

20 Books Our Guests Want You to Read



I Read This Over Shabbos is a weekly newsletter from Rivka Bennun Kay about Jewish book culture, book recommendations, and modern ideas. Receive this free newsletter every week in your inbox by subscribing [here](#). Questions, comments, or feedback? Email Rivka at Shabbosreads@18forty.org.

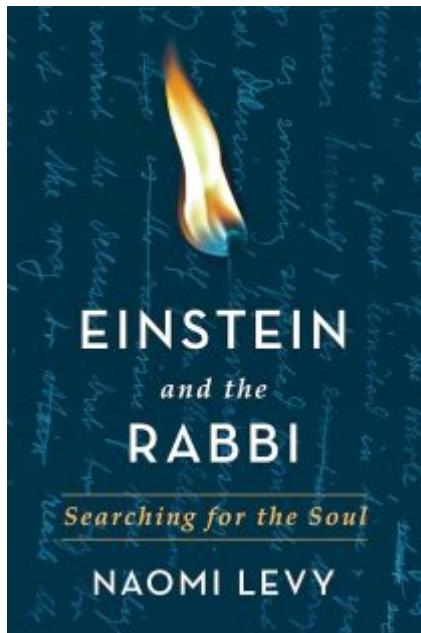
In 2025, we had numerous conversations with exceptional people. We spoke about faith and loss, outreach and divergence, mysticism and teshuva—and even the emerging role of AI. We hosted special episodes on Torah, modernity, and morality. In a year marked by pain and complexity, alongside enduring hope for the Jewish People, 18Forty remained committed to asking honest questions and staying curious.

Our guests this year spanned religious, political, and philosophical perspectives. They brought depth, challenge, and generosity to our conversations—and they also brought the books that shaped their thinking. Below is a selection of our favorite recommendations from the year. We hope you find something here that stays with you. Happy reading!

1. Susan Cain recommended:

***Einstein and the Rabbi* by Naomi Levy**

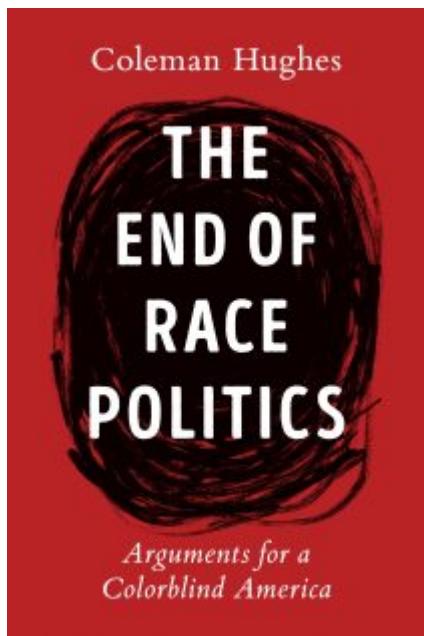
A reflective search for meaning sparked by a letter from Einstein and shaped by questions of faith and the soul.



1. Eitan Hersh recommended:

***The End of Race Politics* by Coleman Hughes**

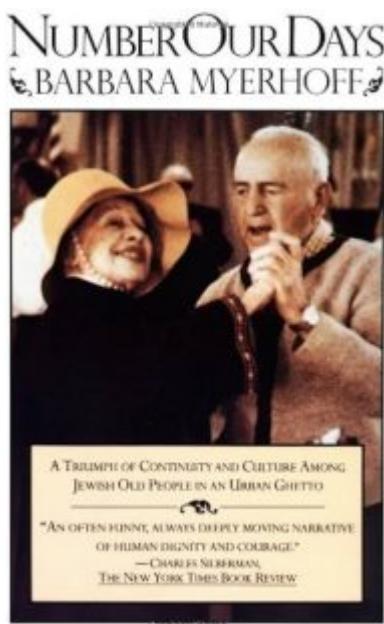
A provocative argument that questions today's race discourse and asks whether a colorblind ideal might better serve equality.



1. Ayala Fader recommended:

***Number Our Days* by Barbara Myerhoff**

An intimate portrait of elderly Jewish immigrants whose rituals and stories sustain meaning, dignity, and community late in life.



1. Judah Dardik recommended:

***Psichologia shel Maala* by Rabbi Yuval Freund (Hebrew)**

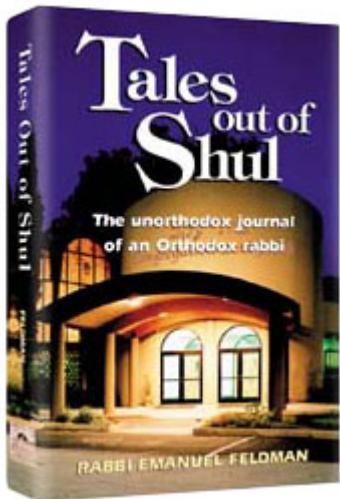
A spiritually grounded approach to psychology that draws on Rav Kook to explore inner life, self-awareness, and personal growth.



1. Ken Brodkin recommended:

***Tales Out of Shul* by Rabbi Emanuel Feldman**

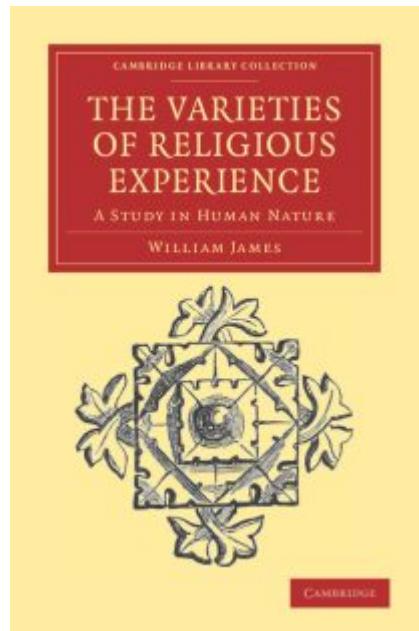
A candid and often humorous collection of reflections on the everyday moments, challenges, and surprises of rabbinic life.



1. Philip Goff recommended:

***The Varieties of Religious Experience* by William James**

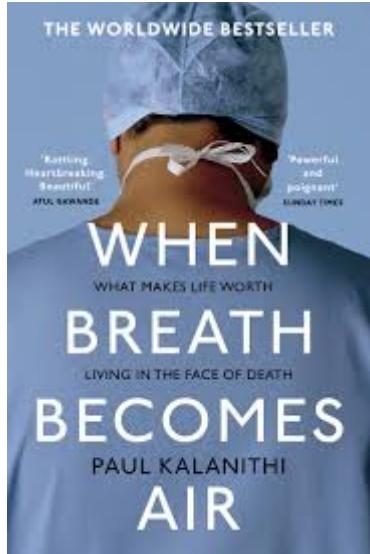
A wide-ranging exploration of how people experience faith, doubt, and transcendence in their inner lives.



1. Beth Popp recommended:

When Breath Becomes Air by Paul Kalanithi

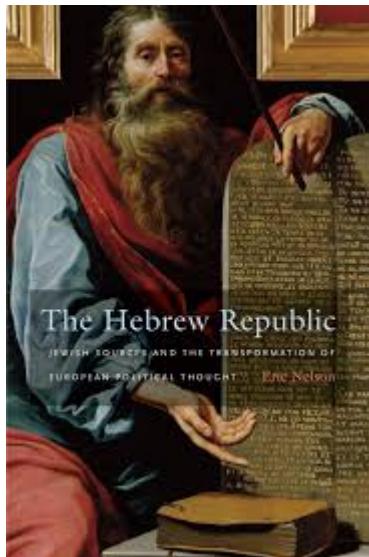
A moving memoir of a young doctor confronting mortality and searching for meaning as his roles abruptly reverse.



1. [Ari Lamm](#) recommended:

The Hebrew Republic by Eric Nelson

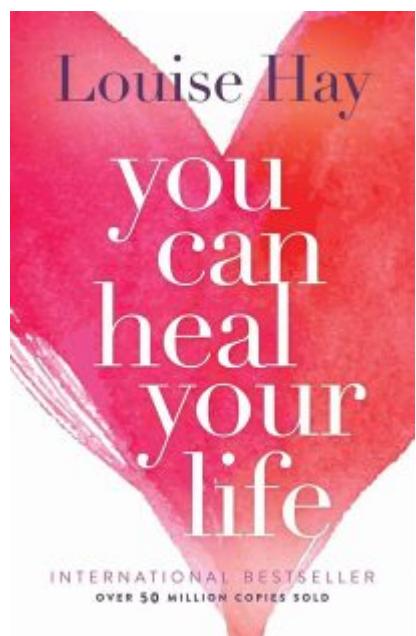
A revealing history of how Christian engagement with Hebrew texts influenced the foundations of modern political thought.



1. Gayle Kirschenbaum recommended:

***You Can Heal Your Life* by Louise Hay**

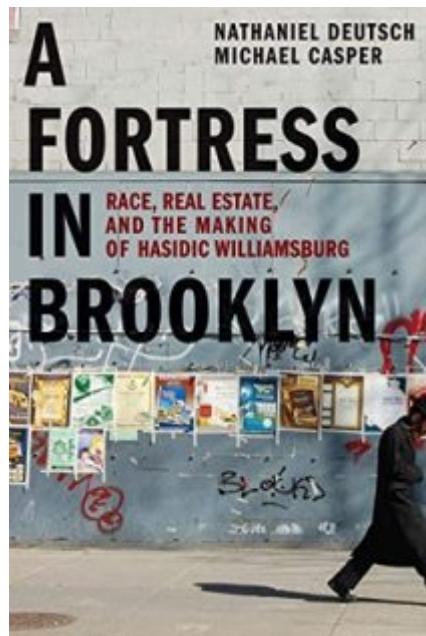
A hopeful invitation to rethink inner narratives and explore the connection between thought, emotion, and healing.



1. Frieda Vizel recommended:

***A Fortress in Brooklyn* by Nathaniel Deutsch and Michael Casper**

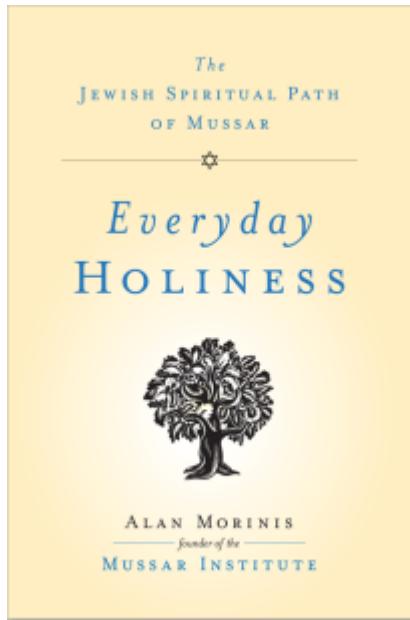
A close look at how the Satmar community in Williamsburg struggled to protect its way of life while navigating conflict, power, and rapid change.



1. Sarah Hurwitz recommended:

***Everyday Holiness* by Alan Morinis**

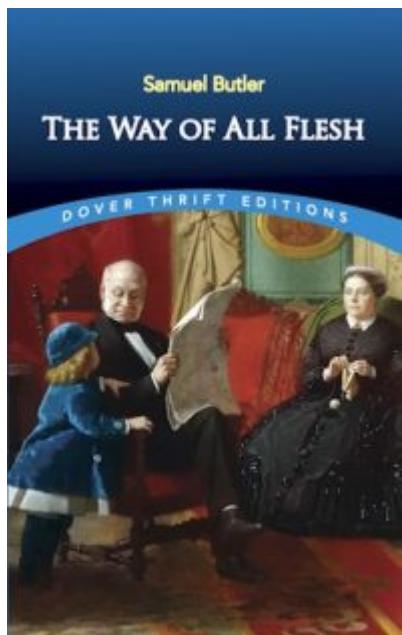
A gentle guide to bringing Jewish ethical practice into daily life through attention to character and small moral choices.



1. Simon Jacobson recommended:

***The Way of All Flesh* by Samuel Butler**

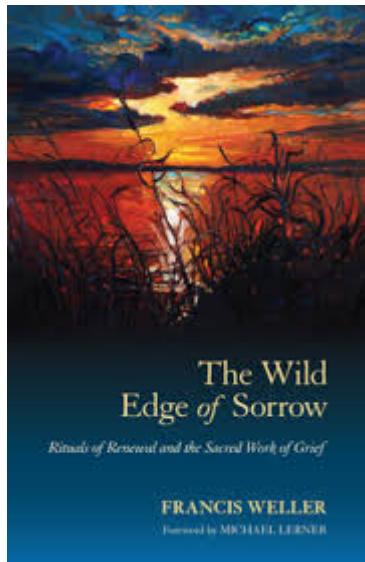
A sharp and personal novel about how family, upbringing, and inheritance quietly shape the course of a life.



1. [Elissa Felder](#) recommended:

***The Wild Edge of Sorrow* by Francis Weller**

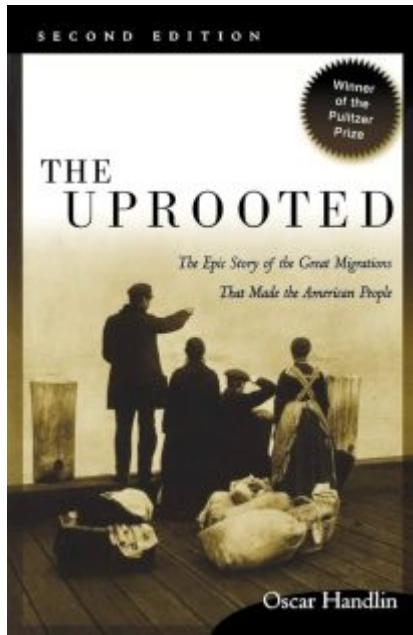
A compassionate exploration of grief that treats sorrow not as something to fix, but as something to listen to.



1. [Haym Soloveitchik](#) recommended:

***The Uprooted* by Oscar Handlin**

A moving account of how migration and displacement have shaped the American story and the lives within it.



1. Aharon Dardik recommended:

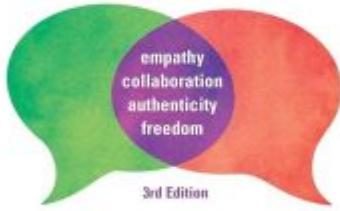
***Nonviolent Communication* by Marshall Rosenberg**

A practical and compassionate guide to speaking honestly, listening deeply, and staying connected even in moments of conflict.

If "violent" means acting in ways that result in hurt or harm, then much of how we communicate could indeed be called "violent" communication.

Nonviolent COMMUNICATION

A Language of Life



Words and the way we think matters.
Find common ground with anyone, anywhere,
at any time, both personally and professionally.

MARSHALL B. ROSENBERG, PhD

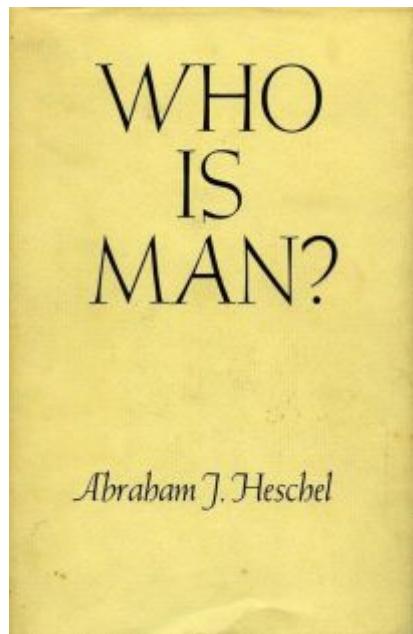
Foreword by Deepak Chopra

Endorsed by Satya Nadella, Arun Gandhi, Tony Robbins,
Marianne Williamson, John Gray, Jack Canfield, Dr. Thomas Gordon, and others

1. Alon Shaley recommended:

Who is Man? by Abraham Joshua Heschel

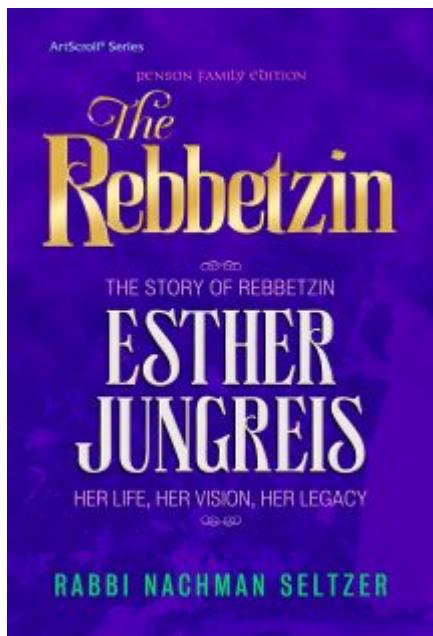
A searching meditation on what it truly means to be human and how misunderstanding ourselves shapes the modern world.



1. Lizzy Savetsky recommended:

The Rebbetzin by Nachman Seltzer

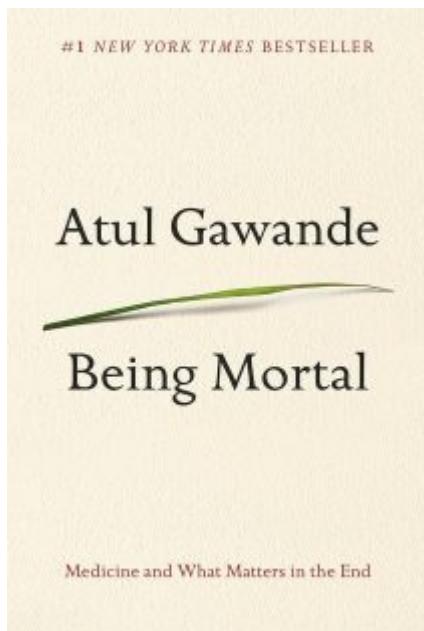
A portrait of Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis that captures her warmth, conviction, and lifelong dedication to Jewish continuity.



1. Shlomo Brody recommended:

***Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande**

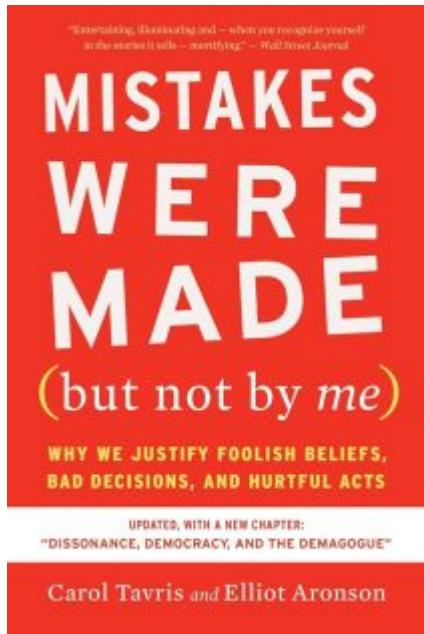
A deeply human examination of how we face aging and death, and how to make choices that honor what matters most.



1. Naomi Dardik recommended:

Mistakes Were Made (But Not By Me) by Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson

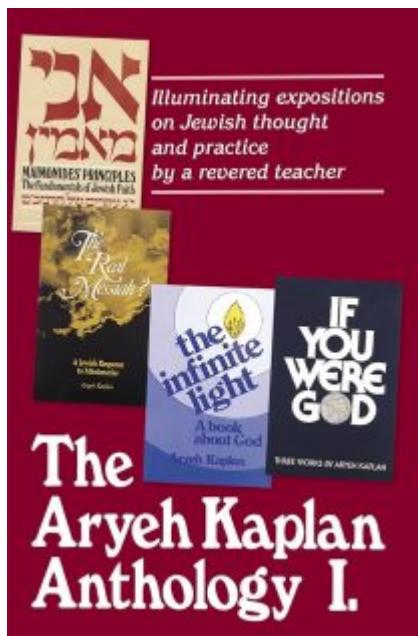
An illuminating look at how we protect our self-image and why acknowledging our mistakes can feel so difficult.



1. Moshe Benovitz recommended:

The Aryeh Kaplan Anthology by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan

A rich gathering of essays that opens a window into Rabbi Kaplan's clear, searching approach to Jewish thought and spirituality.



The Aryeh Kaplan Anthology I.