

New Shabbat Pre-Minḥah Study: "Living a Jewish Life"



On *Shabbat* afternoon, Saturday, May 3, 2003, I will inaugurate a new, *Shabbat* study session which will be held, forty-five minutes before *Minḥah*. It will be called "Living a Jewish Life" and will be held weekly during the months of Daylight Saving Time when *Shabbat* ends late in the afternoon.

The text for the study will be *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*, which was written by Rabbi Isaac Klein, of blessed memory, and published by the Jewish Theological

Seminary of America. Since we will be in the period linking *Pesah* and *Shavuot*, known as *Sefirat HaOmer*, the Counting of the *Omer*, we will begin our study with the section dealing with laws pertaining to this part of the Jewish year.

Many congregants already own *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice* and are familiar with it. Rabbi Isaac Klein was a congregational rabbi in Buffalo, New York, who was a past president of the Rabbinical Assembly and a faculty member of the Seminary. He was a recognized expert in *Halachah*, Jewish Law, and was both a stabilizing and innovative force within our Movement. His *teshuvot* are still consulted for the erudition they display, and his ability to recognize when change is both possible and necessary.

As part of his teaching "Practical Rabbinics" at the Seminary, Klein began to compile a Guide based on traditional Jewish practice, with modern modifications. Originally, Seminary students like me, studied from mimeographed copies (remember the

mimeograph machine?) of the manuscript, with new chapters constantly being added as he developed them. Finally, in 1979, it was published and, to this day, is widely regarded as the "Conservative Movement *Shulchan Aruch*," an authoritative source on Jewish Law within the Conservative Movement. No other volume since comes close to the scope of Klein's masterpiece. In addition to its comprehensive nature, there are copious citations to primary sources in Jewish law for the student to delve into further.

Klein's book is not meant primarily for rabbis or scholars. It was meant to serve the function of the original *Shulchan Aruch*, edited by Rabbi Yosef Karo in *Safed* in the sixteenth century, to be a handy compilation of everything you need to know to lead an observant Jewish life. It follows in the tradition of many other classic works since, whose intent was similar.

This year, our adult education theme has been the Road to God Through Observance, *Halachah*. What better time to begin our study of Rabbi Klein's classic work. We will use it as it was meant to be used, to give us guidance for our individual observance.

It is my hope that members will join me in the Strauss Chapel for study each *Shabbat* afternoon, and then stay for *Minḥah*, *Ma'ariv* and *Havdalah*. The combination of text study and prayer in a community is the ideal way to conclude *Shabbat*. If you own a copy of the book, bring it with you. If not, I will have a few copies available for your use.

Watch the Service Schedule for the exact time, each week. I look forward to seeing you.

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