
A PROGRAMME OF ADOPTION

Adopting Judaism

*Ten stages for a grown-up journey into Jewish life —
for those who are choosing, and being chosen into, the Jewish
people.*

גֵּר צֶדֶק

אֶל-אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֶכִי אֵלַי ... עַמִּי עָמִי

"Where you go, I will go; your people shall be my people."

RUTH 1:16 — THE WORDS OF EVERY JEW WHO CHOSE

A SPIRITUAL-HUMANISTIC WORKBOOK – PERSONAL & REUSABLE

Before we begin

This workbook treats becoming Jewish not as passing an exam but as being *adopted* — welcomed into a family, a people, and a civilisation that is still being written. The tradition itself reaches for this language. It calls the one who converts a *ger*, and it says such a person is “like a new-born child,” entering the world afresh. It gives every Jew-by-choice the same second name — *ben* or *bat Avraham v’Sarah*, child of Abraham and Sarah — because the first Jews were themselves people who *chose*. To adopt Judaism is to be grafted, knowingly and gladly, onto an old and living tree.

These ten stages are modelled on the b’mitzvah journey a Jewish child makes, but rebuilt for an adult mind — one that wants history as well as ritual, argument as well as belonging, and honesty about belief. The programme is written in the first person, as a journey you are making yourself; but it is built so that a rabbi, sponsor, study-partner, or a whole group of adult seekers could travel it together.

THE SPIRIT OF THIS PROGRAMME — *a spiritual humanism*

The voice of this workbook is spiritual-humanistic. It is human-centred and this-worldly: it does not ask you to affirm a supernatural being who suspends the laws of nature, and it treats Judaism’s stories, laws, and holy days as the magnificent creations of a people rather than as dictation from the sky. But it is not dry or merely secular. It keeps the vocabulary of the sacred — awe, wonder, reverence, holiness, blessing — and points those words at what is real: the natural world, the moral life, the mystery of being here at all, and the long companionship of the Jewish people through time. In the lineage of Mordecai Kaplan’s naturalism, Harold Schulweis’s “godliness,” and Sherwin Wine’s Humanistic Judaism, we practise a Judaism that is *chosen for its meaning*.

*You do not need to believe in order to belong.
You need only to begin.*

HOW EACH STAGE IS BUILT

Every one of the ten stages follows the same rhythm, so the book becomes a habit rather than a reading list:

- The teaching — a short essay that carries the substance of the stage.
- Sources to sit with — a few primary voices, ancient and modern, to read slowly.
- Reading & resources — where to go deeper, in books and online.
- Journal — questions to write your way into. This is where the programme becomes *yours*.
- A practice to try — something to *do* in the world, not only to think.

- Milestone — a small piece of evidence you keep. Together the ten milestones become the raw material of your ceremony (Stage 10).

A note on breadth and respect: this workbook describes the whole Jewish world — Orthodox, Haredi, Sephardi, Masorti, Reform, Liberal, Progressive, Reconstructionist and Humanistic — as fairly as it can, even where it does not share a given view. Where practices differ, it tells you so, and then invites you to choose. Nothing here is offered as a ruling; it is offered as an education and an invitation.

The ten stages

BEGINNINGS

- **The Ethos: Three Commitments** — *a Judaism without tribalism, radical inclusion, and tikkun olam*

THE FOUNDATIONS

- I** **What Is Judaism?** — *a civilisation, its denominations, and its story in Britain*
- II** **Why Do I Identify As Jewish?** — *belonging, choosing, and the honest self*

THE PRACTICES

- III** **Shabbat** — *starting and keeping a practice*
- IV** **Kashrut** — *a way of eating that means something*
- V** **The Jewish Year** — *living inside sacred time*

THE MIND

- VI** **Five Who Thought It Through** — *Maimonides, Spinoza, Kaplan, Schulweis, Wine*
- VII** **The Tanakh & The Talmud** — *the library of a people*
- VIII** **Hebrew** — *the aleph-bet, and choosing your Hebrew name*

THE TABLE & THE THRESHOLD

- IX** **Jewish Food** — *Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Mizrahi, Persian, Ethiopian*
- X** **Writing Your Shiur** — *your birthdate parashah, and the ceremony*

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At the back: a guide to finding your Hebrew-birthday Torah portion; an aleph-bet chart; a festival calendar; a milestone tracker; and a consolidated reading list.

BEGINNINGS – WHAT KIND OF JUDAISM THIS IS

The Ethos: Three Commitments

Before the ten stages begin, three convictions that shape everything that follows — drawn from Spiritual Humanistic Judaism and from the siddur Tefilotenu. A JUDAISM WITHOUT TRI-

BALISM · RADICAL INCLUSION · TIKKUN OLAM

JUDAISM WITHOUT TRIBALISM

A people can love itself in two very different ways. It can love itself as a *fortress* — a wall drawn tight around “us,” with everyone else left outside as “them.” Or it can love itself as a *home* — a warm and particular place that opens its door outward, whose love of its own people is the very thing that teaches it to love all people. Spiritual Humanistic Judaism chooses the second with both hands. We are unashamedly a people, with our own language, memory, calendar and song; and precisely *because* we know how much a people is worth, we refuse to treat any other people as worth less.

This is why, in Stage Six, you will meet Kaplan quietly retiring the old idea of the “chosen people.” A humanistic Judaism does not believe any group is loved more by the universe, or granted a monopoly on truth or virtue. What it believes in is peoplehood without supremacy and solidarity without chauvinism: a covenant you join not to stand above humanity but to take up a share of its repair. The siddur *Tefilotenu* says it in a single breath at the heart of the Shema — “*I am Jewish, and I am a child of Humanity.*” Both halves are true at once, and neither cancels the other. To adopt this Judaism is to gain a people *and* to widen your belonging to the whole human family.

FROM TEFILOTENU

“I am a Jew who has come out of the narrow places to be free in life. I am Jewish, and I am a child of Humanity.” — TEFILOTENU, THE SHEMA

“May love of all peoples take root in every heart.” — TEFILOTENU; AND THE AMIDA, OFFERED “FOR ALL ISRAEL, AND FOR ALL HUMANITY”

RADICAL INCLUSION — *why we open the door all the way*

If there is no fortress wall, then the door is genuinely open — and we mean it radically. In a Spiritual Humanistic community no one prays *for* you; we pray *with* one another. There is no priest above the people and no soul turned away at the threshold. We sit in a circle so that everyone can see everyone’s face; we call the one who guides a *facilitator*, not a superior; and we hold that every voice matters and no voice is disqualified by doubt, by background, by whom one loves, by how one’s body or mind is made, or by how much Hebrew one can yet read.

Why do we believe in inclusion this radically? Not as a fashion, but as the direct consequence of everything else in this book. If the sacred lives “between people” (as the siddur puts it), then every person excluded is a diminishment of the holy itself. If human dignity is our first value, then it cannot be rationed. And if we are a people who remembers being the stranger — commanded more than any other thing to *love the stranger* — then a closed door would be a betrayal of our own story. For a Jew-by-choice this is not abstract: the whole tradition of welcoming the convert as a child of Abraham and Sarah is radical inclusion made flesh. You are not tolerated at the edge of this people. You are received into its centre. *Come as you are; bring your voice.*

FROM TEFILOTENU

“The ‘holy’ is between people... no one prays for us, rather we pray with one another. The community’s courage, care, and accountability are the ‘answer’ to our prayers.” — TEFILOTENU, ON

SPIRITUAL HUMANISM

TIKKUN OLAM — *repairing the world with our own hands*

The third commitment is the one that turns belief into work. Tikkun olam — the “repair of the world” — is the conviction that the world is unfinished and that mending it is a *human* task, not a favour we wait on from the heavens. A spiritual humanist does not pray for the hungry to be fed and leave it there; the prayer *is* the resolve, and the resolve becomes the hands. As *Tefilotenu* puts it with startling honesty, “*the measure of our worship is the weekday... if the liturgy lifts our spirits but leaves our neighbour hungry or our world burning, it has failed.*” The Aleinu, near the close of every service, is not a hope that God will fix things but a vow that *we* will: “*it is within our power to build and repair, and it is in our hands to make liberation blossom.*”

No one embodied this more fully than Harold Schulweis, whom you will meet again in Stage Six. A congregational rabbi for over sixty years, he refused to let “godliness” remain a word — he built it. He founded the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous to honour and support the non-Jews who rescued Jews during the Shoah, and Jewish World Watch to mobilise synagogues against genocide in Darfur and beyond; he pioneered the intimate *havurah* and trained ordinary congregants as carers and para-rabbis, pushing the sacred out of the pulpit and into the hands of the whole community. His summary could be the motto of this entire section: “*Religion is behaved, not believed.*” A creed you cannot act on is, for a humanist, barely a religion at all — and a repair you actually make is worth more than any belief you merely hold.

What does the repair actually ask of a person, day to day? Humanists have long tried to name it plainly. One widely used charter, the Ten Commitments of the American Humanist Association, gathers the work into ten habits of a decent human life — a fitting companion to Jewish *tikkun olam*, and a good mirror to hold up to your own week:

COMMITMENT	"I WILL..."
Altruism	help others in need without hoping for rewards.
Critical Thinking	practise good judgement by asking questions and thinking for myself.
Empathy	consider other people's thoughts, feelings, and experiences.
Environmentalism	take care of the Earth and the life on it.
Ethical Development	always focus on becoming a better person.
Global Awareness	be a good neighbour to those who share the Earth, and help make the world better for everyone.
Humility	know my own strengths and weaknesses, and appreciate them in others.
Peace & Social Justice	help people solve problems and settle disagreements in ways that are fair for everyone.
Responsibility	be a good person — even when no one is looking — and own the consequences of my actions.
Service & Participation	help my community in ways that let me know the people I am helping.

The Ten Commitments, American Humanist Association — ten everyday practices of tikkun olam.

*We do not wait to be saved.
We roll up our sleeves and become the repair.*

FROM TEFILOTENV — THE ALEINU

"It is upon us to praise the beauty of the world, and to labour to repair the world. For it is within our power to build and repair, and it is in our hands to make liberation blossom... נְתִתֵּן אֶת הָעוֹלָם — let us repair the world." — TEFILOTENU, THE ALEINU

JOURNAL

WRITE YOUR WAY IN

1. *Fortress or home?* Where have you seen belonging become a wall — and where have you seen it become an open door? Which do you want yours to be?
2. “I am Jewish, and I am a child of Humanity.” Say it aloud. Does holding both feel like a tension, or a relief?
3. Read the Ten Commitments slowly. Which one is already a strength of yours? Which one is this year’s work? Name one concrete act of *tikkun* you could begin this month.

STAGE ONE — THE FOUNDATIONS

What Is Judaism?

“Judaism is something far more comprehensive than Jewish religion. It includes... the nexus of a history, literature, language, social organization, folk sanctions, standards of conduct, social and spiritual ideals, aesthetic values — in short, a civilization.” MORDECAI KAPLAN, *JUDAISM AS*

A CIVILIZATION, 1934

THE TEACHING — *you are joining a civilisation, not signing a creed*

If you ask “what is Judaism?” expecting a list of beliefs, you will be puzzled by the answer, because Judaism keeps failing the test other religions seem to pass. There is no single required creed. There are atheist Jews and mystical Jews, Jews who keep every rule and Jews who keep almost none, and all of them are unarguably Jewish. The reason is that Judaism is not, at bottom, a set of propositions to believe. It is a *people* and the whole way of life that people has built over three thousand years.

The thinker who saw this most clearly, and whose vision frames this entire workbook, was Mordecai Kaplan (1881–1983). In his great book *Judaism as a Civilization* (1934) he argued that Judaism is best understood as an evolving religious civilisation. Like any civilisation it is made of many strands woven together: a *people* with a sense of kinship; a *land* and a longing toward it; a *language*, Hebrew; a *history* and the memory of it; a vast *literature*; *art, music and food*; shared *ethics* and ideals; and, running through all of these, *religion* — but as one strand among many, not the trunk from which everything else hangs. To become Jewish, on this view, is not primarily to adopt a theology. It is to be adopted into a civilisation: to take its history as your history, its calendar as your calendar, its language onto your tongue and its people as your people.

Kaplan’s civilisation is a *living* one, which means it changes. His famous phrase was that “the past has a vote, but not a veto.” The tradition gets a powerful say — we do not begin from nothing — but the present generation is a full participant, not a mere inheritor. That is exactly the freedom an adult convert needs. You are not being asked to pretend the last two centuries of science and moral progress did not happen. You are being asked to join the conversation.

Mitzvot as folkways

This reframing changes how we will meet every practice in the stages ahead — Shabbat, the dietary customs, the festivals. In traditional language these are *mitzvot*, usually translated “commandments”: obligations laid on the Jew by a commanding God. Kaplan offered a different and, for us, liberating reading. He called the observances folkways — the sacred customs, the *sancta*, by which a people marks its time, remembers its story, and recognises its own. A folkway is not a law enforced from above; it is a shared practice that carries meaning, binds the generations, and may grow or change as the people grows and changes.

Read as folkways, the mitzvot lose none of their beauty and gain something precious: honesty. We light the Shabbat candles not because we fear punishment for leaving them dark, but because kindling that light joins us to every Jewish household stretching back through time, and marks a threshold between the working week and a sanctuary of rest. We taste, or decline, certain foods not to satisfy a heavenly rulebook, but to make an ordinary act — eating — into a conscious, values-laden practice. Throughout this workbook, when you meet a “commandment,” read it as an invitation to a folkway: a meaningful custom you are free to take up, shape, and make your own. That is the difference between obeying a tradition and *adopting* one.

A folkway is how a people remembers itself out loud.

Reconstruction: revaluation and transvaluation

If the mitzvot are folkways rather than commands, one question turns urgent: *how* do we decide what a folkway should mean for us now? Kaplan gave us a method — he called it reconstruction — and it runs through every practice in this book. It works in two moves. The first he named revaluation: go back to a tradition, ask honestly what it originally meant and what human need it answered, and then draw out the value in it that still has, in his phrase, “psychological kinship” with your own life — the meaning that was latent there all along, waiting to be released. The second he named transvaluation: where honest continuity runs out, you frankly give the old form a *new* meaning its authors never intended, but which lets it serve a living purpose today.

Together, these are how a folkway stays alive instead of hardening into a fossil or a burden. From here on you will meet a “Reconstruct it” exercise in the practice stages, always asking the same three questions: *What did this originally mean and intend? What value might it hold for me today? How would I reconstruct that value in a practice I can actually keep?* This is not watering the tradition down. It is the most serious thing an adult can do with an inheritance — take it apart with respect, and build it back so it can carry weight again.

THE JEWISH WORLD TODAY — *one people, many movements*

Because the civilisation is alive, it has branched. When people speak of Judaism’s “denominations” they mean the modern movements that grew up, mostly since the early nineteenth century, as Jews met the modern world and answered it differently. They are best pictured as a spectrum, from those who hold the tradition to be divinely given and binding in full, to those who cherish it as a wholly human inheritance to be chosen freely.

MOVEMENT	IN A SENTENCE	BRITISH LANDMARKS
Orthodox (mainstream / “Central”)	Torah is divinely given and Jewish law (<i>halakhah</i>) binding; modern in dress and outlook but traditional in principle.	The United Synagogue (est. by Act of Parliament, 1870), the office of the Chief Rabbi (currently Ephraim

MOVEMENT	IN A SENTENCE	BRITISH LANDMARKS
		Mirvis) and the London Beth Din; the Federation of Synagogues (1887).
Haredi (strictly Orthodox)	Full traditional observance and separation from secular culture; the fastest-growing sector.	The Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations (1926); Stamford Hill (London), Gateshead, Salford.
Sephardi (Spanish & Portuguese)	The historic Iberian-rite community, led traditionally by a <i>Haham</i> rather than a Chief Rabbi.	The S&P Sephardi Community; Bevis Marks (1701), Britain's oldest synagogue in continuous use.
Masorti (Conservative)	Halakhah is binding <i>but historically evolving</i> ; open to modern scholarship. Between Orthodox and Reform.	Born of the “Jacobs Affair” (1964); New London Synagogue; “Masorti Judaism” since 2012.
Reform	Torah is divinely inspired but humanly written; ethics and egalitarianism to the fore; law is guidance, not binding.	West London Synagogue (1840), Britain's first Reform congregation; the Movement for Reform Judaism.
Liberal	The most radical historic British stream: individual conscience, prophetic ethics, reason; early full egalitarianism.	The Jewish Religious Union (1902) of Lily Montagu & Claude Montefiore; the Liberal Jewish Synagogue (1911).
Progressive (new, 2025)	Reform and Liberal united into a single movement — now about a third of Britain's synagogue members.	Formed by member vote on 18 May 2025; c. 80 communities; led jointly by Rabbis Josh Levy & Charley Baginsky.
Reconstructionist & Humanistic	Kaplan's naturalist civilisation-Judaism, and Sherwin Wine's non-theistic celebration of Jewish life. <i>This workbook's spiritual home.</i>	Mostly American movements with a small UK footprint, but a large influence on progressive Jewish thought here.

The British movements at a glance. Mainstream Orthodoxy is still the largest affiliated group, but its share is falling; Progressive is roughly a third; Haredi is growing fastest.

One event deserves a moment, because it shaped the very map above. In May 2025, after two years of preparation, the Reform and Liberal movements voted overwhelmingly to merge into a single new movement, Progressive Judaism — described by the historian Dr Ed Kessler as “the biggest change in British Judaism since the Second World War.” For someone adopting Judaism in Britain today, this is the freshest branch on a very old tree, and one whose inclusive, choice-centred ethos sits close to the spirit of this book.

JUDAISM IN BRITAIN — *a very short history of a very long presence*

You are not joining Judaism in the abstract; you are joining it *here*, in a country with its own nine-hundred-year Jewish story — one of expulsion and return, of poverty and prominence, of the East End sweatshop and the House of Lords.

Jews first came to England with the Norman Conquest of 1066, invited as financiers in an age when the Church forbade Christians to lend at interest. It was a fragile existence: Jews were legally the king's property, barred from owning land. England gave Europe its first blood libel (Norwich, 1144) and, at York in 1190, a massacre in which around 150 Jews died at Clifford's Tower. Then, in 1290, King Edward I issued the Edict of Expulsion — England became the first European kingdom to banish its Jews entirely. For roughly 365 years there were, officially, no Jews in England at all.

The door reopened in the 1650s. The Amsterdam rabbi Menasseh ben Israel petitioned Oliver Cromwell; the Whitehall Conference of 1655 found no law actually barring Jews' return, and a small Sephardi community was quietly permitted to worship — the Resettlement of 1656. From that seed grew the institutions that still stand: Bevis Marks Synagogue (1701), the Ashkenazi Great Synagogue, the Board of Deputies of British Jews (1760) — the community's representative voice to this day — and the Jews' Free School (1732).

The nineteenth century was the century of emancipation. Barred from Parliament by an oath sworn "on the true faith of a Christian," Lionel de Rothschild was elected again and again before the Jews Relief Act of 1858 finally let him take his seat as Britain's first practising Jewish MP. Then, from 1881, pogroms in the Russian Empire drove a great wave — well over a hundred thousand Jews — into Britain, above all into London's East End, with its Yiddish theatres, its tailoring workshops, and its fierce new energy. The backlash produced the Aliens Act of 1905, Britain's first modern immigration control. A generation later, after *Kristallnacht*, Britain admitted about 10,000 mostly Jewish children on the Kindertransport (1938–39) — many of whom never saw their parents again.

Today the community numbers around 271,000 by the 2021 census of England and Wales (nearer 290,000–300,000 across the whole UK once all who identify are counted), concentrated in Greater London — Barnet above all — and in Manchester, Leeds, Gateshead and Glasgow. It is a small community that has left a mark on Britain far out of proportion to its size, and it is the community whose life you are preparing to share.

A word on adoption — how one actually becomes Jewish

The formal process, *giyur*, differs across the movements, and it is worth seeing the whole spectrum. At the traditional end, Orthodox conversion asks for extended observance (often years), full acceptance of the commandments, appearance before a rabbinical court (*beit din*), circumcision or a symbolic drop of blood for men, and immersion in a ritual bath (*mikveh*). Masorti keeps the same halakhic shape more flexibly. Reform, Liberal and now Progressive emphasise a year or so of study, living Jewishly, and a welcoming *beit din*, with immersion encouraged rather than absolutely required. Humanistic Judaism frames it as a conscious, educated *adoption* of Jewish identity, culture and ethics — study and public affirmation rather than religious ritual. Across *all* of them lives the same ancient image: the convert as one reborn, a child of Abra-

ham and Sarah. Whichever door you eventually walk through, this workbook prepares you to walk through it with your eyes open.

SOURCES TO SIT WITH

READ THESE SLOWLY — TWICE

“Before the Jewish religion could have come into existence, the Jewish people had to be in existence. The Jewish religion... is the expression of the Jewish people’s will to live.” — MORDECAI KAPLAN,

JUDAISM AS A CIVILIZATION

“The sancta of a people are the persons, places, events and writings which it singles out as holy... and by which it renews from age to age its collective life.” — KAPLAN, ON FOLKWAYS AND SANCTA

(PARAPHRASED SUMMARY)

“A convert who has just converted is like a new-born child.” — BABYLONIAN TALMUD, YEVAMOT 22A

READING & RESOURCES

TO GO DEEPER

Mordecai Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization* (1934) — the book behind this whole programme.

Read at least the opening chapters and the chapter on “folkways.”

Nicholas de Lange, *An Introduction to Judaism* — a clear, fair one-volume survey.

Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656–2000* — the standard history of Anglo-Jewry.

My Jewish Learning, “The Denominations” — myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-denominations

Progressive Judaism (UK) — progressivejudaism.org.uk; and Bevis Marks — bevismarks.org.uk

JOURNAL

WRITE YOUR WAY IN

1. Kaplan lists the strands of a civilisation — people, land, language, history, literature, art, ethics, religion. Which strand pulls at *you* most strongly right now? Which feels most distant?
2. “The past has a vote, but not a veto.” Where in your own life have you kept a family custom without believing the belief behind it — and what did keeping it give you?
3. Reading the mitzvot as *folkways* rather than commands: does that make them more inviting, or does something feel lost? Be honest.
4. Looking at the map of movements, which one (or two) already feels like it might be home — and what draws you there?

A PRACTICE TO TRY

DO, DON'T ONLY THINK

Visit the civilisation. This month, cross one threshold. Attend a Shabbat or festival service at a synagogue of a movement you're curious about (Progressive communities are used to welcoming newcomers — email ahead and say you're exploring). If you can't go in person, take the virtual tour of Bevis Marks and stand, imaginatively, in a room that has held Jewish prayer since 1701. Afterwards, note one thing that surprised you and one thing that moved you.

MILESTONE — *for your ceremony*

KEEP THIS

Write one page titled “*The Jewish world, as I now understand it.*” Sketch the map in your own words — the civilisation and its strands, the spread of movements, the British story — and end by naming the movement(s) that feel like home to you, and why. Date it. This is the first stone of your ceremony, and a record of where your journey began.

STAGE TWO – THE FOUNDATIONS

Why Do I Identify As Jewish?

“Do not urge me to leave you... for wherever you go, I will go; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.” RUTH 1:16 — THE WORDS OF RUTH THE MOABITE, THE TRADITION’S FIRST AND MOST BELOVED CONVERT

THE TEACHING — *belonging before believing*

This is the hardest stage, and the only one no book can write for you. Everything else in this programme is knowledge you can acquire; this is a truth you have to tell. Why do *you* — with your particular history, your family, your doubts — identify as Jewish, or wish to? The tradition, tellingly, gives its highest honour not to the born insider but to the one who chooses: the *ger tzedek*, the righteous convert. And it hands you the perfect words to borrow. When Ruth the Moabite refuses to leave Naomi — “*your people shall be my people*” — she becomes the model for every Jew-by-choice who has followed, and, according to tradition, the ancestor of King David himself. The outsider who chooses is woven into the very centre of the story.

Notice the order of Ruth’s vow. First “*your people shall be my people*,” and only then “*your God my God*.” Peoplehood comes first; belief follows, if it follows at all. This is precisely Kaplan’s insight from Stage One, in the key of the heart: belonging before believing. You do not have to arrive at a settled theology before you are allowed to belong. In a spiritual-humanistic Judaism you may never arrive at a supernatural God at all — and you will still be wholly, unquestionably Jewish, standing in a long line of Jews who found God to be a human word for the highest human things. Identity here is not hypocrisy. It is the honest claiming of a people, a past, and a way of being good.

People come to this doorway by many roads, and every one of them is legitimate. Some arrive through love — a Jewish partner, a Jewish family that became theirs. Some through ancestry — a grandmother’s half-told story, a name, a suspicion of Jewish roots that turns from curiosity into homecoming. Some come through the ethical vision — a tradition that argues with God about justice, that commands care for the stranger thirty-six times, that treats the repair of the world as a human task. Some come through the mind — the sheer intellectual seriousness of a people that has never stopped asking questions. And some cannot fully explain it: only that Jewish life feels like a country they were always trying to reach. You may recognise several of these at once. Naming yours honestly is the work of this stage.

*Ruth did not convert to a creed.
She bound her life to a people, and let meaning grow from there.*

Honesty also means facing the harder side of the choice. To adopt Judaism is to adopt a history that includes vulnerability — expulsions, blood libels, the Shoah, and an antisemitism that has never entirely gone away. Choosing to identify as Jewish is choosing to stand *with* a people, including in its exposure. This is not said to frighten you but to make the choice real: solidarity is part of what you are taking on, and it is one of the noblest parts. The convert who joins knowing this joins with open eyes.

One last reframing. The old phrase “the chosen people” has troubled many thoughtful Jews, Kaplan among them — he quietly removed it from his prayer book, preferring the idea of a people with a *vocation* rather than a privilege. For a convert this is oddly freeing. You were not born chosen; you did the choosing. Perhaps that is the truest form of the covenant: not a status handed down, but a bond taken up. You are, in the tradition’s own beautiful phrase, becoming a child of Abraham and Sarah — the two who also, once, simply chose to go.

SOURCES TO SIT WITH

READ THESE SLOWLY — TWICE

“You shall love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” — DEUTERONOMY 10:19
(THE TORAH COMMANDS LOVE OF THE GER MORE THAN ANY OTHER LAW)

“Where you go, I will go... your people shall be my people.” — RUTH 1:16

“People need not agree about God in order to stand together for godliness.” — AFTER HAROLD SCHULWEIS, ON LOCATING THE SACRED IN SHARED HUMAN GOODNESS

READING & RESOURCES

TO GO DEEPER

The Book of Ruth — it is four short chapters. Read the whole thing in one sitting; it is the convert’s own scroll.

Anita Diamant, *Choosing a Jewish Life* — the warmest, most practical companion for a Jew-by-choice.

Nan Fink Gefen, *Stranger in the Midst* — a candid memoir of conversion, doubts and all.

Sherwin Wine, *Judaism Beyond God* — for identity claimed without supernatural belief.

JOURNAL

WRITE YOUR WAY IN

1. Finish this sentence five different ways, quickly, without editing: “I am drawn to Jewish life because...” Then read them back. Which surprised you?
2. Which of Ruth’s two vows — the people, or the God — is the one *you* can say with a whole heart today? What would it take to say the other?
3. What are you leaving, or letting go of, in order to do this? Name it gently and honestly.
4. Write down your deepest doubt about this whole undertaking. Then write what you’d say to a friend who had that same doubt.

A PRACTICE TO TRY

DO, DON’T ONLY THINK

Say it out loud to one person. Choose someone you trust — a friend, a partner, a rabbi, a sponsor — and tell them, in your own words, why you are doing this. Speaking it aloud changes it from a private idea into a public commitment, and you will hear yourself say things you didn’t know you thought. Notice what you emphasised, and what you left out.

MILESTONE — *for your ceremony*

KEEP THIS

Write the first draft of your personal statement: “Why I Identify As Jewish.” A page or two, in the first person, unpolished. You will return to it and deepen it as you move through the stages, and a refined version of it will stand at the heart of your ceremony in Stage Ten. For now, just tell the truth as far as you can see it today, and date it.

STAGE THREE – THE PRACTICES

Shabbat שַׁבָּת

“More than the Jewish people have kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept the Jewish people.” AHAD HA’AM (ASHER GINSBERG), THE GREAT SECULAR ZIONIST ESSAYIST

THE TEACHING — *building a sanctuary out of time*

Of all the folkways you will adopt, Shabbat is the one most likely to change your life, because it changes your *week*. Ahad Ha’am — himself a secular Jew — put the whole case in a sentence: the Sabbath has kept the Jewish people at least as much as the people have kept the Sabbath. It is the heartbeat of the civilisation. Once every seven days, an ordinary household stops, lights two small flames, and declares a portion of time to be different from the rest. The philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel called Shabbat a “*palace in time*” — a cathedral you build not out of stone but out of hours.

The tradition roots the day in two stories. In Genesis, the Creator rests on the seventh day, and so rest becomes woven into the order of the world. In Deuteronomy, the reason given is the Exodus: you were slaves who could never stop, and now you are free people who can. A spiritual-humanist hears both as profound human truths rather than divine reports. To rest deliberately is to refuse the tyranny of endless work and endless productivity — to insist that your worth is not measured by output. To gather a table, light a light, and put the week down is a small weekly act of liberation, and of love.

The shape of the day

You do not need to keep Shabbat “fully” to keep it *meaningfully*. But it helps to know the classical shape, so you can choose your own way into it:

- Candles — at least two are kindled, traditionally about eighteen minutes before sunset on Friday. The two flames are often linked to the twin words “remember” and “keep” the Sabbath. Lighting them opens the sacred time.
- Kiddush — the day is “sanctified” over a cup of wine or grape juice: a blessing of gratitude that lifts an ordinary drink into a marker of the holy.
- Challah — two loaves of braided bread (recalling the double portion of manna in the wilderness) are blessed with *ha-motzi* and shared by hand.
- The meal & the day — a long, unhurried table; songs; time with family and friends; and, classically, a full day’s pause from work, commerce and, for many today, screens — a “digital Shabbat.”
- Havdalah — at nightfall on Saturday, when three stars appear (about twenty-five hours after it began), a small ceremony of “separation”: a cup of wine, a box of sweet spices to carry into the week, and a braided, multi-wick candle whose light is caught on the fingernails. Many sing, and wish one another *shavua tov* — a good week.

*Shabbat is not a day off. It is a day apart —
time you consecrate rather than spend.*

Keeping Shabbat as a folkway means you are free to shape the blessings to your conscience. Where the traditional words thank a commanding God “who has sanctified us with commandments,” many humanistic households instead bless the light, the fruit of the vine, the bread — and the human hands and love that made the evening possible. The candles are no less warm for it. What matters is the threshold: that you mark the passage from the week’s noise into a quieter, deliberate time, and back again. Start with one thing — two candles and a shared meal on a Friday — and let the practice grow at its own pace.

WHAT ARE THE HILCHOT OF SHABBAT? — *the traditional rules*

To reconstruct a practice, you first have to know what it actually is. So here, plainly, are the *hilchot* — the traditional laws — of Shabbat. In classical Judaism, keeping Shabbat has two faces. There is a positive face, *zachor* (“remember”): the duties that *make* the day — kindling lights before sunset, *kiddush* over wine, three festive meals, delight (*oneg*) and honour (*kavod*), rest (*menuchah*), and *havdalah* at the close. And there is a negative face, *shamor* (“keep/guard”): the ceasing of work.

But “work” here does not mean effort or exertion — carrying heavy books to study is fine; striking a single match is not. The tradition defines forbidden work as *melachah*: purposeful, creative acts of mastery over the material world. The rabbis counted thirty-nine categories of such *melachah* (the *lamed-tet melachot*), drawn from the kinds of labour once used to build the desert Sanctuary, the Mishkan. They fall into broad families:

- Growing and making food — ploughing, sowing, reaping, threshing, grinding, kneading, baking and cooking.
- Making cloth and clothing — shearing, spinning, weaving, sewing, tearing.
- Writing and preparing hides — trapping, tanning, cutting to shape, writing and erasing.
- Building — building and demolishing, and the “final hammer-blow” that completes a work.
- Fire — kindling and extinguishing (from which, today, comes the traditional avoidance of switching on electricity, cooking, and driving).
- Carrying — transferring objects between private and public domains, and by rabbinic extension the avoidance of money, commerce and handling “set-aside” (*muktzeh*) tools — among them, for many today, the phone.

Seen whole, the thread is unmistakable. Six days a week we are *homo faber* — makers, fixers, buyers, senders, improvers of the world. On the seventh, the tradition asks us to lay down our tools and our mastery, and simply to *be* in a world we are not, for one day, trying to change. That is the deep intention hidden inside the thirty-nine rules — and it is exactly the kind of buried meaning Kaplan’s method is built to release.

RECONSTRUCT IT — A TRANSVALUATION EXERCISE

Take one *halakhah* of Shabbat below (or another that strikes you), and work it through Kaplan's three questions. Write your answers — this is the heart of adopting a folkway rather than merely inheriting it.

1. **WHAT DID IT ORIGINALLY MEAN AND INTEND?** What did those who first kept this rule understand by it — what human need or idea did it answer?

2. **WHAT VALUE MIGHT IT HOLD FOR ME TODAY?** Where is the “psychological kinship” — the enduring value in it that still speaks to your life now? (This is *revaluation*.)

3. **HOW WOULD I RECONSTRUCT THAT VALUE?** Give it a meaning and a form you can honestly keep — continuing the old intention where you can, or frankly giving it a new one where you must. (This is *transvaluation*.)

Rules to try it on — *Kindling no fire* (what would it mean to switch off, not on?) · *No commerce or money* (a day outside the economy, beyond buying and selling?) · *Muktzeh / the phone set aside* (what becomes possible when the device is out of reach?) · *Ceasing melachah* (one day as a creature, not a maker?).

WHAT IS TEFILLAH? — *and the words we say over Shabbat*

Shabbat is carried on words as much as on candlelight — the *Kiddush* that opens it and the *Havdalah* that closes it. But what *are* these words, if we are not petitioning a supernatural God? Here it helps to borrow the definition from the Spiritual Humanistic siddur *Tefilotenu*: tefillah is not “prayer” in the old sense at all. Its Hebrew root, *lehitpalel*, is reflexive — not a plea sent upward but an act of *inner alignment*. Tefillah, in the words of the siddur, is “a multidirectional, communal practice of reflection, aspiration, and connection... fundamentally horizontal. It draws us inward toward our values, and outward toward community and shared responsibility.” We do not, in Kaplan's phrase, say things we no longer believe; we “mean what we say when we pray.”

A daily anchor: the Shema, morning and evening

Tefillah is not only for Shabbat. The oldest daily practice in Judaism is the Shema, traditionally said twice each day — on rising and on lying down — and it is the ideal place for an adopting Jew to begin a rhythm of their own. In *Tefilotenu*, the Shema is not a statement about God's oneness but a call to *our* oneness and shared purpose: it “invites us to listen to the call that arises from within and between us... We don't wait for miracles — we become the miracle.” Its sacred task, the siddur says, is simply *to listen, to unite, to build a better world — together*.

THE SHEMA

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּלָנוּ אֶחָד וְיַעֲוִדֵנוּ אֶחָד

Shem'á Yisra'él Kulánu Eḥád, Veyi'udénu Eḥád.

“Hear, O Israel: we are all One, and our purpose is One.”

הָבָה נַעֲבֹד לְתַקֵּן אֶת הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה

Havá na'avód letakén et ha'olám hazé.

“Come, let us work together to repair this world.”

THE SHEMA · FROM TEFILOTENU

THE VE'AHAVTA — “AND WE WILL LOVE LIFE”

Venoháv et haḥayím bechól-levavénu, uvechól-nafshénu uvechól-me'odénu...

“And we will love life with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our might. And these words will be upon our heart. We will learn them with our children, and speak of them when we are at home and when we are away, when we lie down and when we rise up. We will bind them as a sign upon our hands and let them be symbols between our eyes, and write them on the doorposts of our homes and on our gates.”

THE VE'AHAVTA · FROM TEFILOTENU — LOVE OF LIFE IN PLACE OF LOVE OF A COMMANDING GOD

BEGIN A DAILY PRACTICE

Let the Shema become your first small daily rhythm. Say it — even just the opening line — when you rise in the morning and when you lie down at night, exactly as the words themselves instruct. It takes ten seconds and asks nothing you cannot mean: a morning reminder of your purpose, and an evening return to it. Keep it for a week, and notice what a twice-daily touchstone does to your days — long before you have kept a single Shabbat, you will already be living a Jewish practice.

So when we lift the cup, too, we are not asking wine to become holy by magic; we are *declaring* a stretch of time holy, together, out loud. A *berachah* (“blessing”) does not confer power from on high; it “names the good and strengthens our commitment to it.” That is why, in this tradition, the signature blessing is not “who creates the fruit of the vine” but simply “blessed is the light in life” — words you can say with a whole heart. Here are the tefillot that frame the Sabbath itself — the candles that open it, the wine, and the Havdalah that closes it — in the words of your siddur *Tefilotenu*:

CANDLELIGHTING (NEROT) — KINDLING SHABBAT

“We do not simply observe; we create. We kindle the light. We welcome Shabbat.” Take three deep breaths, then light the candles and say:

בְּרוּכָה הַמְסוֹרֶת שֶׁנוֹתֶנֶת לָנוּ שִׂמְחָה וְשִׂשׂוֹן בְּהַדְלָקַת נֵר שֶׁל שַׁבָּת

Beruchá hamasóret shenoténet-lánu simhá vesasón behadlákat ner shel shabbát.

“Blessed is the tradition which gives us joy and happiness in the lighting of the Sabbath candles.”

NEROT · FROM TEFILOTENU · THE KINDLING OF THE SHABBAT LIGHTS

THE KIDDUSH — OPENING SHABBAT, OVER WINE

“There was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. On the seventh day we complete our labour, and we refrain from all the labour we perform; and we bless the seventh day and sanctify it.

Attention, friends!”

בָּרוּךְ הָאוֹר בְּחַיִּים וּבְרוּךְ פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן

Barúch ha’ór bahayím uvarúch perí hagéfen.

“Blessed is the light in life, and blessed is the fruit of the vine. Amen.”

KIDDUSH · FROM TEFILOTENU · THE SHABBAT-EVENING SANCTIFICATION

THE HAVDALAH — CLOSING SHABBAT, AT THREE STARS

Kos-yeshu’ót esá uveshém ha’ahdút ekrá...

“The cup of liberation I shall lift, and in the name of unity I shall call... For the Jews there was light, joy and honour — so may it be for us.”

Barúch ha’ór bahayím, barúch ha’ór ba’olam, uvarúch perí hagéfen... uvruchím miné habesamím... uvruchím me’oré ha’ésh.

“Blessed is the light in life, blessed is the light in the world, and blessed is the fruit of the vine... the many kinds of spice... the lights of fire.”

בְּרוּכָה הַבְּדֵלָה בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֵל

Beruchá havdalá ben kódesch lehól.

“Blessed is the distinction between the sacred and the everyday.” — *Shavu’a tov!* (Have a good week!)

HAVDALAH · FROM TEFILOTENU · THE CLOSE OF SHABBAT

Say them in Hebrew if you can, in English if you can't, and with other people whenever possible — for in this tradition the blessing is completed not by heaven, but by the community that answers *Amen*.

SOURCES TO SIT WITH

READ THESE SLOWLY — TWICE

“And God finished... and rested on the seventh day... and made it holy.” — GENESIS 2:1-3

“The Sabbath is a palace in time which we build. It is made of soul, of joy and reticence.” — ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL, *THE SABBATH* (1951)

“Observe the Sabbath... remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt.” — DEUTERONOMY 5:12-15 (REST AS FREEDOM)

READING & RESOURCES

TO GO DEEPER

Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* — a short, luminous classic; read it slowly.

Judith Shulevitz, *The Sabbath World* — a modern, searching, secular-friendly account.

My Jewish Learning, “Shabbat 101” and “Havdalah” — the practical basics with blessings and transliterations.

Reboot’s “Unplug”/National Day of Unplugging — a secular on-ramp to a screen-free Shabbat.

JOURNAL

WRITE YOUR WAY IN

1. What in your week most needs a *threshold* — a clear line between “on” and “rest”? What would you have to protect to make it real?
2. Which parts of the traditional shape (candles, wine, bread, unplugging, havdalah) attract you, and which feel foreign? Why?
3. Draft, in your own words, a blessing over the candles that you could say honestly.

A PRACTICE TO TRY

DO, DON'T ONLY THINK

Keep one Shabbat. This week, choose a Friday. Light two candles as the sun goes down. Share a meal with at least one other person — bread and a glass of something, blessed in whatever words are true for you. Put your phone in a drawer for a set number of hours (start with three; be gentle with yourself). On Saturday evening, mark the ending — even just a sniff of a spice jar and a candle — and say *shavua tov*. Notice how re-entering the week feels.

MILESTONE — *for your ceremony*

KEEP THIS

Write your “Shabbat rule of life”: the shape of the Sabbath practice you are adopting — what you will do, how, and why it matters to you — together with a short reflection written the morning after you first kept one. Include the candle blessing you wrote. This is the first of your *practice* milestones, and evidence that Judaism has entered not just your mind but your week.

STAGE FOUR – THE PRACTICES

Kashrut כְּשָׁרוֹת

“There is no way to be a Jew without wrestling with what, and how, we eat. The table is the smallest altar we have.” A SUMMARY OF THE RABBINIC IDEA THAT, SINCE THE TEMPLE’S FALL, EVERY

TABLE IS A PLACE OF THE SACRED

THE TEACHING — *making an ordinary act meaningful*

Three times a day, most of us do the most ordinary thing in the world: we eat. Kashrut — the Jewish way of eating — is the folkway that takes that ordinary act and asks a question of it. Traditionally the question is “is this permitted?” For a spiritual-humanist adopting the practice, the question deepens into “is this *fitting* — is this an act I can do with a whole conscience?” Either way, the effect is the same and remarkable: eating stops being automatic and becomes mindful, chosen, and charged with meaning.

It helps to know the traditional laws, even if you will not keep all of them, because they are the grammar of the practice. In brief: land animals are kosher only if they both chew the cud and have split hooves (so beef and lamb, yes; pork, no); sea creatures need fins and scales (so no shellfish); certain birds are permitted and birds of prey forbidden. Meat and milk are never cooked or eaten together, which yields a third, neutral category, *pareve* (eggs, fish, fruit, grains). Meat must come from humane ritual slaughter (*shechita*) and be drained of blood, which the Torah forbids. In the shops, a small certification mark — a *hechsher*, such as the circled-U of the Orthodox Union — tells you a food has been supervised.

From command to conscious choice

Here the folkways reading opens a door that traditional law keeps shut. If kashrut is not a divine rulebook but a *meaningful practice a people has evolved*, then you are free — indeed invited — to shape a version that is honest, keepable, and rich in meaning for you. This is what many progressive and secular Jews call a “personal kashrut.” It might include some of the traditional markers kept as identity and discipline (many otherwise secular Jews will never eat pork or shellfish, precisely because it joins them to their people), and it will often add a distinctly modern layer: ethical, or “eco-,” kashrut.

The term *eco-kashrut* was coined by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and developed by Rabbi Arthur Waskow, and its insight is simple and searching: a food can be technically kosher and still be, in Waskow’s word, “*eco-treyf*” — unfit — if it was produced through the abuse of workers, the cruelty of factory farming, or the ruin of the earth. So the questions expand: How were the animals treated? How were the pickers and packers paid? Is it local, sustainable, wasteful? For some, the most honest Jewish answer is vegetarian or vegan eating, embraced as a contemporary mitzvah of compassion. For others it is buying ethically, wasting little, and pausing before a meal to give thanks. There is no single right answer — only the discipline of eating *on purpose*.

Kosher asks: is it permitted?
Eco-kosher adds: is it just?

Whatever you choose, add one small thing the tradition never lets us skip: a moment of blessing before you eat. In classical practice it is *ha-motzi* over bread or a short blessing over other food; in a humanistic key it can simply be a breath of gratitude for the sun, soil, rain, and hands that brought this food to you. That pause is the whole of kashrut in miniature: the refusal to let even eating become thoughtless.

RECONSTRUCT IT — A TRANSVALUATION EXERCISE

Take one law of kashrut and run it through Kaplan's three questions, then write your answer.

1. WHAT DID IT ORIGINALLY MEAN AND INTEND? 2. WHAT VALUE MIGHT IT HOLD FOR ME TODAY? (revaluation) 3. HOW WOULD I RECONSTRUCT THAT VALUE? (transvaluation)

Rules to try it on — *Separating meat and milk* (holding life and death, nurture and slaughter, apart?) · *Avoiding blood* (reverence for the life that was taken?) · *Not eating pork or shellfish* (a boundary that marks belonging?) · *Shechita / humane slaughter* (today's ethics of how an animal lives and dies?).

SOURCES TO SIT WITH

READ THESE SLOWLY — TWICE

"You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk." — EXODUS 23:19 (THE SEED OF THE MEAT-AND-MILK SEPARATION)

"Something can be kosher and still be eco-kosher treyf — if it wounds the workers, the animals, or the earth." — AFTER RABBI ARTHUR WASKOW, ON ECO-KASHRUT

"When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless." — DEUTERONOMY 8:10 (GRATITUDE AT THE TABLE)

READING & RESOURCES

TO GO DEEPER

Arthur Waskow, *Down-to-Earth Judaism* — the fullest case for eco-kashrut.

Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals* — not a Jewish book, but a searching one on the ethics of the plate.

My Jewish Learning, “Kosher Food: What Makes Food Kosher” and “Eco-Kashrut” — the basics and the modern extension.

Magen Tzedek — the Conservative movement’s ethical-certification project, for the idea of a “justice” layer atop kashrut.

JOURNAL

WRITE YOUR WAY IN

1. What do you already avoid, or choose, on ethical grounds? How much of your “personal kashrut” is already quietly in place?
2. Which matters more to you: the traditional markers (pork, shellfish, meat-and-milk) as *identity*, or the ethical questions of justice and the earth — or both? Why?
3. Write a short grace — three sentences — you could say before a meal, in words you believe.

A PRACTICE TO TRY

DO, DON'T ONLY THINK

Adopt a two-week kashrut. Decide on a practice you can actually keep — perhaps: no pork or shellfish; one meat-free day becomes several; buy eggs and meat from higher-welfare sources; and a spoken thanks before your evening meal each day. Keep it for two weeks and pay attention to what it does to your relationship with food, with money, and with the world your meals come from.

MILESTONE — *for your ceremony*

KEEP THIS

Write your “Personal Kashrut”: the way of eating you are adopting, set down in a few clear lines, with a paragraph on *why* each part is meaningful to you — identity, ethics, discipline, gratitude. Include your mealtime blessing. Bring it, and what you learned in the two-week trial, to your ceremony as evidence of a Judaism you can taste.

STAGE FIVE – THE PRACTICES

The Jewish Year שנה

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.” ECCLESIASTES 3:1

— THE JEWISH YEAR TURNS THE GREAT HUMAN SEASONS INTO SHARED RITUAL

THE TEACHING — *a wheel that turns experience into ritual*

A calendar is a theory of what matters. Tell me which days a people sets apart, and I will tell you what that people loves and fears. The Jewish year is a great wheel that turns the deepest human experiences — renewal, reckoning, gratitude, freedom, memory, grief — into embodied, repeatable ritual. You do not have to believe a single supernatural claim to be re-shaped, year on year, by moving through it. That is its genius as a folkway: it teaches through the body and the calendar what no lecture could.

The calendar itself is lunisolar: the months follow the moon (each begins at the new moon), while a leap-month — a second Adar, added seven times in every nineteen years — keeps the festivals from drifting out of their seasons, so Passover always falls in spring. The day begins not at midnight but at sunset (“there was evening and there was morning”). And the year is counted from a symbolic creation of the world: the year 5786 begins in the autumn of 2025.

Walk the wheel once. It opens in autumn with the Days of Awe: Rosh Hashanah, the birthday of the world, when the ram’s horn sounds and we take honest moral stock; and, ten days later, Yom Kippur, the solemn day of atonement — which a humanist can keep with complete integrity as a day of unflinching self-examination and the repair of broken relationships. Then Sukkot, when we eat in fragile huts open to the sky, and learn gratitude and impermanence together; and Simchat Torah, when the year’s Torah reading ends and instantly begins again, with dancing. In winter comes Hanukkah, kindling light against the dark and celebrating the survival of a small people’s freedom. Late winter brings Tu B’Svat, the new year of the trees — a natural ecology festival — and Purim, a carnival of survival, satire and masks. Spring is crowned by Pesach, the festival of freedom, whose home ritual, the *seder*, retells the Exodus every year with the astonishing instruction that *each person must see themselves as if they personally came out of slavery*. From Pesach we count the Omer for forty-nine days up to Shavuot, when the people receives its Torah — its own self-understanding — anew. Summer holds Tisha B’Av, a day of mourning for catastrophe and memory. And woven through the spring are the modern days: Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance), Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut.

FESTIVAL	WHEN (HEBREW DATE)	IN ONE LINE
Rosh Hashanah	1–2 Tishrei (autumn)	New Year; birthday of the world; the shofar and moral stock-taking.
Yom Kippur	10 Tishrei	

FESTIVAL	WHEN (HEBREW DATE)	IN ONE LINE
		Day of Atonement; fasting, honesty, and the mending of wrongs — the holiest day.
Sukkot	15–21 Tishrei	Booths; dwelling in fragile huts; harvest, gratitude, impermanence.
Simchat Torah	22–23 Tishrei	“Rejoicing of the Torah”; the reading cycle ends and restarts, with dancing.
Hanukkah	25 Kislev – 2/3 Tevet	Festival of Lights; rededication; light and freedom against the dark.
Tu BiShvat	15 Shevat	New Year of the Trees; ecology, planting, a seder of fruits.
Purim	14 Adar	Survival in the Book of Esther; costumes, satire, gifts, joy.
Pesach (Passover)	15–22 Nisan (spring)	The Exodus from slavery; the seder, matzah, the master-story of freedom.
Counting the Omer	16 Nisan → Shavuot	Forty-nine days linking freedom (Pesach) to revelation (Shavuot).
Shavuot	6 Sivan	Weeks; receiving the Torah at Sinai; first fruits; dairy foods and all-night study.
Tisha B’Av	9 Av (summer)	Mourning the Temples’ destruction and other calamities; fasting and Lamentations.
Yom HaShoah	27 Nisan	Holocaust Remembrance Day.
Yom HaZikaron / HaAtzmaut	4–5 Iyar	Israel’s Memorial Day and Independence Day, back to back.

The wheel of the year. Gregorian dates shift annually because the calendar is lunisolar — look up any given year at hebc.com.

*The festivals are how a people rehearses its soul —
freedom in spring, reckoning in autumn, light in the dark of winter.*

RECONSTRUCT IT — A TRANSVALUATION EXERCISE

Choose one festival or observance and work it through Kaplan's three questions in your journal.

1. WHAT DID IT ORIGINALLY MEAN AND INTEND? 2. WHAT VALUE MIGHT IT HOLD FOR ME TODAY? (revaluation) 3. HOW WOULD I RECONSTRUCT THAT VALUE? (transvaluation)

Days to try it on — *Fasting on Yom Kippur* (a day stripped bare for honest reckoning?) · *Dwelling in a Sukkah* (gratitude and the beauty of impermanence?) · *The Passover seder* (retelling liberation as if it were your own?) · *Lighting Hanukkah candles* (small acts of light and courage against the dark?).

SOURCES TO SIT WITH

READ THESE SLOWLY — TWICE

"In every generation each person is obligated to see themselves as though they personally went out of Egypt." — THE PASSOVER HAGGADAH

"These are the appointed times of the Lord, sacred occasions, which you shall proclaim each at its appointed time." — LEVITICUS 23:4

READING & RESOURCES

TO GO DEEPER

Michael Strassfeld, *The Jewish Holidays: A Guide and Commentary* — the standard, warm handbook.

Irving Greenberg, *The Jewish Way* — deep, humane essays on the meaning of each festival.

hebc.com — the free calendar tool: put in your city and get every festival's exact dates and candle-lighting times.

The Society for Humanistic Judaism's holiday guides — each festival reframed around human and historical meaning.

JOURNAL

WRITE YOUR WAY IN

1. Which of the year's "great seasons" — renewal, reckoning, gratitude, freedom, memory — does your life most need a ritual for right now?
2. Yom Kippur asks you to name wrongs and repair them. Is there one relationship you would bring to such a day?
3. Which festival are you most drawn to, and which most puzzles you? Sit with the puzzle.

A PRACTICE TO TRY

DO, DON'T ONLY THINK

Keep the next one. Look up hebc.com, find the next festival on the wheel, and mark it — however modestly. Light a Hanukkah candle; taste apples and honey at Rosh Hashanah; sit outside for a moment at Sukkot; attend a community seder at Pesach. Do the *thing*, then write down what the ritual did that an idea alone could not.

MILESTONE — *for your ceremony*

KEEP THIS

Build your personal Jewish year: a one-page calendar naming the festivals you intend to keep and, in a line each, *how* and *why*. Add a short reflection written after you observed the next festival on the wheel. This becomes your living almanac — and shows your ceremony that you are not adopting Judaism for a day, but for the turning of every year.

STAGE SIX — THE MIND

Five Who Thought It Through

Maimonides · Spinoza · Kaplan · Schulweis · Wine — a single conversation, across eight centuries, about how to be honest and Jewish at once. THE INTELLECTUAL LINEAGE OF A SPIRITUAL-HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

THE TEACHING — *the road from a God beyond words to a Judaism beyond God*

Every tradition worth joining has argued with itself, and Judaism has argued more, and more honestly, than most. The five thinkers in this stage are not a random anthology; read in order they form a single, astonishing road — from a medieval philosopher who said God is beyond all human description, to a modern rabbi who built a joyful Judaism with no supernatural God at all. Walk it, and you will see that the spiritual humanism of this workbook is not a modern invention but the far end of a very old Jewish conversation.

Maimonides (Rambam), 1138–1204 — reason as a religious duty

Born in Córdoba and driven by persecution to Fez and finally to Cairo, where he served as a court physician, Moses ben Maimon was the towering rationalist of the Jewish Middle Ages. In his *Mishneh Torah* he codified all of Jewish law with unmatched clarity; in his *Guide for the Perplexed* he set out to heal the mind torn between Torah and science, insisting they cannot finally contradict. His most radical gift to us is negative theology: we can say only what God is *not*, never positively what God *is*. Every image of God with a hand, a voice, an anger is metaphor; to take it literally is a spiritual error. A God so far beyond description that no supernatural picture survives is already a doorway toward the naturalists who followed. His *Thirteen Principles* — later sung as the hymn *Yigdal* — became Judaism’s nearest thing to a creed, yet their author had made God unimaginable.

Spinoza, 1632–1677 — God, or Nature

A century and a half later, in Amsterdam’s Portuguese-Jewish community, Baruch Spinoza took the next step and paid for it. In 1656 the community pronounced its harshest *herem* (excommunication) against the twenty-three-year-old — a ban never lifted to this day. His crime was his conclusion: in the *Ethics*, God is not a person outside the world but is identical with the infinite order of reality itself — *Deus sive Natura*, God, or Nature. No miracles, no supernatural will; and in his *Theological-Political Treatise*, the Bible is a human document, shaped by its authors’ times, to be read critically and freely. Cast out of his community, Spinoza became the first great secular Jew, a father of the Enlightenment, of modern biblical scholarship, and of the very idea of a this-worldly, reverent awe before Nature-as-sacred. Much of what “spiritual humanism” means was born in his quiet room.

Kaplan, 1881–1983 — rebuilding Judaism on natural ground

Where Spinoza was cast out, Mordecai Kaplan stayed *in* — and rebuilt. You met his great idea in Stage One: Judaism as an evolving religious civilisation, and the mitzvot as folkways. His God-idea completes the picture: God is “the Power that makes for salvation,” the real forces in nature and human life that make for meaning, goodness and human fulfilment — not a supernatural king but a genuine dimension *within* the natural order (he called this *transnaturalism*). He dropped the doctrine of the “chosen people” as morally untenable, and in 1922 called his daughter Judith to the Torah as the first *bat mitzvah* in history. For his honesty he, too, was excommunicated — in 1945 Orthodox rabbis burned his prayer book. He is the direct parent of every naturalist Judaism, including this one: proof that you can keep the whole rich practice and still tell the truth about the world.

Schulweis, 1925–2014 — from the noun to the adjective

A Conservative rabbi who had studied with both Kaplan and the mystic Heschel, Harold Schulweis offered the most pastorally brilliant move of all, for anyone who wants to belong but cannot simply believe. He called it predicate theology. Stop arguing, he said, about the *noun* — whether “God” exists as a being. Start instead from the *adjective*, the godly: begin with the real, undeniable experiences of justice, mercy, compassion and love in human life, and recognise *these* as the divine, worthy of reverence and cultivation. On this reading, believer and doubter can stand shoulder to shoulder — because both can affirm godliness even where they differ about God. His book *For Those Who Can’t Believe* is written precisely for the honest seeker; and he lived his theology, founding the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous to honour non-Jews who rescued Jews in the Shoah. Godliness, for Schulweis, is a human deed.

Sherwin Wine, 1928–2007 — a Judaism beyond God

Finally, the road reaches its clearest destination. A Reform-ordained rabbi in Detroit, Sherwin Wine concluded he could no longer honestly address prayers to a God he did not believe in — and rather than leave Judaism, he *reinvented* it. In 1963 he founded the Birmingham Temple and, in 1969, the Society for Humanistic Judaism: a proudly non-theistic celebration of Jewish identity, culture, history and ethics as *human* creations. His liturgy sets aside God-language and centres human dignity, courage and reason; his festivals keep the songs, the Hebrew and the peoplehood while retelling the stories as human ones. His summary was blunt and kind: “*People do not need God to be good.*” His book *Judaism Beyond God* gave the movement its charter.

*Maimonides made God unimaginable. Spinoza made God Nature.
Kaplan made God natural. Schulweis made God a verb. Wine made God optional.*

Where you stand. These five mark out a spectrum, and it is worth knowing your own place on it. At one pole is strict secular humanism — Wine’s clarity, Jewish culture affirmed and the sacred vocabulary set gently aside. Nearer the other pole is religious, or spiritual, naturalism — the Kaplan–Schulweis lineage, which rejects the supernatural just as firmly but *keeps* the language of awe, wonder, reverence and the holy, pointing it at nature, peoplehood and the moral life. This workbook makes its home between them, closer

to the second: human-centred and this-worldly, yet unwilling to give up the sacred. Part of adopting Judaism as a thinking adult is deciding, honestly, where on this road *you* can stand and mean it.

SOURCES TO SIT WITH

ONE LINE FROM EACH

“Teach thy tongue to say ‘I do not know.’” — MAIMONIDES

“Whatsoever is, is in God, and nothing can be, or be conceived, without God” — that is, without Nature. — SPINOZA, *ETHICS*, PART I

“The past has a vote, but not a veto.” — ATTRIBUTED TO MORDECAI KAPLAN

“We do not have to agree about God in order to agree about godliness.” — AFTER HAROLD SCHULWEIS, *PREDICATE THEOLOGY*

“People do not need God to be good.” — SHERWIN WINE

READING & RESOURCES

TO GO DEEPER

Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed* (a good abridged edition) — or a reliable summary of the Thirteen Principles.

Rebecca Goldstein, *Betraying Spinoza* — a superb, accessible portrait of Spinoza as a Jewish thinker.

Mordecai Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization* — and Rebecca Alpert / Jacob Staub, *Exploring Judaism* (the Reconstructionist primer).

Harold Schulweis, *For Those Who Can't Believe*.

Sherwin Wine, *Judaism Beyond God*; and the Society for Humanistic Judaism (shj.org).

JOURNAL

WRITE YOUR WAY IN

1. Whose step on the road felt most like *your* position — Maimonides, Spinoza, Kaplan, Schulweis, or Wine? Where exactly do you get off?
2. Try Schulweis's move: name one experience of "godliness" — a moment of justice, mercy or love — that you would call sacred without any argument about God.
3. Spinoza and Kaplan were both excommunicated for honesty. What do you make of a tradition that casts out its truth-tellers and later reveres them?

A PRACTICE TO TRY

DO, DON'T ONLY THINK

Read one primary voice. Choose the thinker who unsettled or attracted you most and read ten pages of their *own* words — not a summary. Underline one sentence you disagree with and one you could live by. Bring both to your next conversation with your rabbi, sponsor, or study partner.

MILESTONE — *for your ceremony*

KEEP THIS

Write your "credo" — one page on what you can honestly say about God, the sacred, and meaning. Use the five thinkers as your foils: agree, disagree, borrow. It need not be tidy or final; it needs to be *true*. This page is the philosophical backbone of your ceremony shiur, and the most grown-up thing this programme asks of you.

STAGE SEVEN - THE MIND

The Tanakh & The Talmud

*“Turn it, and turn it again, for everything is in it.” BEN BAG BAG, PIRKEI AVOT 5:22 — ON THE
ENDLESS TURNING OF THE TEXT*

THE TEACHING — *a people that argues its way to wisdom*

Judaism is often called a religion of the Book, but that is not quite right. It is a religion of a whole *library* — and, more than that, of the endless argument that library has generated. To adopt Judaism is to be handed a reader’s card to three thousand years of the most serious conversation humanity has had about how to live. You are not asked to accept it whole. You are asked to *turn it, and turn it again*.

The first shelf is the Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible — a word built from the initials of its three parts, T-N-K. First the Torah (“Teaching”), the Five Books of Moses, the beating heart of it all, read aloud in the community week by week. Then the Nevi’im (“Prophets”) — the histories of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, and the thundering moral voices of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve, who cared less for ritual than for justice for the widow and the poor. And finally the Ketuvim (“Writings”) — the Psalms, the hard questions of Job, the cool scepticism of Ecclesiastes, the love poetry of the Song of Songs, and the scroll of Ruth you met in Stage Two.

BOOK (HEBREW)	ENGLISH	THE HEBREW NAME MEANS
Bereshit בְּרֵאשִׁית	Genesis	“In the beginning” — creation, the founding families.
Shemot שְׁמוֹת	Exodus	“Names” — slavery, liberation, Sinai.
Vayikra וַיִּקְרָא	Leviticus	“And He called” — holiness, ritual, ethics.
Bamidbar בְּמִדְבָּר	Numbers	“In the wilderness” — forty years of wandering.
Devarim דְּבָרִים	Deuteronomy	“Words” — Moses’ final speeches on the edge of the land.

The Torah’s five books. Each Hebrew name is simply its first significant word.

The Torah is divided into fifty-four portions (*parashot*), one chanted each Shabbat morning so the whole is completed in a year and begun again at Simchat Torah — which is why, in Stage Ten, you will have a *birthday portion* of your own. Each week’s reading is paired with a passage from the Prophets, the *haftarah*.

The second library: the Talmud

Alongside the written text runs the tradition’s claim that a second, oral Torah — the living interpretation — was always its necessary companion. When war and exile threatened to lose it, the rabbis wrote it down.

Around 200 CE, Rabbi Judah the Prince edited the Mishnah, a terse code of law arranged in six orders (*Sedarim*): Seeds, Festivals, Women, Damages, Holy Things, and Purities. Over the following centuries, generations of scholars in Babylonia and the Land of Israel debated every line of it; that sprawling record of debate is the Gemara. Together, Mishnah plus Gemara make the Talmud — and the vast Babylonian Talmud (c. 500 CE) became the central text of Jewish study.

Open a traditional page — a *daf* — and you see the tradition's whole method in a single image: a small block of Talmud in the centre, wrapped on every side by the commentaries of Rashi, of the medieval Tosafot, and of later voices — a thousand years of scholars arguing in the margins around the same few words. No conclusion is hidden; the disagreement *is* the text. For a spiritual-humanist this is the tradition at its most beautiful: not commandments barked from a mountain, but the longest, most honest human argument about justice, time, suffering and holiness ever recorded — and you are now invited into it.

From the Talmud to the set table: the Shulchan Aruch

The Talmud is vast, tangled, and famously hard to use — it preserves the argument, not the verdict. So across the centuries scholars distilled it into codes: orderly summaries of settled practice. The most influential of all is the Shulchan Aruch — “The Set Table” — compiled by Rabbi Joseph Karo, a Sephardi mystic of Safed, and first printed in Venice in 1565. He laid Jewish practice out in four great parts: *Orach Chayim* (daily life, prayer, Shabbat and the festivals), *Yoreh De'ah* (kashrut and ritual), *Even HaEzer* (marriage and family), and *Choshen Mishpat* (civil and monetary law). Because Karo wrote from a Sephardi standpoint, the Ashkenazi authority Rabbi Moses Isserles of Kraków added his own glosses, wryly named the *Mappah* — “the Tablecloth” — recording Ashkenazi custom where it differed. So the Sephardi *table* and the Ashkenazi *cloth* together made a single code both communities could sit at; to this day it is the backbone of Orthodox halakhah.

What is it to a spiritual-humanist? Not a binding rulebook, but something arguably more useful: the fullest record we possess of how the folkways were actually lived — the set table laid with the accumulated customs of centuries. When you want to know how Jews have kept Shabbat, salted meat, mourned, married, or marked a festival, this is where the practice is written down. Read it as an *heirloom to consult* rather than a law to obey: a menu of your people's customs, from which you are free — as this whole workbook has urged — to choose what is meaningful and keepable for you.

Pirkei Avot: the ethics at the heart of it all

If the Shulchan Aruch is the tradition's law, Pirkei Avot — “the Chapters of the Fathers,” often called “Ethics of the Sages” — is its conscience. A short tractate set within the Talmud's order of *Nezikin*, it contains no law at all: only the distilled moral wisdom of the rabbis, saying after saying. It is the one part of the Talmud that Jews of every kind — Orthodox and secular, believer and humanist — have always loved in common, precisely because it asks nothing of your theology and everything of your character. A few of its lines have become the ethical furniture of Jewish life:

- “Who is wise? One who learns from every person. Who is strong? One who masters their own impulse. Who is rich? One who is content with their portion.” (Ben Zoma, 4:1)
- “It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.” (Rabbi Tarfon, 2:16)

- “On three things the world endures: on truth, on justice, and on peace.” (Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, 1:18)

For a Judaism built on human dignity and the repair of the world, Pirkei Avot is almost a founding document — proof that at the very centre of the tradition’s vast legal library sits a small book concerned with nothing but how to be a good human being.

*In Judaism, to study is to pray with your mind open,
and to disagree well is a form of devotion.*

SOURCES TO SIT WITH

READ THESE SLOWLY — TWICE

“It is not in heaven... the matter is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to do it.” —

DEUTERONOMY 30:12–14 (THE TEXT BELONGS TO ITS READERS)

“That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary — go and learn.” — HILLEL, TALMUD, SHABBAT 31A

“If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I?” — HILLEL, PIRKEI AVOT 1:14

READING & RESOURCES

TO GO DEEPER

Sefaria.org — the free digital library: the entire Tanakh and Talmud, in Hebrew and English, with commentaries linked line by line. Your single most useful tool.

Barry Holtz (ed.), *Back to the Sources* — the best guide to reading each Jewish text.

Adin Steinsaltz, *The Essential Talmud* — a warm, clear way in.

Pirkei Avot in any good bilingual edition (Sefaria has it free with commentaries) — short enough to read in an afternoon, deep enough for a lifetime.

The *Shulchan Aruch* is browsable on Sefaria — dip in to see how a folkway looks once it is written down as law.

A good Tanakh: the *JPS Hebrew–English Tanakh*, or Robert Alter’s literary translation of the Hebrew Bible.

JOURNAL

WRITE YOUR WAY IN

1. “It is not in heaven.” How does it feel to be told the tradition’s text now belongs to *you* to interpret — freeing, or daunting?
2. The prophets cared more for justice than for ritual. Which matters more to you, and can the two be held together?
3. Find one verse or saying that troubles you. Don’t resolve it — write out the argument you’d have with it.

A PRACTICE TO TRY

DO, DON’T ONLY THINK

Study in pairs (*chavruta*). Jewish learning is traditionally done aloud, with a partner, arguing toward understanding. Open Sefaria, choose one short text — a psalm, a chapter of Ruth, a page of Pirkei Avot — and read it slowly with a study partner or your sponsor. Ask of it: *What is it really saying? Where is it wrong? What is it asking of me?*

MILESTONE — *for your ceremony*

KEEP THIS

Choose one short text that has taken hold of you — a psalm, a saying of Hillel, a passage of Torah — and write a one-page interpretation: what it means, where you resist it, and how it speaks to your life. This is your first true *d’var Torah* — the very skill you will use to write your ceremony shiur in Stage Ten.

STAGE EIGHT – THE MIND

Hebrew עברית

“Hebrew is the thread on which the generations are strung.” ON THE LANGUAGE THAT CARRIES
JEWISH MEMORY — AND THE REVIVED TONGUE OF A ONCE-DISPersed PEOPLE

THE TEACHING — *the language-strand of the civilisation*

Every civilisation has a language, and Hebrew is Judaism’s. You do not need fluency to adopt Judaism — many devout, lifelong Jews read the prayers only haltingly — but learning to recognise the letters and to sound out a few sacred words changes your relationship to everything else in this book. It is the difference between visiting a country and beginning to speak its language, however brokenly. And Hebrew’s own story is one of the most stirring in the whole civilisation: a language that lived for two thousand years almost entirely in prayer and study was, within a single lifetime around Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, revived as a living, spoken tongue — the only such resurrection in human history. To learn even its alphabet is to touch that miracle of persistence.

The aleph-bet, in brief

The Hebrew alphabet has twenty-two letters, written and read right to left. It is an *abjad*: the letters are all consonants, and the vowels are usually not written at all — in prayer books and learners’ texts they appear as small dots and dashes (*nikkud*) above and below the letters. Five letters take a special final form when they end a word. And every letter is also a number — *aleph* is 1, *bet* is 2, and so on — which is why the letters of the word *chai* (“life”) add up to 18, and why Jews so often give gifts and donations in multiples of eighteen. (A full aleph-bet chart is at the back of this book, in Appendix B.)

*You are not learning a code.
You are learning the handwriting of your new people.*

Choosing a Hebrew name

At the centre of this stage is a small, thrilling act of self-definition: choosing the Hebrew name by which you will be called into Jewish life — at your ceremony, and ever after when you are honoured with a reading of the Torah, at your wedding, or in a prayer for your healing. A Jewish name has a distinctive shape: [given name] *ben* or *bat* [parent’s name] — “son of” or “daughter of” (egalitarian communities often name both parents, or use gender-neutral forms). And here the tradition offers the convert its most moving gift. Because Abraham and Sarah were the first to *choose* the journey, every Jew-by-choice takes them as their spiritual parents: your name will be [your chosen name] *ben/bat Avraham v’Sarah* — child of Abraham and Sarah. You are not grafting yourself onto a stranger’s family tree; you are being given the founding couple as your own.

How do people choose the personal name? Some choose for meaning — a virtue or quality to carry. Some for memory — honouring a beloved relative, mentor, or friend (Ashkenazi custom names after the deceased; many Sephardi and Mizrahi families after the living). Some for sound — a Hebrew name that echoes their existing one. And some receive a name from their rabbi or community. A small palette to begin from:

NAME	HEBREW	MEANING
Asher	אשר	happy, blessed, fortunate
David	דוד	beloved
Aryeh	אריה	lion (strength)
Meir	מאיר	one who gives light
Baruch	ברוך	blessed
Shira	שירה	song
Ora	אורה	light
Tikvah	תקווה	hope
Ariella	אריאלה	lioness of God
Rivka	רבקה	Rebecca; to bind, to join
Shalom	שלום	peace, wholeness (used across genders)
Simcha	שמחה	joy (used across genders)
Noam	נועם	pleasantness, grace (neutral)
Or	אור	light (neutral)

A starting palette. Others worth knowing: Chaim / Chaya ("life"), Menachem / Nechama ("comfort"), Aviv ("spring"), Emunah ("faith"), Lev ("heart"), Zahava ("gold"), Devorah ("bee"; the prophetess).

SOURCES TO SIT WITH

READ THESE SLOWLY — TWICE

“No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham.” — GENESIS 17:5 (A NEW LIFE IS MARKED BY A NEW NAME)

The letters of chai — חַי — add up to eighteen; so “to life” became a number you can give away. — ON GEMATRIA AND THE NUMBER 18

READING & RESOURCES

TO GO DEEPER

EKS, *The First Hebrew Primer*, or *Teach Yourself to Read Hebrew* (audio + book) — gentle self-teaching of the letters.

Duolingo or Memrise Hebrew — free, for the alphabet and first words.

Behind the Name (behindthename.com) — searchable Hebrew names with meanings and histories.

The story of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and the revival of spoken Hebrew — a short, inspiring read on My Jewish Learning.

JOURNAL

WRITE YOUR WAY IN

1. If your name is to mean something, what quality or hope do you most want to carry into Jewish life?
2. Is there a person — living or gone — whom you would want your name to honour? Tell their story in a paragraph.
3. How does it feel to be named a child of *Abraham and Sarah* — to be given ancestors by choice rather than by birth?

A PRACTICE TO TRY

DO, DON'T ONLY THINK

Learn to write your name, and to read three blessings. Using the chart in Appendix B, practise writing your chosen Hebrew name until your hand knows it. Then learn to sound out the opening words of three blessings you have already met — over candles, over wine, over bread. Reading even a little Hebrew aloud will change how the practices feel.

MILESTONE — *for your ceremony*

KEEP THIS

Choose your Hebrew name — the full form, *[name] ben/bat Avraham v'Sarah* — and write the story of why you chose it: its meaning, whom or what it honours, and what you hope to grow into under it. This name will be spoken aloud, perhaps for the first time, at your ceremony. It is the name your new people will call you.

STAGE NINE - THE TABLE & THE THRESHOLD

Jewish Food

“Every Jewish dish is a fragment of history — a whole community’s journey, cooked down to something you can taste.” AFTER CLAUDIA RODEN, WHOSE *BOOK OF JEWISH FOOD* MAPPED THE DIASPORA THROUGH ITS KITCHENS

THE TEACHING — *the civilisation you can taste*

There is no single Jewish cuisine, because there has never been a single Jewish home. Jewish food is diaspora food: the same shared constraints — the rhythms of kashrut and the pause of Shabbat — met in a hundred different lands with a hundred different larders, and cooked into a vast, delicious family of tables. To learn this food is to learn the map of the Jewish people; to cook one dish of it is one of the most intimate acts of adoption there is. Most Jews, including the most secular, keep their Jewishness alive at least as much through the kitchen as through the synagogue. Peoplehood, it turns out, is edible.

Watch one idea travel. Because no fire may be kindled on Shabbat, every community needed a dish that could cook *overnight* and be eaten hot at Saturday lunch. So the same problem produced, in each place, a different masterpiece: cholent in the shtetls of Eastern Europe, adafina in North Africa, t’bit in Baghdad, rolled jachnun in Yemen. One law, five worlds, five glorious answers.

COMMUNITY	STORY	SIGNATURE DISHES
Ashkenazi Central & Eastern Europe	From the medieval Rhineland into Poland, Lithuania and Russia; the source of most “deli” food, carried west by the great migration.	Challah; chicken soup with <i>kneidlach</i> (matzah balls); gefilte fish; brisket; <i>cholent</i> ; latkes; rugelach; bagels.
Sephardi Iberia → Mediter- ranean	The Jews of Spain and Portugal, expelled in 1492, scattered across the Ottoman world and North Africa — carrying Ladino and an olive-oil, vegetable-rich table.	Burekas (savoury pastries); <i>huevos haminados</i> (long-cooked eggs); pastel (meat pie); bimuelos (Hanukkah fritters); <i>adafina</i> .
Mizrahi Iraq, Syria, Yemen	The “Eastern” communities who never left the Middle East — some tracing to the Babylonian exile and the academies that made the Talmud.	Sabich (Iraqi eggplant-and-egg pita); kubbeh (stuffed dumplings); <i>amba</i> ; Yemenite malawach and jachnun; <i>t’bit</i> .
One of the oldest diasporas of all — 2,500 years, since the		

COMMUNITY	STORY	SIGNATURE DISHES
Persian Iran	days of Cyrus and the Book of Esther; a fragrant table of herbs, rice and dried lime.	Gondi (chicken-and-chickpea dumplings); <i>ghormeh sabzi</i> (herb stew); <i>tahdig</i> (crisp rice crust); the Rosh Hashanah <i>simanim</i> table.
Ethiopian Beta Israel	The highland Jews of Gondar, long isolated from rabbinic Judaism, airlifted to Israel in Operations Moses (1984) and Solomon (1991).	Injera (fermented teff flatbread, plate and utensil at once); doro wat (spiced chicken stew); lentil and vegetable <i>wats</i> .

Five of the Jewish world's great kitchens. "Sephardi" is often used loosely for all non-Ashkenazi Jews; strictly it means the Iberian-descended communities.

The Ethiopian story deserves a moment of its own, because it stretches the very idea of what Jewish looks like. The Beta Israel kept their faith — called *Haymanot* — from the biblical text alone, in the ancient Ge'ez language (their Torah is the *Orit*), with priests called *kessim* rather than rabbis, and no Talmud, having been separated before the rabbinic tradition took shape. They keep a festival, Sigd, unknown to any other community — now an official Israeli holiday. To set injera beside challah on one table is to see, in a single glance, how wide and how various the family you are joining truly is.

*A people that has lived everywhere
has learned to taste of everywhere.*

SOURCES TO SIT WITH

READ THESE SLOWLY — TWICE

"For the Jews of the diaspora, food was homeland — the one country you could carry with you and rebuild in any kitchen." — A SUMMARY OF CLAUDIA RODEN'S THEME

"When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless..." — DEUTERONOMY 8:10 (THE TABLE, AGAIN, MADE HOLY)

READING & RESOURCES

TO GO DEEPER (AND TO COOK FROM)

Claudia Roden, *The Book of Jewish Food* — the magnificent classic; part cookbook, part history of the whole diaspora.

Michael Solomonov, *Zahav* — modern Israeli cooking rooted in Sephardi and Mizrahi traditions.

Leah Koenig, *The Jewish Cookbook* — a sweeping, global single volume.

For Beta Israel food and history: search “Ethiopian Jewish cooking” and the story of Operation Solomon.

JOURNAL

WRITE YOUR WAY IN

1. Which of these five tables calls to you — by taste, by heritage, or by sheer curiosity? Why that one?
2. Food carries memory. What dish from *your own* upbringing might sit, one day, beside these on a Jewish table you host?
3. What does it do to your sense of “Jewish” to hold challah and injera in the same thought?

A PRACTICE TO TRY

DO, DON'T ONLY THINK

Cook one dish, and feed someone. Choose a community whose food you've never made — braid a challah, simmer a pot of ghormeh sabzi, fry latkes, bake burekas — and share it at a table with others. Read a little of the community's history while it cooks. You are not just making dinner; you are rehearsing belonging.

MILESTONE — *for your ceremony*

KEEP THIS

Choose “your” dish — one you will learn to make well and bring to your ceremony to feed your community — and write the story of the dish and the community it comes from: its history, why you chose it, and what it means to set it on the table as a Jew-by-choice. At the ceremony, the tradition you have studied becomes something the whole room can taste.

STAGE TEN – THE TABLE & THE THRESHOLD

Writing Your Shiur

“It is not in heaven... it is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to do it.” DEU-

TERONOMY 30:12-14 — THE TEXT IS NOW YOURS TO TEACH

THE TEACHING — *standing up to teach your own Torah*

Here is where the whole programme gathers to a point. For a Jewish child, the b’mitzvah is marked by standing before the community and teaching — taking the ancient text and offering, in their own voice, a word of Torah on it. You will do the same, but as an adult who has chosen this, and with far more to say. Your ceremony will be built around a shiur — a teaching — that you write and deliver on your own portion of the Torah: the *parashah* of your Hebrew birthday. It is the moment the studying stops being preparation and becomes an offering.

Finding your birthdate parashah

Recall from Stage Seven that the Torah is read in fifty-four weekly portions, so every week of the Jewish year “owns” a parashah. Your portion is the one read on the Shabbat of — or nearest to — your *Hebrew* birthday. Two things make this less obvious than it sounds: the Hebrew date is not the same as your Gregorian birthday, and, because of leap-months, the exact portion can vary a little year to year. The practical route is simple, and set out step by step in Appendix A: use the free tool at hebc.com to convert your birth date to its Hebrew equivalent and reveal the Torah portion that belongs to it. That portion becomes a lifelong touchstone — a text to return to every year — and the seed of your ceremony shiur.

How to write the shiur

A shiur (or *d’var Torah*) is not a sermon and needs no theology you don’t hold. It is simply you, thinking aloud and honestly about a text, in front of people who love you. Aim for seven to twelve minutes. A reliable shape:

1. Open with a question or a moment — something from your own journey into Jewish life that the portion touches.
2. Bring the text — read the verse or scene from your parashah that grips you. (Sefaria gives you the Hebrew, the translation, and centuries of commentary to argue with.)
3. Interpret it — use the skill you practised in Stage Seven: What is it really saying? Where do you resist it? What does it ask of a person now?
4. Connect it to your becoming — weave in your statement of *why* (Stage Two) and your *credo* (Stage Six). Let the ancient text and your own choice illuminate each other.
5. Close with a blessing or a hope — what you carry forward, and what you ask of the community that is receiving you.

*You began by asking “what is Judaism?”
You end by teaching it.*

Shaping the ceremony

Your ceremony is the threshold across which you are adopted — and by now you are holding, in your journal, almost everything it needs. Each stage has left a milestone; together they are the ceremony’s raw material. A spiritual-humanistic adoption ceremony might move like this:

- Welcome & gathering — the community assembles to receive you; a song, a lighting of candles.
- Your name conferred — you are called by your new Hebrew name, *ben / bat Avraham v’Sarah* (Stage Eight), perhaps for the first time aloud.
- Your statement — a refined version of “Why I Identify As Jewish” (Stage Two).
- Your shiur — the teaching on your birthday parashah (this stage), carrying your credo (Stage Six) within it.
- Affirmations — you name the folkways you are taking up: your Shabbat (Stage Three), your kashrut (Stage Four), your year (Stage Five).
- The community’s blessing — those present welcome you as one of the people.
- The shared meal — your chosen dish (Stage Nine) is set on the table, and the studying becomes something everyone can taste.

A practical word: if you pursue formal conversion within a specific movement — Progressive, Masorti, Reform, Liberal or Orthodox — that movement will have its own requirements (a beit din, and usually immersion in a mikveh). This ceremony is not a substitute for that process where you want recognition; it is the personal, spiritual celebration that can stand alongside it, or, in a Humanistic setting, can be the affirmation itself. Speak with a rabbi or sponsor about how the two fit together for the path you choose.

SOURCES TO SIT WITH

READ THESE SLOWLY — TWICE

“Who is wise? One who learns from every person.” — PIRKEI AVOT 4:1 — AND NOW YOU TEACH IN
TURN

“Turn it, and turn it again, for everything is in it — and in it you will find yourself.” — AFTER BEN
BAG BAG, PIRKEI AVOT 5:22

READING & RESOURCES

TO GO DEEPER

hebc.al.com — the date converter and Hebrew-birthday tool (see Appendix A).

Sefaria.org — your parashah in full, with commentaries and ready-made study sheets.

My Jewish Learning, “How to Write a D’var Torah” — a clear, practical guide.

Anita Diamant, *Choosing a Jewish Life* — on conversion ceremonies and how to make them your own.

JOURNAL

WRITE YOUR WAY IN

1. Look up your birthday parashah (Appendix A). Read it once through. What is the first thing that snags your attention?
2. Which of your ten milestones are you proudest of? Which surprised you most? Read your Stage Two statement again — how has it changed?
3. Who do you want in the room when you cross this threshold — and what do you want to say to them?

A PRACTICE TO TRY

DO, DON’T ONLY THINK

Draft the shiur, then read it aloud. Write a first version using the five-step shape above. Then read it aloud to yourself, and to one trusted person. A shiur is meant for the ear and the room, not the page — you will hear at once what is true and what is padding. Revise, and let it rest.

MILESTONE — *the last stone*

KEEP THIS

Complete your ceremony shiur on your birthday parashah, and write your order of ceremony, gathering the ten milestones into their places. This is the culmination of the programme — the moment your private study becomes a public adoption, and you stand before your community not as a student of Judaism but as a Jew, teaching Torah in your own voice. *Mazal tov, and welcome home.*

APPENDIX A – THE BACK OF THE BOOK

Finding Your Birthday Parashah

Your birthday Torah portion is the one read on the Shabbat of — or nearest to — your *Hebrew* birthday. Here is the simple way to find it.

1. Convert your birth date to the Hebrew calendar. Go to hebc.com/converter. Enter your Gregorian date of birth. (Tip: the Jewish day begins at sunset — if you were born in the evening, use the *next* day. The converter has a checkbox for “after sunset.”) It will return your Hebrew date, e.g. *14 Sivan 5750*.
2. Find the parashah for that date. On the same result, or via hebc.com → “Shabbat”, look up the Torah portion read on the Shabbat on or just after your Hebrew birthday. That is your parashah. Note its name (e.g. *Naso*, *Beshalach*, *Ki Tissa*).
3. Read it in full. Go to sefaria.org, search the portion by name, and read it — Hebrew and English side by side, with linked commentaries you can open line by line.
4. Choose your verse. Find the one verse, image, or scene that speaks to you. That is the seed of your shiur (Stage Ten).

RECORD IT HERE

My Gregorian birth date: _____

My Hebrew birth date: _____

My parashah: _____ The verse I chose: _____

Tip: hebc.com’s “Hebrew Birthday & Anniversary” calculator will also give you the Gregorian date of your Hebrew birthday every year, with each year’s portion — so you can return to your parashah annually.

APPENDIX B – THE BACK OF THE BOOK

The Aleph-Bet

Twenty-two letters, read right to left. All are consonants; vowels are added as small marks (*nikkud*). Five letters change shape at the end of a word (the “final” forms).

LETTER	FINAL	NAME	SOUND	VALUE
א		Aleph	silent (carries a vowel)	1
ב		Bet / Vet	b / v	2
ג		Gimel	g (as in <i>go</i>)	3
ד		Dalet	d	4
ה		Hey	h	5
ו		Vav	v (or o / u as a vowel)	6
ז		Zayin	z	7
ח		Chet	ch (guttural, as in <i>loch</i>)	8
ט		Tet	t	9
י		Yod	y (or i / e as a vowel)	10
כ	ך	Kaf / Chaf	k / ch	20
ל		Lamed	l	30
מ	ם	Mem	m	40
נ	ן	Nun	n	50
ס		Samech	s	60
ע		Ayin	silent (a throaty stop)	70
פ	ף	Pe / Fe	p / f	80

LETTER	FINAL	NAME	SOUND	VALUE
צ	ץ	Tsadi	ts	90
ק		Qof	k	100
ר		Resh	r	200
ש		Shin / Sin	sh / s	300
ת		Tav	t	400

The letters double as numbers — which is why ח (chai, “life”) = 8 + 10 = 18.

APPENDIX C – THE BACK OF THE BOOK

The Year at a Glance

The festivals in the order the Jewish civil year meets them, beginning in autumn with Tishrei. Exact Gregorian dates shift each year — confirm any year at hebcal.com.

MONTH	FESTIVAL	HEART OF IT
Tishrei (Sept–Oct)	Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Simchat Torah	New year, atonement, harvest booths, rejoicing in the Torah.
Kislev–Tevet (Dec)	Hanukkah	Eight nights of light and freedom against the dark.
Shevat (Jan–Feb)	Tu BiShvat	New year of the trees; ecology and planting.
Adar (Feb–Mar)	Purim	Survival, satire, costumes, and joy.
Nisan (Mar–Apr)	Pesach; Yom HaShoah	The Exodus and the seder of freedom; Holocaust remembrance.
Iyar (Apr–May)	Yom HaZikaron & Yom HaAtzmaut; the Omer	Israel’s memorial and independence; counting toward Sinai.
Sivan (May–Jun)	Shavuot	Receiving the Torah; first fruits; all-night study.
Av (Jul–Aug)	Tisha B’Av	Mourning catastrophe and memory.

APPENDIX D – THE BACK OF THE BOOK

Milestone Tracker

Each stage leaves one piece of evidence for your ceremony. Tick them off as you go; together they are the ceremony itself.

DONE	STAGE	MILESTONE TO KEEP	DATE
☐	I	“The Jewish world, as I understand it” — my map + chosen movement	
☐	II	First draft: “Why I Identify As Jewish”	
☐	III	My Shabbat “rule of life” + candle blessing + reflection	
☐	IV	My personal kashrut + mealtime blessing	
☐	V	My personal Jewish year + a festival reflection	
☐	VI	My one-page credo (God, the sacred, meaning)	
☐	VII	My first d’var Torah on one short text	
☐	VIII	My Hebrew name + the story of why I chose it	
☐	IX	“My” dish + the story of its community	
☐	X	My ceremony shiur + order of ceremony	

APPENDIX E — THE BACK OF THE BOOK

A Reading Companion

The frame — civilisation, folkways, humanism

- Mordecai Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization* (1934).
- Sherwin Wine, *Judaism Beyond God*; Harold Schulweis, *For Those Who Can't Believe*.
- Rebecca Alpert & Jacob Staub, *Exploring Judaism: A Reconstructionist Approach*.

Getting your bearings

- Nicholas de Lange, *An Introduction to Judaism*.
- Anita Diamant, *Choosing a Jewish Life* — the essential companion for a Jew-by-choice.
- Aaron J. Hahn Tapper, *Judaisms: A Twenty-First-Century Introduction to Jews and Jewish Identities* — Judaism in the plural; identity, diversity, and why there was never only one Judaism.
- Liz Kleinrock & Caroline Kusin Pritchard, *What Jewish Looks Like* — a joyful celebration of the sheer range of Jewish faces and stories; radical inclusion made vivid.
- Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656–2000*.

Practice — Shabbat, the year, the table

- Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*; Judith Shulevitz, *The Sabbath World*.
- Michael Strassfeld, *The Jewish Holidays*; Irving Greenberg, *The Jewish Way*.
- Claudia Roden, *The Book of Jewish Food*; Leah Koenig, *The Jewish Cookbook*.
- Arthur Waskow, *Down-to-Earth Judaism* (kashrut and the earth).

Text & thought

- sefaria.org — the whole library, free; and hebc.com — calendar and birthday parashah.
- Barry Holtz (ed.), *Back to the Sources*; Adin Steinsaltz, *The Essential Talmud*.
- Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*; the JPS Tanakh.
- Rebecca Goldstein, *Betraying Spinoza*.

. . .

“Wherever you go, I will go; your people shall be my people.”

RUTH 1:16 — THE FIRST WORDS OF EVERY JEW WHO CHOSE

APPENDIX F – THE BACK OF THE BOOK

The Weekly Torah Portions

The Torah is read in fifty-four portions (*parashot*) — one on each Shabbat morning — so that the whole scroll is completed in a year and begun again, without pause, at Simchat Torah. In a common (non-leap) year, seven pairs of portions are combined so the shorter calendar still fits; in a leap year they are read separately. Each portion is also paired with a reading from the Prophets, the *haftarah*.

Use this list alongside Appendix A and Stage Ten to find your birthday parashah — the portion read on the Shabbat of your Hebrew birthday — and return to it each year as a lifelong text of your own. Each parashah takes its name from its first significant Hebrew word.

Bereshit · Genesis

PARASHAH	HEBREW	TORAH READING	THEME
Bereshit	בראשית	Genesis 1:1–6:8	Creation, Eden, Cain and Abel.
Noach	נח	6:9–11:32	The flood, the rainbow, the Tower of Babel.
Lech-Lecha	לך לך	12:1–17:27	Abraham's call and journey; the covenant.
Vayera	וירא	18:1–22:24	The three visitors; Sodom; the binding of Isaac.
Chayei Sarah	חיי שרה	23:1–25:18	Sarah's death; a wife for Isaac.
Toldot	תולדות	25:19–28:9	Jacob and Esau; the stolen blessing.
Vayetze	ויצא	28:10–32:3	Jacob's ladder; Leah and Rachel.
Vayishlach	וישלח	32:4–36:43	Wrestling the angel; reunion with Esau.
Vayeshev	וישב	37:1–40:23	Joseph and his brothers; sold into Egypt.
Miketz	מקץ	41:1–44:17	Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams; his rise.
Vayigash	ויגש	44:18–47:27	Joseph reveals himself; the family reunited.
Vayechi	ויחי	47:28–50:26	Jacob's blessings; his death in Egypt.

Shemot · Exodus

PARASHAH	HEBREW	TORAH READING	THEME
Shemot	שמות	Exodus 1:1–6:1	Slavery; the birth of Moses; the burning bush.

PARASHAH	HEBREW	TORAH READING	THEME
Va'era	וָאֵרָא	6:2–9:35	The first seven plagues.
Bo	בֹּא	10:1–13:16	The last plagues; the first Passover; the Exodus.
Beshalach	בְּשַׁלַּח	13:17–17:16	The parting of the sea; the Song of the Sea; manna.
Yitro	יִתְרוֹ	18:1–20:23	Jethro's counsel; the Ten Commandments at Sinai.
Mishpatim	מִשְׁפָּטִים	21:1–24:18	The civil and ethical laws of the covenant.
Terumah	תְּרוּמָה	25:1–27:19	Instructions for building the Mishkan.
Tetzaveh	תְּצַוֶּה	27:20–30:10	The priestly garments; the eternal light.
Ki Tisa	כִּי תִשָּׂא	30:11–34:35	The Golden Calf; the second tablets.
Vayakhel	וַיַּקְהֵל	35:1–38:20	Building the Mishkan; Shabbat.
Pekudei	פְּקוּדֵי	38:21–40:38	The Mishkan completed and filled with glory.

Vayikra · Leviticus

PARASHAH	HEBREW	TORAH READING	THEME
Vayikra	וַיִּקְרָא	Leviticus 1:1–5:26	The system of offerings.
Tzav	צַו	6:1–8:36	Further laws of the offerings; the priests.
Shemini	שְׁמִינִי	9:1–11:47	The eighth day; the dietary laws (kashrut).
Tazria	תִּזְרִיעַ	12:1–13:59	Purity, birth, and skin affliction.
Metzora	מִצְרָע	14:1–15:33	Purification of the person and the home.
Acharei Mot	אַחֲרֵי מוֹת	16:1–18:30	The Yom Kippur service.
Kedoshim	קְדוּשִׁים	19:1–20:27	"You shall be holy"; love your neighbour.
Emor	אֱמֹר	21:1–24:23	Priestly holiness; the festival calendar.
Behar	בְּהָר	25:1–26:2	The sabbatical and Jubilee years.
Bechukotai	בְּחֻקֹּתַי	26:3–27:34	Blessings and warnings of the covenant.

Bamidbar • Numbers

PARASHAH	HEBREW	TORAH READING	THEME
Bamidbar	במדבר	Numbers 1:1–4:20	Census in the wilderness; the camp.
Naso	נשא	4:21–7:89	The priestly blessing; the nazirite.
Beha'alotcha	בהעלתך	8:1–12:16	The menorah; the people's complaints.
Shelach	שלח	13:1–15:41	The twelve spies; forty years' wandering.
Korach	קרח	16:1–18:32	Korah's rebellion.
Chukat	חקת	19:1–22:1	The red heifer; the waters of Meribah.
Balak	בלק	22:2–25:9	Balaam's blessing, "How goodly are your tents."
Pinchas	פינחס	25:10–30:1	Covenant of peace; the daughters of Zelophehad.
Matot	מטות	30:2–32:42	Vows; the war with Midian.
Masei	מסעי	33:1–36:13	The journeys; the borders of the land.

Devarim • Deuteronomy

PARASHAH	HEBREW	TORAH READING	THEME
Devarim	דברים	Deuteronomy 1:1–3:22	Moses' review of the wilderness years.
Va'etchanan	ואתחנן	3:23–7:11	The Shema; the Ten Commandments restated.
Eikev	עקב	7:12–11:25	Faithfulness rewarded; "not by bread alone."
Re'eh	ראה	11:26–16:17	Blessing and curse; holiness and charity.
Shoftim	שופטים	16:18–21:9	"Justice, justice"; judges, kings, prophets.
Ki Teitzei	כי תצא	21:10–25:19	A wide range of civil and ethical laws.
Ki Tavo	כי תבוא	26:1–29:8	First fruits; the blessings and curses.
Nitzavim	נצבים	29:9–30:20	"Choose life"; the covenant renewed.
Vayelech	וילך	31:1–30	Moses' final charge; the Torah entrusted.
Ha'azinu	האזינו	32:1–52	The song of Moses.

PARASHAH	HEBREW	TORAH READING	THEME
V'Zot HaBerachah	וזאת הברכה	33:1–34:12	Moses' blessing and death; read on Simchat Torah.

In a common year the following pairs are read together: Vayakhel–Pekudei, Tazria–Metzora, Acharei Mot–Kedoshim, Behar–Bechukotai, Chukat–Balak, Matot–Masei, and Nitzavim–Vayelech. Your exact birthday portion for any given year is best confirmed at hebc.com (see Appendix A).

FOR YOUR JOURNEY - REFLECTIONS, DRAFTS & MILESTONES

Notes

