



Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation's Adult Brit* Mitzvah Cohort 2025-2026

For anyone who has a different relationship with Judaism than they did at age 13

Engage your Adult Jewish identity with this 1 year program,
culminating in a special Shabbat Brit Mitzvah ritual on November 21, 2026

Our 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:

December 9, 2025 - May 26, 2026: Classes

Summer 2026: Independent Work: Spiritual Autobiography and Torah Trope

October 2026: Sharing Spiritual Autobiographies

November 21, 2026: Shabbat Adult Brit Mitzvah Ritual

Faculty:

Rabbi Rachel Weiss, and Cantor Howard Friedland

**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.	Topic to be Covered
1 12/9/25	Introduction to Jewish Identity and Reconstructionist Judaism
2 12/16/25	What is Hevruta?
3 1/6/26	Intro to Brit Mitzvah Process / Torah and the Jewish Library
4 1/13/26	Torah and the Jewish Library
5 1/20/26	Hevruta: Torah and the Jewish Library
6 1/27/26	History and Civilization
7 2/3/26	Hevruta: History and Civilization
8 2/10/26	Liturgy, Prayer and Ritual
9 2/17/26	Hevruta: Liturgy, Prayer and Ritual
10 2/24/26	Liturgy, Prayer and Ritual
11 3/3/26	Hevruta: Liturgy, Prayer and Ritual
12 3/10/26	Shabbat
13 3/17/26	Hevruta: Shabbat
14 3/24/26	Jewish Traditions, Halacha and Values Based Decision Making
15 3/31/26	Hevruta: Jewish Traditions, Halacha and VBDM
16 4/7/26	NO CLASS - Pesach Break
17 4/14/26	Bodies, Food and Daily Living

18 4/21/26	Hevruta: Bodies, Food and Daily Living
19 4/28/26	Tikkun Olam
20 5/5/26	Hevruta: Tikkun Olam
21 5/12/26	God and Theology
22 5/19/26	Hevruta: God and Theology
23 5/26/26	Capstone
SUMMER	Individual/Hevruta: Trope Preparation and Spiritual Autobiography
Fall	Receiving Torah: Sharing Spiritual Autobiographies
Fall	Shabbat Service Planning and Rehearsing
Fall	Celebration Planning
Nov 21, 2026	Adult Brit Mitzvah Ritual and Celebration: Shabbat Vayeitze

Program Commitments

- Attend class. Please make every effort to participate in each weekly session, recognizing that life happens and sometimes you'll have to miss sessions.
- 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, November 21, 2026**
- Participate in the class celebration for the Adult Brit Mitzvah on Shabbat 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 3 class sessions (December 2, 9, 16, 2025) 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 5, 2025 and September 30, 2026
- Attend 5 Shabbat morning services between December 5, 2025 and September 30, 2026
- Participate in the following Jewish Holiday celebrations:
 - Chanukah (December 14-21, 2025)
 - Tu B'Shvat (observed at JRC on Friday, January 30, 2026)
 - Purim (Observed March 1, 2026)
 - Passover (1st Seder, April 1, 2026, continuing through April 8, 2026)
 - Shavuot (May 21, 2026)
 - Tisha b'Av (July 22, 2026)
 - Selichot (Sept. 5, 2026)
 - Rosh Hashanah (Sept 11-13, 2026)
 - Yom Kippur (Sept 20-21, 2026)
 - Sukkot (Sept 25, 2026 continuing through Oct 2, 2026)
 - Simchat Torah (October 3, 2026)

Spiritual Autobiography

During the summer of 2026, 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.

Hebrew Learning

For some, learning to read Hebrew is part of deeper engagement with your Jewish identity at this stage. For those who want to engage with Hebrew reading, decoding, and literacy, Rabbi Rachel recommends the Kamionkowski Beit Midrash, a Reconstructionist, online Hebrew learning program led by Dr. Tamar Kamionkowski. Dr. Kamionkowski is a professor of Hebrew Bible at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, and has opportunities for Hebrew learning at many levels.

<https://kamionkowski-bet-midrash.com/>

We recommend the **FREE** Learn to Read Hebrew in 2 Weeks course, which is self-guided.

<https://kamionkowski-bet-midrash.com/learn-to-read-hebrew-in-two-weeks/>

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. 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.