

“Judaica Collection”

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My interest and collecting of Judaica books began when I was 13. At my bar Mitzvah I received a few books as gifts on Jewish Religion, Hebrew, and Jewish History. At the time I briefly looked the books over and put them on a bookshelf in my room where they began collecting dust for awhile.

A few years later my grandfather died from complications that he had from a heart attack and stroke that he had a few months earlier. While the family was sitting shiva (Jewish mourning period of one week) I was looking through some of his belongings, and among them was a government issue World War Two Jewish Prayer Book, from when he had served. I decided to keep it as an heirloom from him, and added it to my other Judaica books collecting dust on my bookshelf.

A few more months would pass, and I was taking a Middle East/Asia civilization class in high school. For a final paper I chose the subject of the Jews of Asia, since I wanted to expand my knowledge on my Jewish roots. Unknowingly, I had began my fascination with Judaica with this research paper. During my research on the Jews that inhabited India, I found some pictures of synagogues. One of them gave me a sense of *deja vu*. Now, when my grandfather had was in World War Two, he was not sent to the front. He was sent first to India and then to China as a radio operator. I went to the suitcase in which he had kept his mementos from the War, including the prayer book I kept. In the suitcase are all sorts of stuff, including pictures. One of the pictures that was there was of the synagogue in India that gave me the sense of *deja vu*. Before, my family had not known what some of the pictures were of, and I had been able to identify them. This was very exciting for me, and the picture became a great visual aid in my paper.

After the research paper I purchased, or received more books on Jewish History; and even went to some historical synagogues in Amsterdam, Netherlands, Venice, Italy, and Jerusalem and Masada, Israel. I have also had the chance to visit the historical library at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio. There I was able to view many rare Jewish books, including the Kaifeng Jewish Book of the Dead. It is a book that lists all of the anniversaries of death of the Jewish inhabitants of Kaifeng, China for several hundred years. What is amazing is that the Hebrew in it is written in a Chinese calligraphy style. During my research paper on the Jews of Asia, this book was mentioned by some of the authors of my sources, many not knowing if it still existed.

Today my Judaica book collection comprises of Jewish religion, art, literature, history, culture, folklore, (auto)biographies, and cooking. I enjoy reading about my family and cultural experiences. It has taught me from where my ancestors came and a sense of cultural identity.