

The Online Jewish Learning Revolution: Part I. *Sefaria & Podcasts*

By Rabbi David M. Glickman

Never before in human history has so much Jewish content been available so easily to so many Jews. It can be both overwhelming and invigorating. In this month's column I am going to try to curate some great Jewish learning that is available on the internet beyond Chabad.org, Aish.com, and MyJewishLearning.com (though all three are great). I will introduce Sefaria and many podcasts.

Next month, I will introduce actual classes that are available online for free and for minimal cost.

Sefaria: The Greatest Jewish Library for Free on Your Computer

In my opinion, [Sefaria](#) is greatest revolution in Jewish publications since Daniel Bomberg mass-published the Talmud on a printing press in the 1520's. Sefaria has access and connections to every significant classical Jewish text. All of it is accessible in Hebrew and the number of texts available in translation grow each week. Every time that a verse from the Hebrew Bible is found in other sources, a list of those sources pop up. When you are studying the Talmud, there is a list of every commentary and later legal work that quotes that section. If you want a tutorial in how to use this, please email me and we will set up a time (and if multiple people respond to this offer, I'll create a class).

An Introduction to Podcasts

For those who haven't entered into the world of podcasts, these are essentially homemade radio shows that can be listened to on your computer, tablet or smartphone. You use an application like Apple Podcasts (which come preinstalled on all iPhones and iPads). Other options are Overcast for iPhone (download from [overcast.fm](#)) or Pocketcasts for either iPhone or Android (download from [pocketcasts.com](#)). Click [here](#) if you are a Spotify customer to learn how to stream podcasts on Spotify.

If you are reading this on paper I recommend you search for the classes and podcasts online with Google. Or, if you read this article on our webpage or digitally, each will be linked.

Podcasts: Jewish Politics and Culture

Self described as "The world's leading Jewish podcast," [Unorthodox](#) produced by the online magazine [Tablet](#) is a blend of culture, religion and politics. The politics tend to skew left of center, and the tone is irreverent and smart. They also tour around America so sometimes the episodes are broadcast from different locations. On iTunes [here](#).

The [Tikvah Fund](#) is a Jewish, Zionist neo-con thinktank that has a very good interview-based podcast called [The Tikvah Podcast](#). On iTunes [here](#). When discussing politics it is almost exclusively moderately right-of-center. Beyond politics, though, they have some of the best interviews with historians, Jewish thinkers and non-fiction authors.

A podcast I just discovered in the past month is [Judaism Unbound](#). This is a bit of Jewish "insider baseball," interviewing many Jewish professionals that work in the Jewish world. However, it is a great insight into innovations in Jewish communal life around the country. It is a collaboration of [The Institute for the Next Jewish](#)

[Future](#) and [The Oshman Family JCC in Palo Alto, California](#). Judaism Unbound is available on iTunes [here](#).

Podcasts: Jewish Textual Learning

For a comfortable conversation about the weekly Torah portion, give a listen to [Parsha in Progress](#). Each week this hosts a conversation between author, [Abigail Pogrebin](#) and Rabbi Dov Linzer. Pogrebin is Reform Jew and noted author. Linzer is the head of the liberal Orthodox, [Yeshivat Chovevei Torah](#). Each episode is under fifteen minutes and is like you are listening in on a coffee-shop conversation about the weekly Torah portion between two very smart friends. Parsha in Progress podcast can be found on iTunes [here](#).

If you to dive into rabbinic commentaries on the Torah portion check out [The Parsha Nut](#). This is a pun, because “parshanut” is the medieval practice of deep commentary on the Torah. This podcast is not making new episodes, but it is one of the best introductions to rabbinic commentaries on the Torah. It is created by Rabbi David Kasher, a rabbi ordained by Chovevei Torah and now teaching at Ikar in Los Angeles. The website has textually rich written source sheets to follow along with and read deeper. The Parsha Nut podcast can be found on iTunes [here](#).

The [Hadar Institute](#) is an egalitarian, post-denominational yeshiva in New York that I have a close relationship with. Rabbi Ethan Tucker is interviewed on the [Responsa Radio Podcast](#) by Rabbi Avi Killip exploring cutting edge topics in Jewish law like: “Can I bow down in a karate class?” and “Can I keep an Amazon Echo active on Shabbat?”. This has a conversational style, but takes a thoughtful deep dive into the meaning undergirding Jewish law. It seeks relevant connection between our ancient wisdom and contemporary life. Responsa Radio Podcast can be found on iTunes [here](#).

In the “V’ahavta,” the first paragraph of the Shema, we say that the Torah is to be *u’vlecht’cha baderech* – with us as we “walk on the way.” With these podcasts, Jewish wisdom can accompany you when you walk on the way, jog on the track, drive in your commute, or sit in an airport. If you check one of these out – please drop me a line at dglickman@bethshalomkc.org so we can talk about it!