

Off The Pulpit

February 20, 2014

5 Books For Everyone To Read

I'm often asked to recommend books. Here are 5 unique and powerful modern works that you may have missed or forgotten. These works will enrich, elevate and educate any Jew, indeed, any human being.

1. Amos Oz — *A Tale of Love and Darkness*. A gripping, bittersweet memoir of growing up in the early days of the state, when the tragedies of family and the dreams of statehood intermingle in remarkable ways.

2. Leon Wieseltier — *Kaddish*. A work of Jewish learning, personal homage and philosophical reflection, all couched in prose that is simultaneously elegant and stringent. It cannot be read quickly and should not be read just once.

3. Elie Wiesel — *Souls on Fire*. Wiesel is so well known for so many things that we should remind ourselves what a brilliant *maggid* he can be: here are the lives of Hasidic masters retold in the lyrical fashion of an awed student who is himself a shrewd and magical teacher.

4. Adin Steinsaltz — *The Thirteen Petalled Rose*. Among the many books on Kabbalah (including the enchanting *9 1/2 Mystics*) here is a gem from a Talmudic savant who lays out the mystical world view authentically and enchantingly.

5. Jonathan Sacks — *To Heal a Fractured World*. The best book of a gifted and wise teacher of tradition, who keeps the larger Jewish mission to the world ever in mind. An inspirational book to put in the hand of someone who wants to know why Judaism matters.