



## UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM Course Syllabus, page 1 of 1

Save this Syllabus! You will need the information, topics and Journal assignments until the end of course.

- Sponsor:** **UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM**  
15760 Ventura Boulevard, Suite 1125, Encino, CA 91436  
(818) 907-8740 or toll free (888) 834-8242  
Rabbi Suzanne Singer, INTRO Director; Beverly Ross, INTRO Registrar
- Location:** **Temple Israel**  
3538 E. Third Street  
Long Beach, CA 90814  
562-434-0996 [please do not call the temple office to register for this course]
- Time:** **Wednesdays, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.** *Please Come On Time!*
- Instructor:** **Rabbi Steve Moskowitz**  
Email: rabsam@tilb.org

Date	Class Topic
1. Jan. 16	<b>BEGINNINGS</b> Orientation and book distribution.  <b>SHABBAT I: HOLINESS AND GOD</b> The Jewish sense of time and the role of Shabbat The concept of holiness in Judaism The Messiah God <i>Journal: Describe your feelings about starting this program. Write a personal statement about “where you are” in your religious or “spiritual” life now.</i>
2. Jan. 23	<b>SHABBAT II: PRAYER</b> Prayer as experienced particularly during Shabbat Synagogue worship and home blessings; the prayers in the service <i>Tzedakah</i> <i>Parashat haShavua</i> (the weekly Torah portion). <i>Reading: The Jewish Home</i> , chapter 2; <i>Sourcebook</i> p. 197; <i>Gates of Shabbat</i> <i>Journal: How might you observe Shabbat in a meaningful way? (Take a look at Resource Sheet 86 and pick two items you might do.)</i> <i>Do you pray? What motivates you? What setting works? What words emerge?</i>

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**Homework:** Please try to read the titled chapter(s) in the **Jewish Home** (Syme) and the **Sourcebook** (Einstein & Kukoff) each week *prior* to attending class. Pages indicated in the syllabus for the **Sourcebook** are the first pages of the appropriate section.



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3. Jan. 30

#### **SUKKOT: PERMANENCE AND FRAGILITY**

Simchat Torah and the Centrality of Torah

Notable Jews from Abraham to Wiesel: Ushpizin as an entry into the Patriarchs/Matriarchs and other important Jewish figures

Ecclesiastes

**Reading:** *The Jewish Home*, ch. 5; *Sourcebook*, p. 291.

**Journal:**

1. Make a list of Jewish guests, past or present, whom you would invite to your Sukkah
2. Of the four types of people described in *Leviticus Rabbah 30:12* (Resource Sheet 104 in *Sourcebook*, p.293), which one do you most resemble?
3. How would you like to build a Sukkah for your family? Who could help you?

**SHABBATON – A SHABBAT EXPERIENCE!**

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2<sup>ND</sup> 10 :00AM – 3:00PM @ BETH SHIR SHOLOM**

ATTENDANCE AT ONE SHABBATON IS A COURSE REQUIREMENT (CHECK WITH URJ OFFICE IF YOU CANNOT ATTEND THIS SHABBATON).

4. Feb. 6

#### **BIRTH AND COVENANT (BRIT)**

God's covenant with the Jewish people.

Entering into the covenant at Birth: Brit Milah and Baby Naming

The concept of Mitzvot: obligations, commandments or commitments?

**Reading:** *The Jewish Home*, ch. 13, 14, 15 (pp. 108-111); *Sourcebook*, p. 6.

**JOURNAL:** Make two lifecycle charts, one showing ceremonies which marked important milestones in your life and one reflecting important milestones you imagine for your children. What feelings do you experience when acknowledging the differences?

5. Feb. 13

#### **EDUCATION/JEWISH TEXTS**

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah

The role of Torah in Jewish life

**Reading:** *The Jewish Home*, ch. 15; *Sourcebook*, p. 91.

**Journal:** How is your life affected by what you know of Torah?

6. Feb. 20

#### **SHAVUOT: REVELATION**

The Ten Commandments and Other Laws

The Reform Platforms of 1885 and 1999

**Reading:** *The Jewish Home*, ch. 11, 12; *Sourcebook*, p. 232; *Tanakh, The Book of Ruth*, p. 1419.

**Journal:** Do you see Judaism primarily as a system of laws? Ideas? Moral values?

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- 7. Feb. 27**      **JEWISH MARRIAGE**  
*Reading: The Jewish Home, ch. 16, 17; Sourcebook, p. 97.*  
*Journal: Kiddushin is the Hebrew term for wedding. What makes a relationship “sacred?” In what ways can you enhance the holiness of your relationship?*
- 8. Mar. 5**      **DEATH AND MOURNING/THE AFTERLIFE**  
*Reading: The Jewish Home, ch. 18; Sourcebook, p. 75.*  
*Journal: What would you like them to say about you at your funeral? What would you have like to accomplish in your life?*
- 9. Mar. 12**      **CONVERSION (GERUT)**  
*Reading: Choosing Judaism by Lydia Kukoff*  
*Journal: What kinds of welcome do you want or need to continue your journey in Judaism? What does it mean to be part of a community? What seem to be the important reasons for converting to Judaism? What Hebrew name might you choose, and why?*
- 10. Mar. 19**      **PURIM AND ANTI-SEMITISM**  
Anti-semitism through the lens of Purim  
*Reading: The Jewish Home, ch. 8; Sourcebook, p. 152.*  
*Journal: 1. For what would you be willing to risk your life? 2. Considering the realities of history, what would be your reasons for wanting your children to be Jewish?*
- 11. Mar. 26**      **PEOPLEHOOD, with a URJ Facilitator**  
*Journal: Judaism is not just a religion. In what activities might you involve yourself that would enable you to feel more a part of the Jewish people?*
- 12. April 2**      **CHANUKAH: JEWISH IDENTITY AND ASSIMILATION**  
Hellenism and its role in the Chanukah story  
The Christmas Dilemma  
The Enlightenment and Reform Judaism  
*Reading: The Jewish Home, ch. 6; Sourcebook, p. 24.*  
*Journal: What is Chanukah’s message for you? How can you communicate this message in a non- Jewish world? Which Chanukah Resource Sheet in the Sourcebook is most helpful to you?*
- 13. April 9**      **PASSOVER I: REDEMPTION (BRING YOUR HAGGADAH)**  
*Reading: The Jewish Home, ch. 9; Sourcebook, p. 138.*  
*Journal: What is Pesach about? How do you understand liberation? Why do Jews emphasize the Seder ritual?*
- 14. April 16**      **PASSOVER II: KASHRUT AND MODEL SEDER (BRING YOUR HAGGADAH)**

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*Journal: How might following the Jewish dietary laws enhance your Jewish life?*

**FINAL REVIEW: FINAL REVIEW QUESTIONS WILL BE DISTRIBUTED DURING THIS CLASS FOR STUDENTS TO COMPLETE AT HOME.** The completed answers should be returned to the instructor at the last class session of the course, unless you make an alternative arrangement.

#### NO CLASS APRIL 23: PASSOVER

- 15. April 30 THE HOLOCAUST/YOM HA-SHOAH (Holocaust Memorial Day)**  
*Reading: Sourcebook, p. 350; A Short History of the Jewish People, ch. 9.*  
*Journal: "You didn't experience the Holocaust. How can you possibly know what it was like?" How might you feel hearing that question? How might you respond?*
- 16. May 7 ISRAEL AND ZIONISM/YOM HAATZMAUT**  
*Reading: Sourcebook, p. 305; A Short History of the Jewish People, ch. 10.*  
*Journal: What does Israel mean to you? How would you like to live or visit there?*
- 17. May 14 ROSH HASHANAH: CREATION, SIN AND REPENTANCE**  
What it means for the world to be created.  
Sin and repentance as manifested during the High Holy Day of Rosh Hashanah  
Different concepts of sin and salvation in Judaism and Christianity  
*Reading: The Jewish Home, ch. 3; Sourcebook p. 162.*  
*Journal: In looking over the past year, what are aspects of your life you would like to change? What are the obstacles? How can Judaism help you achieve your goals?*
- 18. May 21 YOM KIPPUR: FORGIVENESS**  
The culmination of the High Holy Days: Yom Kippur  
Communal responsibility for transgressions  
The prayers of the holiday  
Fasting  
Yizkor (memorial for the dead)  
*Reading: The Jewish Home, ch. 4; Sourcebook, p. 364.*  
*Journal: What does it take to really let go of a hurt and forgive someone? Do you need to forgive yourself? Are there people from whom you need to ask forgiveness?*

PLEASE PREPARE ALL THE READING ASSIGNMENTS BEFORE CLASS.

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### Notices to all Students of URJ INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM

- 1) A required all day *Shabbaton* is arranged for a Saturday during this course. Other INTRO course students and teachers may be involved. Announcement flyers will be distributed well in advance. Attendance at this Shabbaton or another one is a course requirement. Many students say that it is the best part of the course.
- 2) An official *Certificate of Completion* will be issued by the URJ INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM program to every student who completes all the course requirements. This certificate is worth having and saving. A Bet Din for conversion generally requires the certificate.
- 3) To make up a missed class at another course location, contact the INTRO Registrar at URJ as soon as possible.

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