

MINNEAPOLIS CONSERVATIVE SYNAGOGUES

Introduction to Judaism

5783 / 2022-2023

<p>Rabbi Alexander Davis Beth El Synagogue 5225 Barry Street West St. Louis Park, MN 55416 952.873.7300 adavis@bethelsynagogue.org https://www.besyn.org/</p> <p>Sept-Dec 2022</p>	<p>Rabbis Avram Ettedgui and Danny Ettedgui Sharei Chesed Congregation 1712 Hopkins Road Minnetonka, MN 55305-2029 763.545.8800 avrame@aol.com http://www.shareichesed.org/</p> <p>Dec 2022-Feb 2023</p>	<p>Rabbi Harold Kravitz Adath Jeshurun Congregation 10500 Hillside Lane Minnetonka, MN 55305 952.545.2424 rabbikravitz@adath.net http://www.adathjeshurun.org/</p> <p>Feb-May 2023</p>
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The class will be held on Tuesday evenings, from September 6, 2022 through May 16, 2023, and will meet from 7:30 to 9:00 pm. The class also includes a tour and explanation of the *mikvah*. Each of the above leaders will teach part of the course, and class sessions will be held in person unless health concerns require us to move to Zoom.

As the year progresses, we will offer a course in Hebrew Reading on zoom, which will be taught by Rachel Levitt. **It will meet on Tuesdays from 6:30 to 7:30 pm, beginning Oct 25, 2022 and concluding, March 28, 2023. The fee for the Hebrew course is \$125 per individual or \$160 per couple; make checks payable to Adath Jeshurun Congregation** (please contact your sponsoring rabbi if there is any concern about the cost of the course). The class will teach phonetic Hebrew reading and home-based prayer skills (e.g., *b'rakhot* [blessings] for foods, *Shabbat* home rituals, reciting the *Sh'ma*, etc.), plus some frequently used modern Hebrew terms.

Every class participant is expected to have a sponsoring rabbi with whom they will meet initially. In addition to the class, participants who are interested in conversion to Judaism will meet with their sponsoring rabbi during the course of the year. The number of meetings and the final requirements for conversion will be determined by each sponsoring rabbi.

The success of this class depends upon honest communication, an exploration of Judaism shared by students and teachers. It is crucial that each member of the class feels free to express himself/herself frankly and honestly. At times, people's questions and comments may be addressed in class. At other times, it will be more appropriate to discuss individual concerns in private meetings with one's sponsoring rabbi. It is our hope that people will keep their sponsoring rabbi informed of their progress and will discuss with him any decisions regarding conversion or marriage.

Class Requirements:

- Regular attendance until the conclusion of the class in May 2023; Jewish partners of those considering conversion, are expected to attend as well.
- Completion of reading assignments for each class.
- Contribution of \$50 per individual or \$75 per couple for administrative costs. (This can be waived upon consultation with the sponsoring rabbi.) **Checks should be made out to the “Beit Din Masorti of Minnesota.”** There is a separate charge for the Hebrew Reading class (see above).
- Men are asked, and women are welcome, to wear a *kippah* in class.

Recommended Experiences Outside of Class:

- Series of Jewish experiences (e.g., Passover *seder*, *Shabbat* dinners, *Chanukkah* candles and rituals, visiting a *sukkah*, hearing the *M’gillah* on *Purim*, etc).
- Development of a pattern of personal and communal Jewish observance and pursuit of a Jewish spiritual life.
- Regular attendance at synagogue services throughout the Twin Cities.
- Experience *Shabbat* and Holidays at synagogues (Let us know if you would like to be hosted or obtain tickets for High Holidays services, if needed).
- Keep a journal of your Jewish experiences and feelings this year.
- Create a glossary of Jewish terms.

Requirements for Those Who Choose to Convert to Judaism:

- Accept the basic beliefs and principles of Judaism.
- *Kabbalat ‘ol ha-mitzvot* (acceptance of the yoke of the commandments): demonstrate an integration of Jewish knowledge and practice (including, but not limited to, observance of *Shabbat* and *kashrut*).
- Be able to read Hebrew in original text.
- Integrate into a synagogue of your liking and the general Jewish community.
- Renounce previous religious commitment and set boundaries regarding non-Jewish religious celebrations.

Final Ritual Steps for Conversion to Judaism:

- Meet with *beit din* (rabbinical court) convened by sponsoring rabbi.
- *T’vilah* (ritual immersion) in a *mikvah*.
- *B’rit milah* (ritual circumcision) or *hatafaat dam b’rit* (drawing a drop of blood) for men.

Readings for Introduction to Judaism:

- Bradley Artson, *It's a Mitzvah: Step-by-Step to Jewish Living*
- Elliott Dorff, *Conservative Judaism: Our Ancestors to Our Descendants*
- Samuel H. Dresner, *Keeping Kosher: A Diet for the Soul*
- Neil Gillman, *The Way into Encountering God in Judaism*
- Lawrence Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer*
- Martin Cohen, *The Observant Life*
- Michael Strassfeld, *A Book of Life*
- Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy*
- Ron Wolfson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Comfort*
- Raymond P. Scheindlin, *A Short History of the Jewish People*
- Milton Steinberg, *Basic Judaism*
- *Elie Spitz, Does the Soul Survive?*

Requirements for Those Taking Introduction to Hebrew:

- Paul Michael Yedwab, *Learn Hebrew today: Alef-Bet for Adults*

Recommended Prayer Books, Torah Texts:

- *Siddur Sim Shalom* or *Siddur Lev Shalem* (Conservative prayer books)
- Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer*
- Reuven Hammer, *Ohr Hadash: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom*
- JPS, *The Jewish Study Bible*
- *Etz Hayim* (The Torah with a Conservative commentary)
- *Mahzor Lev Shalom* (Conservative High Holy Days prayer book)
- Rabbinical Assembly, *Passover Haggadah: The Feast of Freedom*

Other Recommended Books:

- Caro Cook, Bradley and Diana Phillips, *Choosing Judaism: 36 Stories*
- Anita Diamant, *The New Jewish Wedding Book*
- Arnie Eisen, *Conservative Judaism Today and Tomorrow*
- Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*
- Larry Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book*
- Harold Kushner, *To Life and When Bad Things Happen to Good People*
- Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Wisdom*
- Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Values*
- Joseph Teulushkin *Jewish Humor*

Most of these books are available in synagogue libraries, some local libraries and online. You are most welcome to make use of our synagogue libraries to borrow books.

Recommended Websites

- An excellent website for more information about Judaism is <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/>
- The portal of the Conservative/Masorti Movement <https://exploringjudaism.org/>

- The website of the Conservative Movement's synagogue organization United Synagogue of Conservative Judasim <http://www.uscj.org/>
- The Rabbinical Assembly- the international organization of Conservative/Masorti rabbis <http://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/>
- The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, the intellectual center of the Conservative movement <http://www.jtsa.edu>

Class Sessions (Tuesday evening 7:30-9 pm):

Classes at Beth El with Alexander Davis

All Faculty	Sept 6, 2022	Introductory Session: Personal Introduction, Course Description & Expectations.
Davis	Sept 13	Introduction to Synagogue
Davis	Sept 20	High Holy Days and Sukkot Reading: Strassfeld, <i>A Book of Life</i> , p. 260-283
Rachel Levitt	Oct 25	Hebrew Starts
Davis	Oct 25	Shabbat 1 Reading: Strassfeld, <i>A Book of Life</i> , p. 103-138 * Introduction to Hebrew begins
Davis	Nov 1	Shabbat 2 Reading: Cohen, <i>The Observant Life</i> p. 98-102, 122-136
Davis	Nov 8	<i>T'filah</i> - The Art of Jewish Prayer 1 Reading: Hoffman, <i>The Way into Jewish Prayer</i> Ch. 1, Ch. 2, p. 58-67, Ch. 5, p.135-151
Davis	Nov 15	<i>Tefilah</i> - The Art of Jewish Prayer 2 Reading: Telushkin, <i>Jewish Literacy</i> part 15
Davis	Nov 18	<i>Shabbat Dinner at Rabbi Davis' house</i>
Davis	Nov 29	<i>Kashrut</i> Reading: Artson, <i>It's a Mitzvah</i> , p. 84-95 Strassfeld, <i>A Book of Life</i> p. 66-93
Davis	Dec 6	Tanakh [Bible] Reading: Telushkin, <i>Jewish Literacy</i> p. 3-6, selections of Part I
Davis	Dec 13	Rabbinic Literature: Midrash, Mishnah, Talmud Reading: Telushkin, <i>Jewish Literacy</i> p. 114-161, 536-549

Davis	Dec 20	<i>Chanukkah; the December Dilemma</i> Reading: Strassfeld, <i>A Book of Life</i> p. 284
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Classes at Sharei Chesed with Avraham and Danny Etedgui

	Dec 27 & Jan 3, 2023	Break
Etedgui	Jan 10	Life Cycle 1 – Birth & Beyond Reading: Strassfeld, <i>A Book of Life</i> , p. 304-323
Etedgui	Jan 17	Life Cycle 2 – Bar & Bat Mitzvah Reading: Salkin, <i>Putting God on the Guest List</i> (to be distributed)
Etedgui	Jan 24	Life Cycle 3 - Marriage & Divorce Reading: Strassfeld, <i>A Book of Life</i> p. 373-395
Etedgui	Jan 31	Minor Holidays
Etedgui	Feb 7	Life Cycle 4 (End-of-Life Issues) Reading: Ron Wolfson, <i>A Time to Mourn, A Time to Comfort</i> (to be distributed)
Etedgui	Feb 14	Tour the Mikvah 6-7pm St Paul Mikvah Tour-1955 Montreal, St Paul, MN, 55116 What is involved in Conversion? Strassfeld, <i>A Book of Life</i> , p.324-336, Perkins and Kling <i>Embracing Judaism</i> p.10-22, <i>Emet V'Emunah</i> p. 56-57
Etedgui	Feb 21	Study Purim

Classes at Adath Jeshurun Congregation with Harold Kravitz

Kravitz	Feb 28	Theology 1: Finding God- Sh'ma Reading: Milton Steinberg, <i>Basic Judaism</i> pp. 42-46 (required) Gillman, <i>The Way Into Encountering God</i> , p. 1-16; p. 51-70 optional
Kravitz	March 7	Holiday of Purim
Kravitz	March 14	Theology 2: The Problem of Suffering Reading: Steinberg, <i>Basic Judaism</i> p. 53-58 (required) (Holocaust theology handout)

Kravitz	March 21	Theology 3: Afterlife Reading: Elie Spitz, <i>Does the Soul Survive?</i> Chap 6 p. 49-55
Kravitz	March 28	Study Passover Pesach Reading: Cohen, <i>The Observant Life</i> p. 202-220 Strassfeld, <i>A Book of Life</i> p. 231-252
Levitt	March 28	Hebrew Reading Class Ends
Kravitz	April 4	No Class
		Holiday of Passover Eve April 5-April 13 Sederim (Contact rabbis to be hosted by a family) Passover Observed Confirm with sponsoring rabbi that you have a seder to attend.
Kravitz	April 18, 7-8:30	Yom HaShoah Community Commemoration (Please plan to stay after the service until about 8:45 to debrief) Location TBD
Kravitz	April 25	Holocaust Reading: Scheindlin, <i>A Short History</i> p.199-215 (to be distributed)
Kravitz	May 2	Theology 4: Modern Jewish History/ Conservative Judaism Reading: Dorff, <i>Conservative Judaism</i> , pp 9-47 required Scheindlin Modern period Chap 7 & 8 Gillman, <i>WIEG</i> , p. 145-163; p. 127-144 (recommended)
Kravitz	May 9	Israel Reading: Scheindlin, <i>A Short History</i> , p. 216-233 (Yom Haatzamut April 17)
Kravitz	May 16	American Judaism-Perkins, <i>Embracing Judaism</i> , Chap 13 Theology 5: Development of Halakha- Women & LGBTQ Articles to be distributed
Kravitz	May 23	Shavu'ot Reading: Cohen, <i>The Observant Life</i> , p. 224-228; Strassfeld, <i>A Book of Life</i> p. 253-255 The Book of Ruth
		Shavu'ot Observed Eve of May 25-27 Attend Tikkun Leyl Shavuot at a synagogue

