



Introduction to Judaism 2027

Union for Reform Judaism

Welcome!

This course introduces the Jewish faith, culture, people, and history from a Reform perspective. Our sessions are designed to create an atmosphere of sharing, learning, and growth. You're encouraged to ask questions, express your feelings, and contribute to discussions. No question is too basic.

This is not an indoctrination class, and there is no pressure to convert to Judaism. For some students, however, the course may provide useful background and inspire them to consider becoming Jewish. Conversion is a thoughtful process that takes time; this class is a required first step for those exploring conversion.

Class Schedule

We'll meet in person at RS on Tuesday evenings from January 12 through April 6. Each session will run from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Regular class sessions will focus on the topics listed in the course schedule and expand on the assigned readings.

This class will meet on Tuesday evenings from January 12 - April 6 in person at RS. Each session will run from 6:00-8:00 p.m. Regular class sessions will focus on listed topics and will expand on assigned readings.

Hebrew is the sacred language of the Jewish people. It appears in our prayers and texts, is woven into our holidays, symbols, and traditions, and connects us with Israel and Jewish communities around the world. We'll devote the final 15 minutes of each session to Hebrew study.

Course requirements

- **Regular attendance:** Please plan to attend regularly, with no more than two absences. If you know you'll miss a class or need to call out, please notify [Michael](#) at 267-930-7282 or [Steven](#) at 267-930-7286 (no more than two absences, please email or call (267-930-7282) or (267-930-7286) if you know you will miss time or need to call out.
- **Weekly reading:** Complete the assigned readings in preparation for each class.

Additional recommendations:

- Attend Shabbat services, at least monthly. You are welcome at Congregation Rodeph Shalom and other synagogues that welcome non-members. Consult with us for recommendations.
- Join one of our weekly or monthly Torah Study opportunities. Weekly, every Saturday at 9:15-10:

Jewish learning is a lifelong journey. The enclosed reading list offers additional resources by topic, and we'd be glad to recommend further ways to learn and get involved. We look forward to learning with you!



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Congregation Rodeph Shalom

Tuesdays, January 12 – April 6

6:00-8:00 p.m.

(215) 627-6747

Sessions will only be held in-person.

Meet your facilitators

[Rabbi Eli C. Freedman](#) (ECF)

[Rabbi Leah Berkowitz](#) (RLB)

[Cantor Brad Hyman](#) (BDH)

[Rabbi Emeritus Bill Kuhn](#) (BK)

[Dr. David Rawdin](#) (DR)

Intro. Alumni (IA)

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. Please contact us if you have any difficulties acquiring your books.

To do:

- 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.

Please join us for:

[Jewish Meditation](#): Every first and third Friday: 4:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m. at RS or on Zoom

Shabbat Evening Service Every Friday 6:00 p.m.-7:15 p.m. with a **Pre-Oneg** (snack and community schmooze) beginning at 5:30 p.m. Can't make it in person but don't want to miss it? Join via [livestream](#), or watch it later on our livestream page.

[Torah Study](#): Every Saturday: 9:15-10:30 a.m. **Shabbat Morning Service** 10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m. followed by **Shabbat Schmooze** until 1 p.m. a chance to share a nosh and conversation with clergy and community. Weekly Torah Study is in person and on Zoom.

	Instructor	Date	Topic
1	ECF	1/12/27	Introduction, Shabbat
2	RLB	1/19/27	Evolution of the Text <i>EJ</i> : Chapter 5: "In the Beginning: The Hebrew Bible" Read: Tanakh (263-266), What is in the Hebrew Bible? (266-269), Torah (269-270), Sidebars (271-273) <i>EJ</i> : Chapter 6: "The Rabbis said: The Talmud and Other Rabbinical Writings" Read: Roots of Rabbinic Judaism (316-318)

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3	BK & DR	1/26/27	<p>The Life Cycle: Birth, B’nai Mitzvah, Conversion, Wedding, Death, Mourning, Afterlife (<i>cont’d. on next ext page</i>)</p> <p><i>EJ:</i> Chapter 3: “Birth to Death: A Jewish Life Cycle” Read: Beginning of chapter and Birth (140-144), Bar/Bat Mitzvah (<i>Session 3 continued on next page</i>) (159-160), Engagement/Marriage (161-168), Conversion (177-180), Death/Mourning (187-194), Afterlife (194-196)</p>
4	BDH	2/2/27	<p>High Holy Days</p> <p><i>EJ:</i> Chapter 2: “Rejoice in Your Festivals: The Jewish Year”</p> <p>Read: High Holy Days (94-103)</p>
		2/5/27 Fri.	<p>Be our guest! Attend 6:00 p.m. Friday Shabbat service followed by a catered Shabbat dinner. Register by clicking here. Contact Steven Share or Michael Saks</p>
5	RLB	2/9/27	<p>The Jewish Calendar: Jewish Holidays, Part 1</p> <p><i>EJ:</i> Chapter 2: “Rejoice in Your Festivals: The Jewish Year”</p> <p>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)</p>
6	RLB	2/16/27	<p>Holidays, Part Two: Purim, Shavuot, Tisha B’av</p> <p>Passover and the Haggadah (reading assignment on next page)</p> <p><i>EJ:</i> Chapter 2: “Rejoice in Your Festivals: The Jewish Year”</p> <p>Read: Pesakh (120-127)</p>
7	RLB	2/23/27	<p>Jewish History</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>
8	BDH	3/2/27	<p>God Ideas</p> <p><i>EJ:</i> Chapter 8: “The Philosophers: The Continuing Evolution of Jewish Thought”</p> <p>Read: Beginning of chapter (408-409), Rabbis versus Philosophers (409-10), also choose any 4 philosophers to read about</p>
9	RLB	3/9/27	<p>Holocaust (Yom HaShoah April 13-14, 2026) and Israel (Yom HaAtzmaut April 21-22, 2026) <i>See next page for more info.</i></p> <p><i>EJ:</i> Chapter 2: “Rejoice in Your Festivals: The Jewish Year”</p> <p>Read: Yom Ha’Shoah, Yom Ha’Atzmaut, Yom Ha’Zikaron, Yom Yerushalyim (130-132); <i>Night</i>, by Elie Wiesel (cont’d. on next page)</p>



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			Holocaust Continued <i>EJ</i> : Chapter 9: “Beyond the Rabbis: How Judaism Got Where it is Today” Read: Evolution of Anti-Semitism (492-494), Sifting Through the Ashes (494-497), Exiles Return (497-500)
		3/14/27 Sun.	Volunteer to help run a game or a booth at the Purim Carnival open to the public from 1-3pm! Registration will open in Feb.
10	BDH	3/16/27	Prayer and Blessings <i>EJ</i> : Chapter 1: “Service of the Heart: Prayer and Ritual” Read: Jewish Idea of Prayer (9-10), Blessings of Daily Life (21-22), Synagogue (47-49)
		3/22/27 Mon.	PURIM! 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)
11	BK	3/23/27	Jewish Values and Ethics <i>EJ</i> : Chapter 4: “613 Ways: Living a Jewish Life” Read: Mitzvot in Daily Life (237-246), Tikkun Olam (246)
12	IA (Intro. Alumni)	3/30/27	Social/Cultural Aspects of Jewish Family, Community and Conversion --Panel discussion with Q&A Consider reading or starting to read: <i>Choosing Judaism or Choosing a Jewish Life</i>
13	ECF	4/6/27	Conclusion - schedule a check in on next steps, with Steven Share regarding membership, prospective membership, or interest in conversion / affirmation ceremonies.
		4/22/27 Wed.	Attend a Passover seder! Attend the Rodeph Shalom Second Night Seder, Wednesday, April 22 (check the March/April Bulletin or our event registrations link in March 2027).



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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, Rabbi 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

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



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Intermarriage

The Intermarriage Handbook, Judy Petsonk & Jim
Remsen

Mixed Blessings, Paul and Rachel Cowan

Making a Successful Jewish Interfaith Marriage,
Kerry Olitzky

Podcasts

Chutzpod

Unorthodox

Judaism Unbound

For Heaven's Sake

Times of Israel Daily Briefing

Two Freaked Out Jews

People of the Pod

Wondering Jews

OMFG Podcast

Being Jewish with Jonah Platt

Adventures with Dead Jews

Websites

MyJewishLearning.com

TheTorah.com

ReformJudaism.org

Sefaria.org

Kveller.com

HeyAlma.com

rac.org