

One
Book

One
Congregation

PROGRAM GUIDE

FROM THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS TO DEADWOOD, VISIT NEXTBOOK.ORG

nextbook  A GATEWAY TO
JEWISH LITERATURE,
CULTURE & IDEAS

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About Nextbook

Nextbook, a project of Keren Keshet—The Rainbow Foundation, was created to promote Jewish culture, literature, and ideas in new and innovative ways. The focus of our work is the promotion of books that illuminate 3,000 years of Jewish civilization. Nextbook programs include partnerships with public libraries and other organizations to create interesting and accessible public programming; a series of short books in which prominent authors take on notable individuals, issues, or events in Jewish history; and nextbook.org, an arts and letters web magazine featuring a daily cultural news digest, original features, and annotated reading lists. As we seek to rejuvenate the highest tradition of Jewish literary inquiry, we are proud to have been heralded by The New York Times for reviving the vigorous spirit of debate “of an earlier age when Jewish intelligentsia argued the world in coffeehouses or in living rooms.”

Nextbook programs take place in public libraries and other public venues across America. Nextbook Fellows organize author talks, readings, book clubs, and other cultural events in Chicago, Seattle and Washington, D.C., while through a partnership with the American Library Association, Nextbook programs have also reached thousands of readers in libraries from Maine to Alabama to Idaho. Nextbook’s One Book—One Congregation program is our newest national initiative, designed to promote conversation and to stimulate intellectual curiosity within Jewish communities.

We would like to thank the American Library Association, whose partnership has been so valuable to Nextbook. We owe particular gratitude to Mary Davis Fournier and Deb Robertson of the ALA’s Public Programs Office. The ALA’s One Book, One Community Program Guide is a clear, well-thought-out model for any guide to literary programming, and we are grateful to the ALA for the inspiration they have provided us in our own work.

For more information about Nextbook and all of its programs, please visit our website, www.nextbook.org.

Introduction

This Guide has been designed as a resource for clergy, educators and lay leaders who are introducing the One Book—One Congregation program into their communities. We want to help you make this program as rich and as fulfilling a literary experience as possible for every member of your congregation, so we have created this Guide to support your efforts. The Guide is not an exhaustive how-to manual, but rather an outline and a sourcebook of information for moving a One Book—One Congregation program forward.

One Book—One Congregation is centered on the Nextbook Jewish Encounters Book Series. This publishing endeavor, edited by acclaimed writer Jonathan Rosen, was conceived as an opportunity to encourage conversation and Jewish literary inquiry. These books have been written and edited precisely with the conversation that follows a reading in mind. We want to help you and your congregants make the most of that experience, and we hope that our materials will help you do just that.

Every community is different, with its own interests and personalities. The ideas in this Guide can help you plan the best program for your own needs. We hope that each of you, in every community and every congregation, will make the Nextbook books your own, and bring life to the words and ideas in every volume you read.

Nextbook's programs rely on intellectually curious readers like you and those in your congregation. We are grateful for feedback about your experience with the One Book—One Congregation program, and we look forward to hearing back from you as you generate new ideas surrounding these books. We invite you to take full advantage of the materials and information Nextbook makes available to you and your reading community.

What is One Book –One Congregation?

Nextbook's One Book—One Congregation program helps build community within your congregation. Imagine if everyone in your congregation was reading a book—the same book, at the same time—that sparked discussion and inquiry into some of the bedrock themes of Judaism. As a Rabbi or Temple Educator, you can engage your congregants in small-group and community-wide discussions around Nextbook's Jewish Encounters book series, leading them through this shared Jewish literary experience.

Community-wide reading programs have had great success throughout the country. One Book—One Congregation was inspired by the One Book, One City idea, which took off in 1998. With that program, the Washington Center for the Book planted the seed for communities to embrace civic unity through literature, and inspired myriad community-wide reads, which have brought untold numbers of readers onto the same page. Today, Austin's public library hosts "The Mayor's Book Club"; in Seattle, there is a program called "If All of Seattle Read the Same Book." In all cases, the idea is the same: "...the city that opens the same book, closes it in greater harmony."¹

Like the One Book, One City model, One Book—One Congregation is more than a book club. One Book can reach an entire congregation—even those who rarely enter the sanctuary. And One Book reaches deeper than the written word; the Jewish Encounters series is a gateway for

"I remember that in my synagogue the rabbi and temple educator encouraged everyone to read the same book during the week spanning the high holidays. This experience provided an opportunity for study, reflection and sense of belonging to a spiritual community."

JULIE SANDORF, NEXTBOOK DIRECTOR

intellectually curious readers to delve into an understanding of Judaism and Jewish spirituality. It is very exciting to think about everyone in your congregation reading Maimonides, talking to one another about the relevance of the Rambam's practice of medical ethics, the relationship between health and spiritual life, or even the position of the Jew in medieval Muslim society. Or wondering what King David, who lived 3,000 years ago, has to say to us today about nationhood, love, violence, and G-d. We hope that by bringing these books and ideals to Jewish readers, we can help congregations strengthen and build Jewish community.

We have designed the One Book—One Congregation Program Guide as a reflection of the Jewish Encounters books, and together they form a program opportunity perfectly suited to congregations. Like every book, every reader and every reading group has a different personality. The One Book—One Congregation program is replicable across communities, but it is, at its best, flexible. The best program reflects the community that it engages; we at Nextbook feel strongly that the most effective and fulfilling ideas and use of these books will come from you. We hope that our materials can help you bring life to the pages of our books.

¹ Mary McGrory, *The Washington Post*, March 17, 2002

Jewish Encounters Book Series

It can be difficult to choose and to recommend a book to your congregation from the vast number of titles available. In fact, we know that book selection can be one of the hardest and most anxiety-producing aspects of a community-wide reading project. The Jewish Encounters series was designed precisely with interactive discussion in mind.

Inspired by the enormous hunger for books on Jewish subjects written in a lively, intelligent, and popular manner, Jewish Encounters brings together writers

of the first rank with people, ideas and events from the Jewish past. The books pair a modern-day philosopher, Rebecca Goldstein, with Baruch Spinoza; the Poet Laureate, Robert Pinsky, with the Poet King, David; the physician and thinker, Sherwin Nuland, with the physician and thinker, Maimonides. Nextbook authors bring people and ideas alive in short volumes that are written and edited to be accessible to readers with even the most cursory knowledge of Jewish history and custom. The series, under the general editorship of Jonathan Rosen, is a collaboration between Nextbook, devoted

"For me the real thrill of editing the series is matching up a contemporary writer with a person or subject from the Jewish past and watching the sparks fly. It should be a journey for the writer as well as for the reader, which I think is key to the accessibility and drama of the books."

JONATHAN ROSEN, EDITOR, JEWISH ENCOUNTERS SERIES

to the promotion of Jewish literature, culture, and ideas, and Schocken, with its storied backlist of Jewish classics.

Jewish Encounters includes biographies of major figures from Moses to Emma Lazarus to Marc Chagall. It also examines subjects ranging from Jews and power to messianism. Idiosyncratic and ambitious, these books explore ideas and themes that have been integral to Jewish life and culture through the ages, and that in many cases lie at the heart of not only American society but Western civilization itself. Our aim is to create books that are at once edifying, entertaining, and wonderfully illuminating.

And we continue to make it easy for you:

- > Nextbook makes these books available at a discounted rate of 40% off retail price, and provides free shipping.
- > Every three to four months, a new book will be published and made available to you and your congregation.
- > You can choose from any of the published books at any time (with a twenty-book minimum for each title). Your congregation may choose to read two books each year: a Fall book and a Spring book, or one book every quarter, or even more.
- > We can fulfill orders of hundreds of books at a time, for an entire congregation, after receiving an order and full payment.
- > Extra order forms are included in this Guide, or you can call Nextbook at (646) 277-2400.

Jewish Encounters Book Series

CONTINUED

Titles in the series include:

Robert Pinsky on The Life of David*
 Sherwin Nuland on Maimonides*
 Douglas Century on Barney Ross+
 Stephen J. Dubner on Moses
 Masha Gessen on Birobijan
 Jeffrey Goldberg on Judah Maccabee
 Rebecca Goldstein on Baruch Spinoza+
 Hillel Halkin on Yehuda HaLevi
 Ben Katchor on The Dairy Restaurant
 Melvin Konner on The Jewish Body
 Elena Lappin on The Song of Songs
 Seth Lipsky on Abraham Cahan
 Jonathan Mahler on The Lubavitcher Rebbe
 David Mamet on Self-Hatred and Anti-Semitism +
 Daphne Merkin on Gluckel of Hameln
 Michael B. Oren on the Sinking of the Altalena
 Esther Schor on Emma Lazarus +
 Ilan Stavens on the Hebrew Alphabet
 Noga Tarnopolsky on Marshall Meyer
 Leon Wieseltier on Messianism
 Jonathan Wilson on Marc Chagall
 Ruth Wisse on Jews and Power

*In Bookstores Fall, 2005
 +2006 Publication Date

Identifying Your One Book – One Congregation Goals

By setting clear goals for your One Book—One Congregation program before you get started, you will make it easier to articulate both your needs and the impact that this program will have on your community. When you can state your goals clearly, you make it easy for others to understand your vision, to participate, and to lend their support.

To get your planning started, we suggest focusing on two types of goals: Program Goals and Community Goals.

Program Goals

WHAT DO YOU WANT THE ONE BOOK—ONE CONGREGATION PROGRAM TO ACCOMPLISH?

- > Is this an informal way for the rabbi to interact with congregants, outside of the sanctuary, but on Jewish terms? Is it part of an educational series or as part of a year-long educational program?
- > Is your goal to have another forum to teach about Judaism? The Jewish Encounters books can serve as gateways to discussion about religion and religious text.
- > Do you seek to attract new or less active congregants? The books can serve as entry points into congregational life, for the intellectually curious who do not spend much time in the building.
- > Will the books attract membership for your Sisterhood chapter, your Brotherhood, or your Men's Club?
- > Is your goal to bring in unaffiliated members of the larger community, to strengthen bonds with your local or regional Jewish community, or to strengthen your existing community?

Community Goals

WHOM WILL YOUR PROGRAM SERVE?

- > Do you need more than one group to make this work for everyone?

HOW MANY PEOPLE DO YOU EXPECT TO PARTICIPATE?

- > How much and what kind of support do you need to make the program successful?
- > Do you need a budget, for a larger effort?

Identifying Your One Book – One Congregation Goals

CONTINUED

WHAT ARE THE INTERESTS AND NEEDS OF EACH AUDIENCE TARGET GROUP, AND HOW WILL THEY BENEFIT?

- > The Jewish Encounters books match authors and their subjects: for example, Rebecca Goldstein (philosopher and author of *The Mind-Body Problem*) writes on Baruch Spinoza. Do you have a population that may be interested in the medical work of Maimonides? Is there an audience interested in the world of Barney Ross, professional boxer? You can choose books to target a specific segment of your community.
- > Consider the location and timing of your program. Will your target audience be available in the mornings (e.g., after pre-school drop-off time) or in the evenings after work hours?

HOW CAN THIS PROGRAM HELP TO STRENGTHEN YOUR COMMUNITY?

- > Your readers will come together for lively and in-depth conversations on Jewish topics.
- > The books can serve as an entryway for your less active members who are active readers.
- > You can invite havurot who do not otherwise use the shul, minyans who may be less active in the institutional structure, or even other congregations to join your program.
- > The books and accompanying programs are an intellectually stimulating project that appeals to a constituency in your community.

Different Programs for Different Groups

Programming Models

There is no “right” place to house your One Book—One Congregation program, nor is there one programming strategy that can fit all communities. But where and how One Book—One Congregation finds a home in your congregation can affect the design, impact and sustainability of your effort.

While this program is new, there may not be a need to create a new, independent program around it. Perhaps you already have a program that can absorb the Jewish Encounters series; or you may want to experiment with a current program by mixing in One Book—One Congregation programming and creating something new out of that. The Jewish Encounters books are designed to be easily accessible to lay readers, while offering them a literary journey into themes and ideas that may be religiously complex. The books can be read on many levels, so many different programs can emerge from the slim volumes.

Nextbook offers some programming ideas in this Guide, and we expect that many more will come from participating congregations. Different books will lend themselves to different programs, just as different congregations will be better suited to certain types of books and book-related programming.

Educator Initiative

AN EDUCATION INITIATIVE CAN BE CONGREGATION-WIDE, OR IT CAN FOCUS ON SMALL GROUPS. DIFFERENT FORMATS FOR THIS KIND OF INITIATIVE ARE:

- > Reading and study group: Create a reading group led by a rabbi, educator, or lay person with expertise in the topic are who can bring in religious text to help readers connect to Judaism while they connect to each other.
- > The One Book—One Congregation book can be announced at High Holidays services, when the largest number of congregants may be in attendance. The congregation can be encouraged to read the book, or pre-purchased books can be available for the taking. The temple educator can then offer community-wide or small group discussion opportunities, with the rabbi, educator, or with lay experts.
- > As the temple educator, you can ask your rabbi to encourage congregants from the bimah at any time, or in your congregational newsletter, to read one book together. A community-wide program can then be put in place for discussion groups to take place within existing small-groups (Sisterhood, Brotherhood, Men’s Club, Youth Group).

Different Programs for Different Groups

Programming Models CONTINUED

Adult Literacy and Congregational Learning

Some congregations have an adult learning program, and many now have a Director for Congregational Learning. Can the Jewish Encounters books fit into an existing curriculum? You can work with an existing study group, and even bring in a facilitator for your One Book session. Offices of Congregational Learning work congregation-wide on new and innovative programs to promote Jewish learning. They may also house national program initiatives such as Me'ah, Heritage, Melton, Ikkaraim, or other nationally-sponsored programs. Your Congregational Learning Director may also be interested in starting something new. Our materials make it easy for that to happen.

Our Physician's Study Group meets with me throughout the year, studying ancient, medieval and modern Jewish texts which give insight into current medical dilemmas. For a Fall, 2005 event, we invited Dr. Sherwin Nuland to speak to the Congregation as a whole. We hosted him through a whole weekend. He signed books before Shabbat, and then we held a dinner which 350 people attended. He spoke after dinner and then those who wanted to stay and talk more moved into a smaller room to have a question and answer session over tea with Dr. Nuland. We included the cost of the book in the price of the tickets sold for the dinner. We purchased 500 books. Those who were at the dinner found their copy at their place. On the Sunday morning following his visit, I taught a chapter of his book. After the discussion, people purchased copies of the book. What Dr. Sherwin Nuland did for us was to provide one of the most inspirational and best talks we've ever had. It was just the right level for our congregation: very human and very informative."

RABBI HERB YOSKOWITZ AT CONGREGATION ADAT SHALOM

AFFINITY-GROUP PROGRAMMING

The series was designed to match authors with fitting subjects. You can design a reading group to match readers with books and themes. Bring together medical professionals to talk about how the ideas of Maimonides are relevant today. Initiate a discussion series about ethics and leadership, and read about *Jews and Power* and *King David*.

AUTHOR TALK

It is always exciting to have an event around an author, especially when the format allows for questions from the audience. Booking an author requires advance planning. And while Nextbook cannot book even our own authors—only their publicists or designated agents can—we strongly encourage you to pursue an author event in your community. The promise of a large turnout and a book signing after a talk is a good way to attract an author; you might consider getting together with other congregations to guarantee a large turnout. You can also consider partnering with a bookstore or working with another cultural institution that may have experience handling similar events. Partnering can also help defray the author's cost.

Different Programs for Different Groups

Programming Models CONTINUED

LECTURE SERIES

You can combine all of these ideas into a lecture series around a theme—for example, you can invite different speakers to approach the same book or two books from a different perspective in a series of four lectures. Or you may choose to hold two lectures or discussion groups about one book. In this format, you may want to partner with another institution or group in your larger community.

CONGREGANT PARTICIPATION

In place of a sermon on Shabbat morning, congregants who have read the book and/or been part of a program in the synagogue comment from the bimah on their reactions and reflections on the book.

EXISTING BOOK CLUB/CONGREGATION READING PROGRAM

There is a real hunger for reading that many communities are seeking to satisfy. Does your congregation have a book club, or an annual or monthly community read? The Jewish Encounters books and programming materials can fit seamlessly into one of these existing formats. Do you want to start such a program from scratch? We have the materials for you to do it easily.

- > Lay-led Groups: Ask a local university professor or a congregant to lead a discussion about Spinoza; or a poet-in-residence to talk about David the poet.

LIBRARY

Consider inviting your librarian to take leadership in your One Book—One Congregation program. What better place than a library to house a Jewish literary experience?

Partners and Auxiliary Programming Ideas

Your One Book—One Congregation program can involve groups outside of your congregation. You may choose to create a partnership with another institution to move your program forward, especially if you are planning a large event, or to create a “buzz” about the program you are planning. These partnerships can bring in larger numbers of people, they can provide a way of sharing responsibility and costs for a large-scale event, and they can help make your literary experience much richer by bringing in theatre, history or music.

Groups or institutions with whom you may consider talking include:

- > Theatres
- > Talks around town
- > Museums
- > Film festivals
- > Universities
- > Jewish communal institutions (JCC, Federation)
- > Existing regional and national programs
- > Hospitals
- > Galleries
- > Historical societies
- > Professional associations

Tachlis: Getting Down to Brass Tacks

As with any program, there are important logistics and decisions involved in creating a One Book—One Congregation program as well. Timing and publicity are good examples.

Timeline

- > When will your One Book—One Congregation program start? For a Rosh Hashana kick-off, you will need to start planning in the previous summer.
- > Will you do a Fall book and a Spring book? A February launch would need attention in the Fall, which is a busy time. For a Spring launch, you have the winter months to plan.
- > If you plan to work with other institutions or other congregations, give yourselves extra weeks to work out your joint logistics.
- > An author event or a discussion led by someone outside of your congregation could take six months of advance notice to book. Do your research and send out your invitation early.

Publicity

- > Will you market this program outside of your congregation?
- > How will you invite participation from throughout the congregation?
- > How will you advertise? Do you need to organize a committee?

Finding the Right Venues

- > Where will you hold your One Book—One Congregation program? Some ideas that have worked for other readers include: synagogue, coffee house, library, local community institution, art studio, or bookstore.

Ordering the Books

- > This is the easy part. When you are ready, just send in your order form and payment to Nextbook and we will send you books, the Program Guide, Reader's Guides and list of suggested books immediately.

Program Support: What Nextbook Offers You

Nextbook offers a variety of opportunities and materials to support your One Book—One Congregation effort. We offer planning and organizational resources for the leader of your reading event, and support resources for your community of readers.

For the Programmer

THE NEXTBOOK PROGRAM GUIDE

The Nextbook Program Guide was developed by people who are familiar with Jewish institutional and community life, and who have experience with cultural programming and community program planning. The Guide is offered only to those groups who have committed to the One Book—One Congregation program by purchasing books.

The Program Guide is updated periodically. It is accompanied by book-specific programming ideas, which are made available for every title in the series as it is published.

READER'S GUIDES

The Jewish Encounters Reader's Guides are partner texts for every book in the series. No previous experience is necessary when you pick up a Jewish Encounters book; the books are written to be accessible in their language and thought. We have designed short Reader's Guides to make your reading experience richer; to guide the reader through complex ideas, while challenging you to read deeper into the story. The Reader's Guides have been written by writers and readers who are familiar with the topics at hand.

LEADER'S FORUM

A private discussion group for rabbis and educational directors to ask Nextbook and one another about ideas, what worked and what didn't. Upon receiving your order, Nextbook will automatically enroll you as a participant in the Forum.

DISCOUNTED BOOKS, FREE SHIPPING

As a philanthropic effort, Nextbook offers all of the Jewish Encounters Books at a 40% discount with free shipping. We do not profit financially from this program. Questions? Email onebook@nextbook.org

Program Support: What Nextbook Offers You

CONTINUED

For the Reader

NEXTBOOK PODCASTS

Our award-winning webmagazine, Nextbook.org, includes podcasts as well as written material. The podcasts feature interviews, fiction, poetry, comedy, music, and documentaries about Jewish life today.

Podcasting is an easy way to receive audio programming through your computer or portable mp3 player. It's just like radio, only better, since you can listen to recorded segments when and where you want—in the car, on the subway, at the gym. You can pause, rewind, and listen again. And your computer will automatically download new episodes as they appear. You can subscribe and listen to episodes at your computer at home or work. You can also listen to episodes by clicking on "Listen to the Podcast" on the Nextbook.org homepage. The file should then open in your preferred audio player. But only by subscribing can you be sure to hear every new episode as it appears.

Our podcasts are an ideal program supplement for your readers. They include interviews with the authors of many of the Jewish Encounters books, and discussions with some of today's most fascinating writers and thinkers about themes related to your reading experience. Invite your community to listen to Robert Pinsky talk about poetry as they explore his *The Life of David*.

NEXTBOOK.ORG

Nextbook.org offers you the best of what is happening in Jewish arts and letters. Nextbook.org provides annotated booklists, cultural news, program highlights and articles that range from interviews with our own authors, to an interview with Myla Goldberg and a discussion of how her best-selling novel, *Bee Season*, was adapted to the big screen and ended up starring Richard Gere. Click on our Resource Links to discover museums, restaurants, periodicals and Jewish music resources that may fit right in with your Jewish Encounters book. Nextbook.org is an ideal programming tool for congregants, as they join a larger, online community of equally intellectually curious readers and writers.

Program Support: What Nextbook Offers You

CONTINUED

READING LISTS

With Nextbook's reading lists—guided tours of history and culture seen through the many lenses of Jewish experience—readers can discover necessary works of literature and non-fiction. Nextbook.org's lists, drawing on more than 450 available titles, are fully annotated, with links to purchase books on the spot. The lists are organized by theme, author and title. Readers and One Book—One Congregation leaders can match the books they are reading with other titles from an associated category, which we have grouped under the areas of

- > Fiction
- > Religion
- > History
- > Memoir
- > Poetry
- > Philosophy
- > Biography
- > Children's literature

The Nextbook Reader

Some of us prefer to read newsprint rather than to listen to on online podcast. The Nextbook Reader is a great resource for these readers. Published twice a year, the Nextbook Reader is a literary supplement that reprints the best of Nextbook. It includes interviews with authors, literary articles and program excerpts. The Reader is free, and you can hand it to program participants who can read the articles alongside the Jewish Encounters book you have chosen. It is also an ideal promotional tool for your program.



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