

**The Essential Judaism**  
**Jewish Year 5780 – Fall 2019 / Spring 2020**  
 Rabbi Barry Leff  
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Classes are held Sunday mornings 10am to 11:30am at Herzl Ner Tamid.

	<b>Class</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Date</b>
	<b>What Jews Believe</b>		
1	In the Beginning: Revelation and the Written and Oral Torahs	JL 1-4, 82-84, 245-246	9/8
2	Jewish Views of God, Theodicy (the problem of evil)	JL 264, 288;	9/15
3	The Fall Holidays: Tisha b'Av, Elul, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur	JL 291-294, 310-313; JW	9/22
	No class – Rosh Hashanah		9/29
	No class – Yom Kippur		10/6
4	Sukkot/Simchat Torah	JL 295-297; JW	10/13
5	Being Jewish: Who's a Jew?		10/20
	No class – post holiday break		10/27
6	Teleology: Jewish Views of the Afterlife and the Messiah in Judaism	JL 283, 284	11/3
	<b>Jewish Prayer</b>		
7	The Jewish Prayer Service and Synagogue Rituals / Bimah Basics	JL 331-346	11/10
8	The Central Prayers: Shema and Amidah	JL 344, TPJ	11/17
9	The Jewish Calendar and holiday cycle	JL 290, JW	11/24
	No class – Thanksgiving		12/1
11	How to Pray	Readings	12/8
10	Chanukah, Tu b'Shevat, Purim	JL 298-300, JW	12/15
	No Class – winter break		12/22, 12/29,1/5

	<b>Living as a Jew – The Mitzvot</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Date</b>
12	Halacha and Commandedness	JL 253	1/12
	No class – MLK weekend		1/19
13	Shabbat	JL 314-317; HTR	1/26
14	What Goes in and out of Our Mouths: Kashrut and Lashon Hara (gossip)	HTR; JL chap. 271, 330	2/2
15	The body: sexuality and medical ethics	JL 262, 270, 274, 279, 322; CR pp. 115-122	2/9
	Winter Break		2/16, 2/23
16	Righteous Living: Charity, Kindness, Business Ethics, the Environment	JL 254-260, 265, 269, 272, 275-8, 280, 281	3/1
	<b>Jewish History</b>		
17	History – Biblical Period to the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century	JL 2-132	3/8
18	History – Zionism and the History of Israel, the Holocaust, Israel in the Heart of the Jew (Diaspora vs. Exile)	JL 133-244	3/15
	<b>Lifecycle Events</b>		
19	Lifecycle Part I – Birth, Bris/Simchat Bat, Bar Mitzvah, Wedding, Mezuzah	JL 318-323; CR pp. 1-70	3/22
21	Passover/Omer/Shavuot	JL 301-309; JW	3/29
	No class – Passover		4/5, 4/12
20	Lifecycle Part II –Divorce, Sickness, aging, death; Honor Your Father and Mother	JL 324-329, 273; CR pp. 71-251;	4/19

Legend:

CR = Celebration and Renewal

HTR = How to Run a Traditional Jewish Household

JL = Jewish Literacy

JW = The Jewish Way

KG = Knowing God

TL = To Life

TPJ = To Pray as a Jew

## **Essential Judaism –annotated bibliography**

### **Needed as soon as possible:**

Kushner, Harold. *To Life! A Celebration of Jewish Being and Thinking*. New York: Warner Books, 1993. Read all of “To Life!” as an overview of Judaism; other books will take us into greater detail in specific areas

Telushkin, Joseph. *Jewish Literacy*. New York: William Morrow, 1991. In many ways, *Jewish Literacy* is the central textbook for the course.

### **Additional books, recommended, but not required:**

Donin, Hayim Halevy. *To Pray as a Jew*. Basic Books, 1980.

Dorff, Elliot. *Knowing God: Jewish Journeys to the Unknowable*. Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 1991.

Geffen, Rela M. *Celebration and Renewal: Rites of Passage in Judaism*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publications Society, 1993

Greenberg, Blu. *How to Run a Traditional Jewish Household*. Fireside, 1985.

Greenberg, Irving. *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays*. Touchstone, 1993.

Lew, Alan. *This is Real and You Are Completely Unprepared*. New York: Little, Brown & Company. The best book on the High Holidays.

Simon, Ethelyn, and Anderson, Joseph. *Teach Yourself to Read Hebrew*. Albany, CA: EKS Publishing, 1985.

### **Basic Home Jewish Library (not course texts per se, but things every Jewish home should have)**

A Siddur—either Siddur Sim Shalom or the Artscroll Interlinear Siddur.

Harlow, Jules, ed. *Siddur Sim Shalom*. New York: Rabbinical Assembly (United Synagogue of America), 1985

The Schottenstein Ed. *Siddur: Sabbath & Festivals Prayers With an Interlinear Translation – Ashkenaz*. Artscroll, 2002.

The Schottenstein Ed. *Siddur: Weekday Prayers With an Interlinear Translation – Ashkenaz*. Artscroll, 2002.

A Chumash—preferably Etz Hayim, although any Chumash is acceptable.

An English Tanakh (Hebrew Bible), preferably Jewish Publications Society.

## **Introduction to Judaism – Recommended Readings, Videos on Jewish Culture/History**

### **Books:**

#### **Historical Novels**

As a Driven Leaf, by Milton Steinberg

O Jerusalem!, by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre

Mila 18 by Leon Uris

Exodus by Leon Uris

The Source by James Michener

#### **Contemporary (relatively) fiction**

The Chosen, by Chaim Potok

Sotah, by Naomi Ragen

Kaatterskill Falls by Allegra Goodman

All of a Kind Family (series, children's books) by Sydney Taylor

### **Videos:**

The Long Way Home (Moriah Films, the Wiesenthal Center)

Schindler's List

Yentl

Fiddler on the Roof

Masada (the six hour TV miniseries with Peter O'Toole)

In Our Hands (about the Six Day War)

The Gatekeepers (former heads of Israel's security services)

#### **Contemporary Israel**

Like Dreamers, by Yossi Klein Halevi