFER HASICHOS—these are Shabbos farbrengens edited by the Rebbe from 1987 through 1992 (2 volumes per year).

IGROS KODESH—Also a work in continued progress, this is a growing set of letters the Rebbe wrote to individuals and organizations on a very broad range of topics (life advice, spiritual guidance, Torah learning, answers to questions) edited by the Rebbe's library for publication.

SEFER HAMAAMORIM—these are Chassidic discourses (as opposed to the Rebbe's Sichos or talks) that are unedited, and published by year.

SEFER MAAMORIM MELUKAT—these are select Maamorim (Chassidic discourses) that the Rebbe edited.

Plus: the Rebbe's Haggadah, the HaYom Yom Calendar, and many collections of Rebbe's teachings in different formats and styles.

PREVIOUS CHABAD REBBES' BOOKS

ALTER REBBE (Shneur Zalman 1745-1812) - authored the Tanya (classic work of Chabad Chassidus), Shulchan Aruch HaRav (a unique rewriting of the Code of Jewish Law), Torah Ohr and Lekutei Torah (Chassidic depth on Parsha and holidays). He also composed ten melodies.

MITTELER REBBE (Dov Ber 1773-1827) - wrote many books dedicated to individual Chassidim including: Imrei Bina, Toras Chayim, Derech Chayim, etc. A set of Mitteler Rebbe's Maamorim by year was prepared from manuscript in recent years by my great-uncle R' Alexander Piekarski.

TZEMACH TZEDEK (Menachem Mendel 1789-1866) - wrote Derech Mitzvosecha (a rich book on inner meanings of Mitzvos) while still a teen. The book he is named for "Tzemach Tzedek" is Rabbinic Responsa as well as Talmudic commentary. He also has a wealth of Chassidic teachings in the many volumes of the Ohr HaTorah and Sefer HaLikutim blue sets.

REBBE MAHARASH (Shmuel 1834-1882) - his Chassidic writings are titled "Toras Shmuel" and they are the last of all the Rebbes to go from handwritten manuscript to printed publication.

REBBE RASHAB (Sholom DovBer 1860-1920) - is known for famous Hemsheichim (Maamorim in a lengthy series) that are known by the name of the year including Ranat, Samach-Vov and Ayin-Beis. Of all the Rebbes, his Maamorim are learned the most in Chabad Yeshivas.

FRIEDIKER REBBE (Yosef Yitzchak 1880-1950) - he wrote Maamorim and Letters, both of which are published of over a dozen books each, but may be most famous for the warmth of his Sichos which are filled with nostalgia, rich character and vivid description of a time bygone.



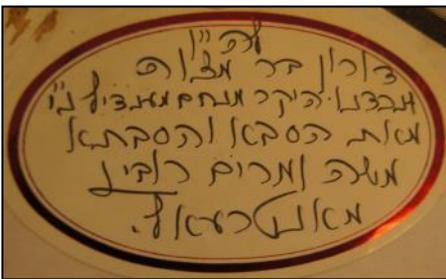
MY GREAT-GRANDFATHERS BOOKS



OUR RAMBAM LE'AM—

We have a few sets of the Rambam's Mishneh Torah. One has commentaries printed all around it. And then we have two Rambam Le'Am sets, which

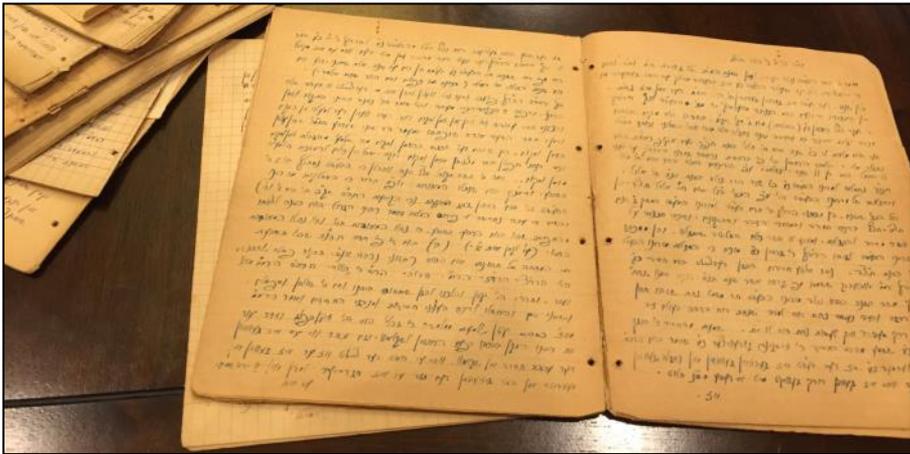
means it is more accessible and user-friendly. It has clear typeset, the Rambam's Hebrew has vowels underneath the letters and it has a clear simple and helpful commentary underneath. The beige Rambam Le'am set belonged to my great-grandfather R' Yechiel Michel Piekarski. He very much enjoyed the Rebbe's establishment of the daily Rambam study, and also enjoyed when the Rebbe started up Kollel Tiferes Zkanim Levi Yitzchak which was a study group of retired elders to learn together. He sometimes learned the Rambam with the study group and sometimes himself. But he used this set so much that it began to lose its covers and fall apart so my mother saw a set on sale and bought the red Rambam Le'am set, too.



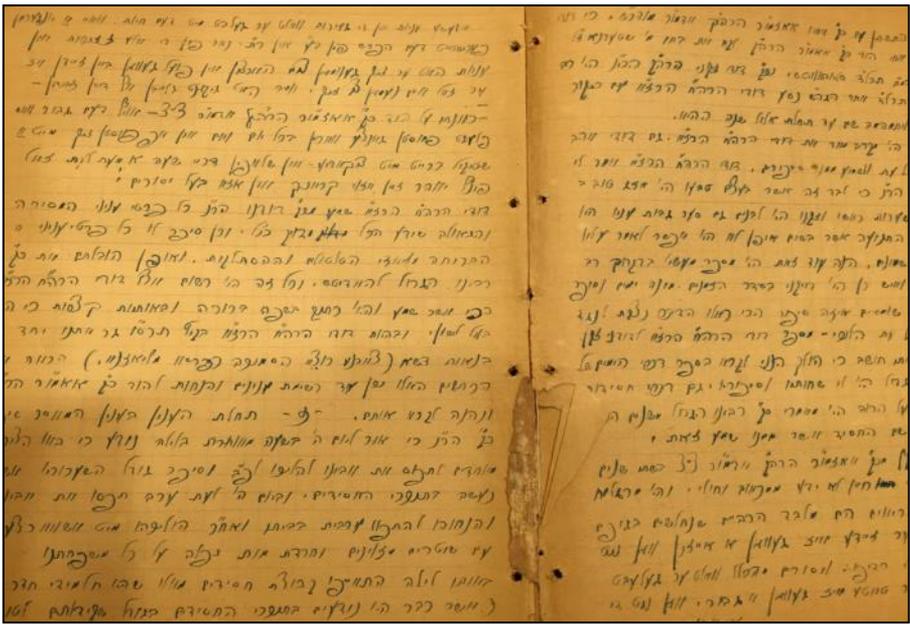
LEKUTEI SICHOS—See the page about the Rebbe's books, this is the classic set of the Rebbe's teachings. When my father was Bar-Mitzvah he got this set (only about 25 of the 39 volumes were then in print) from his grandparents Rabbi Moshe and

Miriam Rubin. What's really special is that Zeide Moshe hand-inscribed a gift sticker inside each and every one of those books!

MY GREAT-GREAT-GRANDFATHERS NOTEBOOK



LEKUTEI DIBURIM – My uncle Shimon has this notebook in his house, but we cherish this “book”, too. My great-great-grandfather, R’ Shmuel Pleshnitzer (Galperin) in Russia didn’t have a copy of the Friediker Rebbe’s Lekutei Dibburim, and it was hard to come by. So when a person came through town with such a book, he sat down and copied it down into notebooks by hand. No copier, no iPhone photos, he did it by hand! He even kept the same abbreviations as the original book.



STORYBOOKS

This may be my favorite, because while learning is important, I really like to read stories. There's no real order to this, and it isn't a comprehensive list, just a big sampling of Jewish stories.

THE STORYTELLER—is a five volume series by Nissan Mindel with lots of classic Jewish short stories, that were taken from old issues of the “Talks and Tales” magazine (no longer in publication).

ZEVIN'S STORIES—this is a collection of Chassidic stories, with connections to Parsha and Holidays, written by a great Torah scholar Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin who also was the editor of the Talmudic Encyclopedia (the “yellow-set” that is an invaluable Talmud research tool but doesn't belong here on the storybook page).

MARCUS LEHMAN—was a 19th century Rabbi in Germany who wrote great works of Jewish historical fiction (some very much based in truth) in an engaging style of a novel. “Five Novelletes” has 5 of his classics.

AVNER GOLD—is a modern writer who does a great job portraying Jewish history (mostly in the Dark Ages) through historical fiction, in a series of more than ten books that follow a family. Speaking of this style, the Cohens of Tzfat by Miriam Stark Zakon (who wrote Jewish books for kids and adults) follows a fictional Cohen family from the times of the Temple to modern day Israel!

MACHANAYIM BOOKS—aka “Stories of Tzadikim” pamphlets with their distinctive blue and yellow covers with an arch, printed in Israel and translated into several languages. These are an old classic set that can be collected as loose pamphlets or also now in sets of books.

MUCHNIK SERIES—Leibel's Lighthouse & other books were early classics.

Here are some more serialized sets of books that you'll find in Jewish kids libraries: **Baker's Dozen, Cheery Bim Band, Regards from Camp, Savta Simcha, Bina Gold, Devorah Doresh Mysteries, GemorahKup, Blitz's Jewish Bedtime Stories, Klapholtz's Tales of the Baal Shem Tov...**

MORE STORYBOOKS

HACHAI PUBLISHING—This prolific publishing house for children has some of the biggest selection of children’s books, ranging from picture books for the youngest children to storybooks for tweens.

SHAAR PRESS—This publishing company translates many popular Israeli religious novels for the English-speaking crowd, and also publishes original English novels with a religious tone or geared for the religious community—all these books are for teens and adults.

ONCE UPON A CHASSID—What makes this one-volume book by Yanki Tauber so special are the connecting captions that create the links between the Chassidic stories and the Torah portion.

KIDS SPEAK—this series is based on true stories of children dealing with situations at home or in the classroom with changed names and details so we can learn from their challenges and experiences.

YOUNG LAMPLIGHTER—is a book series that travels to exotic countries all around the world visiting with young Shluchim and how life is for them in those countries.

BEST OF OLOMEINU—is a collection of stories published in the Olomeinu childrens magazine by Torah Umesorah, stories are both modern and old, the pencil illustrations by Yosef Dershowitz are very rich.

DR SEUSS—Hey, isn’t this a collection of Jewish books? Well, we do have all of Dr. Seuss’ books at home thanks to Harriet ‘04 and Oren S. It could be appropriate to include here by appreciating their depth through the lens of Torah in the spirit of the Baal Shem Tov’s teaching to learn spiritual and life lessons from everything we see and hear, and Chassidus’ vision to fuse and synthesize spiritual and physical, elevating worldly things by revealing their holiness hidden within...

REFERENCE BOOKS

CONCORDANCE—This lists all the Hebrew root-words in all of Tanach along with all the different ways the words are formed and used in the various verses. It's a handy resource to find a word or source text, and it also helps you see different ways the same word is used.

DICTIONARY—or “Milon” in Hebrew. A Hebrew-English dictionary is a useful reference book both at school and at home.

JASTROW—it's actually a person's name, Rabbi Marcus Jastrow of Philadelphia, but its synonymous with a very good Talmud dictionary he wrote that is still in use in Yeshivas everywhere.

ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIS—it's a bold yellow set, an excellent reference for Talmudic issues by topic, well-defined, organized and footnoted. This work is still in progress!

OTZAR AGGADOT—This 3-volume set lists hundreds of Talmudic phrases or quotes about a long list of topics, alphabetically arranged.

TOCHEN UMAFTAYACH—Table of Contents and Index. One of these is on the Rebbe's Lekutei Sichos where you can see at a glance all of the Rebbe's edited talks on a given Parsha with a 2-3 line synopsis. The much larger very thick big red index of Rebbe's talks was compiled by Rabbi Seligson and it also includes the unedited farbrengens of the Rebbe.

FOOTNOTES—They can be an annoying part of a page, or they can be the most helpful part of a book. Some books (like the Rebbe's books) are very well footnoted so they can serve as an excellent reference for further study, to know where else to look.

ACCENTS & FEATURES

These accents and features add character to a book, we're not sure of the official titles of these items, some of which aren't very common, but it is interesting to take note of them:

BOOKMARK RIBBON—You rarely ever find this on secular books, but many Siddurim and Chumashim do have them built (sewn) in. It comes in handy and can be quite useful until it starts to fray and come apart.

COVER ETCHING—It has a 3D effect, builds character to a book, adds a type of leathery feel. Artscroll Chumash has it while its Siddur does not.

ILLUSTRATIONS IN TEXT BOOKS—Not in picture books, but in books that have 99% text... like the maps now and then in pages of Chumash, or the charts in back, or the birds and mammals pictured in Aryeh Kaplan's Chumash, or the rare illustration on a Gemorah page.

YARTZEIT AND BIRTH DATES—My great-grandfather R' Michel Piekarsky would record family dates of yartzeits and birthdays in the inside blank cover pages of his Tehillim and Tanyas.

DEDICATIONS—Sometimes the author dedicates his work to someone, or uses a verse or quote as the opening words.

LEATHER COVERS—This is an extra special touch that people only do for presents, usually its for a Siddur or Tehillim, especially one that Kallahs get for their wedding.

COLORED PAGE EDGES—A lot of big tall Gemorah sets have some coloring on the page edges, that see best when the book is closed. Some Siddurim have gold-color rimmed pages. This is another way to beautify a Sefer and show our love and reverence for it.

REBBE'S "HOUSE FULL OF BOOKS" CAMPAIGN

One of the Rebbe's Ten Mitzvah Campaigns was to encourage people to fill their homes with Jewish books, at the very least a basic library of things like a Siddur and Chumash. In addition to having these texts accessible and available at home, filling the home with books is a way to create that the "fill" of the home should be Jewish books. In addition to learning, they also help set the tone and create atmosphere.

This is a article by my grandfather Rabbi Israel Rubin on this theme:



Are You Shelf Conscious? By Rabbi Israel Rubin

Did you ever realize how often the shelf is a reflection of the self? Unfortunately, some people leave their shelf empty, or full of nonsense.

Actually, a shelf is for Books, And we mean BOOKS. Not a telephone book. Not fix-it books on how to make your own shelf. Not fiction, novels and other "Bubbeh Mayses" that are not for real.

As People of the Book, we know what the real) classics are - real Jewish books - A Chumash (five books of the Torah), a Siddur (prayerbook), and Tehillim (Psalms written by King David).

Now, let's not get too selfish. These books are great for the whole household. Their mere presence adds to the ambience of the home - ATorah book in the house radiates Yiddishkeit and makes the whole room meaningful. A Chumash, Tehillim and Siddur make a positive statement even before the first word is read or recited.

So do yourself a favour. Don't leave these books lonely and forsaken in the Synagogue or Library - welcome them into your home, and keep their company. It's a great idea, so don't just shelve it. If you don't yet have a Chumash, Siddur and Tehillim at home - go out and get it!

