

Intro to Judaism  
 Zoom Spring, 2020  
 Open Temple

**Soul Journey: Zoom/Spring, 2020**  
**An Open Temple and AJRCA Introduction to Judaism**

**Schedule in Brief--Soul Journey:**  
**Introduction to Judaism (5-7 pm PST Sundays)**

**Quick at a Glance Dates/Topics/Instructors:**

Date	Class Agenda/Topic	Instructor(s)
1/26/2020	Introduction and Community / Concepts of Believing, Belonging, Behaving. Text: Ruth and Exodus	Avivah
2/2/2020	Hebrew/Jewish languages / Rabbinic vs. Biblical vs. Modern Hebrew / Learn the aleph bet	Muriel
2/9/2020	Menschlichkeit: How Study and Spiritual Practices Shape a Healthy, Upstanding Life	Avivah
2/16/2020	Lifecycle I: Marriage, Birth, Circumcision, Raising Children	Janet
2/23/2020	Lifecycle II: Bikkur Cholim/Visiting the Sick, Maturity, End of Life, Afterlife	Avivah
3/1/2020	Holy Days I: Wheel of the Jewish Year: Weekdays and Shabbat	Janet
3/8/2020	Holy Days II: The Summer and Fall Holidays	Janet
3/15/2020	Holy Days III: The Winter and Spring Holidays	Janet
3/22/2020	Interfaith/World Religions	Avivah

3/29/2020	Sacred text/Oral and Written	Janet
4/5/2020	Sacred texts li	Janet
4/19/2020	Tefilah / Liturgy / Music	Tamar
4/26/2020	Jewish Law (Halacha )/ Kashrut / Contemporary Jewish Practice	Muriel
5/3/2020	L'Havdil/Distinctions: Gender, "The Other", Denominations, Diversity	Avivah
5/17/2020	Jewish Civilization and History I: Ancient	Tamar
5/24/2020	Jewish Civilization and History II: Enlightenment	Tamar
5/31/2020	Modern Issues: Holocaust, Israel & Palestine	Lori
6/7/2020	Jewish Spirituality / Concepts of God / Jewish Thought	Lori
6/14/2020	Siyum - Judaism in Los Angeles: Where Do We Go From Here?	Muriel/Avivah/Lori

### **Emails of Instructors:**

Rabbi Janet Madden, PhD:

Muriel Dance, PhD:

Rabbi Avivah Erlick:

Rabbi Lisa Bock, PhD:

Tamar Frankiel, PhD:

Rabbi Lori Shapiro:

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## **Learning Outcomes:**

At the end of the program students will be able to:

1. Describe the cycle of the Jewish year and the role and function of holidays and fast days.
2. Explain Jewish traditions around life cycle events from birth to death.
3. Identify central Jewish beliefs, values and sacred texts and how they are unique among world religions.
4. Identify the structure of Jewish prayer within a synagogue community and know some of the central prayers including the Sh'ma.
5. Describe the major events of Jewish history and the role Israel has played throughout history.
6. Describe the resources and institutions available to support Jewish communal life.
7. Explain kashrut and associated customs, values and implications for mindful eating and ecology.
8. Appreciate the value of questions, considering different opinions and their expression in the pluralistic nature of Judaism.

## **Required Books:**

- A Siddur, Chumash and Tanach (do not obtain until after first class)
- Abraham Joshua Heschel's, The Shabbat
- Paul Yedwab and Howard Bogot, Learning Hebrew Today.

## **Other Course Requirements:**

- Keeping a Soul Journal (3-5 entries per week responding to prompts)
- Preparing a final oral presentation based on a topic that is important to you.
- Choosing a mentor from among the teaching staff with whom you will meet by phone or Zoom 2-3 times during course

**Week One (Jan. 26): OPENING CLASS: COMMUNITY  
RESHAPING IDENTITY, COMMUNITY FORMATION and TRANSMISSION OF  
AUTHORITY.**

Instructors: Rabbi Lori Shapiro/Rabbi Avivah Erlick

Location: Zoom

*Enduring Understandings:*

- Learn how spiritual practices influence identity and choice of communities
- Explore the “chain of authority” of traditional Judaism and how authority is interpreted by the different “trees” in the Jewish forest of Biblical, rabbinic, textual and geographic knowledge.
- Identify the differences between the definitions of the Old Testament and New Testament, Chumash, Tanach and Siddur and how different Jewish publications reflect biases from each publishing house.

*Required Reading:*

- Pirkei Avot 2.4, <https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/47323>
- Diagram of Descending Jewish Authority
- “Towards a Greater Judaism,” Mordecai Kaplan: Chapter: Belonging
- Transdenominational publishings of siddurim/chumash/tanach:  
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/how-to-choose-a-siddur/>

*Classroom Activities and Topics:*

- As students enter the classroom, the table is filled with different publications of Bibles and prayer books. They are asked to look through them and choose one.
- Student introductions: names, where they live, three communities that they are currently part of, and which book they chose and why.
- Text Study of Pirkei Avot (an activity of the Jewish community)
- Review of curriculum (enduring understandings, class structure, zoom vs. live classes).
- Blessing Word: Shalom/ Salaam.
- Journals handed out and explained

*Writing Prompt for Soul Journal:*

- What footsteps in your Soul Journey have brought you here to this moment in time? What would you like this journey to bring you?

*For Your Further Learning:*

- Purchase Abraham Joshua Herschel's The Sabbath,
- Choose (one of each): a Chumash/Tanach/Siddur.
- <http://www.becomingjewish.net/>
- MyJewishLearning.org
- BimBam.org
- Sefaria.org

**Week Two (Feb. 2): Hebrew/Jewish languages / Rabbinic vs. Biblical vs. Modern Hebrew / Learn to decode in one session**

Instructor: Muriel Dance

Location: Zoom

*Blessing Words: Ivrit*

*Enduring Understandings:*

- Hebrew is a language of simplicity and power with a long history
- The aleph bet, Hebrew vowels and how to decode a hebrew word

*Required reading:*

- Paul Yedwab and Michael Bogot, Learn Hebrew Today, UAHC Press, pp. 1-20
- Daily repetition of the Aleph Bet Song (see link below)  
<https://www.bimbam.com/?s=hebrew>
- <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/how-to-learn-hebrew/>

*Class Activities and Topics:*

- Short lecture on history of Hebrew
- Sing the aleph bet song
- Review the vowels
- In small groups, practice the brachot.
- Explore the Siddur and regular synagogue attendance as way to learning
- Investigate online resources for daily Hebrew learning

*Writing Prompt for Soul Journal:*

- What have you learned about Hebrew that engages you? Reflect on each of the Hebrew words you have learned thus far. How can you imagine committing to regular study of Hebrew?

*For Further Learning*

- Duolingo, Hebrew--free app
- The First Hebrew Primer: The Adult Beginner's Path to Biblical Hebrew, Third Edition, Ethelyn Simon and Linda Motzkin
- Choose the best method described below for you to learn Hebrew:

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/how-to-learn-hebrew/>

**Week Three (Feb. 9): Menschlichkeit: How Study and Spiritual Practices Shape a Healthy, Upstanding Life**

Instructor: Rabbi Avivah Erlick

Location: Zoom

*Blessing word: Atah*

*Enduring Understanding:*

- Judaism offers a treasure trove of practices and techniques for self-management, spiritual growth and responsible, mature living.

*Required readings:*

- What Is A Mensch? -- On being a mensch – an upstanding member of society – and leading an ethical life.  
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/mentsch/>
- I and Thou: Selected Passages.  
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/i-and-thou-selected-passages/>
- What Is Mussar? -- A history and overview of this virtues-based approach to Jewish ethics.  
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-musar-movement/>

*Class Activities and Topics:*

- Open with a guided meditation
- Teach song: *Al Shloscha Devarim*, and use as a framework for class.

- Three “mini lectures”, possibly with PowerPoint:
  - a. Torah -- lifecycle mitzvot (blessings, kashrut, holidays)
  - b. Avodah -- spiritual practices -- prayer, ritual, leynung, text study, chevruta, Mussar/counseling
    - i. Sample text study from current week’s parsha
  - c. Gemilut chasadim -- being of service -- I/Thou, communal responsibility (tikkun olam, minyan, tzedakah, bikkur cholim)

*Journal Prompt:*

- Explore any religious experience in childhood for you. Now, how do you see ways that religion can contribute to your life for as long as you live?

*For Your Library:*

- Anita Diamant, Living a Jewish Life: Jewish Traditions, Customs, and Values for Today's Families
- Wendy Mogel, The Blessing of a Skinned Knee: Using Timeless Teachings to Raise Self Reliant Children
- Rabbi Evan Moffic, The Happiness Prayer: Ancient Jewish Wisdom for the Best Way to Live Today
- Michael Strassfeld, A Book of Life: Embracing Judaism as a Spiritual Practice

**Week Four (Feb. 16): Lifecycle I -- Marriage, Birth, Circumcision, Raising Children**

Instructor: Rabbi Janet Madden

Location: Zoom

*Blessing Word:* YKVK

*Enduring Understanding:*

- Judaism offers practices and rituals that are especially meaningful and important at different times in our life, and transmit our tradition from generation to generation.

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*Required reading/listening/viewing:*

- Liturgy, Rituals and Customs of Jewish Weddings: The Jewish wedding is rich with ceremony, beginning with the announcement of intent to marry and ending with seven days of celebration.  
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/liturgy-rituals-customs-of-jewish-weddings/>
- Jewish Newborn Ceremonies 101: An overview of ceremonies to welcome baby boys and girls.  
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-newborn-ceremonies-101/>
- Our Favorite Shabbat Songs for Kids.  
<https://www.kveller.com/article/our-favorite-shabbat-songs-for-kids/>
- Blessing the Children: This Friday night practice is taken from the priestly blessing.  
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/blessing-the-children/>

*Classroom Topics and Activities:*

- Open with a reflection on an important event in their life, and rituals (if any) that accompanied that event
- Three “mini lectures”:
  - a. **Kiddushin** - wedding ceremony, *ketubah*, traditional customs, establishing a Jewish home, a *get*
  - b. **Birth & Brit Milah** - *Brit Milah*, names & naming ceremonies, *Pidyon Haben*, folk customs, adoption
  - c. **Raising Children** - parents’ obligation to teach their children, formal & informal Jewish education, concept of lifelong learning, rituals and practices at home

*Writing Prompt for Soul Journal:*

- The Hebrew word for marriage is *kiddushin*, from the root meaning holy, sacred. In what ways can you consider that marriage is sacred?
- What makes a house a Jewish home? What have you learned that resonates with you that you would like to incorporate into your home?
- Today, many baby boys are circumcised in the hospital, and some, not at all. What do you now think of the ritual of *brit milah* and its significance in Jewish life?

*For Further Learning:*

- Anita Diamant, Living a Jewish Life
- Anita Diamant, The New Jewish Wedding and The New Jewish Baby Book
- Nancy Weiner, Beyond Breaking the Glass
- Wendy Mogel, The Blessing of a Skinned Knee
- Danielle Dardashti, Roni Sarig, The Jewish Family Fun Book
- Daniel B. Syme, The Jewish Home: A Guide for Jewish Living
- Chaim Stern, On the Doorposts of Your House

**Week Five (Feb. 23): Lifecycle II -- Bikkur Cholim/Visiting the Sick, Maturity, End of Life, Afterlife**

Instructor - Rabbi Avivah Erlick

Location - Zoom

*Blessing word: Eloheinu*

*Enduring Understandings:*

- Judaism's community service-centered orientation gives our later years meaning, strength and hope.

- Our bodies and souls are gifts from God, who takes them back at the end of our lives.

*Required reading/viewing:*

- How To Visit the Sick, in Judaism:  
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/how-to-visit-the-sick-in-judaism>
- *Jewish Ritual Wishes at End of Life* (a PDF)
- *Jewish Mourning Rituals: Caring for the Body*  
<https://youtu.be/IOAaDj7cEFw>

*Classroom Activities and Topics:*

- a. Bikkur cholim/visiting the sick, shlemut/wholeness, and God as healer, including Chassidic stories
- b. Aging into wisdom and maturity
- c. End of life rituals - kavod hameit/kavod ha-emet (honoring the dead; the greatest obligation)
  - i. Taharah demo with doll
- d. Afterlife - many versions

*Journal Prompt:* Experiment with writing part of your own ethical will. Respond to at least one of these prompts:

1. My Principles of Life
2. My Personal Commandments/Wishes
3. One key failure/struggle/obstacle experience in my life, and how I learned from it or made the best of it
4. Key miracles/blessings/joys of my life
5. Questions that have accompanied me much of my adult life

*For Your Library:*

- Rabbi Harold Kushner, When Bad Things Happen to Good People
- Elana Zaiman, The Forever Letter: Writing What We Believe For Those We Love
- Elie Spitz, Does the Soul Survive?: A Jewish Journey to Belief in Afterlife, Past Lives & Living with Purpose

## **Week Six (March 1): Holy Days I -- Weekdays and Shabbat**

Instructors: Rabbi Janet Madden

Location: Zoom

*Vocabulary Words: Menuchah, L'havdil*

*Enduring Understandings:*

- Judaism has a unique conception of time based in Torah with Shabbat as its destination
- The structure of the Shabbat and the way it relates to the weekly cycle of Torah and Haftorah readings

*Required Readings:*

- Abraham Heschel [The Sabbath](#)
- <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-calendar-solar-and-lunar/>
- <https://www.bimbam.com/judaism-101/shabbat/>

*Classroom Activities and Topics*

- Discussion of Heschel's understanding of Shabbat
- Identifying your birth parsha
- Learning the Shabbat blessings, Havdallah blessings and Hanukkah
- Making a plan for three shabbat experiences

*Writing Prompt for Soul Journal.*

- Ahad Haam famously said "more than than the Jews have kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jews." How does this statement resonate with you? What elements of Shabbat might you want to explore?

*For Your Further Learning:*

- Jill Hammer, [The Jewish Book of Days](#)
- Abigail Pogrebin, [My Year of Living Jewishly](#)
- Sara Hurwitz, [Here All Along: Finding Meaning, Spirituality, and a Deeper Connection to Life--in Judaism \(After Finally Choosing to Look There\)](#)
- Mark Shapiro, [Gates of Shabbat: A Guide to Shabbat Observance](#)
- Judith Shulevitz, [The Sabbath World: Glimpses of a Different Order of Time](#)

- Rosh Hodesh:  
[https://www.kveller.com/more-jews-should-celebrate-the-new-moon-heres-how/?utm\\_source=kveller\\_maropost&utm\\_campaign=kveller&utm\\_medium=email&mpweb=1161-4704-73206](https://www.kveller.com/more-jews-should-celebrate-the-new-moon-heres-how/?utm_source=kveller_maropost&utm_campaign=kveller&utm_medium=email&mpweb=1161-4704-73206)
- Shabbat (short video)<http://wendysshabbat.com/wendys-shabbat>
- The Shabbes Mother (short video)  
<http://www.maale.co.il/en/movie/12904>

**Week Seven (March 8) -- The Calendar Year: Holy Days II: High Holy Days, Festivals, Fasts, and Modern Additions**  
(Please note that this curriculum is two weeks - see Week Eight)

Instructor: Rabbi Janet Madden

Location: Zoom

*Blessing Word: Hag, Haggim, Yom Tov*

*Enduring Understandings:*

- High Holy Days are a unique period of introspection reflection and communal prayer to begin anew spiritually
- Connection to land, temple and history inform all holidays, particularly the pilgrimage festivals
- Since foundation of State of Israel and aftermath of Shoach, several modern holidays have been established that connect the Diaspora to Israel

Required Reading:

- <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/types-of-jewish-holidays/>
- <https://www.bimbam.com/judaism-101/jewish-holidays/>
- <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/holidays-bibliography/>
- <https://www.hebcal.com/hebcal/>

Class Topics and Activities:

- Wheel of Jewish Year
- Types of Holidays: High Holidays/ Pilgrimage Festivals/Non-Torah holidays/Modern Israeli Holidays-- (links to the land of Israel)
- Activity will depend on which holiday we are closest to

*For your Further Learning:*

- Allen Lew, [This is Real and You are Completely Unprepared](#);
- David Dishon and Noam Zion, [A Different Night](#) (Haggadah);
- Michael Strassfeld, [The Jewish Holidays: A Guide and Commentary](#)
- Sukkot film: [Ushpizin](#) (2005)

*Writing Prompt for your Soul Journal:*

- Take a look at a Jewish calendar: What holidays do you have some experience of? What do you notice when you compare a secular to a Jewish calendar? What comes up for you as you consider living in Jewish time?

**Week Eight (March 15): Holy Days III: The Winter and Spring Holidays**  
**(con't from Week Seven - we have included the same curriculum, below):**

Instructor: Rabbi Janet Madden

Location: Zoom

***Blessing Word: Hag, Haggim, Yom Tov***

*Enduring Understandings:*

- High Holy Days are a unique period of introspection reflection and communal prayer to begin anew spiritually
- Connection to land, temple and history inform all holidays, particularly the pilgrimage festivals
- Since foundation of State of Israel and aftermath of Shoach, several modern holidays have been established that connect the Diaspora to Israel

**Required Reading:**

- <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/types-of-jewish-holidays/>
- <https://www.bimbam.com/judaism-101/jewish-holidays/>
- <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/holidays-bibliography/>
- <https://www.hebc.com/hebc/>

### Class Topics and Activities:

- Wheel of Jewish Year
- Types of Holidays: High Holidays/ Pilgrimage Festivals/Non-Torah holidays/Modern Israeli Holidays-- (links to the land of Israel)
- Activity will depend on which holiday we are closest to

### *For your Further Learning:*

- Allen Lew, [This is Real and You are Completely Unprepared](#);
- David Dishon and Noam Zion, [A Different Night](#) (Haggadah);
- Michael Strassfeld, [The Jewish Holidays: A Guide and Commentary](#)
- Sukkot film: [Ushpizin](#) (2005)

### *Writing Prompt for your Soul Journal:*

- Take a look at a Jewish calendar: What holidays do you have some experience of? What do you notice when you compare a secular to a Jewish calendar? What comes up for you as you consider living in Jewish time?

## **Week Nine (March 22): Interfaith/World Religions**

Instructor: Rabbi Avivah Erlick

Location: Zoom

### *Enduring Understanding:*

- All religions are not the same but each can learn from others.
- Judaism is very tolerant of other religions, but also has key beliefs, attitudes, practices that maintain Judaism's distinctiveness.

### *Class Topics and Activities:*

- Open with blessing: *Baruch ata. . .shenatan mechochmato l'vasar v'dam.*
- Lecture/discussion: Four stories of interfaith activity: Catholic, Muslim, Mormon, Buddhist - major obstacles and achievements.

### *Required reading:*

- <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-church-and-the-jews/>

- Steven Windmueller and Mark S. Diamond, “What Jews Can Learn From Mormons.”  
<https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/what-jews-can-learn-from-mormons-insights-from-the-church-of-jesus-christ-of-latter-day-saints/>

*Journal prompt:* Based on what you already know about these religions, what is similar to or different from Judaism?

*For Further Learning:*

- Irving Greenberg, For the Sake of Heaven and Earth

### **Week Ten (March 29): Sacred Texts/ Written and Oral Traditions Part I**

Instructor - Rabbi Janet Madden

Location: Zoom

**Please note: to be continued Week Eleven**

*Blessing Words:* The Blessing for Study of Torah (taught in the classes, above)

*Enduring Understanding:*

- Paired study (called Chevrutha) has been a powerful way to learn and embraced by Jewish students across the ages in order to Jewish texts from Biblical, Rabbinic, Codes and Hasidut.
- The concept of *machlochet*, argument for the sake of Heaven represented in the contrasting styles of Hillel and Shammai, model and affirm the power of questioning and argument.
- Jews have questioned, argued and created stories throughout the different movements in Jewish text from Written to Oral tradition.

*Writing Prompt for Soul Journal:* What impact did the Oral Tradition have on the Written Tradition?

### **Week Eleven (April 5): Sacred Texts/Written and Oral Traditions Part II**

Instructor: Rabbi Janet Madden

Location: Zoom

**Please note: this is a continuation of Week Ten**

*Blessing Words:* The Blessing for Study of Torah (taught in the classes, above)

*Enduring Understanding:*

- Paired study (called Chevrutha) has been a powerful way to learn and embraced by Jewish students across the ages in order to Jewish texts from Biblical, Rabbinic, Codes and Hasidut.
- The concept of *machlochet*, argument for the sake of Heaven represented in the contrasting styles of Hillel and Shammai, model and affirm the power of questioning and argument.
- Jews have questioned, argued and created stories throughout the different movements in Jewish text from Written to Oral tradition.

For Week Eleven Texts: Creation stories in the Torah: Creation 1 and 2, Tower of Babel (language), Noah (Noachide Laws), Abraham (Jewish Monotheism), Exodus 1-18 (Israelites), 1 Samuel 16: King David and the United Kingdom of Israel

*Writing Prompt for Soul Journal:* The Torah and The Oral Tradition are the foundation of Jewish texts. What texts in your life are your founding creation story? For the universe? For yourself?

*On Machlochet:* Who in your life do you disagree with the most? How does that person help you experience new ways of seeing, thinking and feeling about the world around you?

*Required Readings:* Bring your Chumash and Tanach to class.

Also for Weeks Ten and Eleven: Text PDF (including rabbinic source texts from Mishna Pirkei Avot 5:26, Avot of Rabbi Natan A, Chapter 3, Talmud b. Bava Metzi'a 59, Talmud b. Eruvin 13 b.

*Classroom Activities and Topics:*

- Journaling prompt at the beginning of class
- A text PDF with chevruta prompts from Torah, Prophets, Writings, Mishna, Gemara, Talmud, Midrash (Halacha, Aggada), Codes, and Hassidut.

*For Your Further Learning:*

- Sefaria.org,
- Stone Chumash,
- DafHachaim.org (online Daf Yomi),
- James Kugel, How to Read the Bible
- Richard Elliott Friedman, Who wrote the Bible?
- Finkelstein and Silberman, The Bible Unearthed
- Barry Holtz, Back to the Sources
- Godcast “Lo b’Shamayim Hi”: <https://youtu.be/al4FgjbUztl>

**Week Twelve (April 19): Tefilah/Liturgy/Music**

Instructor: Tamar Frankiel

Location: Zoom

*Enduring Understanding:*

- Jewish prayer traditions encourage you to find your heart in prayer/meditation/song, using the communal siddur.

*Required Reading/Viewing:*

- Look through the Table of Contents in your siddur and find the “Barchu” and the “Shema.” Read in English these prayers and the ones in between.
- <https://www.bimbam.com/judaism-101/prayers-blessings/>
- Trope of 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph of Shema:
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXhao7EhYJM>

*Class Topics and Activities:*

- Open with Blessing: end of Yishtabach - *Baruch ata.... Chei Ha-Olamim*
- Cantor teaches *Mah Tov*
- Text study: *Ahavah Rabbah* and *L’cha Dodi*

*Journal prompt:*

- In the journey of my soul, what calls to me most from the formal prayers I have experienced thus far?

*For further your further learning:*

Tamar Frankiel, Loving Prayer: A Study Guide to Everyday Jewish Prayer

**Week Thirteen (April 26): Jewish Law/Halacha/Kashrut/Contemporary Jewish Practice**

Instructor: Muriel Dance

Location: Zoom

Blessing Words: **Pri HaAdamah** and **Pri Ha'Etz**

*Enduring Understandings:*

- Biblical origin of Kashrut and evolving system over time as an example of Halacha
- Jewish practice encourages mindful consumption of food

*Required Readings:*

- Leviticus 11, Deuteronomy 14:4-21;
- Read 3 from among the following short essays:  
<https://www.bimbam.com/kosher/>  
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/kashrut-101/>  
**Choosing to eat kosher:**  
<http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/263837/saying-goodbye-to-bacon>  
<https://reformjudaism.org/eco-kosher-biblical-roots>  
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/vegetarianism-an-alternative-kashrut/>  
<http://www.on1foot.org/text/eco-kosher-rabbi-zalman-shachter-shalomi>  
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/eco-kashrut-environmental-standards-for-what-and-how-we-eat/>  
<https://www.buzzfeed.com/emilyorley/most-annoying-things-about-keeping-kosh>

*Class Topics and Activities:*

- Each participant brings a food item from their kitchen
- Participants work together with Bag of Groceries to determine whether Kosher
- Learn additional blessings over food
- Short lecture on kashrut as an example of evolution of Jewish Law and contemporary applications

*Writing prompt for soul journal:*

- How might you incorporate some of this learning into your approach to sourcing, preparing and eating?

*For your further learning:*

- Rabbi Dr. Shmuly Yanklowitz, [The Jewish Vegan](#)
- Lise Stern, [How to Keep Kosher: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding Jewish Dietary Laws](#)

### **Week Fourteen (May 3) : L'Havdil/Distinctions: Gender, "The Other", Denominations, Diversity**

Instructor: Rabbi Avivah Erlick

Location: Zoom

*Blessing word: Baruch*

*Enduring Understandings:*

- Traditional Judaism has issues around women and strangers that are in ways at odds with contemporary social perspectives
- Still, Judaism's core priorities of fairness, kindness, justice and welcome make room for many approaches.

*Required Readings:*

- Jewish Gender and Feminism 101: Debates about the role of women in Jewish life.  
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/gender-feminism-101/>
- Why Some Jewish Women Go to the Mikveh Each Month  
(<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-laws-of-niddah-taharat-hamishpaha/>)
- The Jewish Denominations: A quick look at Reform, Conservative, Orthodox and Reconstructionist Judaism.  
(<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-jewish-denominations/>)
- Who Is a Jew: Patrilineal Descent.  
(<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/patrilineal-descent/>)
- Judaism and LGBTQ Issues: An Overview.  
(<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/judaism-and-the-lgbtq-community-an-overview/>)

- Sh'ma Now: Our Moral Obligation  
(<https://forward.com/shma-now/elu-velu/402187/our-moral-obligation/>)

*Class Activities and Topics:*

- Opening song: *Lechi Lach*/You shall be a blessing, Debbie Friedman
- Topics:
  - a. Jewish communal image as “former slave/outsider” and also “chosen/insider”
  - b. Women/female as characters, roles and metaphors
  - c. Strangers/Idolaters: “Who is a Jew,” conversion, boundaries
  - d. Denominations

*Journal prompt:*

- What have you known about Jews being called “The Chosen People,” and how do you feel about this now? Can God “choose” a group of people for special responsibilities?

*For Further Learning:*

- Rabbi Elyse Goldstein, [New Jewish Feminism: Probing the Past, Forging the Future](#)
- Anita Diamant, [Choosing a Jewish Life, Revised and Updated: A Handbook for People Converting to Judaism and for Their Family and Friends](#)
- [https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/mehitzah-separate-seating-in-the-synagogue/?utm\\_source=mjl\\_maropost&utm\\_campaign=MJL&utm\\_medium=email&mpweb=1161-6271-234100](https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/mehitzah-separate-seating-in-the-synagogue/?utm_source=mjl_maropost&utm_campaign=MJL&utm_medium=email&mpweb=1161-6271-234100)

**Week Fifteen (May 17): Jewish Civilization and History (Ancient through Enlightenment)**

**This is Week One of a Two Week Class**

Instructor: Tamar Frankiel

Location: Zoom

*Enduring Understandings:*

- Judaism has manifested in diverse ways, frequently with themes of resistance to hierarchies of power such as slavery, empire, inquisition, discrimination.

*Required Reading/Viewing:* Choose at least 1 hour of video

- *Body and Soul*, directed by Gloria Z. Greenfield (1 hour), on history of the Jewish connection to the land of Israel, available on Amazon.
- Simon Schama, *The Story of the Jews* (5 parts to choose from), available on Amazon
- Steven Cohen, sociologist, article on modern Jewish identity. Read the abstract and skim the rest, with the option of reading more fully any parts of interest:  
<http://jcpa.org/article/changes-in-american-jewish-identities-from-normative-constructions-to-aesthetic-understandings/>

*Class Topics and Activities:*

- Open with blessing: *Baruch ata. . . shechalak mechachmato l'yire'aiv.*
- Lecture with PowerPoint and discussion including segments on diversity in Judaism, women in various times and places, modern challenges internally & externally.
- Handout in class: Timeline of Jewish history.

*Journal prompt:* Explore what period, event(s), themes or figures in Jewish history resonate with you.

*For Further Learning:*

- Chaim Potok, *Wanderings*

Recommended reading in overviews to supplement the above –medieval to early modern history

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<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/medieval-jewish-history-632-to-1650/>

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<http://cojs.org/overview-introduction-to-jews-in-the-early-modern-period/>

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<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/expulsion-and-readmission/>

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<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/usury-and-moneylending-in-judaism/>

Recommended video relating to antisemitism

- *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947 award-winning film directed by Elia Kazan)

## **Week Sixteen (May 24) Jewish Civilization and History Part II:**

### **Enlightenment**

Instructor: Tamar Frankiel

*Location:* Zoom

This is Week Two of a Two Week Class. Curriculum in Week Fifteen with possible additions by Dr. Tamar Frankiel.

## **Week 17 (May 31): Modern Issues: Holocaust, Israel & Palestine**

Instructor: Rabbi Lori Shapiro

*Location:* Zoom

*Hebrew Word: ha'aretz*

### *Enduring Understanding:*

- A basic knowledge of the events of the Holocaust and its impact, anti-semitism, Zionism
- The relationship of the Jewish people to the land of Israel, and an appreciation of the complexity of the modern state of Israel.

### *Required reading/listening/viewing:*

- A Timeline of the Holocaust: From Hitler's rise to power to the Nuremberg trials, key events of the Shoah.  
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/a-timeline-of-the-holocaust/>
- The Paperclip Project - Holocaust Memorial.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFOaAK32C94>
- The Auschwitz Album - Visual Evidence of the Process Leading to the Mass Murder at Auschwitz-Birkenau.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATQp8rFXRkg>

- Holocaust Survivor Testimonies: Daily Life in the Concentration Camps. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ges-Od4tR0I>
- “All My Mothers” - The Story of Yehudith Kleinman <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5u5uVPd1Yvc>
- IsraelPalestine for Critical Thinkers: #4 Islam & Israel-Palestine. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g93GWbjOIGU>
- IsraelPalestine for Critical Thinkers: #5 The Rise of Arab & Jewish Nationalism. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElvFj0abW7Y>
- Conflict in Israel and Palestine: Crash Course World History 223. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wo2TLLMhiw>
- Israel and Palestine Explained, by The Daily Conversation. A mini-documentary that takes you through the history of the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians - from the establishment of Jerusalem as a holy city, all the way through Israel’s 2014 invasion of Gaza. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4r1EmEni2Rw>
- The Israel-Palestine conflict: a brief, simple history. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRYZjOuUnlU>
- Israeli settlements, explained. The maps that explain the settlers. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0uLbeQlwjw>
- Israel - Small but Outstanding, from [www.israel.org](http://www.israel.org), a promotional video on the land, culture, and beauty of Israel. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AoizSL-TEJQ>

### *Class Topics and Activities:*

- Open with lighting six yahrzeit candles
- Three “mini lectures”:
  - a. *Holocaust* - timeline, maps, *shtetl*, The Butterfly, anti-semitism, resistance
  - b. Israel - Zionism, formation of the State of Israel, map of Israel, relationship between the land and the people of Israel, Diaspora
  - c. Palestine - a review of the major events leading up to the current conflict

### *Writing Prompt for Soul Journal:*

- What impact has knowing and learning about the Holocaust had on you?
- What does Israel mean to you? Have you travelled to Israel? If so, what was that like for you? If not, what would it mean for you to go?

*For Further Learning:*

- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website:  
<https://www.ushmm.org/learn>
- Elie Wiesel, Night
- Anne Frank, The Diary of a Young Girl
- Sandy Tolan, The Lemon Tree
- Ari Shavit, My Promised Land
- Defiance, film, (Bielsky Bros.)
- No Place on Earth, film, (hiding)
- Sarah's Key, film, (French Nazi background)
- Denial, film, (Lipstadt trial)
- Aftermath, film, (Poland)
- Bogdan's Journey, film, (attempts at reconciliation, Poland)

**Week Eighteen: (June 7) --Jewish Spirituality/Concepts of God/  
Jewish Thought**

Instructor - Rabbi Lori Shapiro

Location: Zoom

*Blessing Words: B'divrei Torah*

*Enduring Understandings:*

- Judaism is monotheistic with different names (that are gendered) for God.
- The many different Concepts of God in Judaism such as immanent vs. transcendent, monotheism vs. polytheism vs. henotheism,

negative theology, predicate theology, Transnatural God, and others affect spiritual practice, belief and prayer.

- Jewish spiritual practice such as *hitbodedut* and *hitbonnenut* draw on specific God concepts.

*Required Reading:* PDF of Jewish Thought including Exodus 18-19, (spotlighting that it is Parshat *Yitro*), Leviticus 19:18, Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1, Talmud b. Shabbat 31a, Maimonides *Morei Nevuchim* (excerpt), Mendellsohn Horeb (excerpt), SR Hirsch (excerpt), Hermann Cohen (excerpt), Franz Rosenzweig (excerpt), Mordecai Kaplan (excerpt), Rav Kook (excerpt), R. Soloveichik (excerpt), and Howard Shulweis (excerpt), and Brad Artson (excerpt).

*Writing Prompt for Soul Journal:*

- What is your God concept?

*Classroom Activities and Topics:*

- Beginning of Class: write a personal God statement (5 minutes).
- End of Class: edit your personal God statement (10 minutes).
- Closing class meditation experience: we drive to the beach and engage in 1) *Hitbodedut* practice; 2) *Hitbonnenut* practice.

*For Your Further Learning:*

Texts: Patai, Teuval, Buber, Shulweis, Maimonides, Mendellsohn, Rosenzweig, Cohen, Kaplan, Heschel and others.

**Week Nineteen: (June 14) Siyum - Judaism in my Life:  
Where Do We Go From Here?**

Instructor: Rabbi Lori Shapiro, Muriel Dance and Rabbi Avivah Erlick  
Location: Zoom

Soul Journey: An Introduction to Judaism engages the participant in a content rich, informative and transformative introduction to Judaism. Our Siyum is an open space for the group to reflect, share and create a final ritual together of what this transformation meant to them.

The siyum will take place at a location chosen by the class. All instructors are encouraged to be present. Each student will present an autobiographical statement taken from their Soul Journals.

Foods will be eaten with ritual blessings, and prayers for new beginnings will be shared.

At the end of the siyum, students will be invited to continue their Jewish education with offerings that include:

Representatives from Jewish LA sharing their community offerings with the students:

- Jewish Arts Engagement in LA (David Dassa's Arts Shabbaton, Open Temple, Jewish Arts Alliance, The Braid, others)
- Tikkun Olam / Volunteering opportunities (Hospice, Jails, Senior Living and the work of Avivah Winocur Erlick)
- Continuing education at various communities (Open Temple, B'nai Horin, Nachshon minyan, Nefesh, etc.).
- Jewish Federation, Honeymoon Israel
- Next steps to formal Affirmation of Jewish Identity/Conversion