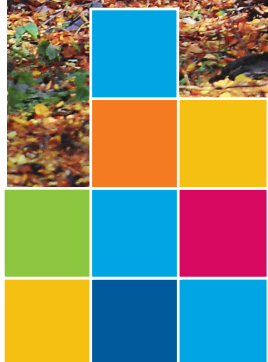
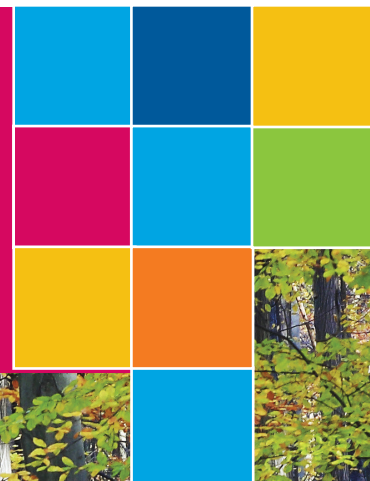


Introduction to Judaism

18 Session Course Outline for Faculty



August 2017/Av 5777

Dear Introduction to Judaism Instructor,

Thank you for engaging in the sacred work of teaching Introduction to Judaism! Three model Faculty Course Outlines (a 24-session version, an 18-session version, and a 13-session coupled with a *Shabbaton* retreat version) have been created as resources to enhance your teaching. Along with the Faculty Resource Bibliography, these faculty materials are part of the URJ's commitment to Introduction to Judaism and the course's transformational impact on individuals, couples, families, and ultimately, our community.

The new CCAR Introduction to Judaism Sourcebook Reader, *Honoring Tradition, Embracing Change* aligns with the 24-session course outline version, but the book can be used with either of the other two model course outline versions. It is the only comprehensive text that explores topics through a Reform lens.

[Purchase the print version](#)

[Purchase the digital version](#)

We are confident that the CCAR Reader, three Faculty Course Outlines, and Faculty Resource Bibliography will enhance your teaching and our Intro students' experiences.

We are deeply grateful to the many Introduction to Judaism faculty and coordinators who shared their syllabi with us, to Joy Wasserman for creating each of the three model course outlines, and to Helayne Friedland and Julia Knobloch for editing the documents.

Best wishes,



April Baskin
Vice President,
Audacious Hospitality



Rabbi Leora Kaye
Director of Program



Frieda Hershman Huberman
Manager, Introduction to Judaism

Introduction to Judaism Faculty Course Outline (18 sessions)

This outline was crafted to guide faculty in creating an experience aimed to help students explore Judaism. The session topics address the needs of both the mind and heart of each participant—that is to challenge and support each participant in deepening their understanding of Judaism and in imagining how they might integrate Judaism into their personal identity, and impact choices about how to lead their lives.

Each of the 18 sessions identifies the “Big Ideas” and outlines the “Key Content”. You will find a glossary and texts relating to the topic included as well. Additionally, we have created journal prompts for each session. We believe our students’ exploration of Judaism will be enriched by having an opportunity to reflect on readings and content covered in class. We provide a number of journal prompts so that students can select one or more that speaks to what is on their mind. We urge you to read and respond to your students’ journals on a regular basis. Finally, you will find a “Deepening the Learning” section for each session. This section includes opportunities, both in and out of class to enhance the exploration of the content of the topic.

While this 18 session outline was built around five themes or units, we recognize that the order of the sessions may be rearranged to coordinate with the Jewish calendar. Please feel free to do so, but please share the one-page overview of the themes and sessions with your students to help orient them to the depth and breadth of the course.

Each community makes their own decision about how to approach the teaching of Hebrew. We encourage you to add assigned Hebrew pages or chapters to the course outline you distribute to students.

This outline was created by the gathering of wisdom and insights from our faculty and coordinators across North America. We want to express our sincere thanks to the colleagues who so graciously shared their experience with us. This outline will continue to evolve as we receive your comments from the field. Please be in touch with us with any insights, “enhance the learning” suggestions, or feedback you have to share.

Joy Wasserman R.J.E.
August 2017/Av 5777

Notes for Faculty

Thank you for serving as faculty for the Introduction to Judaism course! Each faculty member brings their own gifts, experience and wisdom to the classroom. We have collected these notes below over time from our outstanding faculty; please help us enrich the course experiences for both colleagues and students by sharing your insights with us. We hope to add to this section each year.

About Our Participants

Our participants come from every possible background and experience, with various goals and motivations, and at different points on their Jewish journeys. Some come certain that they will become Jewish soon after the course ends; others come certain that they will not ever become Jewish, but turn to us because they want to understand more about the Jewish life of their family members. Most of our participants tell us that regardless of their position when they begin the course, they often vacillate along the way as they learn more.

Because many participants enroll as couples, those who take the course on their own—whether single or unaccompanied by their partner—need to be explicitly welcomed and supported. Jewish partners who do participate in class come from a great range of Jewish backgrounds. Some have a rich background and can add much to class discussions, while others have a limited Jewish experience and are learning along with their partners. In both cases Jewish partners often struggle with their role in their partners' decision to take part in a Jewish life. We are seeing more adult children of interfaith couples in our classes as people raised as both/neither opt to explore their Jewish background. More and more of our students are Jewish and see this course as a way to deepen their Jewish knowledge and as a gateway to leading a more informed Jewish life.

The Needs of Adult Learners

You know from your own experience that adult learners come to class with their own unique mix of expectations and learning style. In general, adults are motivated to learn to fill knowledge gaps and to look for meaning. Our adult learners come because they want to make informed choices. Diane Tickton Schuster, an expert in Adult Learning, reworks Mary Belenky's classic work on *Adult Ways of Knowing*, which teaches that there are 5 types of "Knowers" (Learners) and recommends strategies for connecting with each type.

| Type of “Knower” (Learner) | Characteristics of Knowers ¹ (Learners) | Teaching Strategy ² |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Silent | <p>Lacks confidence in learning ability</p> <p>Doesn't know how to acquire knowledge</p> <p>Does not feel s/he has right to an opinion</p> <p>Silent observer</p> | <p>Offer safe space for conversation</p> <p>Invite reflection</p> <p>Provide opportunities to hear the stories of others, including the teachers</p> |
| Received | <p>Knowledge comes from outside authority</p> <p>Likes to listen and not participate in conversation</p> <p>Is dependent on others to form opinion</p> <p>Prefers lecture and facts</p> <p>Articulates view of others rather than own opinion</p> | <p>Accept on their own terms but encourage critical thinking</p> <p>Invite their to summarize (compare and contrast) others' observations and to offer commentary</p> <p>Share your own stories and help learner identify their own questions</p> |
| Subjective | <p>Relies on personal experience as source of knowledge</p> <p>Recognizes maybe many truths but has attachment to their own truth</p> <p>Strong conviction that their knowledge is correct</p> <p>Uses their intuition and inner voice</p> | <p>Encourage learner to document own and others' experiences and viewpoints</p> <p>Suggest that the learner explore new ideas and experiences and compare their reflections with others</p> <p>Help learner experiment with new practices</p> <p>Affirm the learner's passions</p> |
| Procedural | <p>Engages in conscious, deliberate systematic analysis of ideas</p> <p>Values multiple perspectives</p> <p>Interested in how others formulate ideas</p> <p>Develops tools to analyze data</p> <p>Able to conceptualize and debate opposing views</p> | <p>Introduce the learner to resources and approaches</p> <p>Help learner find appropriate study partners</p> <p>Create opportunities for learner to debate ideas and consider multiple perspectives</p> <p>Help learner plan future learning projects that involve a variety of strategies</p> |
| Constructed | <p>Recognizes that all knowledge is constructed and comes from experience</p> <p>Seeks to examine and question</p> <p>Develops own knowledge base after careful analysis</p> <p>Pushes back on boundaries of their own perspectives</p> <p>Creates new ways of seeing old ideas</p> <p>Enjoys sharing ideas with others</p> | <p>Encourage learner to synthesize learning</p> <p>Invite learner to share insights with others</p> |

Teaching a class of different types of learners can be challenging for even the most experienced teacher. Schuster recommends 10 strategies that foster adult learners' growth³. Adult learners value and appreciate:

1. Recognition: Independence, being welcomed, and having options and appreciate being respected as learners
2. Resocialization: Being helped to learn by facilitative teachers who empower learners to become self-directed
3. Reinforcement: Being affirmed for having questions, insights, doubts, and skills for deeper learning
4. Repetition: Encouraged to review material
5. Rigor: Being challenged to grapple with substantive material and taught how to access it independently
6. Relevance: Discovering connections between what they are learning and their experience
7. Relationships: Finding a community for learning that includes partners for conversation, mentors and facilitators
8. Reverence: Being affirmed in the pursuit and cultivation of meaningful spiritual experiences
9. Retreat: Being given the opportunity to retreat from the ordinary and to pursue the meaning
10. Ritualized Rejoicing: Being honored in ways that joyfully support the learner's adult growth

In short, teachers of adults are most effective when they are skilled facilitators, mentors and guides and when they are both credible (demonstrate subject matter expertise) and are respectful of the learner experience.

Suggestions for Building Classroom Community

Coming together in shared experience for common purpose is what connects or binds people to one another in "community." Community is built when:

- People build meaningful relationships based on knowing each other in personal ways, i.e. by sharing stories or by sharing study
- People develop a shared vocabulary that acts as a reference point for discussion and decisions.
- A safe and non-judgmental environment where all well-intentioned inquiries are welcomed and encouraged and open space is created for talking about important and personal concerns.

Facilitating Discussions and Using Questions Effectively

Diane Tickton Schuster's *Jewish Lives, Jewish Learning: Adult Jewish Learning in Theory and Practice* (Behrman House 2003) is a very helpful resource to consult if you are interested in strategies for effective questioning (pages 204-5) or suggestions for facilitating discussions (pages 200-3).

¹ Diane Tickton Schuster, *Jewish Lives, Jewish Learning: Adult Jewish Learning in Theory and Practice* (Behrman House 2003), 87.

² Schuster, *Jewish Lives, Jewish Learning: Adult Jewish Learning in Theory and Practice*, 89

³ Schuster, *Jewish Lives, Jewish Learning: Adult Jewish Learning in Theory and Practice*, 52

Introduction to Judaism

| Theme/Unit | Session | |
|--|---------|--|
| The Jewish People, Beliefs and Sacred Texts | 1 | What is Judaism?—Who are the Jewish People? |
| | 2 | People of the Book |
| | 3 | Jewish Prayer and the Synagogue |
| | 4 | What do Jews Believe? |
| Living a Jewish Life | 5 | Creating a Jewish Life and Home |
| | 6 | Marriage, Partnership and More |
| | 7 | Raising <i>Menschen</i> |
| | 8 | Death and Mourning |
| Living in Jewish Time | 9 | The Calendar and Shabbat |
| | 10 | The <i>Yamim Nora'im</i> (High Holidays): The Days of Awe |
| | 11 | The Three Festivals |
| | 12 | Other Jewish Holidays |
| The Jewish Story | 13 | From Creation to the Enlightenment |
| | 14 | The <i>Shoah</i> (Holocaust) |
| | 15 | Israel and Zionism |
| | 16 | The American Jewish Experience and Understanding Diversity |
| Choosing Judaism | 17 | Becoming Part of a Jewish Family and the Jewish People, Conversion and <i>Shalom Bayit</i> |
| | 18 | Next Steps—Becoming Part of the Jewish Community |

Introduction to Judaism

| Theme/Unit | Session | Topics |
|--|---|---|
| The Jewish People, Beliefs and Sacred Texts | 1 What is Judaism?— Who are the Jewish people? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions and Participants' Stories • Explicate: Syllabus, Book List, Reading, Journal Questions, Extend the Learning Options • Expectations • Who is a Jew? • God, Torah and Israel Framework • Why Hebrew? • Participants' Questions |
| | 2 People of the Book | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bible • Midrash • Talmud (<i>Mishnah</i> and <i>Gemara</i>) • Commentary • Codes • Responsa • Contemporary Commentary (social media/tech based) • Follow a Jewish Value (eg. gratitude, honesty, <i>tzedakah</i>) through each Text Genre • Creating a Jewish Library • Online Jewish Resources |
| | 3 Jewish Prayer and the Synagogue | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why pray—What is Prayer? • <i>Beit T'filah</i>, <i>Beit Midrash</i>, and <i>Beit Knesset</i> • Tour of the Sanctuary • <i>Kippah</i>, <i>Tallit</i> and <i>Tefillin</i> • <i>Keva</i> and <i>Kavanah</i> • The Language of Prayer: Hebrew and the Vernacular • Structure and Choreography of <i>T'filah</i> • Prayer Outside the Synagogue • <i>Brachot</i> and the <i>Bracha</i> Formula • <i>Hazanut</i> and the Music of Prayer |

| Theme/Unit | Session | Topics |
|--|---|---|
| The Jewish People, Beliefs and Sacred Texts | 4 What do Jews Believe? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God • <i>B'rit</i>/Covenant • Chosenness • <i>Kedushah</i>/Holiness • <i>Mitzvah</i> • <i>Halachah</i> |
| Living a Jewish Life | 5 Creating a Jewish Life and Home | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created in the Image of God (related to values and daily interactions) • <i>Mezuzah</i> and <i>Hanukkat Habayit</i> • Objects that Make a Home Identifiably Jewish (Jewish books, art, music, ritual objects) • Jewish Values and Ethics • <i>Kashrut</i> and Food Ethics (<i>Shmirat Haguf, Baal Tashchit, Tzar Baaley Chayim</i>) • Home Observance • Later Adulthood • Online Resources |
| | 6 Marriage, Partnership and More | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love and Sex • Birth Control • Marriage and Partnering • The Wedding Ceremony • Divorce |
| | 7 Birth and Raising Up the Next Generation, and the Wisdom of Adulthood | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth and Adoption, <i>B'rit Milah</i> and <i>Simchat Bat</i> • Views of Fertility • Genetic Testing • Considerations about Terminating a Pregnancy • Jewish Education • Jewish Camping • Bar/Bat Mitzvah • Confirmation • “It Takes a Village”—the Role of Community |

| Theme/Unit | Session | Topics |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Living a Jewish Life | 8 Death and Mourning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of Life • Death • Mourning • Organ Donation • Views about Afterlife |
| Living in Jewish Time | 9 The Calendar and <i>Shabbat</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Jewish Calendar • <i>Shabbat</i> |
| | 10 The <i>Yamim Nora'im</i> (High Holidays)—The Days of Awe | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sin and Forgiveness • <i>S'lichot</i> • <i>Rosh HaShannah</i> • <i>Yom Kippur</i> |
| | 11 The Three Festivals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sukkot</i> (and <i>Sh'mini Atzeret</i> and <i>Simchat Torah</i>) • <i>Pesach</i> • <i>Shavuot</i> |
| | 12 Other Jewish Holidays | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hanukkah</i> • <i>Tu BiSh'vat</i> • <i>Purim</i> • <i>Tishah B'Av</i> • Marking Holidays of Other Faith Traditions |
| The Jewish Story | 13 From Creation to the Enlightenment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience and Adaptation |
| | 14 The <i>Shoah</i> (Holocaust) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Semitism • The <i>Shoah</i> • <i>Yom HaShoah</i> • Jewish Views of Evil |
| | 15 Israel and Zionism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zionism • The Modern State of Israel • <i>Yom HaZikron</i> • <i>Yom HaAatzmaut</i> • Understanding and Contextualizing the Conflict |

| Theme/Unit | Session | Topics |
|------------------|--|---|
| The Jewish Story | 16 The American Jewish Experience and Understanding Diversity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Di Goldene Medinah</i> (The “Golden Country”) • The Evolution of and Principles Guiding Reform Judaism and the Other Movements • The Range of Belief and Practice Within Each Movement • Beyond Denominations • “Secular” Jews |
| Choosing Judaism | 17 Becoming Part of a Jewish Family, and the Jewish People, Conversion and <i>Shalom Bayit</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious Perspectives and Decisions Evolve throughout Life • The Conversion Process • Family Issues and <i>Shalom Bayit</i> • Community attitudes • Looking back: “Panel Discussion” |
| | 18 Next Steps—Being Part of the Jewish Community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being part of the Jewish Community • “Ask the Rabbi” • <i>Siyum</i> |

The Jewish People, Beliefs and Sacred Texts

Session One: What is Judaism?—Who are the Jewish people?

Big Ideas

- Each participant is on their own unique journey and the journey can be enriched by being an engaged participant in the class community.
- The strands of God, Torah, and Israel woven together create the fabric of Judaism.
- For generations and generations, Hebrew has been a language of the Jewish people.

Key Content

1. Welcome, Introductions and Participants' Stories
 - a. Introduce yourself and share some of your own story.
 - b. Ask participants to introduce themselves and share what brings them to this program.
2. Explicate: Syllabus, Book List, Reading, Journal Questions, Extend the Learning Options.
3. Expectations
 - a. Clarify your “attendance” expectations
 - i. Does your community have an attendance requirement in order to receive a certificate of completion?
 - ii. Let participants know if you want them to let you know if they can't come. (Asking them to let you know if they can't come sends a strong message that you care about them and their participation.)
 - iii. Out of respect for you and your time, class will start and end on time.
 - b. Make sure participants know how to reach you in-between sessions with questions or concerns.
 - c. Questions are welcomed and honored.
 - d. Encourage your students to be curious! This experience is about looking at the world in a different way. Bring your questions and observations to class.
 - e. Explain the relationship of the readings to the content covered in class. Explain that doing the reading in advance will foster a more meaningful class experience.
 - f. Discuss how the journal questions and extend the learning options help make more personal meaning of the material covered. Let participants know if you will read and/or comment on their journals. Do you want the journals emailed to you each week? For clarity, the syllabus includes the journal prompts with the topic and reading. The journal reflection will be more helpful if it is written following the class session, and so we recommend that the journal be completed before the start of the next class.
 - g. Create a signup sheet of dates for snacks.
 - h. Set dates for *Shabbat* dinners and group attendance at *Shabbat* services.
 - i. Discuss how “community” enriches the experience of the program.
 - j. Be explicit about the class as a safe and non-judgmental environment where all well-intentioned inquiries are welcomed and encouraged and open space is created for talking about important and personal concerns.
 - k. Come to a class agreement on what is appropriate (food allergies, *kashrut* concerns, expense) to bring for snack.
4. Who is a Jew?
 - a. Halachic Definition
 - b. Reform Position on Patrilineal Descent

5. God, Torah and Israel Framework

- a. A way to understand Judaism is to picture it as a triangle of with God, Torah and Israel as its three angles.
 - b. God, Torah and Israel are each distinct but are all necessary parts of the whole.
 - i. God
 1. Judaism does not require a specific belief in God—*Yisrael* means to struggle with God.
 2. Jews have a multitude of understandings of God.
 - ii. Torah
 1. A noun derived from the verb “to teach” or “to guide” therefore means guidance or teaching
 2. In this framework, it is understood to mean the Jewish narrative and the vastness and variety of Jewish law and tradition and a world of ideas and values
 - iii. Israel/*Klal Yisrael*
 1. The Jewish people regardless of where they live
 2. Jews from different lands have much in common but they also have some unique traditions and perspectives.
 - c. Judaism can also be thought of as a tightly wound cord of 7 strands*:
 - i. A doctrine concerning God, the universe and humanity
 - ii. A moral code (values and ethics) for the individual and society
 - iii. A system of ceremonies and customs
 - iv. A body of law
 - v. A sacred literature
 - vi. Institutions through which all these find expression
 - vii. The people Israel (the Jewish people) the central strand around which the others are wound
 1. While the strands are distinct, they are wound ever so tightly together from centuries of experience, that it is impossible to really pull them apart.
 2. That said, individual Jews find that some strands speak more to them than others as they move through their lives.
- *Adapted from Basic Judaism by Milton Steinberg
- d. Jews can be divided into 2 groups: traditionalist and modernists. They have more in common than what separates them. Their viewpoints are not 2 different religions but variants of one.

6. Why Hebrew?

- a. For generations and generations Hebrew has been a language of the Jewish people.
 - i. Liturgy and Jewish texts widely available in English today
 - ii. The *Kaddish*—a prayer of significance to the mourner was written in the vernacular Aramaic.
- b. Some students are very eager to learn to read Hebrew, some are intimidated by the idea and some are not interested. Here are two activity suggestions to help the class share ideas and make the case for learning Hebrew.
 - i. Affinity Grouping:
 1. Ask students to privately record on a large post-it note all the reasons (one reason/note) that they feel it is important to learn to Hebrew.
 2. Once everyone is done, ask them to put their notes on the wall.

3. Without any talking ask group to work together to arrange the reasons into categories. If the group is too large, put half the notes on one wall and half on another and have 2 groups. (It is fine that they will not all have the same notes to work with.)
4. Read through the list and give each category a name.
5. Discuss the reasons by category.
- ii. Taking the temperature
 1. Record a variety of responses to the question “why learn Hebrew” on small posters (one reason/poster or sentence strip) before class.
 2. Hang the posters around the room and read them aloud to the class. Answer any clarifying questions only— do not get into a discussion about the responses yet.
 3. Give students a number of sticky dots and ask them to place a dot on each response that speak to them.
 4. Reflect on the responses that were most popular, least popular and in between.
- iii. Explain to students the goal and expectation of the Hebrew component of the class.
7. Participants’ Questions
 - a. Ask participants to jot down any questions or concerns on an index card that are on their minds so that you can be sure to address them. (Consider doing this each session.)
 - b. Let participants know that they can hand them back to you at the end of each session, without their names.

Glossary

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Yisrael</i> | <i>Am Yisrael</i> |
| <i>Klal Yisrael</i> | <i>Torah</i> |
| <i>Am</i> | <i>Ivrit</i> |

Journal Prompts

1. Why am I participating in this class? What are some of the questions I hope this class will help answer? What concerns and doubts do I have?
2. What draws me to Judaism? What about Judaism gives me pause?

Extend the Learning

1. Consider creating a few class norms to set this class experience apart from the other activities of the day and to create community. These could include reciting the *bracha* for study (*la’asok b’divrei torah*), a *bracha* before snack, a quick text study prepared by a student, practicing a *T’filah*, etc....
2. For the first snack consider arranging something sweet or made with honey and teach about the tradition of associating sweetness with the beginning of study.

Session Two: People of the Book

Big Ideas

- Judaism is a religion that values and centers around the contents of its sacred documents—each generation adding to the explication and interpretation of its texts.
- The Torah is the record of the Jewish people’s understanding of God and their world.

Key Content

1. What is the Nature of the Content of Each Text?
 - a. Bible
 - b. *Midrash*
 - c. *Talmud (Mishnah and Gemara)*
 - d. Commentary
 - e. Codes
 - f. Responsa
 - g. Contemporary commentary (including social media/tech based)
2. Follow a Jewish Value (e.g. gratitude, honesty, *tzedakah*) Through each Text Genre
3. Creating a Jewish Library
4. Online Jewish Resources

Glossary

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| Torah | Drash |
| Prophets | <i>Mishnah</i> |
| <i>Neviim</i> | <i>Gemara</i> |
| Writing | <i>Talmud</i> |
| <i>Ketuvim</i> | Commentary |
| <i>Tanach</i> | Codes |
| Bible | Responsa |
| <i>Midrash</i> | |

Texts

Moses received the Torah from Sinai and committed it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the Prophets; and the Prophets committed it to the men of the Great Synagogue. They said three things: Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples, and make a fence around the Torah. *Mishnah Avot* 1:1

Journal Prompts

1. Does the Bible speak to you? If so, how? If not, why not?
2. What do you believe about how the Bible came to be?
3. Through the study and discussion of text, Jews, for generations, add their voice to the ongoing Jewish dialogue. How might you consider joining this conversation?

Extend the Learning

1. Bring various versions of texts to share, i.e. a feminist translation of Torah, a traditional volume of Talmud, *Mikraot Gedolot*.
2. Show several translations of the same text to illustrate how translation is interpretation.

Session Three: Jewish Prayer and Synagogue

Big Ideas

- Judaism encourages both *keva* and *kavanah*.
- The “fixed” prayers of the siddur have evolved over the generations and are an expression of Jewish beliefs and experiences.
- The structure and choreography of *T’filah* and the ritual objects of the synagogue used for prayer are all expressions of timeless theological principles.
- Music plays a powerful role in prayer.

Key Content

1. Why Pray—What is Prayer?
2. *Beit T’filah*, *Beit Midrash*, and *Beit Knesset*
3. Tour of the Sanctuary
4. *Kippah*, *Tallit*, and *Tefillin*
5. *Keva* and *Kavanah*
6. The Language of Prayer: Hebrew and the Vernacular
7. Structure and Choreography of *T’filah*
8. Prayer Outside the Synagogue
9. *Brachot* and the *bracha* Formula as a Prism of Jewish Theology
10. *Hazanut* and the Music of Prayer

Glossary

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| <i>T’filah</i> | <i>Tallit</i> |
| <i>Beit T’filah</i> | <i>Tefillin</i> |
| Rabbi | <i>Keva</i> |
| <i>Chazan/Cantor</i> | <i>Kavanah</i> |
| <i>Beit Midrash</i> | <i>Brachot</i> |
| <i>Beit Knesset</i> | <i>Bimah</i> |
| <i>Torah</i> | <i>Aron Kodesh</i> |
| <i>Siddur</i> | <i>Minyan</i> |
| <i>Chumash</i> | <i>Nusach</i> |
| <i>Kippah</i> | <i>Trope</i> |

Texts

“To pray is to take notice of the wonder, to regain a sense of the mystery that animates all beings, the divine margin in all attainments. Prayer is our humble answer to the inconceivable surprise of living.” Heschel’s essay “Quest for God” in *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*

“Prayer is meaningless unless it is subversive, unless it seeks to overthrow and to ruin the pyramids of callousness, hatred, opportunism, falsehood. The liturgical movement must become a revolutionary movement, seeking to overthrow the forces that continue to destroy the promise, the hope, and the vision.”—Heschel’s essay “On Prayer” in *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*”

Gen 28:10-18

¹⁰ Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. ¹¹ When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. ¹² He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ There above it stood the Eternal, and God said: “I am Adonai, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴ Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. ¹⁵ I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” ¹⁶ When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, “Surely God is in this place, and I was not aware of it.” ¹⁷ He was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.” ¹⁸ Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. ¹⁹ He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.

Numbers 15:38-41

³⁸ Speak to the Israelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout the ages; let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner. ³⁹ That shall be your fringe; look at it and recall all the commandments of the Eternal and observe them, so that you do not follow your heart and eyes in your lustful urge. ⁴⁰ Thus you shall be reminded to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God. ⁴¹ I, the Eternal, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I, the Eternal, am your God.

Deuteronomy 6:4-7

⁴ Hear, O Israel! (Shema Yisrael) Adonai is our God, Adonai alone. ⁵ You shall love the Eternal your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day. ⁷ Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead; ⁹ inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Samuel 1:1-18

There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite[a] from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. ² He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. ³ Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to God Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the Eternal. ⁴ Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. ⁵ But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and Adonai had closed her womb. ⁶ Because Adonai had closed Hannah’s womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. ⁷ This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Eternal, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. ⁸ Her husband Elkanah would say to her, “Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don’t you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don’t I mean more to you than ten sons?” ⁹ Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of God’s house. ¹⁰ In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to God, weeping bitterly. ¹¹ And she made a vow, saying, “God Almighty, if you will only look on your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to Adonai for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.” ¹² As she kept on praying to God, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³ Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk ¹⁴ and said to her, “How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine.” ¹⁵ “Not so, my lord,” Hannah replied, “I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to Adonai. ¹⁶ Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.” ¹⁷ Eli answered, “Go in peace, and may the God of

Israel grant you what you have asked.”¹⁸ She said, “May your servant find favor in your eyes.” Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

Mishnah Brachot 1:2-3

² From what time in the morning may the Shema be recited? So soon as one can distinguish between blue and white. R. Eliezer says: Between blue and green. And it should be finished before sunrise. R. Joshua says: Before the third hour: for so is it the way of kings, to rise up at the third hour. He that recites it from that time onward suffers no loss and is like to one that reads in the Law.

³ The School of Shammai say: In the evening, all should recline when they recite [Shema], but in the morning they should stand up, as it is written, *And when you lie down and when you rise up* (Deut. 6:7). But the School of Hillel say: They may recite it every one in their own way, as it is written, *And when you walk by the way* (Deut. 6:7). Why then is it written, *And when you lie down and when you rise up*? [It means] the time when people usually lie down and the time when people usually rise up...

Babylonian Talmud, Ta’anit 2a

“Love Adonai your God and serve God with all your heart and soul” (Deuteronomy 11:13). What is the service of the heart? This is prayer.

Rashi on Numbers 15:39

The *tzitzit* reminds us of all of the commandments because the *gematriyah* [numerical value] of the word *tzitzit* is 600. In addition, there are 8 threads and 5 knots, which all together comprise 613.

Shulchan Arukh, Orech Chayim 98:1

One who prays needs to concentrate on the words he expressing, imagine that the Divine Presence is opposite him, and remove from his mind all distracting thoughts, so that he has a clear concentration and *kavannah*. As he would speak before an earthly king, organizing his words and considering them well, lest he stumble, how much more should he do this when standing before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be God, who probes all of our thoughts.

Journal Prompts

1. Attend a Shabbat service. What felt comfortable? Was anything about the experience uncomfortable?—Why do you think that was the case? What specific questions do you have about the service you attended?
2. What do you see as the purpose of prayer?
3. Do you believe that God hears prayer? What role does prayer play in your life? Have you ever found yourself praying in response to something that happened? If so, why did you pray? How was it helpful in the moment?
4. How do you think praying alone and praying as part of community compare?
5. Would you like to have a richer prayer life? Why and/or why not?
6. What questions or concerns do you have about prayer?

Extend the Learning

1. *Shabbat* Field Trip: Pick a couple of dates and encourage the class to go to services together. Help them organize to have *Shabbat* dinner together before or after *T’filah*.
2. *Seudah Shlisheet and Havdalah* Gathering: Encourage the class to gather together for a light *seudah shlisheet* and *havdalah* at someone’s home or at the synagogue. Prepare a text study a story or discussion guide.
3. Consider holding part of the class in the sanctuary so that the students can have a “guided tour” of the sanctuary and ritual objects on-site. How is this similar and different from other houses of worship?
4. Consider unrolling a Torah for all to see.

Session Four: What do Jews Believe?

Big Ideas

- Israel/*Yisrael* means to struggle with (one's understanding of) God.
- There are many different Jewish theological perspectives about God.

Key Content

1. God
2. Chosenness
3. *B'rit*/Covenant
4. *Kedushah*/Holiness
5. *Mitzvah*
 - a. Traditional and liberal understandings of “commanded”
6. *Halachah*

Glossary

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|-----------------|------------------------|
| <i>B'rit</i> | Kodesh |
| <i>Mitzvah</i> | <i>Am Kadosh</i> |
| <i>Kedushah</i> | <i>Torah blessings</i> |

Texts

Genesis 9:17

⁸ And God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹ “I now establish My covenant with you and your offspring to come, ¹⁰ and with every living thing that is with you—birds, cattle, and every wild beast as well—all that have come out of the ark, every living thing on earth. ¹¹ I will maintain My covenant with you: never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” ¹² God further said, “This is the sign that I set for the covenant between Me and you, and every living creature with you, for all ages to come. ¹³ I have set My bow in the clouds, and it shall serve as a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. ¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember My covenant between Me and you and every living creature among all flesh, so that the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures, all flesh that is on earth. ¹⁷ That,” God said to Noah, “shall be the sign of the covenant that I have established between Me and all flesh that is on earth.”

Exodus 19:5-6

⁵ Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed, all the earth is Mine, ⁶ but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel.”

Leviticus 19:1-2 (Holiness Code)

The Eternal said to Moses, ² “Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy because I, Adonai your God, am holy.

Deuteronomy 7:6

For you are a people consecrated to the Eternal your God: of all the peoples on earth the Eternal your God chose you to be God’s treasured people.

Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of Faith

1. God exists; God is perfect in every way, eternal and the cause of all that exists. All other beings depend upon God for their existence.
2. God has absolute and unparalleled unity.
3. God is incorporeal—without a body.
4. God existed prior to all else.
5. God should be the only object of worship and praise. One should not appeal to intermediaries, but should pray directly to God.
6. Prophets and prophecy exist.
7. Moses was the greatest prophet who ever lived. No prophet who lived or will live could comprehend God more than Moses.
8. The Torah is from heaven. The Torah we have today is the Torah that God gave to Moses at Sinai.
9. The Torah will never be abrogated, nothing will be added to it or subtracted from it; God will never give another Law.
10. God knows the actions of humans and is not neglectful of them.
11. God rewards those who obey the commands of the Torah and punishes those who violate its prohibitions.
12. The days of the Messiah will come.
13. The dead will be resurrected.

Journal Prompts

1. How has your understanding of God evolved over time? What are your current thoughts about God?
2. Do you have a relationship with God? Does this relationship affect your decisions and actions? Are there times you feel closer to God?
3. If you are a parent or imagine yourself becoming a parent, or in any relationship you have with a child, what would you like to teach your child/ren about God?
4. What are your big questions and doubts about God?
5. In your view are liberal Jews “commanded”? What role do you think *mitzvot* should play for liberal Jews?
6. What are the differences between *mitzvot* and good deeds?
7. Which theologian’s views on God that you read and /or discussed in class most resonate with you?

Extend the Learning

1. Tape multiple viewpoints around room, with quotes. Have participants pick one group to join and discuss questions you prepare.
2. Have student search in *siddurim* for various names of God.

Living a Jewish Life

Session Five: Creating a Jewish Life and Home

Big Ideas

- Judaism is lived by creating a home and lifestyle that embraces Jewish values, ethics, rituals and celebrations.

Key Content

1. Created in the Image of God
 - a. Belief reflected in the choices we make, in how we live our lives and create our homes
 - b. Humanity is God's partner in the world we create.
2. *Mezuzah* and *Hanukkat Habayit*
3. Objects that make one's Home Identifiably Jewish (Jewish books, art, music, ritual objects)
4. Jewish Values and Ethics
 - a. What makes a value "Jewish"?
 - b. *Midot* (personal ethical characteristics)
 - c. *Tzedakah*
 - d. Social Justice
 - e. *Derech Eretz*
 - f. Business Ethics
 - g. Reform Judaism's strong commitment to creating a world of justice and compassion
5. *Kashrut* and Food ethics (*Shmirat Haguf, Baal Tashchit, Tzar Baaley Chayim*)
6. Home Observance (vs. synagogue)
7. Later Adulthood
8. Online Resources:
 - a. ReformJudaism.org/learning
 - b. Online Jewish newspapers
 - c. reformjudaism.org/jewish-holidays/jewish-holiday-calendar
 - d. hebc.com

Glossary

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|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Mezuzah</i> | <i>B'tzelem Elohim</i> |
| <i>Klaf</i> | <i>Derech Eretz</i> |
| <i>Hanukkat Habayit</i> | Kosher/ <i>Kashrut</i> |
| <i>Mikdash M'at</i> | <i>Milchik/Halavie</i> |
| <i>Midot</i> | <i>Flaischik/Basarie</i> |
| <i>Tzedakah</i> | <i>Parve</i> |
| <i>Tikkun Olam</i> | |

Texts

Leviticus 19:18

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen. Love your fellow as yourself:
I am Adonai.

Deuteronomy 14:3-21

³ You shall not eat anything abhorrent. ⁴ These are the animals that you may eat: the ox, the sheep, and the goat; ⁵ the deer, the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope, the mountain sheep, ⁶ and any other animal that has true hoofs which are cleft in two and brings up the cud—such you may eat. ⁷ But the following, which do bring up the cud or have true hoofs which are cleft through, you may not eat: the camel, the hare, and the daman—for although they bring up the cud, they have no true hoofs—they are unclean for you; ⁸ also the swine—for although it has true hoofs, it does not bring up the cud—is unclean for you. You shall not eat of their flesh or touch their carcasses. ⁹ These you may eat of all that live in water: you may eat anything that has fins and scales. ¹⁰ But you may not eat anything that has no fins and scales: it is unclean for you. ¹¹ You may eat any clean bird. ¹² The following you may not eat: the eagle, the vulture, and the black vulture; ¹³ the kite, the falcon, and the buzzard of any variety; ¹⁴ every variety of raven; ¹⁵ the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull, and the hawk of any variety; ¹⁶ the little owl, the great owl, and the white owl; ¹⁷ the pelican, the bustard, and the cormorant; ¹⁸ the stork, any variety of heron, the hoopoe, and the bat. ¹⁹ All winged swarming things are unclean for you: they may not be eaten. ²⁰ You may eat only clean winged creatures. ²¹ You shall not eat anything that has died a natural death; give it to the stranger in your community to eat, or you may sell it to a foreigner. For you are a people consecrated to the Eternal your God. You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

Deuteronomy 16:20

Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive and occupy the land that the Eternal your God is giving you.

Micah 6:8

God has told you, O human, what is good, And what Adonai requires of you: Only to do justice And to love goodness, And to walk modestly with your God.

Journal Prompts

1. What do you think makes a Jewish home?
2. What about your life and home feels Jewish?
3. What might you want to add to your Jewish home and what might be the first steps towards this?
4. Which Jewish values do you feel enrich your life?

Extend the Learning

1. Bring in a *mezuzah* and *klaf* for students to see close up. Give students a sample of a *Hanukkat Habayit* ceremony to take home.
2. Encourage participants to add a contribution to a *tzedakah* box at home each week before the start of *Shabbat*.
3. Query the participants about their interest in contributing to a class *tzedakah* box. At the end of the program the group could direct funds collected to an organization of their choosing in recognition of their completion of class.

Session 6: Marriage, Partnership and More

Big Ideas

- The value concept of *B'tzelem Elohim* should permeate our interactions.
- Marriage is a sacred partnership and involves both rites and mutual responsibilities. Consider that for some course participants who are not with a Jewish partner, this may be a sensitive topic.

Key Content

1. Love and Sex
2. Jewish texts, beginning with the Bible, address both love and sex frequently.
3. Tradition teaches that a healthy sexual relationship is joyful and a mitzvah coupled with sacredness.
4. Birth Control
5. Marriage and Partnering
6. The Wedding Ceremony
7. Divorce

Glossary

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| <i>Kallah</i> | <i>Chuppah</i> |
| <i>Chatan</i> | The Seven Blessings (<i>Sheva Brachot</i>) |
| <i>Ketubah</i> | <i>Get</i> |
| <i>Aid/Aidim</i> | <i>Agunah</i> |

Texts

Mishnah Kiddushin 1:1

A woman is acquired in one of three ways... by money, written deed, or intercourse. How much money? Beit Shammai says by a *dinar* or its equivalent. Beit Hillel says by a *perutah* or its equivalent.

Babylonian Talmud, Yevamot 62b

Rabbi Tanchum said in the name of Rabbi Chanilai: A man who has no wife dwells without joy, without blessing, without goodness... "Without goodness" as it is written: "It is not good for a person to be alone." (Genesis 2:18).

From the Baal Shem Tov

From every human being there rises a light that reaches straight to heaven. And when two souls that are destined to be together find each other, their streams of light flow together, and a single brighter light goes forth from their united being.

Journal Prompts

1. In what ways do you feel the rituals and symbols of the Jewish wedding ceremony add meaning and/or an element of sacredness for the couple and for those present?
2. Does the Jewish view of love and sex align with yours?

Extend the Learning

1. Bring in an illuminated *ketubah* and copy of a *get* for students to view.
2. Compare various English *ketubah* texts.

Session 7: Birth and Raising Up the Next Generation, and the Wisdom of Adulthood

Big Ideas

- Jewish rituals beginning with birth connect individuals to the community and to family.
- Lifelong Jewish learning is at the core of engagement with Judaism.

Key Content

1. Birth and Adoption, *B'rit Milah* and *Simchat Bat*
2. Views on Fertility procedures
3. Genetic Testing
4. Considerations about Terminating a Pregnancy
5. Jewish Education
6. Jewish Camping
7. *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*
8. Confirmation
9. “It Takes a Village”—The Role of Community

Glossary

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|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>B'rit Milah/Bris</i> | <i>Bar Mitzvah/Bat Mitzvah</i> |
| <i>Brit bat or chaim</i> | <i>Aliyah</i> |
| Elijah's chair | Torah portion |
| <i>Sandek</i> | <i>Haftarah</i> |
| <i>Mohel</i> | Confirmation |
| Consecration | |

Texts

Genesis 1:28

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.

Genesis 17:9-13

⁹ God further said to Abraham, “As for you, you and your offspring to come throughout the ages shall keep My covenant. ¹⁰ Such shall be the covenant between Me and you and your offspring to follow which you shall keep: every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and that shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. ¹² And throughout the generations, every male among you shall be circumcised at the age of eight days. As for the homeborn slave and the one bought from an outsider who is not of your offspring, ¹³ they must be circumcised, homeborn, and purchased alike. Thus shall My covenant be marked in your flesh as an everlasting pact.”

Mishnah Niddah 5:6

The vows of a girl of age eleven years and one day must be examined. The vows of a girl of age twelve years and one day are valid...The vows of a boy of age twelve years and one day must be examined. The vows of a boy of age thirteen years and one day are valid.

Moshe Isserles, Gloss on Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim, 225:2

There are those who rule that one whose son has become bar mitzvah should recite the following blessing: ‘Blessed are You... Who has absolved me (*shep'tarani*) from responsibility for this one.’”

CCAR Resolution on Patrilineal Descent (1983)

The Central Conference of American Rabbis declares that the child of one Jewish parent is under the presumption of Jewish descent. This presumption of the Jewish status of the offspring of any mixed marriage is to be established through appropriate and timely public and formal acts of identification with the Jewish faith and people. The performance of these *mitzvot* serves to commit those who participate in them, both parent and child, to Jewish life.

Depending on circumstances, mitzvot leading toward a positive and exclusive Jewish identity will include entry into the covenant, acquisition of a Hebrew name, Torah study, bar/bat mitzvah, and *Kabbalat Torah* (confirmation). For those beyond childhood claiming Jewish identity, the public acts or declarations may be added or substituted after consultation with their rabbi.

Therefore, it is essential that a Reform Jew be well-educated so that he or she can make knowledgeable choices for integration of Judaism into his or her everyday life.

Journal Prompts

1. What meaning do you find in the rituals connected to birth and *bar/bat mitzvah*?
2. What role do you feel the Jewish “community” plays in raising its children?

Extend the Learning

1. Share contact information and website of local organizations that offer resources, information and services. Contact local Jewish agencies for postcards or flyers to share with students. Many cities participate in PJ Library that provides free Jewish books and music for children 0 -8 years old. Other communities provide other programs, eg. Chicago’s Federation has a robust jBaby Chicago and JUF Right Start program.

Session Eight: Death and Mourning

Big Ideas

- Rituals of death and mourning are focused on helping the mourner grieve, experience the support of community, and in time find his/her way back to daily life.

Key Content

1. Illness/End of Life
2. Death
3. Mourning
4. Organ donation
5. Views about Afterlife

Glossary

K'riah

Yizkor

Shiva

Kaddish

Sheloshim

Chevra Kadisha

Yahrzeit

Texts

Numbers 20:28-29

After Moses had stripped Aaron of his garments and put them on his son Eleazar, Aaron died there on the mountain top. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain. When the people realized that Aaron had died, all Israel mourned for him thirty days.

Babylonian Talmud, Ketubot 104a

“On the day when Rabbi [Yehudah HaNasi] died, the rabbis decreed a public fast and offered prayers for heavenly mercy. They, furthermore, announced that whoever said the Rabbi was dead would be stabbed with a sword. The Rabbi’s handmaid ascended to the roof and prayed, ‘The immortals desire the Rabbi [to join them] and the mortals desire the Rabbi [to remain with us]; may it be the will [of God] that the mortals may overpower the immortals.’ When, however, she saw how often he resorted to the privy, painfully taking off his ritual garb and putting it back on again, she prayed: ‘May it be the will [of God] that the immortals may overpower the mortals.’ As the rabbis continued incessantly continued their prayers for [heavenly] mercy, she picked up a jar and threw it from the roof to the ground. [For a moment] they ceased praying, and the soul of Rabbi departed to its eternal rest.”

Moses Maimonides (12th century), from “Moses Maimonides: Two Treatises on the Regimen of Health” American Philosophical Society 54 (1964)

“The physician, because he is a physician, must give information on the conduct of a beneficial regimen, be it [Jewishly] unlawful or permissible, and *the sick have the opportunity to act or not to act...* It is manifest that the [Jewish] Law commands whatever is of benefit and prohibits whatever is harmful in the next world, while the physician gives information about what benefits the body and warns against whatever harms it in this world.”

Yosef Karo, *Shulchan Aruch*, Yoreh De’ah 376

The comforters are not permitted to say anything until the mourner speaks first... when the mourner gestures with his head in a manner that suggests that he would like them to leave, they are not permitted to stay any longer.

Yosef Karo, *Shulchan Aruch*, Yoreh De'ah 380

These are the things that are forbidden to the mourner: he is forbidden to engage in work, to wash, to anoint, to wear shoes [of leather], or to engage in marital relations. He is also forbidden to read from the Scriptures, to extend greetings, or to launder his clothing... he is further forbidden to press his clothing, to cut his hair, to rejoice, or to restitch the tear during the entire thirty day period of mourning.

***Shulchan Aruch* 339:1, 19th Century Jewish Law Code**

“It is forbidden to do anything to a goses [actively dying] that would hasten his death ... and despite the fact that we see that he is suffering greatly during the dying process, and he would be better off dead, it is still forbidden to do anything to hasten his death for *the world and all that is in it are God's*, and that is God's will.”

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

“The Patient as Person”, *The Insecurity of Freedom* (1966)

“Physical vigor alone does not constitute total health. Nor is longevity the only purpose of living. Quality of living is as important as quantity of living.”

Journal Prompts

1. Which Jewish mourning rituals have meaning to you?
2. Which Jewish ideas about death are most attuned to your own? Which do not speak to you?

Extend the Learning

1. Consider inviting a Jewish funeral director to speak with the class.

Living in Jewish Time

Session Nine: The Calendar and Shabbat

Big Ideas

- Living a rich Jewish life is centered around living in Jewish time.
- The ancient Jewish calendar focused on the cycle of the moon with adjustments for the solar seasons, and continues to guide Jewish time for Jews around the world.
- Sanctifying *Shabbat* (setting *Shabbat* apart from the other days of the week) each week, creates a Jewish focus and a Jewish rhythm.

Key Content

1. The Jewish Calendar
 - a. hebc.com, and reformjudaism.org/jewish-holidays/jewish-holiday-calendar
 - b. Having the Jewish calendar is part of living in Jewish time
 - c. Review all the information that the calendar contains (Torah reading, candle lighting time, etc.)
 - d. It is lunar based with adjustments for solar seasons. The lunar year has 354 days.
 - e. The Jewish festivals are all connected to the planting and harvest cycle. To keep the holidays falling in their appropriate season an extra month—*Adar II*—is periodically added to the calendar.
 - f. *Rosh Hodesh*
 - g. Why the Reform movement follows the calendar of Israel in the celebration of *Yom Tov* for the *Shlosh R'galim*
 - h. A Jewish day begins with sunset reflecting the day as described in the 1st chapter of Genesis
2. *Shabbat*
 - a. The 4th commandment of the Torah instructs us to sanctify (make holy, set apart) *Shabbat* (share Exodus 20:8-11).
 - b. Observing *Shabbat* is a sign of/ a reaffirmation of the covenant between God and the Jewish people (share Exodus 31: 16-17)
 - c. How to celebrate a joyful Shabbat.
 - d. How do we remember and sanctify *Shabbat*?
 - i. Rest/cease labor
 1. Definition of *Melachah*
 - a. Exodus 31:16-18
 - b. 39 major categories of work (Mishnah *Shabbat* 7:2)
 - c. Reform perspective
 - ii. Rituals—*Shabbat* observance focused not only on what to abstain from but also upon rituals that one should do to enhance the meaning and celebration of *Shabbat*
 1. Preparation for *Shabbat*
 2. *Tzedakah*
 3. Candles
 4. *Shalom Aleichem*

5. *Kiddush*
6. Blessing Children
7. Washing and *HaMotzi*
8. 3 meals on *Shabbat*
9. *Birkat Hamazon*
10. *Havdalah*

Glossary

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|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Rosh Chodesh</i> | <i>Birkat Hamazon</i> |
| <i>Shabbat</i> | <i>Oneg</i> |
| <i>Shabbat Shalom</i> | Blessing Children |
| <i>Kiddush</i> | <i>Havdalah</i> |
| <i>HaMotzi</i> | <i>Bentscher</i> |
| <i>Challah</i> | |

Texts

“More than Israel (the Jewish people) have kept *Shabbat*, *Shabbat* has kept Israel”. Ahad Ha’am (1856 – 1927)

Genesis 2:1

The heaven and the earth were finished, and all their array. ² On the seventh day God completed the work that had been done, ceasing then on the seventh day from all the work that [God] had done. ³ And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, and ceased from all the creative work that God [had chosen] to do.

Exodus 20:8-11

⁸Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Eternal your God: you shall not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger who is within your settlements. ¹¹ For in six days God made heaven and earth and sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Eternal blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

Exodus 31: 16-17

The Israelite people shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout the ages as a covenant for all time: it shall be a sign for all time between me and the people of Israel.

Mishnah *Shabbat* 7:2

The main classes of work are forty save one: sowing, plowing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, cleansing crops, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking, shearing wool, washing or beating or dyeing it, spinning, weaving, making two loops, weaving two threads, separating two threads, tying [a knot], loosening [a knot], sewing two stitches, tearing in order to sew two stitches, hunting a gazelle, slaughtering or flaying or salting it or curing its skin, scraping it or cutting it up, writing two letters, erasing in order to write two letters, building, pulling down, putting out a fire, lighting a fire, striking with a hammer, and taking out from one domain into another. These are the main classes of work: forty save one.

Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of *Shabbat* 30:2-3, 5, 7-9, 14

² What constitutes honor of the *Shabbat*? One must wash his face, hands, and feet with hot water on erev *Shabbat*, in honor of *Shabbat*. He should then wrap himself in a fringed garment and sit in a dignified way

awaiting the arrival of the *Shabbat*, as if he were going to greet the king. The early sages used to gather their students on erev *Shabbat*, enwrap themselves and exclaim: ‘Let us go out to greet the Sabbath bride.’

³ Included in the honor of *Shabbat* is the donning of clean garments. One’s weekday clothing should be different from one’s *Shabbat* clothing...

⁵ A person must set the table for a *Shabbat* meal on Friday night, even if he feels no need for more than a minimal amount of food...in order to honor the *Shabbat*, a person must arrange his house while it is still daytime, light candles, set the table, and make the bed. All of these things constitute honor of *Shabbat*.

⁷ What constitutes delighting in the *Shabbat*? This is explained by the Sages to mean that one should prepare rich foods and sweet drinks for *Shabbat* consumption, each person according to his means. Praiseworthy is the one who spends much for *Shabbat* and for the preparation of numerous tasty dishes.

⁸ One who was raised in luxury and wealth such that everyday was like *Shabbat*, must nevertheless prepare different foods for *Shabbat* than he eats during the week.

⁹ A person is obligated to eat three meals on *Shabbat*: an evening meal, a morning meal, and an afternoon meal.

¹⁴ Cohabitation is regarded as one of *Shabbat*’s delights.

The Sabbath by A. J. Heschel

“The meaning of the Sabbath is to celebrate time rather than space. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to holiness in time. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation, from the world of creation to the creation of the world.”

“Judaism is a religion of time aiming at the sanctification of time.... Every hour is unique and the only one given at the moment, exclusive and endlessly precious.

Judaism teaches us to be attached to holiness in time, to be attached to sacred events, to learn how to consecrate sanctuaries that emerge from the magnificent stream of a year. The Sabbaths are our great cathedrals...”

Journal Prompts

1. What does living in Jewish time mean to me?
2. What aspects of my life are sacred and what aspects are unremarkable/commonplace? How do your lists compare?
3. What about *Shabbat* speaks to me? What might I consider adding to my *Shabbat* observance, and how might I go about making it a regular part of my week?

Extend the Learning

1. Explicate the text, practice reciting the Hebrew and explain and demonstrate the various practices of each ritual.
2. If you haven’t done so already, plan at least one Shabbat “Field Trip.
3. Pick a couple of dates and encourage the class to go to services together. Help them organize to have Shabbat dinner together before or after t’fillah.
4. Encourage the class to gather together for Seudah Shlisheet and Havdalah Gathering. Prepare a text study a story or discussion guide.

Session Ten: The Yamim Nora'im (The High Holidays)—The Days of Awe

Big Ideas

- Each year the *Yamim Nora'im* present us with a number of opportunities to reflect on our choices and behavior and to set a new path.
- Asking for and granting forgiveness is a key step in changing our behavior.

Key Content

1. Sin and Forgiveness
 - a. Born Innocent
 - b. *Yetzer Tov* and *Yetzer Ra*
 - c. To sin is to miss the mark
 - d. *Ben Adam LaMakom* and *Ben Adam LaChavero*
 - e. Teshuvah
2. *S'lichot*
3. *Rosh HaShanah*
4. *Yom Kippur*
5. Our Prayers Asking for Forgiveness are in the Plural

Glossary

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Yom Tov</i> | <i>Chet</i> |
| <i>S'lichot</i> | <i>Teshuvah</i> |
| 10 days of <i>Tshuvah</i> | <i>Machzor</i> |
| <i>Rosh HaShanah</i> | <i>L'Shanah Tovah Tikateivu</i> |
| <i>Tashlich</i> | <i>Yahrzeit</i> Candle |
| <i>Yom Kippur</i> | <i>G'mar Chatimah Tovah</i> |
| <i>Yamim Nora'im</i> | <i>Kol Nidre</i> |
| <i>Shofar</i> | <i>Yizkor</i> |

Texts

Leviticus 23:23-32

Adonai said to Moses, ²⁴ “Say to the Israelites: ‘On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of sabbath rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts. ²⁵ Do no regular work, but present a food offering to the Eternal.’” ²⁶ Adonai said to Moses, ²⁷ “The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and afflict your souls, and present a food offering to the Eternal. ²⁸ Do not do any work on that day, because it is the Day of Atonement, when atonement is made for you before the Eternal your God. ²⁹ Those who do not afflict themselves on that day must be cut off from their people. ³⁰ I will destroy from among their people anyone who does any work on that day. ³¹ You shall do no work at all. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. ³² It is a day of Sabbath rest for you, and you must afflict your souls. From the evening of the ninth day of the month until the following evening you are to observe your Sabbath.

Jonah 3:1-10

And the word of the Eternal came unto Jonah the second time, saying, ² Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. ³ So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of Adonai. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey. ⁴ And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. ⁵ So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. ⁶ For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. ⁷ And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither human nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: ⁸ But let human and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: let them turn everyone from their evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. ⁹ Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from God's fierce anger, that we perish not? ¹⁰ And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that God had said that would be done unto them; and God did not.

Babylonian Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 1: Mishna 1 & 2

There are four New Years: The first of Nissan is New Year for (the ascension of) Kings and for (the regular rotation of) festivals; the first of Elul is New Year for the cattle-tithe, but according to R. Eliezer and R. Simeon, it is on the first of Tishri. The first of Tishri is New Year's day, for reckoning of years, and for sabbatic years and jubilees; and also for the planting of trees and for herbs. ⁵ On the first day of Shebhat is the New Year for trees, ⁶ according to the school of Shammai; but the school of Hillel says it is on the fifteenth of the same month. ... At four periods in each year the world is judged: on Passover, in respect to the growth of grain; on Shavuot, in respect to the fruit of trees; on Rosh Hashanah all human beings pass before God as sheep before a shepherd, as it is written [Psalms 33:15]: "The One who has fashioned all their hearts understands all their works"; and on Sukkot judgment is given in regard to water (rain).

Pesikta Rabbati, Ch.40

The Holy One, Blessed be God, said to the people of Israel: 'Repent during these ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and I shall acquit you in judgment and create you anew... If you repent during these days and stand before Me on Yom Kippur, then even if your transgressions extend from the earth to the heavens, I shall whiten them as snow.'

Moses Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance 2:2

What constitutes repentance? That the sinner should abandon their transgression, remove it from their thoughts, and resolve in their heart not to repeat it...also, they must regret what they have done.

Kol Nidre (*Gates of Repentance*)

Let all our vows and oaths, all the promises we make and the obligations we incur to You, O God, between this Yom Kippur and the next, be null and void should we, after honest effort, find ourselves unable to fulfill them. Then may we be absolved of them.

Unetaneh Tokef (*Gates of Repentance/Mishkan HaNefesh*)

On Rosh HaShanah it is written, on Yom Kippur it is sealed...

Journal Prompts

1. Many cultures celebrate the new year with a party. Judaism marks the beginning of a new year with soul searching, prayer and asking others for forgiveness. In what ways does the Jewish approach speak to you and in what ways does it not feel quite right to you?

2. What are your thoughts about sin? How do your thoughts compare with Jewish ideas?
3. Each Yom Kippur we are implored to ask for forgiveness directly from those we have wronged. In your view, what constitutes authentic atonement?

Extend the Learning

1. Encourage a few participants to sound the *shofar*.

Session Eleven: The Three Festivals

Big Ideas

- Each of the holidays have unique rituals that connect us to their historical, religious and agricultural meaning.
- Celebrating the holidays empowers us to live in Jewish time and to feel connected to Jews around the world and throughout time.
- Judaism is sustained as each generation passes the Jewish story with the next generation, who in turn, adds their own voice and interpretation to the continuing saga of the Jewish people.

Key Content

1. Meaning of the *Shalosh R'galim*
 - a. Observance of pilgrimage and harvest holidays in Temple times
 - b. What happened with observance after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem
 - c. *Yizkor* recitation
2. *Sukkot* (and *Sh'mini Atzeret* and *Simchat Torah*)
 - a. Calendar
 - i. Dates of *Sukkot* and structure of *chag*
 1. *Chol HaMoed*
 2. *Sh'mini Atzeret*
 3. *Simchat Torah*
 4. Number of days celebrated by Reform Jews and in Israel and number of days celebrated outside of Israel by other movements
 - b. Biblical narrative about *Sukkot* commemorates events in the Jewish story
 - c. Biblical explanation of observance of *Sukkot* (Lev. 23:39-43)
 - d. Names of the holiday
 - e. Synagogues observances, including use and symbolic meaning of *lulav* and *etrog*
 - f. Home observances
 - g. Meanings of *Sukkot* in our lives
 - i. Considered most joyous of the pilgrimage festivals
 1. Happiness—a welcomed transition from the solemnness and introspection of the *Yamim Nora'im*
 2. Thanksgiving—for the bounty in our lives
 3. Hospitality—*Ushpizin* and inviting guests
 - ii. Like the *sukkah*, the material blessings in our lives are fragile and transitory; life is precarious.
 - iii. The juxtaposition of the bounty of the harvest and fragility of the *sukkah* remind of our obligation to care for those who face housing and food insecurity.

3. *Pesach*

- a. Calendar
 - i. Dates of *Pesach* and structure of *chag*
 1. *Chol HaMo-eid*
 2. Begin counting the *Omer*
 3. Number of days celebrated by Reform Jews and in Israel and number of days celebrated outside of Israel by other movements
- b. Biblical narrative about *Pesach* commemorates events in the Jewish story
 - i. Why the Israelites came and how they became slaves in Egypt
 - ii. Commemorates the exodus from Egypt
 - iii. Until this point the covenantal relationship was between God and individuals (eg. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) but now extends to the whole Israelite people. (I will take you to be My people... Exodus 6:7)
The covenantal relationship is a central theme of the *Pesach*.
- c. Biblical explanation of observance
 - i. “You shall explain to your child on that day: It is because of what God did for me when I went free from Egypt” (Exodus 13:8)
 - ii. “Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread...” (Exodus 12:15-19)
 - iii. Also see Deut. 16:3 and Num. 9:11
- d. Names of the holiday
- e. Synagogue observance
- f. Home observances
- g. Counting the Omer
- h. Meanings of *Pesach* in our lives
 - i. Compassion for and responsibility to help the poor, the stranger and the oppressed
 - ii. Freedom is to be prized, celebrated and not taken for granted.
 - iii. We all have our *Mitzrayim*—narrow places from which we need liberation.
 - iv. Judaism values learning by asking questions.
 - v. Each generation has a responsibility to tell its family story to the next generation.

4. *Shavuot*

- a. Calendar
 - i. Dates of *Shavuot*
 1. End of the counting of the *Omer*
 2. Number of days celebrated by Reform Jews and in Israel and number of days celebrated outside of Israel by other movements
- b. Biblical narrative/ *Talmud* about *Shavuot* commemorates events in the Jewish story
 - i. It took 50 days for the Israelites to travel from Egypt to the foot of Mount Sinai and “You shall proclaim that day to be a holy convocation” (Lev 23:21).
 - ii. The Torah does not connect *Shavuot* with revelation but the Talmud does. “The Torah was given to Israel on the 6th day of the 3rd month” *Shabbat* 86b
- c. Biblical explanation of observance

- i. “You shall count off seven weeks... Then you shall observe the Feast of Weeks to Adonai your God.
(Deut 16:9-10)

d. Names of *Shavuot*

e. Synagogues observance

f. Home observances

g. Meanings of *Shavuot* in our lives

The significance of holding confirmation on *Shavuot*

The significance of *Z'man Matan Torah*

The reading of Ruth teaches us to embrace the *ger*.

Glossary

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Chag</i> | 4 cups |
| <i>Chag Sameach</i> | <i>Matzah</i> |
| <i>Yom Tov</i> | Seder plate |
| <i>Chol HaMo-eid</i> | <i>Maror</i> |
| <i>Sukkot</i> | <i>Karpas</i> |
| <i>Sukkah</i> | Salt water |
| <i>Lulav</i> | 4 questions |
| <i>Etrog</i> | Elijah's cup |
| <i>Arba minim</i> | Miriam's cup |
| <i>Sh'mini Atzeret</i> | <i>Omer</i> |
| <i>Simchat Torah</i> | <i>Shavuot</i> |
| <i>Hakafah</i> | <i>Megillah</i> |
| <i>Pesach</i> | <i>Tikkun Leil Shavuot</i> |
| <i>Seder</i> | <i>Yizkor</i> |
| <i>Haggadah</i> | |

Texts

Exodus 12:15

¹⁵ Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the very first day you shall remove leaven from your houses, for whoever eats leavened bread from the first day to the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. ¹⁶ You shall celebrate a sacred occasion on the first day, and a sacred occasion on the seventh day; no work at all shall be done on them; only what every person is to eat, that alone may be prepared for you. ¹⁷ You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your ranks out of the land of Egypt; you shall observe this day throughout the ages as an institution for all time. ¹⁸ In the first month, from the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. ¹⁹ No leaven shall be found in your houses for seven days. For whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the community of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a citizen of the country. ²⁰ You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your settlements you shall eat unleavened bread.

Exodus 23:15-16

¹⁵ You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread—eating unleavened bread for seven days as I have commanded you—at the set time in the month of Aviv, for in it you went forth from Egypt; and none shall

appear before Me empty-handed;¹⁶ and the Feast of the Harvest, of the first fruits of your work, of what you sow in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in the results of your work from the field.

Leviticus 23:4-8

These are Adonai's appointed festivals, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times:⁵ The Eternal's Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month.⁶ On the fifteenth day of that month the Eternal's Festival of Unleavened Bread begins; for seven days you must eat bread made without yeast.⁷ On the first day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work.⁸ For seven days present a food offering to Adonai. And on the seventh day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work.”

Leviticus 23:39-44

³⁹ Mark, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the yield of your land, you shall observe the festival of the Eternal to last seven days: a complete rest on the first day, and a complete rest on the eighth day.⁴⁰ On the first day you shall take the product of hadar trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Eternal your God seven days.⁴¹ You shall observe it as a festival of God for seven days in the year; you shall observe it in the seventh month as a law for all time, throughout the ages.⁴² You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths,⁴³ in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I the Eternal your God.⁴⁴ So Moses declared to the Israelites the set times of the Eternal.

Deuteronomy 16:9-11

⁹ You shall count off seven weeks; start to count the seven weeks when the sickle is first put to the standing grain.¹⁰ Then you shall observe the Feast of Weeks for the Eternal your God, offering your freewill contribution according as Adonai your God has blessed you.¹¹ You shall rejoice before the Eternal your God with your son and daughter, your male and female slave, the Levite in your communities, and the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow in your midst, at the place where Adonai your God will choose to establish God's name.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

² A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

³ A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

⁴ A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

⁵ A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

⁶ A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

⁷ A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

⁸ A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Mishna Pesachim 10:4 (Source of the Four Questions)

They then mix him the second cup. And here the son asks his father (and if the son has not enough understanding his father instructs him how to ask), ‘Why is this night different from other nights? For on other nights we eat seasoned food once, but this night twice; on other nights we eat leavened or unleavened bread, but this night all is unleavened; on other nights we eat meat roasted, stewed, or cooked, but this night is all roasted. And according to the understanding of the son his father instructs him...

Vayikra Rabbah 30:12 & 30:14

Another explanation: “The fruit of a beautiful tree”—these are [referring to] Israel. Just like this citron (etrog), which has taste and has smell, so too Israel has among them people that have Torah and have good deeds. “The

branches of a date palm”—these are [referring to] Israel. Just like this date, which has taste and has no smell, so too Israel has among them those that have Torah but do not have good deeds. “And a branch of a braided tree (a myrtle)”—these are [referring to] Israel. Just like this myrtle, which has smell and has no taste, so too Israel has among them those that have good deeds but do not have Torah. “And brook willows”—these are [referring to] Israel. Just like this willow, which has no smell and has no taste, so too Israel has among them people that have no Torah and have no good deeds. And what does the Holy One, Blessed Be, do to them? To destroy them is impossible, but rather the Holy One, Blessed Be, said “bind them all together [into] one grouping and these will atone for those.” And if you will have done that, I will be elevated at that time. This is [the meaning of] what is written (Amos 9:6), “The One who built the upper chambers in the heavens” (indicating God’s elevation). And when is God elevated? When they make one grouping, as it is stated (Ibid.), “and established God’s grouping on the earth.” ... Rabbi Mani opened, “All of my bones shall say, “Adonai, who is like you” (Psalms 35:10). This verse was only stated for the sake of the lulav (the four species). The spine of the palm branch is similar to the spine of person. And the myrtle is similar to the eye. And the willow is similar to the mouth. And the etrog (citron), is similar to the heart. David said, ‘In all of the limbs, there are no greater ones than these, as they are compared to the entire body.’ This is [what is meant] by ‘All of my bones shall say.’”

Moses Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Sanctification of the New Month, 5:4

As long as the *Sanhedrin* functioned and the new month was designated according to the sighting [of the new moon], the people of Israel and in locations close by, whom the *Tishrei* messengers reached quickly, would observe only one day of *Yom Tov*. Those who dwelt far away [from Israel], whom the *Tishrei* messengers did not reach in time, would therefore keep two days out of doubt, for they were not certain which day the people of Israel had determined as the new moon.

Journal Prompts

1. How do you see integrating celebration of the holidays into your life and home?
2. What might celebrating the holidays add to your home and life?
3. How have you been able to pass through your own “*mitzrayim*” narrow places? How do you see Pesach rituals as vehicles for self-reflection and personal renewal?

Extend the Learning

1. With each holiday discussed, bring in as many ritual objects as possible to enable students to have hands-on experiences

Session Twelve: Other Jewish Holidays

Big Ideas

- Despite the challenges of being a minority people throughout history, the Jewish people continue to thrive.
- The challenge of participating in the cultural and intellectual life of the society in which Jews live while living a Jewish a life is a challenge Jews have faced throughout history.

Key Content

1. Hanukah
 - a. Calendar
 - i. Date of *Hanukkah*
 - ii. Number of days celebrated and relationship to *Sukkot*

- b. The Miracle of the story of *Hanukkah*
 - i. Historical understanding
 - 1. The spread of Hellenism and the assimilation of the of Jews and the loss of Jewish identity
 - a. Conflict between Jewish values and Greek values
 - 2. Refusal of a minority (Mattathias and his 5 sons and their followers) to submit to idolatrous religious demands from the Greeks
 - 3. Jewish valor against overwhelming odds
 - ii. Rabbinic addition to the story—the miracle of the oil (*Shabbat* 21b)
 - c. Textual explanation of observance
 - d. Names of the holiday and their meaning
 - i. Hanukkah
 - ii. Chag Urim
 - e. Synagogue observances
 - f. Home observances
 - g. Meanings of *Hanukkah* in our lives
 - i. Challenges of self-determination of a minority group
 - ii. Challenges of assimilation are not new; acculturation vs assimilation
 - iii. The few can prevail over the many
 - iv. Challenge when values of the majority culture and minority culture conflict
2. Tu BiSh'vat
 - a. Calendar
 - i. Date of Tu BiSh'vat
 - ii. Meaning of the name of the holiday
 - b. Origins in the *Mishnah*
 - i. Tithe levied on fruit grown
 - c. Customs
 - i. Seder
 - ii. Tree Planting
 - d. Meaning of Tu BiSh'vat in our lives
 - i. Connection to the land of Israel
 - ii. Focus on environmental concerns

Avot de Rabbi Natan 31

Planting is so important that if a sapling were in your hand, and you were told that the Messiah has come, first plant the sapling, then go out to greet the Messiah.

3. Purim

- a. Calendar
 - i. Date of *Purim*
 - ii. Leap year—*I Adar and II Adar*
- b. The Story of Purim
 - i. Content
 - ii. Historicity of story
 - iii. Origins of story unclear
 - iv. Why is a Jewish holiday based on an event that may not have happened?
 - v. Idea of *Nahafochu*—everything is opposite. Powerless to powerful, knowing between Mordechai and Haman
- c. Synagogues observances
 - i. Mitzvah of hearing *Megillah Esther*
- d. Home observances
 - i. Mitzvot of *Matanot Laevyonim, Mishloach Manot*.
- e. Meaning of *Purim* in our lives
 - i. Struggle against bigotry and persecution continues today.
 - ii. Esther's concern about publically sharing her Jewish identity mirrors the ambivalence or fear that some Jews feel today.
 - iii. Taking care of the poor is ongoing obligation.

4. Tishah B'Av

- a. The role of the Temple in Jewish life
- b. *Kohen, Levi, Yisrael*
- c. Historical events
- d. Observances
- e. Transition to the synagogue
 - i. *Shacharit, Minchah, and Maariv* replaced the sacrifices
- f. Meaning of *Tisha B'Av* in our lives
 - i. While liberal Jews do not long for the re-establishment of the Temple and sacrifices, the day marks a time of death, destruction, and disruption on Jewish life. It is a day of sadness to recall the calamities that have fallen on the Jewish people.
 - ii. A day to sit with the brokenness of the world.
 - iii. It is a time to reflect that even today devastation is inflicted on other peoples at the hands of their neighbors.

5. Marking Holidays of Other Faith Traditions

- a. Choosing Judaism can make celebrating holidays with family and friends of other faith traditions challenging
 - i. Honoring one's parents is an important mitzvah regardless of their religion.
 - ii. There is difference between celebrating a holiday yourself and being with family or friends as they celebrate a holiday in their homes or with their communities.
 - iii. Interfaith partners may want to reflect which aspects of their respective traditions need to be honored with their families, and where.

Glossary

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Hanukkah</i> | <i>Purim</i> |
| <i>Menorah</i> | <i>Megillah</i> |
| <i>Hanukkiyah</i> | <i>Esther</i> |
| <i>Shamash</i> | <i>Mordechai</i> |
| <i>Dreidel</i> | <i>Haman</i> |
| <i>Nes</i> | <i>Hamantaschen</i> |
| <i>Latke</i> | <i>Tisha B'Av</i> |
| <i>Tu BiShvat</i> | |

Texts

I Maccabees 3:36-58 and II Maccabees 10:5-8

Esther 9:20-28

²⁰ Mordecai recorded these events. And he sent dispatches to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Ahasuerus, near and far, ²¹ charging them to observe the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar, every year—²² the same days on which the Jews enjoyed relief from their foes and the same month which had been transformed for them from one of grief and mourning to one of festive joy. They were to observe them as days of feasting and merrymaking, and as an occasion for sending gifts to one another and presents to the poor. ²³ The Jews accordingly assumed as an obligation that which they had begun to practice and which Mordecai prescribed for them. ²⁴ For Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the foe of all the Jews, had plotted to destroy the Jews, and had cast pur—that is, the lot—with intent to crush and exterminate them. ²⁵ But when [Esther] came before the king, he commanded: “With the promulgation of this decree, let the evil plot, which he devised against the Jews, recoil on his own head!” So they impaled him and his sons on the stake. ²⁶ For that reason these days were named Purim, after pur. In view, then, of all the instructions in the said letter and of what they had experienced in that matter and what had befallen them, ²⁷ the Jews undertook and irrevocably obligated themselves and their descendants, and all who might join them, to observe these two days in the manner prescribed and at the proper time each year. ²⁸ Consequently, these days are recalled and observed in every generation: by every family, every province, and every city. And these days of Purim shall never cease among the Jews, and the memory of them shall never perish among their descendants.

Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 21b

Our Rabbis taught: The commandment of Hanukkah requires one light per household; the zealous kindle a light for each member of the household; and the extremely zealous—Beit Shammai maintain: On the first day eight lights are lit and thereafter they are gradually reduced [by one each day]; but Beit Hillel say: On the first day one is lit and thereafter they are progressively increased. Ulla said: In the West [Eretz Yisrael] two amoraim, R. Jose b. Abin and R. Jose b. Zebida, differ concerning this: one maintains, the reasoning of Beit Shammai is that it should correspond to the days still to come, and that of Beit Hillel is that it shall correspond to the days that are gone. But another maintains: Beit Shammai's reason is that it shall correspond to the bullocks of the Festival [of Tabernacles; i.e. Sukkot], while Beit Hillel's reason is that we increase in matters of sanctity but do not reduce ... Our Rabbis taught: It is incumbent to place the Hanukkah lamp by the door of one's house on the outside; if one dwells in an upper chamber, place it at the window nearest the street. But in times of danger it is sufficient to place it on the table. Raba said: Another lamp is required for its light to be used, yet if there is a blazing fire it is unnecessary. But in the case of an important person, even if there is a blazing fire another lamp is required. What is the reason for Hanukkah? As our Rabbis taught: On the twenty-fifth day of Kislev, the eight days of Hanukkah begin, during which it is forbidden to eulogize the dead or to fast. When the Greeks entered

the sanctuary of the Temple, they defiled all of the oil. When the Hasmoneans overpowered them and were victorious, they searched but could find only one cruse of oil that was intact with the seal of the High Priest. It contained only sufficient oil [to kindle the menorah] for one day, but a miracle occurred, and they were able to light with it for eight days. The next year, they designated these days as a festival with the recitation of hymns of praise and thanksgiving.

Jerusalem Talmud, Taanit 2:12

Though all other festivals be abolished, Hanukkah and Purim will never be annulled.

Journal Prompts

1. What advice do you have for someone who is invited to spend holiday time with family that celebrates Christmas (or any other faith based holiday) and has chosen to live a Jewish life? If you anticipate finding yourself in this situation at some point, what challenges might you encounter and what choices do you think you might make?
2. When the “pulls” of Jewish life and American culture they conflict, how do you balance them?
3. What do you see as significant challenges facing Judaism today? What do you attribute to the factors within Judaism and what do you attribute to the challenge of living in the American context?
4. What might celebrating Hanukkah or Purim add to your life?

Extend the Learning

1. Explain and practice the *brachot* for lighting the *hanukkiyah*. Demonstrate the lighting of the *hanukkiyah* with the *brachot*.
2. Display as many different *hannukkiyot* as possible to illustrate cultural influences on artistic interpretations.

The Jewish Story

Session Thirteen: From Creation to Enlightenment

Big Ideas

- Jewish history can be understood as the story of Jewish resilience and adaptation.

Key Content

1. Is the Bible “History”
2. Overview of the Family Tree from Adam and Eve to Twelve Tribes
3. Resilience and Adaptation
 - a. The Egypt Experience: From Slavery to Freedom in the Desert
 - b. Settling the land
 - c. Judges, Kings and Prophets
 - d. Fall of Jerusalem and the Exile
 - e. Rebuilding the Temple
 - f. Torah canonized, Midrash, Bible translated to Greek, Mishnah and the world of the rabbis
 - g. Beginnings of Christianity
 - h. The fall of the 2nd Temple
 - i. Massada
 - ii. Bar Kochba
 - iii. The Dispersion
 1. The transition to the synagogue
 2. Yavneh and Rabbinic Judaism
 - i. Mohammed and the rise of Islam
 - j. Crusades
 - k. Spanish Islamic Golden Age
 - l. Expulsion from England and France
 - m. The Inquisition and the expulsion from Spain—rise of Sephardic Diaspora
 - n. Ghetto
 - o. *Shulchan Aruch*
 - p. *Hasidim and Mitnagdim*

(The Beginnings of Modernity)

 - q. Moses Mendelson and the *Haskalah*
 - r. (The American and French Revolutions)
 - s. Emancipation: “To the Jews as Individuals, all rights. To the Jews as a people, no rights”
 - t. Pogroms and May Laws of 1881

Journal Prompts

1. Think of a person or an event from Jewish history and describe how it speaks to your life today.

Deepen the Learning

1. Consider creating a PowerPoint with artifacts to teach about each period.

Session Fourteen: The Shoah (Holocaust)

Big Ideas

- Resistance, adaptation and resilience are all part of the Jewish *Shoah* story.
- The Shoah has had a profound effect on the Jewish identity following WWII.

Key Content

1. Anti-Semitism
2. *The Shoah*
3. *Yom HaShoah*
4. Jewish Views of Evil

Glossary

Shoah

Yom HaShoah

Journal Prompts

1. What are your thoughts about the existence of God and suffering and evil in the world? Can God and evil both exist in the world?
2. What lesson/s from the *Shoah* speak to you?
3. If you are considering conversion and/or being part of a Jewish family, are you concerned about antisemitism? Why and/or why not?

Extend the Learning

Encourage students to visit a local Holocaust museum and/or watch an on-line recording of a Shoah survivor.

Session Fifteen: Israel and Zionism

Big Ideas

- The Jewish people's relationship to the land of Israel began in Biblical times and continues until today.
- The story of the modern state of Israel is complex and still evolving.

Key Content

1. Zionism
2. The Modern State of Israel
3. *Yom HaZikaron*
4. *Yom HaAtzmaut*
5. Understanding and Contextualizing the Conflict

Glossary

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Zionism | <i>Yom HaZikaron</i> |
| <i>Yisrael</i> | <i>Yom HaAtzmaut</i> |
| <i>M'dinat Yisrael</i> | Green Line |
| <i>Am Yisrael</i> | West Bank |
| <i>Hatikvah</i> | Gaza |
| 1948 | 1973 The Yom Kippur War |
| 1967 The Six Day War | |

Texts

Psalm 126:1-2

When Adonai restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like dreamers.

² Then were our mouths filled with laughter, and our tongues with singing; then said they among the nations, "Adonai hath done great things for them!"

Psalm 137:1-6

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and we wept, when we remembered Zion. ² We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. ³ For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required amusement, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." ⁴ How shall we sing the Eternal's song in a strange land? ⁵ If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning. ⁶ If I do not remember you, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I do not keep Jerusalem in memory even at my happiest hour.

Yehudah HaLevi (c. 1141)

My heart is in the east, and I in the uttermost west—My food has no taste. How shall it be sweet to me? How can I fulfill my vows and my bonds, while yet Zion lies beneath the fetter of Edom, and I in Arab chains. A light thing would it seem to me to leave all the good things of Spain—Seeing how precious in mine eyes to behold the dust of the desolate sanctuary.

***Hatikvah*, Naftali Herz Imber (c. 1880)**

In the Jewish heart
A Jewish spirit still sings,
And the eyes look east
Toward Zion.
Our hope is not lost,
Our hope of two thousand years,
To be a free nation in our land,
In the land of Zion and Jerusalem.

***Mi Shebeirach* for the Israel Defense Forces, Mishkan Tefilah DATE**

Bless the soldiers of Israel's Defense Forces, and everyone who stands guard in order to protect our people. May the Holy One, Blessed be God, protect them and save them from all troubles and afflictions, from all sickness and injury and send blessing to all their endeavors. May the words of the Prophets come to fruition through them 'and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. And each one shall sit under the vine and under the fig tree and none shall be afraid,' and let us say, Amen.

"Anat's Prayer for Israel" by Anat Hoffman, Director of the Israeli Religious Action Center—11/10/2015

My God, Eili
In this sacred moment, give us hope for Israel and her future.
Renew our wonder at the miracle of the Jewish State.
In the name of the pioneers who made the deserts bloom—give us the tools to cultivate a diversity of Jewish expression in Israel.
In the name of our fallen soldiers—give us courage to stand up to the words and ways of zealots. Those in our own midst and those among our neighbors.
In the name of Israeli inventors who have amazed the world with their innovations—help us apply the same ingenuity to finding a path to peace.
In the name of all these women and men—grant us the strength to conquer doubt and despair in Israel.
Replacing doubt with action.
Replacing despair with hope.
And let us say: Amen.

Journal Prompts

1. What role does Israel play in your life? Would you like this to change and if so, in what ways?
2. Being in relationship with the land of Israel is part of the Jewish narrative. The State of Israel is often discussed in American politics and in the media. What are your feelings about Israel? What role do you feel Israel should play in the lives of Jews in the diaspora?
3. Do you relate to the Jewish longing for Jerusalem? How so? If not, why?

Extend the Learning

1. Study the meaning of the words of *Hatikvah*.
2. Add alternative version, sung by Neshama Carlebach (see bibliography), or unpack Anat Hoffman's prayer and explore the issues the prayer raises.

Session Sixteen: The American Jewish Experience and Understanding Diversity

Big Ideas

- While not without many very significant challenges, Jews thrived in America, and Judaism evolved and continues to progress today.
- To insiders, there are gulfs between the movements and to outsiders, Jews of different orientations have more in common than differences with each other.

Key Content

1. *Di Goldene Medinah* (The “Golden Country”)
2. The Evolution of and Principles Guiding Reform Judaism and the Other Movements
3. The Range of Belief and Practice within Each Movement
4. Beyond Denominations
5. “Secular” Jews

Glossary

Reform Judaism

Conservative Judaism

Reconstructionist Judaism

Orthodox Judaism

Modern Orthodox Judaism

Orthodoxy

Journal Prompts

1. What do you think connects and separates Jews of different denominations?
2. Do you feel a connection to Jews of any movement? Why and/or why not?
3. What do you find inspiring and/or concerning about the Jewish experience in America?

Choosing Judaism

Session Seventeen Becoming Part of a Jewish Family and Jewish People, Conversion and *Shalom Bayit*

Big Ideas

- The Reform movement is committed to welcoming all who want to be part of its community.
- There are many ways to be part of a Jewish family.
- Judaism's process and attitude about welcoming *gerim* is influenced by cultural and historical context, and therefore, is continually evolving.
- While the decision to convert or to embrace a deeper Jewish commitment is highly a personal journey, it will likely have an impact on family members.

Key Content

1. Religious Perspectives and Decisions Evolve throughout Life
2. The Conversion Process
 - a. Historical perspective
 - b. Study
 - c. Participation in Jewish life
 - d. Sponsoring clergy
 - e. Choosing a Hebrew name
 - f. Personal decision and declaration of free choice
 - g. Leave behind other faith traditions
 - h. *Bet Din*
 - i. *B'rit (Milah or Hatafat Dam)*
 - j. *Mikvah*
3. Family Issues and *shalom bayit*
 - a. Maintaining your identity and connection to your family of origin
 - b. Becoming part of a Jewish family
 - c. Raising Jewish children
4. Community Attitudes
 - a. Lev. 19:33-34
 - b. Reform movement commitment to “open doors” and “audacious hospitality”
 - c. Status of Reform conversion in Orthodox world and in Israel
5. Looking Back: “Panel Discussion”

Glossary

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>Ger/Gerim</i> | <i>Mikvah</i> |
| <i>Giur</i> | <i>B'rit Milah</i> |
| <i>Ger Tzedek</i> | <i>Hatafat Dam B'rit</i> |
| <i>Shalom Bayit</i> | <i>Ben/bat Avraham v'Sarah</i> |
| <i>Bet Din</i> | Patrilineal descent |

Texts

Leviticus 19:33-34

When a *ger* resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. The *ger* who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were *gerim* in the land of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 10:19

And you are to love those who are foreigners (*gerim*), for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.

Ruth 1:16- 18

¹⁶ But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May Adonai deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.” ¹⁸ When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

Babylonian Talmud, Yevamot 47a-b

Our Rabbis taught: a person who wishes to convert at this time is told: ‘Why do you want to convert? Don’t you know that the people of Israel at this time are afflicted, pushed about, swept from place to place, and tossed about, and that tribulations come upon them?’ If he answers: ‘I know and I am not worthy [to be one of them],’ then we immediately accept him. We inform him of the punishment for not observing ‘Gleanings,’ ‘Forgotten Sheaves,’ ‘Corner of the Field,’ and ‘Tithe for the Poor,’ and we further tell him the punishment for violating the mitzvot. We say to him: ‘Be aware that up until now you could eat forbidden animal fat without being liable for the penalty of karet, you could profane Shabbat without incurring the punishment of stoning. But from now on, [you are liable]... Just as we tell him of the punishment for non-observance of the mitzvot, so too we describe the reward to him... We are neither too lengthy with the descriptions nor too detailed. If he accepts, then he is immediately circumcised... when he heals, we immerse him immediately, while two scholars stand by him and inform him of some of the lighter and some of the weightier mitzvot. When he has completed the immersion, he is considered as a Jew in all respects...

Sifrei, Numbers 108

Rabi says: The people of Israel entered the covenant [of the Torah] through three things: circumcision, immersion, and the presentation of offerings. Converts must do likewise.

Tanchuma Buber, Lech Lecha 6:32a

Dearer to God than all of the Israelites who stood at Mount Sinai is the convert. Had the Israelites not witnessed the lightning, thunder, quaking mountain, and sounding trumpets they would not have accepted the Torah. But the convert who did not see nor hear any of these things, came and surrendered himself to God and took the yoke of heaven upon himself. Can anyone be dearer to God than such a person?

Journal Prompts

1. How do I create a new Jewish path for myself while honoring my past? How can I honor values and celebrations with my family of origin as I create a Jewish life for myself?
2. If you are considering conversion, what do you feel you are giving up? What might you do to help yourself with that sense of loss?
3. As you are consider living a Jewish life, what are some of your hopes for the future and some of the challenges you foresee?
4. If you are a partner of someone considering living a Jewish life, what role do you want to play in supporting this decision and in creating a Jewish home together?

5. If you are joining a Jewish family which of your own faith values and family traditions do you want to preserve?

Extend the Learning

Consider taking a class trip to, or holding a class at the community *mikvah*.

Session Eighteen: Next Steps—Being Part of the Jewish Community

Big Ideas

- Jewish engagement and education is a lifelong Jewish journey.
- Judaism is lived in community.
- Question-asking is core to Judaism.

Key Content

1. Being Part of the Jewish Community
 - a. Organizations and institutions of the Jewish Community
 - b. What you might need
 - c. What you might have to give
2. “Ask Your Jewish Questions”
3. *Si’yum*

Glossary

K'hilah

Siyyum

Texts

Babylonian Talmud, Taanit 7b

Much I have learned from my teachers, more from my colleagues, but most from my students.

Journal Prompts

1. What do you see as the next steps in your Jewish journey?
2. What continuing and/or new involvements are you considering?
3. How might you find your place or increased involvement in the Jewish community? Are there Jewish organizations, institutions, or resources you are thinking about connecting with?
4. What gifts/talents do you bring to the Jewish community? Where might you want to share them?
5. What questions are on your mind? How might you get them answered?

Extend the Learning

1. Create a ritual or siyyum to mark the end the session.

Notes

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