

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

Instructors: Rabbi Lori Shapiro, Dr. Muriel Dance, Dr. Tamar Frankiel,
 Rabbi Janet Madden, Rabbi Robin Podolsky

Schedule in Brief
7 - 9 pm PST Wednesdays

Quick at a Glance Dates/Topics/Instructors

Date	Class Agenda/Topic	Instructor(s)
11/4/20	Introduction and Community / Concepts of Believing, Belonging, Behaving. Text: Ruth and Exodus	Lori + Muriel, Tamar, Janet
11/11/20	Hebrew/Jewish languages / Rabbinic vs. Biblical vs. Modern Hebrew / Learn the aleph bet	Muriel
11/18/20	Menschlichkeit: How Study and Spiritual Practices Shape a Healthy, Upstanding Life	Lori
12/2/20	Lifecycle I: Marriage, Birth, Circumcision, Raising Children	Muriel
12/9/20	Lifecycle II: Bikkur Cholim/Visiting the Sick, Maturity, End of Life, Afterlife	Janet
12/16/20	Holy Days I: Wheel of the Jewish Year: Weekdays and Shabbat	Muriel
1/6/20	Holy Days II: The Summer and Fall Holidays	Janet
1/13/20	Holy Days III: The Winter and Spring Holidays	Janet
1/20/20	Interfaith/World Religions	Tamar
1/27/20	Sacred text/Oral and Written Part I	Janet

2/3/20	Sacred text/Oral and Written Part II	Janet
2/10/20	Tefilah / Liturgy / Music	Tamar
2/17/20	Modern Issues: Holocaust, Israel & Palestine	Lori
2/24/20	L'Havdil/Distinctions: Gender, "The Other", Denominations, Diversity	Robin Podolsky confirmed
3/3/20	Jewish Civilization and History I: Ancient	Tamar
3/10/20	Jewish Civilization and History II: Enlightenment	Tamar
3/17/20	Jewish Law (Halacha)/ Kashrut / Contemporary Jewish Practice	Muriel
3/24/20	Jewish Spirituality / Concepts of God / Jewish Thought	Lori
3/31/20	Siyum - Judaism in Los Angeles: Where Do We Go From Here?	Muriel/Lori

Emails of Instructors:

Rabbi Janet Madden, PhD:

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Rabbi Robin Podolsky:

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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

FALL 2020 SYLLABUS

Week One (11/4): OPENING CLASS: COMMUNITY **RESHAPING IDENTITY, COMMUNITY FORMATION and TRANSMISSION OF AUTHORITY.**

Instructors: Rabbi Lori Shapiro

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
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Week Two (11/11): Hebrew/Jewish languages / Rabbinic vs. Biblical vs. Modern Hebrew /

Instructor: Muriel Dance

Location: Zoom

Blessing Word: Ivrit

Enduring Understandings:

- Hebrew is a language of simplicity and power with a long history
- The aleph bet, the names of the Hebrew letters and the Hebrew letters in your name

Required reading:

- 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
- Learn the Hebrew letters in your Hebrew name

- 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 the Hebrew letters in your name. Can you imagine committing to regular study of Hebrew?

For Further Learning

- Duolingo, Hebrew--free app
- The Aleph isn't Tough, Linda Motzkin, CCAR Press
- Consider the best method described below for you to learn Hebrew:

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

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Week Three (11/18): Menschlichkeit: How Study and Spiritual Practices Shape a Healthy, Upstanding Life

Instructor: Rabbi Lori Shapiro

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:
 - Torah -- lifecycle mitzvot (blessings, kashrut, holidays)
 - Avodah -- spiritual practices -- prayer, ritual, leyning, text study, chevruta, Mussar/counseling
 - Sample text study from current week’s parsha
 - 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

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Week Four (12/2): Lifecycle I -- Marriage, Birth, Circumcision, Raising Children

Instructor: Muriel

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 (12/9): Lifecycle II -- Bikkur Cholim/Visiting the Sick, Maturity, End of Life, Afterlife

Instructor - Janet
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
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Week Six (12/16): 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
- Shabbat (short video) <http://wendysshabbat.com/wendys-shabbat>
- The Shabbes Mother (short video) <http://www.maale.co.il/en/movie/12904>

Week Seven (1/6) -- 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 (1/13): 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.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 Nine (1/20): Interfaith/World Religions

Instructor: Tamar Frankiel

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](#)

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Week Ten (1/27): 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 (2/3): 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 (2/10): 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 1st 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 Tovu*
- 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](#)

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Week Thirteen (2/17): 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, 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)

After Week 13 - Check in: Zoom conference for Instructors:

Student check in with mentor.

Instructor check in for Siyum.

Recommendations from Instructors to Students for their siyum assignments.

Week Fourteen (2/24) : L'Havdil/Distinctions: Gender, "The Other", Denominations, Diversity

Instructor: Rabbi Robin Podolsky

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

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Week Fifteen (3/3): 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

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

- http://cojs.org/overview-introduction_to_jews_in_the_early_modern_period/

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

- <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)

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Week Sixteen (3/10) Jewish Civilization and History Part II:

Enlightenment

Instructor: Tamar Frankiel

Location: Zoom

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

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Week 17 (3/17): 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](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
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Week Eighteen: (3/24) --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. -----

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**Week Nineteen: (3/31) Siyum - Judaism in my Life:
Where Do We Go From Here?**

Instructor: Rabbi Lori Shapiro & Muriel Dance
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