

# INSTITUTE FOR CONVERSION AND OUTREACH EDUCATION

*A Program of the New Jersey Rabbinical Assembly  
in partnership with the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, New Jersey Region*

IN CASE OF INCLEMENT WEATHER, CALL YOUR CLASS LOCATION  
DURING OFFICE HOURS, OR WATCH FOR AN E-MAIL UPDATE

Fall 2008-Spring 2009

## **Hoboken Schedule**

**Wednesday evenings, 7-9:30 PM**

United Synagogue of Hoboken  
115 Park Avenue  
Hoboken, NJ 07030  
(201) 659-4000

Instructor: Rabbi Robert Scheinberg

## **Toms River Schedule**

**Wednesday evenings, 7-9:30 PM**

Congregation B'nai Israel  
1488 Old Freehold Road  
Toms River, NJ 08753  
(732) 349-1244

Instructor: Rabbi Bob Fierstein

## **Perth Amboy Schedule**

**Thursday evenings, 7-9:30 PM**

Congregation Beth Mordecai  
224 High Street  
Perth Amboy, NJ 08861  
(732) 442 1373

Instructor: Rabbi Melinda Zalma

## **Fair Lawn Schedule**

**Tuesday evenings 7-9:30 PM**

Fair Lawn Jewish Center  
10-10 Norma Avenue  
Fair Lawn, NJ 07410  
(201) 796-5040

Instructor: Rabbi Melissa Crespy

## **Livingston Schedule**

**Tuesday evenings 7-9:30PM**

Temple Beth Shalom  
193 E. Mt. Pleasant Avenue  
Livingston, NJ 07039  
(973) 992-3600

Instructor: Rabbi Geoffrey Spector

**Schedules for each class will be distributed at the first class at each site.**

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## TEXTS:

Students receive a number of books whose cost is included in tuition. They are:

Harold Kushner, *To Life! A Celebration of Jewish Being and Thinking*  
Noah Golinkin, *Shalom Aleichem, Learn to Read the Hebrew Prayerbook*  
Michael Strassfeld, *The Jewish Holidays: A Guide and Commentary*  
Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy*  
*Siddur Sim Shalom* -- The prayer book of Conservative Judaism (1985 edition)  
Bradley Shavit Artson, *It's a Mitzvah!*  
*TaNakh*--The Jewish Publication Society's English translation of  
Hebrew Scripture

In addition to the above texts, each registrant receives (by e mail, in pdf format) a reading packet with various articles, and materials drawn from a wide variety of sources. Each unit includes links to relevant web sites, questions for discussion, a list of terms/concepts to know, and a bibliography for further reading. Also included in the registration fee is an audio CD of selections read and sung from the Hebrew prayer book.

## TOPICS:

- Session 1: Welcome & Introduction: *Three Dimensions of Jewish Identity: Behaving, Believing, Belonging*
- Session 2: *TaNakh -- The Hebrew Bible*
- Session 3: *Introduction to Rabbinic Judaism*
- Session 4: *Jewish Perspectives on God*
- Session 5: *Introduction to the Jewish Calendar*
- Session 6: *Judaism & Christianity: A Comparative Look; Hanukkah, "December Dilemma" issues*
- Session 7: *Halakhah: The Role of Law and Commandment in Judaism*
- Session 8: *The Holidays of Tishri & the Concept of Teshuva*
- Session 9: *Birth, Covenant & Jewish Parenting: From Infancy through Adolescence*
- Session 10: *Prayer in Judaism -- Communal & Individual*
- Session 11: *Shabbat -- A Palace in Time*
- Session 12: *Kashrut -- The Jewish Dietary Laws*
- Session 13: *Marriage, Divorce & Jewish Perspectives on Sexuality*
- Session 14: *The End of Life: Dying, Death, Mourning & Afterlife*
- Session 15: *Finding God through Joy: Purim*
- Session 16: *Contemporary Moral Issues: Jewish Perspectives on Bioethics*

- Session 17: *As If You Came Forth from Egypt: Passover*  
Session 18: *The Holocaust and Anti-Semitism*  
Session 19: *The Land of Israel & Ancient Judaism -- The Biblical and Rabbinic Background*  
Session 20: *Zionism and the Modern State of Israel*  
Session 21: *Women and Judaism*  
Session 22: *The Four Streams of Contemporary Judaism*  
Session 23: *Judaism in America -- Challenges of the Melting Pot*  
Session 24: *Shavu'ot: Jewish Perspectives on Conversion, Siyyum*

## **TEACHING:**

Faculty members are drawn from members of the Rabbinical Assembly, and occasionally, fourth or fifth year rabbinical students of the Jewish Theological Seminary. In addition to our primary instructors, during the course of the year a number of guest lecturers with special areas of expertise will visit the various sites. Hebrew teachers at the Institute are either native speakers of Hebrew or individuals fluent in the language.

Each session begins at 7 PM . Hebrew instruction is taught during 18 of the sessions. A brief recess is followed by the primary topic of the evening, starting at 8 PM. All sessions conclude by 9:30 PM.

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## *If You've Ever Wondered. . .An Introductory Course in Judaism* **2 0 0 8-2009 REGISTRATION FORM**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Home telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Business telephone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ The best way to contact me is: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Spouse/Significant Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Address of Synagogue {if affiliated} \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Address of Sponsoring Rabbi {if applicable} \_\_\_\_\_

How did you find out about this class? (referral from rabbi; referral from friend or relative; newspaper article; newspaper advertisement (which newspaper?); other (specify) )

I wish to register for the following site {please check one}:

\_\_\_ **Fair Lawn (Begins Tues. Nov. 11)**    \_\_\_ **Hoboken (Begins Weds. Nov. 5)**

\_\_\_ **Livingston (Begins Tues., Nov. 11)**    \_\_\_ **Perth Amboy (Begins Thurs. Nov. 6)**

\_\_\_ **Toms River (Begins Weds. Nov. 5)**

We serve a wide variety of individuals, including the needs of potential Jews by Choice and their spouses/significant others, non-Jews raising Jewish children, and born Jews who wish to learn more about their heritage. In order to serve our diverse student population more effectively, it is helpful to know something about the background of those enrolled in the program. Please briefly describe what occasioned your interest in the course (You may attach another sheet of paper if you need additional space):

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**Please read information on reverse side and sign.**

We welcome all who are interested in the courses of the Institute for Conversion and Outreach Education for a variety of reasons. For some, it is a step towards the process of conversion to Judaism; others are contemplating conversion. Still others are life-long Jews who take the class to fill gaps in their Jewish education, or to re-explore Jewish tradition as adults. Yet others are in relationships with Jews, though not Jewish themselves and with no plans to convert to Judaism, who are planning to participate in raising Jewish children. Whatever your motivation, you are invited to join our course.

### **Information for those considering conversion**

While The Institute for Conversion and Outreach fulfills the basic study component of the conversion process, it doesn't by itself comprise all of the requirements of a conversion.

Additional requirements include ritual immersion (*tevilah*) and where indicated, ritual circumcision (*brit milah*) or its symbolic equivalent to circumcision for men already circumcised (*Hatafat dam brit*) and (for men and women) a declaration of commitment to the *mitzvot* (commandments) of Jewish tradition, and immersion in a *mikveh* (ritual bath) in the presence of a rabbinical court. (*bet din*).

Those pursuing the conversion process need to have a "rabbinic sponsor" who guides them through the conversion process, including these additional requirements above. Instructors in the ICOE courses do not automatically serve as such sponsors. If you are looking for a rabbinic sponsor for conversion, the ICOE administrator, Ellen Nesson, can help to link you to a rabbi in your area.

Our program provides a comprehensive study of basic Judaism, but preparation for conversion, and the exact length of the process, varies from sponsor to sponsor and often takes longer than the length of the course.

**Attendance at each session is expected as it is vital to the integrity of the overall program.** *Those who miss any class will be asked to make up the material through work to be assigned by the instructor. Except in highly extenuating circumstances as determined by the instructor, those who are absent more than four times will not receive "Certificates of Completion."*

**We strongly encourage couples to take this course together. Some rabbinic sponsors may require the attendance of spouses or significant others of conversion candidates.**

**A tuition check for the full amount of \$ 600 for an individual, or \$700 for a couple, made payable to the NJRA (New Jersey Rabbinical Assembly) must accompany the registration form.** Please write "ICOE" in the memo area of the check. Tuition covers the expense of all instruction and study materials. Extracurricular activities and events offered through the program may carry additional costs. Tuition is non-refundable once classes are in session.

Questions of a general nature about the course can be directed to Ellen Nesson , Program Administrator at (973) 285-9772 or [ellen.nesson@gmail.com](mailto:ellen.nesson@gmail.com). If questions pertain to a specific site, Ellen will refer you to the instructor at that site.

Please send completed registration forms and checks to:

The Institute for Conversion and Outreach Education (ICOE)  
Ellen Nesson, Program Coordinator  
11 Sunderland Drive  
Morristown, New Jersey 07960

***I HAVE READ THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND ACCEPT THE TERMS OF ENROLLMENT***

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_