

MINNEAPOLIS CONSERVATIVE SYNAGOGUES

Introduction to Judaism

5769 / 2008-09

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The class will be held on Tuesday evenings, from September 9, 2008, through May 26, 2009, and will meet from 7:30 to 9:00 P.M. The class also includes a *Shabbat* dinner and a tour and explanation of the *mikvah*. Each of the above rabbis will teach one third of the course, and class sessions will be held at each teaching rabbi's synagogue during his portion.

As the year progresses, we will offer a course in Hebrew Reading, which will be taught by Rachel Levitt. It will meet on Tuesdays from 6:30 to 7:30 P.M., starting in November. The fee for the Hebrew course is \$125 per individual or \$160 per couple; please 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 must have a sponsoring rabbi who will meet with him/her 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 2009; Jewish partners are expected to attend.
- Completion of reading assignments for each class.
- Contribution of \$36 per individual or \$50 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, *Hanukkah* 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.
- 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.
- Integrate into the synagogue community 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*—men and women.
- *B’rit milah* [ritual circumcision]—men.

Required texts:

Bradley Artson, *It's a Mitzvah: Step-by-Step to Jewish Living*
Elliott Dorff, *Conservative Judaism: Our Ancestors to Our Descendants*
Nina Beth Cardin, *The Tapestry of Jewish Time*
Neil Gillman, *The Way into Encountering God in Judaism*
Lawrence Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer*
Isaac Klein, *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*
Simcha Kling, *Embracing Judaism*
Harold Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*
Samuel H. Dresner, *Keeping Kosher: A Diet for the Soul*
Rabbinical Assembly, *Passover Haggadah: The Feast of Freedom*
Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy*
Ron Wolfson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Comfort*

Recommended Texts:

Siddur Sim Shalom (Conservative prayerbook)
Reuven Hammer, *Ohr Hadash: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom*
ArtScroll *Siddur* (Orthodox prayerbook)
Jewish Publication Society, *The Tanakh* [Hebrew Bible]
Etz Hayim (The Torah with a Conservative commentary)
The Stone *Chumash* (The Torah with an Orthodox commentary)
Gunther Plaut, *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*
Anita Diamant, *The New Jewish Wedding Book*
Emet Ve-Emunah: Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism
Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: It's Meaning for Modern Man*
and/or
Samuel Dresner, *The Sabbath*
Harold Kushner, *To Life*
Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Wisdom*
and/or
Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Values*

Most of these books are available from the two Jewish bookstores in St. Louis park:

Brochin's Book Store

5808 West 36th Street
St. Louis Park, MN 55416
Phone: 952-926-2011
Fax: 952-926-9824
Website: www.brochins.com

Elijah's Cup

4212 Minnetonka Boulevard
St. Louis Park, MN 55416
Phone 952-926-4433
Fax: 763-374-9285
E-mail: toots140@juno.com

Class Sessions:

Beth El

- Tue., Sept. 9 Introductory session: personal introduction (students and rabbis); course description and expectations
- Tue., Sept. 16 Introduction to synagogue & basic symbols
- Tues. Sept. 23 Overview – High Holydays
Reading: Cardin, *Tapestry*, pp. 55-81
- Tue., Oct. 28 *T'filah* - The Art of Jewish Prayer 1
Reading: Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer*, Ch. 1, Ch. 2, pp. 58-67, Ch. 5, pp. 135-151
- Tue., Nov. 4 *Tefillah* - The Art of Jewish Prayer 2 – Shabbat I
Reading Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy*, pp. 641-671
- Tue., Nov. 11 *Shabbat* 1
Reading: Cardin, *Tapestry*, pp. 35-45
- Tue., Nov. 18 *Shabbat* 2
Reading: Artson, *It's a Mitzvah*, pp. 130-147
- Tue., Nov. 24 *Kashrut* 1
Reading: Dresner, *Keeping Kosher* (all) and/or Artson, *It's a Mitzvah*, pp. 84-95
- Tue., Dec. 2 *Kashrut* 2
- Tue., Dec. 9 *Tanakh* [Bible]
Reading: Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy*, pp. 23-25, 91-96, 101-105
- Tues., Dec. 16 Rabbinic Literature: *Midrash, Mishnah, Talmud*
Reading: Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy*, pp. 131-158

Adath Jeshurun

- Tue., Dec. 23 *Hanukkah*; *Hanukkah* party; the December Dilemma
Reading: Cardin, *Tapestry*, pp. 95-109

Tues., Dec. 30 (NO CLASS)

Tue., Jan. 6 Theology 1 (Finding God)

Reading: Gillman, *The Way Into Encountering God*, pp. 1-16 (required); pp. 51-70 (recommended)

Tue., Jan. 13 Theology 2 (Revelation)

Reading: Gillman, *WIEG*, pp. 145-163 (required); pp. 127-144 (recommended)

Tue., Jan. 20 Theology 3 (Afterlife)

Reading: Neil Gillman, *The Death of Death*; portions to be distributed

Tue., Jan 27 Theology 4 (Holocaust; the Problem of Evil)

Reading: Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, Introduction and Chapter 1 (required); remainder of book (recommended)

Richard Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, Chapter 2 (to be distributed)

Tue., Feb. 3 Minor holidays (erev tu b'shevat)

Reading: Cardin, *Tapestry*, Chapter 2

Tue., Feb. 10 Middle Ages: The Golden Age

Reading: Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy*, pp. 170-171, 175-177, 180-183, 200-204, 214-218

Tue., Feb. 17 Conservative Judaism

Reading: Dorff, *Conservative Judaism*, pp. 9-26, 30-36

Tue., Feb. 24 Judaism & Christianity

Reading: to be distributed

B'nai Emet

Tue., Mar. 3 Women and Judaism

Reading: to be distributed

Tue., Mar. 10 *Purim* (no class)

Tue., Mar. 17 Life Cycle 1 (Birth & Beyond)

Reading: Kling, *Embracing Judaism*, pp. 122-133
Klein, *Guide*, pp. 419-432

- Tue., Mar 24 Life Cycle 2 (*Bar/Bat Mitzvah*; Marriage)
Reading: Klein, *Guide*, pp. 380-418, 450-508, 269-300
- Tue., Mar 31 *Pesah* I
Reading: Klein, *Guide*, pp. 104-106, 109-118, 139-145
Cardin, *Tapestry*, pp. 129-138
Passover *Haggadah*: Feast of Freedom (peruse)
- Tues., Apr. 7 *Pesah* 2
Reading: Materials to be distributed
- Tues., Apr. 21 Yom Hashoach?
- Tue., Apr. 28 Yom Hazikaron/Haatzmaut?
- Tue., May 5 Life Cycle 3 (Marriage; Divorce)
Reading: Klein, *Guide*, pp. 380-418, 450-508, 269-300
- Tue., May 12 Life Cycle 4 (End-of-Life Issues)
Reading: materials to be distributed
- Tue., May 19 Conversion to Judaism
Reading: materials to be distributed
- Tues. May 26 *.Shavu'ot*, Book of Ruth; *Torah Mi-Sinai*
Reading: materials to be distributed