

**Foundations of Judaism**  
**The Jewish Community Project of Lower Manhattan**  
**Spring 2023**

**Foundations of Judaism:** An Introduction to Jewish Life and Civilization.

**Taught by:** Rabbi Deena Silverstone and Rabbinic Fellow Jacob Leizman

**Course Overview**

“Foundations of Judaism” is a ten-week course that will serve as an introduction to the basic ideas of Jewish life and civilization. Taught in an informal seminar style with open conversation and dialogue encouraged, we will explore the many facets of Jewish life over the centuries, with special attention to the meaning and relevance of Jewish values to our lives today in the twenty-first century. We’ll dive into topics including the Jewish bookshelf, Shabbat, keeping kosher, prayer and spirituality, life cycle rituals, antisemitism, Zionism, and more. The course is open to all, no Jewish background necessary.

*\*Minimum 10 participants, maximum 20 participants\**

**Course Dates**

**Dates:** Weekly on Tuesdays

**Time:** 7 – 8:30 pm

3/7, 3/14, 3/21, 3/28, 4/18, 4/25, 5/2, 5/9, 5/16, 5/23

*\*Depending on the makeup of the class, we might need to skip the private school break which is on 3/21 and 3/28. If this is the case, we will skip those two weeks and add 5/30, 6/6\**

**Cost**

**Non-Member Cost:** \$300 Individual, \$360 Couple, \$180 Downtown Jews

**Member Cost:** \$150 Individual, \$180 Couple, \$72 Downtown Jews

*\*\*We strive to eliminate barriers to participation. Please be in touch about financial support if needed.\*\**

**Location**

146 Duane Street

## **Contact**

Rabbi Deena Silverstone: [dsilverstone@jcpdowntown.org](mailto:dsilverstone@jcpdowntown.org); 917.664.0223

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## **Books**

Arthur Hertzberg's *Jews: The Essence and Character of a People*; Anita Diamant's *Living a Jewish Life*; Abraham Joshua Heschel's *The Sabbath*; Ari Shavit's *My Promised Land*. We will have these books available for you during the first few sessions. The price of the books is included in the course fee. All other readings will be photocopied and distributed to you.

## **Course Topics and Outline**

- **Week One (Tuesday, March 7): Welcome and Introductions, Timeline of Jewish History**
  
- **Week Two (Tuesday, March 14): The Hebrew Bible**
- Reading:
  - *Jews: The Essence and Character of a People*, Introduction (pp. 1-12)
  - [Encyclopedia Britannica: Hebrew Bible](#)
  
- **Week Three (Tuesday, March 21): The Rabbis: Mishnah, Midrash, and Talmud**
- Reading:
  - *Sefer Ha'Aggadah*, Chayyim Nahman Bialik, Introduction
  - *The Essential Talmud*, Adin Steinsaltz, (pp. 3-9)
  - *A Bride for One Night: Talmud Tales*, Ruth Calderon, Introduction (pp. xi-xv)
  
- **Week Four (Tuesday, March 28): Shabbat and Kashrut**
- Reading:
  - *The Sabbath*, Abraham Joshua Heschel, "A Palace in Time" (pp. 12-26)
  - *Living a Jewish Life*, "What Jews Eat" (pp. 82-92)
  - [Ethical Kashrut and Food Justice](#), Shmuley Yanklowitz (author of *Kashrut and Jewish Food Ethics*)

## ***Break for Passover***

- **Week Five (Tuesday, April 18): The Calendar and Holidays**
- Reading:
  - *Living a Jewish Life*, “The Cycle of the Year” (pp. 139-151)
  
- **Week Six (Tuesday, April 25): Prayer and Spirituality**
- Reading:
  - *On Prayer*, Abraham Joshua Heschel
  - *Jews: The Essence and Character of a People*, “Judaism without God?” (pp.240-260)
  
- **Week Seven (Tuesday, May 2): The Jewish Life Cycle**
- Reading:
  - *Living a Jewish Life*, “Birth” (pp. 213-224)
  - *Living a Jewish Life*, “Bar and Bat Mitzvah” (pp. 225-233)
  - *Living a Jewish Life*, “Conversion and Adoption” (pp. 249-254)
  - *Living a Jewish Life*, “Marriage” (pp. 234-248)
  - *Living a Jewish Life*, “Death and Mourning” (pp. 255-267)
  - *Saying Kaddish*, Anita Diamant, (pp. 3-30)
  
- **Week Eight (Tuesday, May 9): Antisemitism and the Holocaust**
- Reading:
  - [\*Skin in the Game: How Antisemitism Animates White Nationalism\*](#), Eric Ward
  - *People Love Dead Jews: Reports from a Haunted Present*, Introduction (pp. xi-xxi) and “Legends of Dead Jews” (pp. 88-107)
  - *A Jewish Dialectic of Hope*, Irving Greenberg and Michael Oppenheim, 324-334
  
- **Week Nine (Wednesday, May 16): Zionism**
- Reading:
  - *My Promised Land*, Ari Shavit, Ch. 1-5
  - [\*Inside the Unraveling of American Zionism\*](#), Marc Tracy, NYT Magazine
  
- **Week Ten (Tuesday, May 23): Remaining Questions and Moving Forward**
- Reading:
  - Gershom Scholem, *Who is a Jew?*

*\*Topics and readings subject to change based on the interests of participants. We might also add additional sessions when we learn about relevant lectures and exhibits in the area.*