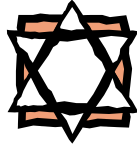
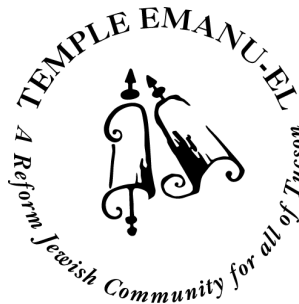


# Conversion Program Introduction



**Requirements  
Recommendations  
Resources**

**For those interested in  
Conversion to Judaism**



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## **The Conversion Program at Temple Emanu-El, Tucson, Arizona**

### **Rabbi Batsheva Appel**

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Jew-by-Choice here at Temple Emanu-El. We place great value on the integrity of the choice of becoming a Jew, and are privileged to have the opportunity to assist you in the process of exploring developing a Jewish identity.

The process of becoming Jewish is very individual and personal. Our conversion to Judaism program is flexible and organic in nature, but it does have certain specific requirements to assist you in coming to understand Judaism and determine if it is a choice you wish to make.

### **Coursework**

Judaism is a religion of learning, and classes play a critical role in preparing to enter Jewish life. Every student is encouraged to enroll in a **Taste of Judaism** pre-introductory course. Each student should also take an introductory class in Judaism, either our **Basic Judaism** series or another comparable course that covers the academic year. In addition, every student should take a **Hebrew Marathon**, our two-day mini-class in Hebrew, so that Hebrew is not a closed book. The **Practical Judaism** class is also highly recommended; this monthly class is a thorough introduction to the pragmatic details of Jewish holidays, Shabbat, and life-cycle events.

We offer many other Jewish Lifelong Learning classes, all of which are applicable and useful in preparing to become a Jew-by-Choice. These are not required for conversion, but are encouraged.

### **Services**

We recommend that all potential converts attend Shabbat and Festival services as often as practical. You will learn a great deal about the life of a Jewish congregation, and share in the annual cycle of Torah readings and festivals that forms a central part of Jewish life. Plan on attending Sabbath services at least once a month, preferably more. Both Shabbat evening and morning services are helpful, and each is different in character.

### **Writing Assignments**

Rabbi Appel will ask you to write a series of pieces on your interest in Judaism and your experiences learning about it and living it. There are typically about four “essays” required of each student, one at the beginning of the process, one at the end, and two somewhere in between.

### **Counseling**

Each student typically meets individually with Rabbi Appel approximately every two months, mostly to “check in” and ask questions. In addition, many students email questions to our rabbi more regularly. Other students meet more frequently with our rabbi, as their questions and needs require.

## **Books, Films, and On-Line**

Students are encouraged to read as many varied Jewish books as they have time to read. A brief reading list is provided, but this is just a suggested jumping off point in learning about Judaism. Films on Jewish themes are also a valuable resource. A suggested film list is also enclosed.

There is a wealth of Jewish information available instantly online. Search on a Jewish topic and you will find many resources to scan or read. Most Jewish newspapers and magazines are now available online, such as the Jewish Forward ([www.forward.com](http://www.forward.com)), Moment Magazine, the Jerusalem Report, Ha'aretz, the Jerusalem Post, and many others. Keeping up on the current events in the Jewish world is sometimes as easy as signing up for Jewish email notices.

## **Other Jewish Experiences**

A wide variety of other Jewish experiences are also helpful in shaping a consciousness of Jewish issues, ideas, culture, and religious practice. These might include everything from going to Jewish museums to attending Jewish music concerts, lectures, camps, art shows, bar mitzvahs, weddings, and *brisses*. Get yourself invited to someone's house for Shabbat dinner, or to a Passover Seder or Chanukah party. It's all valuable.

## **How Do I Know When I'm Ready?**

Typically, both the conversion student and the sponsoring rabbi have a sense at some point that "it's time." Usually the process takes in the neighborhood of a year, but there are no hard and fast rules on this.

When both you and the rabbi feel that you are ready to complete conversion, the rabbi will schedule a *beit din*, the rabbinic court made up of three rabbis or religious leaders, a trip to the *mikveh*, the ritual bath, and the conversion ceremony.

## **What Does it Mean to Embrace Judaism?**

- I choose to enter the eternal covenant between God and the people Israel and to become a Jew of my own free will.
- I accept Judaism to the exclusion of all other religious faiths and practices.
- I pledge my loyalty to Judaism and to the Jewish people under all circumstances.
- I promise to establish a Jewish home, and to participate actively in the life of the synagogue and of the Jewish people.
- I commit myself to the pursuit of Torah and Jewish knowledge.
- If I should be blessed with children, I promise to raise them as Jews.

**Conversion/Introduction to Judaism Suggested Reading List**  
**Rabbi Batsheva Appel**



**Introductory Texts and Practice:**

What is a Jew, Morris Kertzer  
Book of Jewish Belief, Louis Jacobs  
The Book of Jewish Practice, Louis Jacobs  
The Sabbath, Abraham Joshua Heschel  
The Idiot's Guide to Judaism  
Jewish Literacy, Joseph Telushkin  
**Conversion:** Choosing a Jewish Life, Anita Diamant

A Book of Life, Michael Strassfeld  
Living a Jewish Life, Anita Diamant  
The How-to Handbook for Jewish Living,  
Kerry Olitzky  
To Be a Jew, Hayim Donin  
Choosing Judaism, Lydia Kukoff

**Fiction:**

The Source, James Michener  
The Chosen, The Promise, Chaim Potok  
As a Driven Leaf, Milton Steinberg  
The Yiddish Policeman's Union, Michael Chabon  
The Art of Blessing the Day, Marge Piercy

Exodus, Leon Uris  
Bee Season, Myla Goldberg  
Night, Elie Wiesel  
Everything is Illuminated, Jonathan Foer

**History:**

A History of the Jews, Paul Johnson  
American Judaism, Jonathan Sarna  
Jewish People, Jewish Thought, Robert Seltzer  
Six Days of War, Michael Oren  
A Short History of the Jewish People, Raymond Scheindlin  
A History of the Jewish Experience: Eternal Faith, Eternal People, Leo Trepp  
Unsettled: an Anthropology of the Jews, Melvin Konner  
Written Out of History: Our Jewish Foremothers, Emily Taitz and Sondra Henry  
Hitler's War Against the Jews, Lucy Davidowitz

The Story of Jews, Stan Mack  
Wanderings, Chaim Potok  
A History of Israel, Howard Sachar  
The Yom Kippur War, Rabinovich

**Bible and Torah Commentary:**

The Tanakh, Jew. Pub. Society  
Commentary on the Torah, Richard Eliot Friedman  
The Torah: A Women's Commentary, Tamara Cohn Eskinazi, ed.  
The Torah—a Modern Commentary, UAHC/URJ Press, Gunther Plaut, ed.  
A Torah Commentary for Our Times, Harvey Fields  
Sparks Beneath the Surface, Kushner and Olitzky, Jason Aaronson  
Torah Today, Pinchas Peli  
The Bible as it Was, James Kugel  
Seventy Facets, Gershon Gorenberg, ed.

**Prayer Books**

Mishkan T'fila: The Siddur for Reform Jewish Prayer, CCAR/URJ Press  
Likrat Shabbat, Sidur Hadash, Prayerbook Press of Media Judaica  
The Artscroll Siddur  
The Gates of Prayer, CCAR/URJ Press  
Shabbat Reflections Prayerbook  
Shabbat of Song, CD's from Temple Emanu-El; Avanim, a Rock Shabbat, CD

**Theology and Belief (and some Practice)**

Finding God: Selected Responses, by Rifat Sonsino and Daniel B. Syme  
When Your Jewish Child Asks Why, Kerry Olitzky  
Jewish Book(s) of Why, Jonathan David Publishers

God in Search of Man, Abraham Joshua Heschel

I and Thou, Martin Buber

Liberal Judaism, Eugene Borowitz

Why Bad Things Happen to Good People, Harold Kushner

The Book of Words, Laurence Kushner

What Happens After I Die? Jewish Views of Life After Life, Rifat Sonsino & Daniel Syme

### **Websites**

www.tabletmag.com

www.hebcal.com

myjewishlearning.com

urj.org

virtualjerusalem.com

### **Suggested Films**

This is a limited list of Jewish films that are worth seeing. Use this list as a starting point.

#### **Jewish Musicals**

Fiddler on the Roof

The Jazz Singer (any of three versions)

Funny Girl

West Bank Story

Yentl

#### **Jewish Families**

Keeping up with the Steins

Brighton Beach Memoirs

Avalon

Lost in Yonkers

A Walk on the Moon

The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg

#### **Anti-Semitism**

School Ties

Gentleman's Agreement

Crossfire

Chariots of Fire

#### **Jewish Humor**

Frisco Kid

Crossing Delancey

The Great Dictator

Keeping the Faith

Most movies by Mel Brooks

Most movies by Woody Allen

#### **Biblical Judaism**

David and Bathsheba

The Ten Commandments

Solomon and Sheba

The Bible

The Prince of Egypt

#### **The Holocaust**

The Diary of Anne Frank

The Hiding Place

Voyage of the Damned

Au Revoir, les Enfants

Schindler's List

The Pianist

Paper Clips

Left Luggage

Europa, Europa

The Nasty Girl

Jew-Boy Levi

Max

The Harmonists

#### **Old Jewish Neighborhoods**

The Chosen

King of the Roaring Twenties

Lepke

Once Upon a Time in America

Bugsy

Hester Street

A Stranger Among Us

A Price Above Rubies

#### **Israel**

Sword in the Desert

Exodus

Cast a Giant Shadow

#### **Jewish Dilemmas**

Walk on Water

The Quarrel

Everything is Illuminated

King of the Corner

Crimes and Misdemeanors

Ghengis Cohn