



**Introduction to Judaism 2026**  
**Union for Reform Judaism**

**Congregation Rodeph Shalom**  
**Tuesdays, January 20 – April 14**  
**6:00-8:00 p.m.**  
**(215) 627-6747**  
**Sessions will only be held in-person**

**Rabbi Jill L. Maderer (JLM)**  
**Rabbi Eli C. Freedman (ECF)**  
**Cantor Brad Hyman (BDH)**  
**Rabbi Emeritus Bill Kuhn (BK)**  
**Dr. David Rawdin (DR)**  
**Michael Riccardi (MR)**  
**Lauren Newman (LN)**

Books: [\*Aleph Isn't Tough: An Introduction to Hebrew for Adults\*](#) by Linda Motzkin, *Night* by Elie Weisel, *Essential Judaism ("EJ")* by George Robinson, for those considering conversion to Judaism: either *Choosing Judaism* by Lydia Kukoff or *Choosing a Jewish Life* by Anita Diamant, for further Hebrew study consider: [www.easylearnhebrew.com](http://www.easylearnhebrew.com). Please contact us if you have any difficulties acquiring your books.

Please:

- Order and bring your Hebrew Workbook, [\*Aleph Isn't Tough\*](#)... to every session. Also available on Amazon.
- Read assigned selections in preparation for each class.

Every Friday: 5:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m. Jewish Meditation, 6:00 p.m.-7:15 p.m. Shabbat Evening Service

Every Saturday: 9:15-10:30 a.m. Torah Study, 10:45 a.m - 12:15 p.m. Shabbat Morning Service followed by Shabbat Schmooze until 1 p.m. a chance to share a nosh and conversation with clergy and community.

|   | <b>Instructor</b> | <b>Date</b> | <b>Topic</b>  |
|---|-------------------|-------------|---|
| 1 | ECF               | 1/20/26     | <b>Introduction, Shabbat</b>  |
| 2 | JLM & Rabbi Nir   | 1/27/26     | <b>Evolution of the Text</b><br><i>EJ</i> : Chapter 5: "In the Beginning: The Hebrew Bible"<br>Read: Tanakh (263-266), What is in the Hebrew Bible? (266-269), Torah (269-270), Sidebars (271-273)<br><i>EJ</i> : Chapter 6: "The Rabbis said: The Talmud and Other Rabbinical Writings"<br>Read: Roots of Rabbinic Judaism (316-318) |
| 3 | BK & DR           | 2//3/26     | <b>The Life Cycle: Birth, B'nai Mitzvah, Conversion, Wedding, Death, Mourning, Afterlife</b><br><i>EJ</i> : Chapter 3: "Birth to Death: A Jewish Life Cycle" Read: Beginning of chapter and Birth (140-144), Bar/Bat Mitzvah<br><i>(Session 3 continued on next page)</i>   |



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|   |     |                       |  |
|---|-----|-----------------------|--|
|   |     |                       | (159-160), Engagement/Marriage (161-168), Conversion (177-180), Death/Mourning (187-194), Afterlife (194-196)  |
| 4 | BDH | 2/10/26               | <b>High Holy Days</b><br><i>EJ:</i> Chapter 2: “Rejoice in Your Festivals: The Jewish Year”<br>Read: High Holy Days (94-103)   |
|   |     | 2/13/26               | <b>Be our guest! Attend 6:00 p.m. Friday Shabbat service</b> followed by a catered Shabbat dinner. Register by clicking <a href="#">here</a> . Contact Steven Share or Michael Saks  |
| 5 | JLM | 2/17/26               | <b>The Jewish Calendar: Jewish Holidays, Part 1</b><br><i>EJ:</i> Chapter 2: “Rejoice in Your Festivals: The Jewish Year”<br>Read: Sacred Time- the Jewish calendar (79-83), Sukkot (103-110), Shemini Atzeret (pgs 110-111), Simchat Torah (112-113), Hanukkah (114-117), Tu B’Shevat (117-119) |
| 6 | JLM | 2/24/26               | <b>Holidays, Part Two: Purim, Shavuot, Tisha B’av</b><br><b>Passover and the Haggadah</b> (reading assignment on next page)<br><i>EJ:</i> Chapter 2: “Rejoice in Your Festivals: The Jewish Year”<br>Read: Pesakh (120-127)  |
|   |     | 3/1/26<br><b>Sun.</b> | Volunteer to help run a game or a booth at the Berkman Mercaz Limud, religious school Purim Fair! <b>Registration will open in Feb.</b>  |
|   |     | 3/2/26<br><b>Mon.</b> | <b>PURIM!</b> Join the fun at our Annual Purim Spiel (think hilarious One Act Play type entertainment by RS members singing, dancing, and telling the story of Purim)  |
| 7 | BDH | 3/3/26                | <b>Prayer and Blessings</b><br><i>EJ:</i> Chapter 1: “Service of the Heart: Prayer and Ritual”<br>Read: Jewish Idea of Prayer (9-10), Blessings of Daily Life (21-22), Synagogue (47-49)   |
| 8 | BDH | 3/10/26               | <b>God Ideas</b><br><i>EJ:</i> Chapter 8: “The Philosophers: The Continuing Evolution of Jewish Thought”<br>Read: Beginning of chapter (408-409), Rabbis versus Philosophers (409-10), also choose any 4 philosophers to read about  |
| 9 | ECF | 3/17/26               | <b>Holocaust (Yom HaShoah April 13-14, 2026) and Israel (Yom HaAtzmaut April 21-22, 2026)</b><br><i>EJ:</i> Chapter 2: “Rejoice in Your Festivals: The Jewish Year”<br><i>(Session 9 continued on next page)</i>   |



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|----|----------------------------|-------------------------|--|
|    |                            |                         | <p>Read: Yom Ha'Shoah, Yom Ha'Atzmaut, Yom Ha'Zikaron, Yom Yerushalyim (130-132); <i>Night</i>, by Elie Wiesel</p> <p><i>EJ</i>: Chapter 9: "Beyond the Rabbis: How Judaism Got Where it is Today"</p> <p>Read: Evolution of Anti-Semitism (492-494), Sifting Through the Ashes (494-497), Exiles Return (497-500)</p> |
| 10 | BK                         | 3/24/26                 | <p><b>Jewish Values and Ethics</b></p> <p><i>EJ</i>: Chapter 4: "613 Ways: Living a Jewish Life"</p> <p>Read: Mitzvot in Daily Life (237-246), Tikkun Olam (246)</p>   |
| 11 | BK                         | 3/31/26                 | <p><b>Jewish History</b></p> <p><i>EJ</i>: Chapter 9: "Beyond the Rabbis: How Judaism Got Where it is Today"</p> <p>Read: (461-491), Appendix 2: A Timeline of Major Events (skim)</p>   |
|    |                            | 4/2/26<br><b>Thurs.</b> | <p><b>Attend a Passover seder!</b> Attend an in-home or the Rodeph Shalom Second Night Seder, Thursday, April 2nd (check the March/April Bulletin or our <a href="#">event registrations link</a> in March 2026).</p>  |
| 12 | MR & LN<br>Intro.<br>Alumn | 4/7/26                  | <p><b>Social/Cultural Aspects of Jewish Family, Community and Conversion</b></p> <p>--Facilitated discussion. (see next page)</p> <p>Consider reading or starting to read: <i>Choosing Judaism or Choosing a Jewish Life</i></p>   |
| 13 | ECF                        | 4/14/26                 | <p><b>Conclusion</b> - <a href="#">schedule a check in</a> with Steven Share regarding membership, prospective membership, or interest in conversion / affirmation ceremonies.</p>   |



## **Introduction to Judaism 2026** **Union for Reform Judaism**

### **About Introduction to Judaism**

Welcome! This course is designed to provide students with a foundation of the Jewish faith, culture, people and history, from a Reform perspective. Class sessions will be run with the intent of creating an atmosphere of sharing, learning and growing. You are encouraged to ask questions, express feelings, and offer input into the discussions. No question is too basic.

This is not an indoctrination class and there will be no pressure to convert to Judaism. Yet for some, it may provide the background and motivation to become Jewish. Conversion is a process that takes tremendous time and thought. This class is required as a first step toward conversion.

This class will meet on Tuesday evenings from January 20 - April 14. Each session will run from 6:00-8:00 p.m.. **On Friday, February 13, we will attend Shabbat services at 6:00 p.m., followed by a catered dinner. Regular class sessions will focus on listed topics and will expand on assigned readings.**

Hebrew is the sacred language of the Jewish people and is found in our prayer and texts. It is the language of our holidays, symbols and traditions and it ties us to Israel and to Jews around the world. Therefore, we will devote the last 15 minutes of each session to Hebrew study.

Course requirements include the following:

- Regular attendance (no more than two absences, please notify Steven or Michael if you know you will miss time or need to call out).
- Weekly readings as noted, in preparation for each class.

Additional recommendations:

- Attendance at Shabbat services, at least monthly. You are welcome at Congregation Rodeph Shalom and other synagogues that welcome non-members. Consult with us for recommendations.
- Meetings with your sponsoring rabbi two times during the course.

Of course, in Jewish life, the study never stops. Refer to the enclosed reading list by topic for more in depth study of areas of particular interest. And feel free to ask us for further guidance in your Jewish education and involvement. We look forward to learning with you!

The tuition for this class is \$250 for an individual or couple.

Continue below for reading suggestions, web sites, and some of our favorite podcasts!



## **Introduction to Judaism 2026** **Union for Reform Judaism**

### **Recommended Reading List - in no particular order**

#### **Introduction Material**

To Life!, Harold Kushner  
Living a Jewish Life, Anita Diamant

#### **Torah and Tanakh**

The Torah: A Modern Commentary, Gunther Plaut  
The Torah: A Women's Commentary, Tamara Cohen Eshkenazi, Andrea Weiss  
A Torah Commentary for Our Times, Harvey Fields  
How to Read the Bible, Marc Brettler  
ReVisions: Seeing Torah Through a Feminist Lens, Elyse Goldstein  
The Red Tent (novel), Anita Diamant

#### **Jewish Living**

Jewish Literacy, Joseph Telushkin  
Essential Judaism, George Robinson  
The Guide to Jewish Living (Conservative Movement), Isaac Klein  
The Doorposts of Your House, CCAR  
How to Be a Jewish Parent, Anita Diamant

#### **Jewish Holidays**

The Jewish Holidays, Michael Strassfeld  
Seasons of Our Joy, Arthur Waskow  
The Sabbath, Abraham Joshua Heschel  
A Day Apart: Shabbat at Home, Noam Zion  
The Open Door: Passover Hagaddah, Sue Levi Elwell  
Days of Awe, S.Y. Agnon

#### **Jewish Lifecycle**

The New Jewish Wedding, Anita Diamant  
The New Jewish Baby Book, Anita Diamant  
Putting God on the Guest List (bar/bat mitzvah), Jeffrey Salkin  
A Time to Mourn, A Time to Comfort

#### **History**

A History of the Jews, Abram Sachar  
The Story of Judaism, Bernard Jacob Bamberger  
The Amazing Adventures of the Jewish People, Max Dimont

#### **Holocaust**

The Diary of Anne Frank, Anne Frank  
Escape from Auschwitz, Primo Levi  
Night, Elie Wiesel

#### **Israel**

The Zionist Idea, Arthur Hertzberg  
The Making of Modern Zionism, Shlomo Avineri  
My Life, Golda Meir  
The Source (novel), James Michener  
Exodus (novel), Leon Uris  
The Hope (novel), Herman Wouk

#### **Jewish Beliefs**

The Way into Encountering God in Judaism, Neil Gillman  
Quest for God, Abraham Joshua Heschel  
Seek My Face, Speak My Name, Arthur Green  
**Jewish Beliefs cont'd.**  
Standing Again at Sinai, Judith Plaskow  
Engendering Judaism, Rachel Adler  
Teaching Your Children About God, David Wolpe  
On Being a Jewish Feminist: A Reader, Susannah Heschel  
The Chosen (novel), Chaim Potok

#### **Conversion**

Choosing Judaism, Lydia Kukoff  
Choosing a Jewish Life, Anita Diamant

#### **Rediscovering Your Judaism**

Here All Along, Sarah Hurwitz

#### **Intermarriage**

The Intermarriage Handbook, Judy Petsonk and Jim Remsen  
Mixed Blessings, Paul and Rachel Cowan  
Making a Successful Jewish Interfaith Marriage, Kerry Olitzky

#### **Podcasts**

Unorthodox  
Judaism Unbound  
Adventures with Dead Jews

For Heaven's Sake  
Times of Israel Daily Briefing  
Chutzpod  
Two Freaked Out Jews  
People of the Pod  
Wondering Jews  
OMFG Podcast

**Websites**

[MyJewishLearning.com](http://MyJewishLearning.com)  
[TheTorah.com](http://TheTorah.com)  
[ReformJudaism.org](http://ReformJudaism.org)  
[Sefaria.org](http://Sefaria.org)  
[Kveller.com](http://Kveller.com)  
[HeyAlma.com](http://HeyAlma.com)  
[rac.org](http://rac.org)