



## Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation's Brit\* Mitzvah Cohort | 2021-2022

**Engage your Adult Jewish identity with this 10-month program,  
culminating in a special Shabbat Brit Mitzvah ritual on Shabbat Sukkot (October 15, 2022)**

Our newly redesigned JRC Adult Brit Mitzvah program combines group study, hevruta/partner learning, Torah Trope, Spiritual Autobiography, and topics such as Liturgy and Prayer, God and Theology, Reconstructionism, Bodies, Eating and Daily Living, Shabbat, Halacha and Traditions, Tikkun Olam, Gender and Identities, the Jewish Library, and Jewish History.

### **This program is for you if you:**

- Have a different relationship to Judaism now than you did when you were a child
- Never became bar/bat mitzvah as a teen or are looking for a different experience
- Want to deepen your knowledge, skills and engagement with Jewish traditions
- Have been part of a Jewish community for a while, but are exploring formal conversion and learning

### **When and Where:**

Classes meet Tuesday evenings from 7-8:30pm at JRC in Evanston, will include some group, individual and hevruta meetings, and will be multi-access/zoom friendly.

### **Program Dates:**

**November 30, 2021 - May 31, 2022: Classes**

**Summer 2022: Independent Work: Spiritual Autobiography and Torah Trope**

**September 2022: Sharing Spiritual Autobiographies**

**October 15, 2022: Shabbat Sukkot Adult Brit Mitzvah Ritual**

### **Faculty:**

Rabbi Rachel Weiss, Cantor Howard Friedland, and Rabbi David Eber.

*\*Why Brit and not Bnai? Bnai/Bat/Bar Mitzvah literally translates to "Children/Child of the Commandments/Values" and is a gendered term. "Brit Mitzvah" literally translates to "entering a covenant of Jewish Values" and is a non-gendered term. As this is a program for adults, we use this more inclusive language which better represents our values and our relationship to Judaism.*



### Syllabus Overview and Schedule

Will I have time and space in my life for this program?

As adults, we have busy lives and many different things compete for our time. This program is designed to be flexible enough for each member to do the best they can, integrating Judaism and Jewish learning into their real lives, rather than waiting for the time to be right. Some participants may need to attend online, some may not be able to attend each session. We ask that you make a commitment to yourself that is feasible and manageable for you, and that you make a commitment to being part of the class community in the ways that are possible for you.

***After all, Judaism should be something that supports our busy lives, filling us as we live.***

Class No.	Date	Topic to be Covered
1	November 30, 2021	Introduction
2	December 7, 2021	Reconstructionist Judaism
3	December 14, 2021	What is Hevruta?
4	December 21, 2021	Building your own Jewish identity
5	January 11, 2022	Torah and the Jewish Library
6	January 18, 2022	Hevruta: Torah and the Jewish Library
7	January 25, 2022	Torah and the Jewish Library
8	February 1, 2022	Hevruta: Torah and the Jewish Library
9	February 8, 2022	History and Civilization
10	February 15, 2022	Liturgy, Prayer and Ritual
11	February 22, 2022	Hevruta: Liturgy, Prayer and Ritual
12	March 1, 2022	Liturgy, Prayer and Ritual
13	March 8, 2022	Hevruta: Liturgy, Prayer and Ritual
14	March 15, 2022	Shabbat
15	March 22, 2022	Jewish Traditions, Halacha and Values Based Decision Making
16	March 29, 2022	Hevruta: Jewish Traditions, Halacha and VBDM
17	April 5, 2022	Bodies, Food and Daily Living
18	April 12, 2022	Hevruta: Bodies, Food and Daily Living



19	April 19, 2022	Gender, Race and Identities
20	April 26, 2022	Hevruta: Gender, Race and Identities
21	May 3, 2022	Tikkun Olam
22	May 10, 2022	Hevruta: Tikkun Olam
23	May 17, 2022	God and Theology
24	May 24, 2022	Hevruta: God and Theology
25	May 31, 2022	Capstone Class
SUMMER	Individual/Hevruta: Trope Preparation and Spiritual Autobiography	
Fall	TBD	Receiving Torah: Sharing Spiritual Autobiographies
Fall	TBD	
Fall	TBD	
	Saturday, October 15, 2022	Shabbat Sukkot: Adult Brit Mitzvah Ritual

### **Program Commitments**

- Attend class. Please make every effort to participate in each weekly session, recognizing that life happens.
- Make a commitment to your fellow classmates to learn, question, and show up. Always keep your commitments to your Hevruta partners.
- Celebrate different identities. Each member has their own Jewish identity, and identity is dynamic.
- Participate in the class service on **Saturday, October 15, 2022 (Shabbat Sukkot)**
- Participate in the class celebration on Shabbat Sukkot following services. We will plan this celebration as a group.
- Parshat haShavua - read or subscribe to a weekly Torah discussion:
  - Weekly Torah Learning from Reconstructing Judaism:  
<https://www.reconstructingjudaism.org/learn/weekly-learning>
  - (M)Oral Torah, from T'Ruah  
<https://truah.org/resource-types/moral-torah/>
  - Weekly Torah learning from Hazon  
<https://hazon.org/news-musings/hazon-blog/>
  - Rabbi Jonathan Sacks Torah Commentary

<https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation-homepage/>

Or others - see My Jewish Learning's compilation:

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/guide-to-weekly-torah-commentaries-online/>

- **Membership at JRC.** You are welcome to join the first 4 class sessions before you make a membership commitment. If you are not yet a member, we ask that you join our congregation to continue in our program.
- **Class cost: The cost for this program is \$360**, which includes all sessions and group tutoring. Additional donations to JRC are always welcome. Financial assistance available.

### **Shabbat and Holidays**

- Attend 5 Shabbat evening services between December 1, 2021 and August 31, 2022
- Attend 5 Shabbat morning services between December 1, 2021 and August 31, 2022
- Participate in the following Jewish Holiday celebrations:
  - Chanukah (Nov 28 - Dec 5)
  - Tu B'Shvat (observed at JRC January 21, 2022 or on actual day, January 16, 2022)
  - Purim (March 16, 2022)
  - Passover (1st Seder, April 15, 2022, continuing through April 22, 2022)
  - Shavuot (June 4, 2022)
  - Tisha b'Av (Aug 6, 2022)
  - Selichot (Sept. 17, 2022)
  - Rosh Hashanah (Sept 25-27, 2022)
  - Yom Kippur (Oct 4-5, 2022)

### **Spiritual Autobiography**

During the summer of 2022, each participant will create a spiritual autobiography, a personal narrative that explores your own relationship to Jewish identity, belief, experience and self. We will meet periodically over the summer to explore and study in Hevruta and with the clergy, but the writing will be at your own pace.



### **Torah Trope**

While Torah and Tefillah (liturgy) are written in Hebrew, we recognize that not everyone has the goal of reading Hebrew fluently. It is absolutely acceptable to rely on tools such as transliteration and aural learning, and for those who want to learn to read, decode, and translate Hebrew, resources and options for lessons will be provided.

Cantor Howard will teach two tracks of cantillation/trope:

1. Torah Trope System: Cantor Howard will create a small group to teach the trope/cantillation symbols and system, and how to apply the system to any piece of Torah text. For those who want to build this skill and chant Torah in the future or more regularly, this option is right for you.
2. Torah Trope Recording: Cantor Howard will record several *pesukim*/verses of Torah and will be available to you one-on-one if you need help to go over pronunciation and musicality. For those who want to chant Torah at the Brit Mitzvah ritual and be able to learn to copy the trope by ear, this option is right for you.

### **Hevruta**

At the heart of Jewish learning is the hevruta/partnership relationship. Each person in our Brit Mitzvah cohort will pair with a classmate, and this learning will deepen the connection to the content we learn each lesson. Note that we may shuffle the hevruta pairings throughout the cohort so that we can find optimal partnerships for everyone.

There will be some weeks in which our class will only take place in hevruta. During these weeks, hevrutot have the choice to meet at JRC during regular class time, or to find other times/ways to meet during the week at your convenience.

### **Learners' Service**

This spring our clergy will lead a Shabbat morning Learners' Service, which is a Shabbat service designed for questions, explanations and discussion in the midst of the service. Note-taking is optional, but we supply post-it notes for your siddur! Participants must attend this service.

