Or Chadash
Access to Judaism
2019 - 2020

WESTMINSTER SYNAGOGUE
020 7584 3953   -   admin@westminstersynagogue.org
Or Chadash (meaning new light), is our weekly adult education group for those wanting to learn more about Judaism. Sessions are held on Wednesday evenings from 6:30-7:45pm. Our Jewish Studies course covers the Jewish lifecycle, the yearly festival cycle, Jewish history, and of course, a familiarising and appreciation of our prayer book and Hebrew Bible. It is a vibrant and inclusive group and is warm and welcoming to new members with sessions taught by Rabbi Benji Stanley, Yael Roberts or guest tutors. Many students at Or Chadash are seeking to convert to Judaism, others are looking to confirm Jewish status, to learn about Judaism or to deepen the understanding that they already have. Whichever is the case, the first step in this process is to come and speak to Rabbi Benji who would be delighted to talk through your situation, discuss your options and work out the best programme of learning for you.

Converting to Judaism or looking to confirm Jewish Status
Our conversion course generally lasts for 12 months, and includes a commitment to education, to learning Hebrew and to participating in community life.

In addition to the learning content of the Access to Judaism class, the following pages also provide information about further learning opportunities, including Hebrew classes and ways of getting involved in the community.

Learning about Judaism
The schedule of weekly topics can be found on the following pages. As you will see, they follow the annual calendar of festivals, with other pertinent topics fitting in around them. The course works on a roll on/roll off basis, with people joining and completing their course at different points of the year. Whether you wish to attend a one off session to learn more about a particular topic, or are looking to complete the course, we look forward to welcoming you to classes!

Learning Hebrew
A key part of our adult education offer is the opportunity to learn to read and use Hebrew, the ancient language of Judaism. We offer a range of Hebrew learning options; including a 45 minute Hebrew Class held at the end of each Or Chadash class, from 7:45-8:30pm, a Modern Hebrew Conversation course on Thursday evenings and we also recommend a website (www.rosenwasser.org).

Involvement in Community Life
Whether it’s attending services, getting involved with our Young Professionals, taking part in other learning groups or attending talks and cultural events, we offer adults many opportunities to get involved. A number of options are set out in this booklet.

For more information on anything in these pages, please contact Yael Roberts through the contact information on the back page.
### Or Chadash: Chanukah Term

<table>
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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>THEME</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday 18<strong>th</strong> September</td>
<td>Who are we? History and development of Progressive Judaism</td>
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<td>Wednesday 25<strong>th</strong> September</td>
<td>High Holy Days</td>
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<td>Wednesday 2<strong>nd</strong> October</td>
<td>Sukkot &amp; Simchat Torah with the Jewish Calendar</td>
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<td>Wednesday 9<strong>th</strong> October</td>
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<td>Wednesday 16<strong>th</strong> October</td>
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<td>Wednesday 23<strong>rd</strong> &amp; 30<strong>th</strong> October</td>
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<td>Wednesday 6<strong>th</strong> November</td>
<td>Patriarchs and Matriarchs</td>
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<td>Wednesday 13<strong>th</strong> November</td>
<td>Tzedakah, Mitzvah Day and Jewish Values</td>
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<td>Wednesday 20<strong>th</strong> November</td>
<td>Torah and visit to the MST</td>
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<td>Wednesday 27<strong>th</strong> November</td>
<td>Jewish History through a Timeline</td>
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<td>Wednesday 4<strong>th</strong> December</td>
<td>Food Glorious Food: Traditional &amp; Progressive Kashrut</td>
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<td>Wednesday 11<strong>th</strong> December</td>
<td>Chanukah</td>
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### Festivals and Services this term

**Friday 6****th** September - *Shabbat Unplugged* - Shabbat Unplugged is a Friday Night service where we welcome in Shabbat with our voices. Learn, sing and pray together with Rabbi Benji and Yoav Oved, followed by a Community Dinner.

**Saturday 21****st** September - *Selichot* - Selichot is a chance to intellectually and spiritually prepare ourselves ahead of the High Holy Days. Before the service, where we will encounter some musical highlights of the period, we will share a meal together and explore themes related to the Days of Awe.

**Sunday 13****th** October - *Sukkot Shira* - Explore Sukkot through music and poetry, followed by a feast in our Sukkah.

**Sunday 10****th** November - *Westminster Chai* - Celebrate Interfaith Week with a day of learning. Join us for sessions, workshops & lectures exploring a range of topics.

**Friday 22****nd** October - *WS Czech Scrolls Commemorative Service* - Our annual service to remember those who died, from the towns of Horažďovice and Preštice.
Or Chadash: Pesach Term

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<td>Wednesday 8th January</td>
<td>The Conversions Process: Theory and Practicalities</td>
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<td>Wednesday 15th January</td>
<td>The gift of Shabbat</td>
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<td>Wednesday 22nd January</td>
<td>The Holocaust</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday 29th January</td>
<td>Shabbat Liturgy: Structure, Meaning &amp; Prayer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday 5th February</td>
<td>Structure of Services &amp; learn the Music of our services</td>
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<td>Wednesday 12th February</td>
<td>Tu B’Shevat</td>
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<td>Jewish responsibility towards the environment</td>
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<td>Wednesday 19th &amp; 26th February</td>
<td>Half Term</td>
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<td>Wednesday 4th March</td>
<td>Purim: Topsy Turvy Ethics &amp; Laughter</td>
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<td>Wednesday 11th March</td>
<td>Women and Judaism</td>
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<td>Wednesday 18th March</td>
<td>Pesach: Story, History &amp; Meaning</td>
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<td>Wednesday 25th March</td>
<td>Pesach Cooking</td>
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Festivals this term

Tu B’Shevat
Tu B’Shevat is the new year for trees and falls on Sunday 9th February. As such, on Wednesday, 12th February, we will be holding our annual Tu B’Shevat Seder as part of the Or Chadash course which is open to all members and friends!

Purim
On Purim, members are encouraged to come in fancy dress. If you speak a foreign language, let us know and you can participate in our “Service of Many Tongues” on Monday, 9th March. If you want to get up on stage, let us know and join the cast of our Musical Purim Players!

Pesach
Rabbi Benji will be leading our communal First Night Seder in the Synagogue on Wednesday 8th April. We hope that you can join us along with your loved ones.

If you have any questions on the above festivals, or would like to volunteer either in the lead up or on the days themselves, please contact Jon Zecharia on jon@westminstersynagogue.org.
Or Chadash: Shavuot Term

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<td>History of Ancient Israel</td>
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<td>Wednesday 29(^{th}) April</td>
<td>History of Modern Israel</td>
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<td>Wednesday 6(^{th}) May</td>
<td>Tanakh: Structure, Importance &amp; Meaning</td>
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<td>Wednesday 13(^{th}) May</td>
<td>Oral Torah: An Introduction to the Talmud</td>
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<td>Wednesday 20(^{th}) May</td>
<td>Shavuot; Revelation, Sleep Deprivation &amp; Cheesecake</td>
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<td>Wednesday 27(^{th}) May &amp; 3(^{rd}) June</td>
<td>Half term</td>
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<td>Wednesday 10(^{th}) June</td>
<td>Birth, Brit and Naming Ceremonies</td>
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<td>Wednesday 17(^{th}) June</td>
<td>Bar and Bat Mitzvah</td>
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<td>Wednesday 24(^{th}) June</td>
<td>Put a ring on it: Jewish Weddings</td>
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<td>Wednesday 1(^{st}) July</td>
<td>Death, mourning and afterlife</td>
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<td>Wednesday 8(^{th}) July</td>
<td>Your questions answered</td>
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Hebrew Learning

The Hebrew language is at the core of our identity, culture and heritage, and therefore learning Hebrew is an essential element of the Or Chadash journey for those who are converting to Judaism.

Students are expected to learn Hebrew, and we offer many ways to learn:

- Hebrew Lessons after Or Chadash – Wednesdays 7:45-8:30pm;
- Modern Hebrew Ulpan classes take place on Thursday evenings from 6pm and are available at beginner and more advanced levels;
- We also provide online learning options. Take a trial lesson at www.rosenwasser.org and see if it’s for you!

For more information about any of our Hebrew learning opportunities, please contact Yael Roberts.
Further Learning and Community Life

But when Moses’ father-in-law saw how much he had to do for the people, he said, “What is this thing that you are doing to the people? Why do you act alone? … The thing you are doing is not right; you will surely wear yourself out … For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone … Exodus 18:14, 17-18

Members contribute to every aspect of Synagogue life. Many have helped out on a regular basis or as often as their schedules permit. It is fair to say that without members’ support, the community would function in a very limited way. Or Chadash students have always been integral in helping with Synagogue life and we hope that you will be able to continue this tradition.

There are many opportunities for Or Chadash members to help or serve. It may be that you have a new idea or you have a skill that would benefit your fellow members. Don’t be shy, the rewards of contributing often far out-weigh the time and effort involved and offer the perfect chance to get to know the wider Synagogue community.

Some examples of activities and volunteering opportunities are:

Torah in the City – Join Rabbi Benji and lay leaders in exploring the Torah. Sessions take place once a month on Wednesday mornings from 8:30-9:15am;

Lunch and Learn/Oneg Shabbat – Look out for these opportunities to learn about the weekly Torah portion and other aspects of Judaism after Shabbat services;

Westminster Young Professionals (WYP) – organise events targeted at our young professional community members;

Meet and Greet – getting to meet members and visitors by being a warm and welcoming face as people enter on Saturday Mornings;

Kiddush Rota – helping to prepare Kiddush for after the Shabbat Morning Service. This can be done either by yourself or with some friends/family;

WS Czech Scrolls – create events and activities centred around our very special Torah scrolls from Horažďovice and Přeštice;

Purim – sing and act as part of our troupe who perform the story of Purim in song;

Music – explore, expand and learn the music of our services through Shabbat Unplugged, Or Shira and other opportunities;

For more information, contact Jon Zecharia in the Synagogue office.
Reading List for Or Chadash Students:

The following is a recommended list of core texts for those wishing to learn about Judaism. The Rabbi will recommend particular books depending on the interests of an individual, but the core text for the course is ‘The Honey and the Sting’, number 19 listed below which offers a wonderfully comprehensive and warmly written overview of Judaism from a Reform perspective.

1. Westminster Synagogue’s Daily and Sabbath Prayer Book
2. Westminster Synagogue’s Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Festival Prayer Books
3. Siddur Lev Chadash (Liberal Judaism Website)
4. Machzor Ruach Chadashah (Liberal Judaism Website)
5. Haggadah b’chol dor va-dor (Liberal Judaism Website)
6. Hebrew-English Tanakh, Jewish Publication Society of America (JPS), 2003
7. W Gunther Plaut, The Torah: A Modern Commentary, 2005
8. Liberal Jewish Values and Practice leaflets (Liberal Judaism Website)
9. Affirmations of Liberal Judaism (Liberal Judaism Website)
11. John D Rayner, Principles of Jewish Ethics
12. Elizabeth Tikvah Sarah, Compelling Commitments, 2007
16. Louis Jacobs, The Book of Jewish Belief, 1984
17. Louis Jacobs, The Book of Jewish Practice, 1984

Useful Websites for further learning:

My Jewish Learning— for information and articles on all aspects of Jewish learning from customs and history to the weekly Torah portion: www.myjewishlearning.com
The American Reform Judaism Movement website is also a treasure trove on Jewish life including videos on how to perform rituals, songs, links for children and so much more: reformjudaism.org

Useful Contacts:

Movements:
Liberal Judaism: www.liberaljudaism.org
Reform Judaism: www.reformjudaism.org.uk

London Jewry:
The Jewish Museum, London: www.jewishmuseum.org.uk
United Jewish Israel Appeal: www.ujia.org
JW3: www.jw3.org.uk
Jewish Film Festival: www.ukjewishfilm.org
Jewish Music Institute: www.jmi.org.uk
Jewish Chronicle: www.thejc.com
Jewish News: www.jewishnews.co.uk
Limmud: www.limmud.org
Dates for your Diary
Friday 13th September - B’nei Mitzvah Chavurah Supper
Saturday 21st September - Selichot Supper, Study and Service
Sunday 29th & Monday 30th September - Erev Rosh Hashanah & Rosh Hashanah
Tuesday 8th & Wednesday 9th October - Kol Nidre & Yom Kippur
Sunday 13th & Monday 14th October - Erev Sukkot Shira & Sukkot First Day
Sunday 20th & Monday 21st October - Erev Simchat Torah & Simchat Torah
Friday 8th - Sunday 10th November - BM Westminster Residential Trip
Sunday 10th November - Westminster Chai
Sunday 17th November - Mitzvah Day
Sunday 17th - 24th November - Peace of Mind
Friday 22nd November - WS Czech Scrolls Commemorative Service
Friday 27th December - Westminster Chanukah Celebrations
Sunday 23rd February - Westminster Questions?
Friday 6th - Sunday 8th March - BM European Residential Trip
Monday 9th March - Purim Spiel and Celebrations
Wednesday 8th April - First Night Seder
Monday 20th April - Erev Yom HaShoah with WLS
Thursday 28th May - Erev Shavuot Service and Supper
Friday 19th June - B’nei Mitzvah Graduation

Useful Contacts

Our Rabbis
Rabbi Benji Stanley - rabbi@westminstersynagogue.org
Rabbi Dr Thomas Salamon, Rabbi Emeritus - thomas@westminstersynagogue.org

Education Enquiries
Yael Roberts, Director of Community and Education - yael@westminstersynagogue.org
Nivi Chatterjee Duari, Office Administrator - admin@westminstersynagogue.org

Lifecycle Enquiries
Ben Shaw, PA to Rabbinic Team - ben@westminstersynagogue.org

Festival and Cultural Event Enquiries
Jon Zecharia, Events and Communications Manager - jon@westminstersynagogue.org
Louise Wendel, Events Coordinator - louise@westminstersynagogue.org

Membership Enquiries
Hilary Ashleigh, Membership Administrator - hilary@westminstersynagogue.org

Executive Director
Gary Sakol - gary@westminstersynagogue.org