



# EXPLORING JUDAISM

**"THEY ARE AS FILLED WITH GOOD DEEDS AS A  
POMEGRANATE IS WITH SEEDS"**

BABYLONIAN TALMUD, HAGIGAH 27A





# Welcome!

Whether you're looking to convert to Judaism, or just want to learn a little bit more about Jewish practice and belief, we're excited to help!

## ASKING JEWISH QUESTIONS: JUDAISM 101

Join our Asking Jewish Questions: Judaism 101 class, which covers the basics of Jewish history, meaning, and spiritual practice in a safe and welcoming space that encourages questioning and critical thinking. This class of about 10-20 people includes people looking to convert, people who are just curious about Judaism, people married to Jewish spouses, and Jews who just want a refresher course.

Class meets weekly from the fall through the spring, and requires a commitment to regular attendance. Registration opens in the fall. If the class registration is closed, let me know that you're interested and I'll contact you when registration opens again. There are also plenty of ways to learn and get involved while waiting for the next class session to start.

- The (tentative) schedule is available [here](#).
- Class tuition is \$360 for an individual and \$613 for a couple, with a 50% discount for students and Tifereth Israel synagogue members. We are committed to finding a way for everyone who wants to learn with us to take this class, regardless of financial ability. If these costs are prohibitive, please be in touch and we will work something out together.
- At the end of this guide, you'll find the class reading list. Feel free to get a head-start on the readings, especially if class registration is closed and you're waiting for the fall session to begin!
- There are also a number of additional classes offered during the year. Check them out [here](#).
- It is highly recommended that partners take this class together, so that they can engage together in conversation about issues of religion and spirituality, allowing them to better find their common ground and places where their outlook on Jewish practices might differ.

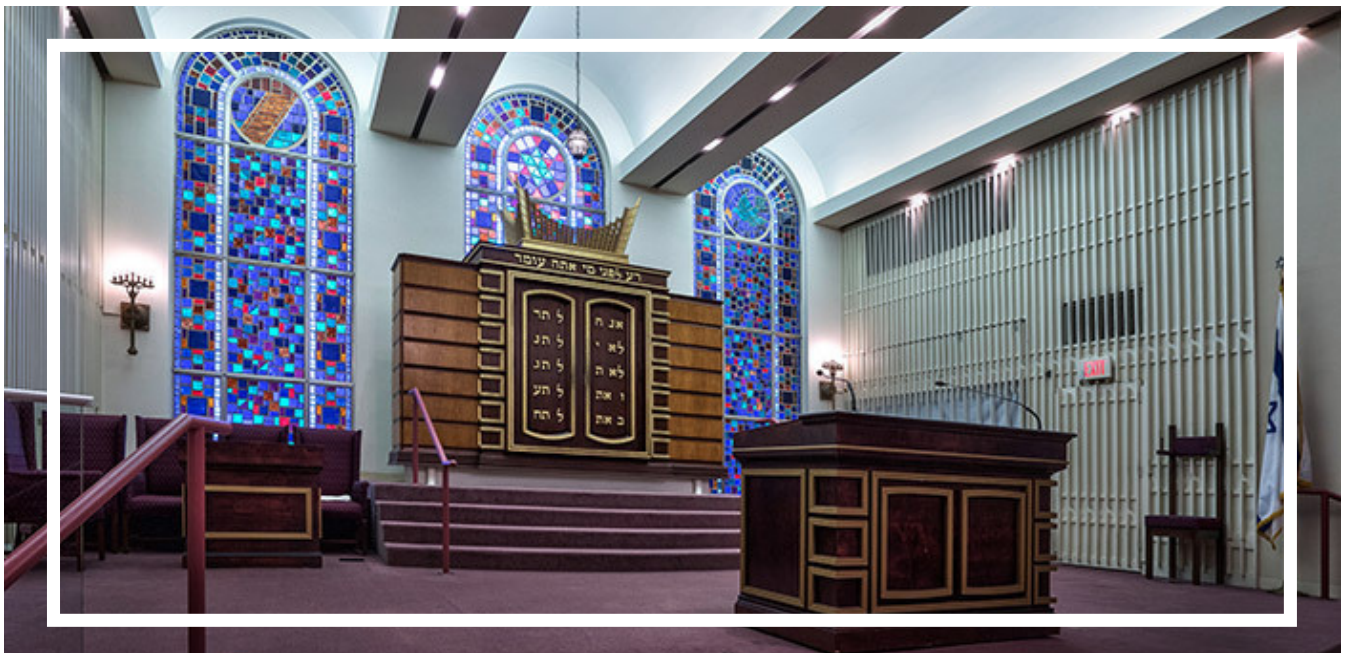
## BE OUR GUEST!

Regular attendance at services is the best and easiest way to begin exploring and learning about Judaism, so come to synagogue! Our main service begins at 9:30 a.m. every Saturday morning and lasts until about noon. Feel free to join us a little early at 9:00 a.m. for one of our intimate “Shabbat Warmup” classes. Or, if the length of the service feels a little daunting at first, come in around 10:30 or so to catch the central part of our service – the public chanting of the Torah scroll, followed by a sermon and concluding prayers.

We also offer a smaller Friday night service each week, which are 6:00-7:15 p.m. during daylight savings time from spring to fall, and 5:30-6:45 in the wintertime.

Though “business casual” wear is perfectly fine, some people in attendance may choose to wear a suit or other similar, more formal dress in honor of Shabbat.

- Much of our service is conducted in Hebrew, and it may feel a little foreign to you – that’s OK! Try to soak it up, and don’t be afraid to ask questions: our greeters or your neighbors in the seats will be happy to give you a hand.
- Looking for someone to sit with? Be in touch with Rabbi Braver about our “Buddy Program.” We’ll match you with someone who can pick a day and time to meet you at services, sit with you, and help answer questions along the way.
- MyJewishLearning.com has a great email series called [Getting Comfortable in Synagogue](#) that’s worth checking out!
- You’re welcome to attend other synagogue events and classes as our guest! [Sign up for our email newsletter](#) to stay up-to-date on the latest happenings in our community. Feel free to reach out if you’re unsure about whether or not to attend a class or event.



# CHOOSING JUDAISM



As you continue on this journey, if you decide you want to take the leap and seriously consider conversion, reach out to me directly and let me know! You'll begin scheduling 1-1 mentoring meetings every 6 weeks or so, to help process what you've been learning and explore how Jewish practice and tradition can fit into your day-to-day life and relationships with family and friends. At these meetings, you set the agenda; any and all questions are on the table.

- We'll also take this time to explore your growing relationship to six key areas of Jewish thought and practice: (1) Shabbat, (2) Prayer, (3) Torah Study, (4) Charity and Acts of Lovingkindness, (5) Keeping Kosher, and (6) Connection to Jewish Peoplehood and the Land of Israel
- Looking for some help about concrete steps you can take toward exploring these areas of Jewish knowledge and practice? Check out [Ba-Derekh: On the Path](#), a help list of concrete steps to explore in the conversion process.

There is no guaranteed timeline for conversion, but the process usually takes no less than about one year. Once both you and I feel that you're ready to convert, we'll move on to the rituals for conversion.

- You'll pick a Hebrew name, write a 3-5 page spiritual autobiography describing your journey toward Judaism, and answer questions about it a beit din (group of 3 Jews constituting a "religious court")
- When appropriate, either circumcision or a ritual known as hatafat dam brit - a symbolic drop of blood drawn from the male genitals. While circumcision is a serious medical procedure, hatafat dam brit is a minor and - while perhaps a bit awkward - short and virtually painless ritual. If circumcision would be required, please be in touch with Rabbi Braver.
- Immersion in a ritual bath known as a mikveh.
- [Visit this link for more information about the mikveh and beit din process.](#)

Once you've completed the rituals for conversion, you've officially cast your lot in with the Jewish people! We also would expect you to cast your lot in with Tifereth Israel at this point by [becoming a member of the congregation](#) and actively contributing to our community. While there is a cost associated with membership, we will never allow finances to be a barrier for entry and are happy to work out arrangements with you.

## MORE INFORMATION

- Judaism is not a missionary religion; while we are eager and excited to guide you on this path and welcome you into the Jewish people, we know that conversion isn't for everyone. Conversion requires a serious investment of time and effort, and is ultimately about a major change in identity and in one's daily life. If it's not for you — or not for you right now — that's OK! If you begin down this path and after a period of months (or even years!) realize that you love learning about Judaism but don't want to be a Jew, we consider that just as much a success as someone who decides to convert. This is your journey, and it's our privilege to help you on it — but the ball is in your court.
- If you are not Jewish but are planning on marrying someone Jewish (mazel tov!) and already have a date set, please let me know as soon as you can, so we can talk about whether or not there is time for the full conversion process to take place before your wedding.
- If you are a patrilineal Jew (i.e. you were raised, educated, and identify as a Jew, but do not have a Jewish birth-mother) who is interested in making your Jewish legal status official, we tend to proceed through this process with the framework of an affirmation of your already existing Jewish identity and experience, rather than as a "conversion." This process tends to move faster and be more self-guided than a traditional "conversion" process. For more information, please be in touch!

Please reach out to me ([abraver@tiferethisrael.org](mailto:abraver@tiferethisrael.org)) and let's schedule some time to chat and to talk a little bit about how you became interested in Judaism and Tifereth Israel. I'd love to hear your story!

Rabbi Alex Braver





## ASKING JEWISH QUESTIONS CLASS READING LIST

### Required Reading

- Wayne Dosick – *Living Judaism: The Complete Guide to Jewish Belief, Tradition, and Practice.*
- Irving Greenberg – *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays*
- Harold Kushner – *To Life!*
- Anita Diamant & Howard Cooper – *Living a Jewish Life: Jewish Traditions, Customs and Values for Today's Families*
- *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary*
  - Weekly Torah portions with very useful commentary.
  - Compact-sized edition is recommended if small-print is not an issue.

### HIGHLY Recommended

- *Jewish Publication Society Tanakh*
  - Hebrew Bible (Torah, Prophets, and Writings)
  - Pocket edition recommended if small-print is not an issue.
- *Siddur Lev Shalem for Shabbat and Festivals*

### Recommended Reading for Further Learning and Library Building

- *The Observant Life: The Wisdom of Conservative Judaism for Contemporary Jews*
- *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford University Press)
- Elie Wiesel – *Night*
- Nina Beth Cardin – *The Tapestry of Jewish Time*
- Blu Greenberg, – *How to Run a Traditional Jewish Household*
- *Jewish Dietary Laws*
  - Published by the Rabbinical Assembly and United Synagogue (will have a PDF copy)
- Arthur Green – *These Are the Words: A Vocabulary of Jewish Spiritual Life*
- Abraham Joshua Heschel – *The Sabbath*
- Harold Kushner – *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*
- Michael Strassfeld – *A Book of Life: Embracing Judaism as a Spiritual Practice*
- Michael Strassfeld – *The Jewish Holidays: A Guide and Commentary*
- Joseph Telushkin – *Jewish Literacy*
- Zalman Schachter-Shalomi – *Davening: A Guide to Meaningful Prayer.*
- A Passover haggadah

### Private Hebrew Tutors

- Malka Bendor – 614-937-4495
- Chen-Li Levy – [chenli.levy@gmail.com](mailto:chenli.levy@gmail.com)
- Pamela Feldman-Hill – [pamela@feldman-hill.com](mailto:pamela@feldman-hill.com)



614-253-8523 | 1354 East Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43205

 [tiferethisrael.org](http://tiferethisrael.org) |  [cticbus](https://www.facebook.com/cticbus) |  [tiferethisrael](https://www.instagram.com/tiferethisrael)