

Some Books to Introduce Jews to Islam

A Border Passage: From Cairo to America – A Woman's Journey, by Leila Ahmed. In language that vividly evokes the lush summers of Cairo and the stark beauty of the Arabian desert, Leila Ahmed tells a moving tale of her Egyptian childhood. As a young woman in Cairo in the 1940s and '50s, Ahmed witnessed some of the major transformations of this century—the end of British colonialism, the creation of Israel, the rise of Arab nationalism, and the breakdown of Egypt's once multireligious society. Amid the turmoil, she searched to define herself—and to see how the world defined her—as a woman, a Muslim, an Egyptian, and an Arab.

An Introduction to Islam for Jews by Reuven Firestone. Muslim-Jewish relations in the United States, Israel, and Europe are tenuous. Jews and Muslims struggle to understand one another and know little about each other's traditions and beliefs. Firestone explains the remarkable similarities and profound differences between Judaism and Islam, the complex history of Jihad, the legal and religious positions of Jews in the world of Islam, how various expressions of Islam (Sunni, Shi`a, Sufi, Salafi, etc.) regard Jews, the range of Muslim views about Israel, and much more. He addresses these issues and others with candor and integrity, and he writes with language, symbols, and ideas which make sense to Jews.

The Butterfly Mosque by G. Willow Wilson. This is the exquisitely-written memoir of an American woman who moved to Egypt, chose Islam, and became part of an extended Muslim family. She opens up for her readers the experience of entering into Islam, as well as some of the unique beauties she finds there. The book also speaks to the realities of marrying into an Egyptian Muslim family after 9/11, and how that impacts the way she's treated in America.

I Shall Not Hate: A Gaza Doctor's Journey on the Road to Peace and Human Dignity, by Izzeldin Abuelaish. A Harvard-trained Palestinian doctor who was born and raised in the Jabalia refugee camp in the Gaza Strip and "who has devoted his life to medicine and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians" (*New York Times*), Abuelaish has been crossing the lines in the sand that divide Israelis and Palestinians for most of his life. In 2009 his daughters were killed by Israeli soldiers. His response to this tragedy made news and won him humanitarian awards around the world. Instead of seeking revenge or sinking into hatred, Abuelaish called for the people in the region to start talking to each other.

On Being a Muslim: Finding a Religious Path in the World Today, by Farid Esack. This contemplation is an inspiring personal account of a black South African Muslim's experience in modern Western society—a practical guide for relating Islam to everyday life.

The Tent of Abraham: Stories of Hope and Peace for Jews, Christians, and Muslims, by Saadi Shakur Chishti, a Scottish American Sufi, Rabbi Arthur Waskow, an American Jew, and Joan Chittister, a Benedictine sister. This book explores in accessible language the mythic quality and the teachings of reconciliation that are embedded in the Torah, the Qur'an, and the Bible. It also weaves together the wisdoms of the Jewish, Muslim, and Christian traditions into a deeper, more unified whole. *The Tent of Abraham* is the first book to tell the whole story of Abraham as found in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sources and to reenergize it as a basis for peace.

Some Books to Introduce Muslims to Judaism

Climbing Jacob's Ladder: One Man's Journey to Rediscover a Jewish Spiritual Tradition, by Alan Morinis. Jewish by birth, though from a secular family, Alan Morinis explored Hinduism and Buddhism as a young man. But in 1997, in the face of personal crisis, he turned to his Jewish heritage for guidance. In his reading he happened upon a Jewish spiritual tradition called Mus-sar. Gradually he realized that he had stumbled upon an insightful discipline for self-development, complete with meditative, contemplative, and other well-developed transformative practices designed to penetrate the deepest roots of the inner life.

The Jew in the Lotus, by Rodger Kamenetz. The true story of the group of rabbis (across the Jewish religious spectrum) who went to India to meet with the Dalai Lama and teach him how Judaism has survived 2000 years of Diaspora. This book offers a meaningful introduction to the different streams of Judaism while also exploring Jewish interactions and relationships with another religious tradition (Buddhism.) It's also a terrific travelogue of a unique journey.

Jewish With Feeling: A Guide to Meaningful Jewish Practice, by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi. Virtually anyone remotely affiliated with Judaism should read this book, wrote *Publishers Weekly*, which listed *Jewish with Feeling* among its Best Religion Books of the Year. "Without question the best, most readable introduction to Reb Zalman's philosophy of Judaism, it is also the best beginners' guide to Jewish spirituality available today," wrote the *Forward*, "the perfect book for both the spiritual seeker and the curious skeptic."

The Sabbath, by Abraham Joshua Heschel. Elegant, passionate, and filled with the love of God's creation, Abraham Joshua Heschel's "The Sabbath" has been hailed as a classic of Jewish spirituality ever since its original publication--and has been read by thousands of people seeking meaning in modern life. In this brief yet profound meditation on the meaning of the Seventh Day, Heschel introduced the idea of an "architecture of holiness" that appears not in space but in time. Judaism, he argues, is a religion of time: it finds meaning not in space and the material things that fill it but in time and the eternity that imbues it, so that "the Sabbaths are our great cathedrals."

Standing Again at Sinai, by Judith Plaskow. The first-ever book of Jewish feminist theology, this book offers insights into how Jewish women have reread and reclaimed our tradition. Plaskow deftly explores both Torah and theology to reveal the voices of women which have always run through Jewish tradition, and sheds light on why the full participation of women in Jewish life contributes to the wholeness of Jewish tradition and peoplehood.

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