**Basic Judaism**

**Course Outline**

This course is designed to educate people who wish to become Jews By Choice. It is also for Jews who want to learn more about our faith. The course is an introduction to Jewish beliefs, practices, and history from the Biblical period to the present. Students will become familiar with Jewish holidays, lifecycle events, and philosophical issues by reading key texts of the Jewish tradition. The diversity within the Jewish world - geography, gender, and modern religious movements - will be represented.

The course covers 18 sessions, from **January to May, 2021. The class runs from 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM on Monday evenings.**

Based on your prior knowledge and progress, you may be able to miss a class from time to time. If you do, **we will be recording each class** to catch up on your own schedule.

If you have a friend or significant other, they are also invited to take the course with you.

**There is no cost to you for this class.** Rabbi Brian will provide the readings to read before each class. It is a service our congregation provides on behalf of the Jewish community of La Crosse. However, there may be costs for religious articles, books you choose to own, and other expenses. These are outlined below, just after the Course Content.

Following is an outline of our curriculum. Depending on the time required to learn and discuss, some topics may extend into the next lesson (especially the sessions learning to read Hebrew).

The classes are designed to move along at the pace comfortable to that of the person choosing to live as a Jew, or become a more knowledgeable Jew.

| Week | Course Content |
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| 1  Jan. 11 | Introduction to Judaism  Expectations  **The Jewish Holiday Cycle: Rosh Hashanah & Yamim Noraim (High Holidays)**  High Holidays music and prayers  Jewish Calendar, Elul  Hebrew *– Alef bet, Lessons 1-3* |
| 2  Jan. 18 | **The Jewish Holiday Cycle: Yom Kippur**  Movements in Judaism - Comparison of Ideologies  Hebrew *Reishit Binah*, pp. 10-12 |
| 3  Jan. 25 | **The Jewish Holiday Cycle: Tu B’Shvat**  Biblical Texts and History  Prayer, Jewish meditation, Kavanah  Hebrew *Reishit Binah*, pp. 13-15 |
| 4  Feb. 1 | **The Jewish Holiday Cycle: Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret & Simhat Torah**  Introduction to Jewish worship and services  A first look at Basic Jewish Books: Torah, Tanakh, Mishna, Talmud, Midrash, Siddur  Hebrew *Reishit Binah*, pp. 16-18 |
| 5  Feb. 8 | G-d: Covenant with Avraham, at Sinai, 13 Characteristics  Deep dive into the Siddur  Blessings  **The Jewish Holiday Cycle: Purim**  Hebrew *Reishit Binah*, pp. 19-21 |
| 6  Feb. 15  Presidents  Day | **The Jewish Holiday Cycle: Passover, Haggadah, Seder**  How to Prepare for Passover  Hebrew *Reishit Binah*, pp. 22-24 |
| 7  Feb. 22 | Kashrut (Jewish Dietary Laws) – Why? How?  **The Jewish Holiday Cycle: Counting of the Omer**  K’riat Shema (The readings of the Shema), Themes and Theology, Mitzvot (Commandments)  Hebrew *Reishit Binah*, pp. 25-27 |
| 8  Mar. 1 | Israel: History and Meaning to Contemporary Jews  **The Jewish Holiday Cycle: Yom Hazikaron, Yom HaAtzma’ut**  Hebrew *Reishit Binah*, pp. 28-30 |
| 9  Mar. 8 | Shabbat - Its Meaning and Centrality in Judaism  Observing & Remembering - Two Dimensions of Shabbat  Hebrew *Reishit Binah*, pp. 31-33 |
| 10  Mar. 15 | How to Make Shabbat at Home  Mysticism and Kabbalah  Hebrew *Reishit Binah*, pp. 34-37 |
| 11  Mar. 22 | Songs and Chants of the Synagogue:Trope, Nusah, MiSinai Tunes, Cantorial Music  **The Jewish Holiday Cycle: Chanukah**  Hebrew *Reishit Binah*, pp. 38-41 |
| 12  Mar. 29 | Jewish Home and Family Life: Part I  Birth Naming, Millah, Pidyon HaBen, and choosing a name as a convert  Hebrew *Reishit Binah*, pp. 42-45 |
| 13  Apr. 5 | Anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, and its impact on the Jewish psyche  **The Jewish Holiday Cycle: Yom HaShoah (April 8 this year)**  Tzedakah and Gemilut Hassidim; Shalom Bayit  Hebrew *Reishit Binah*, pp. 46-49 |
| 14  Apr. 12 | Jewish Home and Family Life: Part II  Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Marriage Divorce, Death  Hebrew *Reishit Binah*, pp. 50-53 |
| 15  Apr. 19 | Biblical Texts and History  Yiddish songs, expressions, stories, foods, humor  Hebrew *Reishit Binah*, pp. 54-57 |
| 16  Apr. 26 | **The Jewish Holiday Cycle: Shavuot**  The Book of Ruth  Affiliating with a new religion and community  Hebrew *Reishit Binah*, pp. 58-62 |
| 17  May 3 | Conversion Practicalities & Unanswered Questions  An Open Forum  Preparing for the Conversion Ceremony  Selecting Hebrew Names  Scheduling  Hebrew *Reishit Binah*, pp. 63-66 |
| 18  May 10 | Brit Milah (men), Mikveh, Bet Din, Conversion Ceremony  **No Class – May 17 is Shavuot, Day 1 – service attendance** |
| 19  May 24 | Optional additional class:  Bar/Bat Mitzvah  Welcoming Ceremony |

**Cost considerations for you:**

* Whichever Jewish books you will want to own for your library
* Mikvah (ritual bath) fee
* Brit Milah or Hatafat Dam Brit (for men)
* Tallit, Kippot, Tefillin
* Mezuzot, other Judaica
* Candlesticks, Shabbat candles
* Menorah
* Wine, wine cup
* Havdalah candle and spices

**Bibliography**

We will provide all reading and study materials from the following texts. You may want to buy some of these for your own personal Jewish library:

* *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice,* by Rabbi Isaac Klein. Conservative Jewish practice*.*
* *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People: From the Time of the Patriarchs to the Present*.. Barnavi, Eli, ed. 1992. New York: Schocken Books
* *Artscroll Siddur* (Orthodox prayer book).
* *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts*, edited by Barry W. Holtz, Simon & Schuster, 1986.
* *Book of Jewish Belief -* by Louis Jacobs
* *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*. Biale, David , ed. New York: Schocken Books.
* *Entering Jewish Prayer: A Guide to Personal Devotion and the Worship Service* - by Reuven Hammer
* *Introduction to Judaism: A Sourcebook. New York: UAHC Press.* Einstein, Stephen J, and Lydia Kukoff, eds. 1999.
* *Jewish Literacy,* by Rabbi Joseph Telushkin. Morrow
* *Jewish Living, by Mark Washofsky. Contemporary Reform Practice. URJ Press.*
* *Judaism: Revelation and Traditions.* Fishbane, Michael. 1988. San Francisco: HarperCollins.
* *Kol Haneshama: Shabbat v’Hagim* (Reconstructionist prayer book)
* *Living a Jewish Life: Jewish Traditions, Customs and Values for Today's Families -* by Anita Diamant, Howard Cooper
* *Mishkan Tefilah* (Reform prayer book).
* *My Prayer: Volume 2, Shabbat Prayers.* By Nissan Mindel
* *Reisheet Binah – Hebrew Crash Course.* National Jewish Outreach Program.
* *Sacred Fragments: Recovering Theology for the Modern Jew.* Gillman, Neil. 1990. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society
* *Shalom Aleichem - Learn to Read the Hebrew Prayer Book -* by Noah Golinkin *The Jewish Holidays* - by Michael Strassfeld
* *Siddur Sim Shalom* (Conservative prayer book).
* *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures, The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text*, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1st Special edition, 1985.
* *The Jewish Cultural Tapestry: International Jewish Folk Traditions*, by Steven M. Lowenstein, Oxford University Press, 2002
* *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays*, by Rabbi Irving Greenberg, Simon & Schuster, 1988/1993.
* *The Life of Judaism*, edited by Harvey E. Goldberg, University of California Press, 2001
* *The Newish Jewish Encyclopedia:* : From Abraham to Zabar's and Everything in Between. Butnick, Liebovitz, Oppenheimer.
* *The Sabbath*, by Abraham Joshua Heschel, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975.
* *The Siddur Companion.* Rabbi Paul H. Vishny. Devora Publishing, New York.
* *To Be a Jew, by Rabbi Hayyim Halevy Donin.*
* *To Pray as a Jew, by Rabbi Hayyim Halevy Donin.*

**Useful Websites**

Congregation Sons of Abraham <https://lacrosse.synagogue.org>

Sefaria.org [www.sefaria.org](http://www.sefaria.org)

My Jewish Learning <http://myjewishlearning.com>

Interactive Jewish Calendar <http://www.hebcal.com/hebcal/>

Jewish History Resource Center <http://www.dinur.org//1.html>

Jewish Language Research Website <http://www.jewish-languages.org/>

Jewish Music Web Center <http://www.jmwc.org/>

Chabad Lubavitch [www.chabad.org](http://www.chabad.org)

Reform Judaism [www.urj.org](http://www.urj.org)

Jewish Encyclopedia [www.jewishencyclopedia.com](http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com)

Judaism 101 <http://jewfaq.org/> an online encyclopedia of Judaism, covering Jewish beliefs, people, places, things, language, scripture, holidays, practices and customs.