

RABBINICAL COUNCIL OF AMERICA – MONTREAL REGION

CONVERSION PROGRAM

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*Member, Network of Regional Batei Din for Conversion under the auspices of
The Rabbinical Council of America and the Beth Din of America*

JEWISH LIBRARY AND READING LIST – 5783/2023

You need not purchase or read every one of these. But we will use many of them through the Conversion process, and all of them will be helpful to you. Plus, every Jewish person should have a Jewish library, according to their means – these are good selections to start.

Stone Chumash
Artscroll Tanach
Artscroll Siddur and Machzor, or Koren Shalem Siddur and Machzor
Handbook of Jewish Thought, 2 volumes, Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan
Maimonides Principles, Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan
Living Each Week, Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski
Triumph of Jewish History, Rabbi Berel Wein
To Be a Jew, Rabbi Halevi Donin
To Pray as a Jew, Rabbi Halevi Donin
To Raise a Jewish Child, Rabbi Halevi Donin
Shemirat Shabbat, Rav Yehoshua Neuwirth (English, 2 volumes)
Peninei Halachah, Rabbi Eliezer Melamed, available online
The Sabbath, Dayan Grunfeld
The Sabbath, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel
Practical Guide to Kashrut, Rabbi S. Wagschal
The Book of our Heritage, Eliyahu Kitov
The Secret of Jewish Femininity, Tehilla Abramov
The Holocaust, Martin Gilbert
Pirkei Avot
The World of Prayer, Rabbi Elie Munk
Prayerfully Yours, Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski
Passover Haggadah with commentary of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks and/or Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski
Gateway to Judaism, Rabbi Mordechai Brecher

The following titles are guides to conversion. They are both very good, but do not necessarily follow every detail of our program. Use them as a helpful guide to the process of Conversion.

Becoming a Jew, Rabbi Norman Lamm
The Gerus Guide, Rabbi Aryeh Moshen

GEIRUT STUDY CURRICULUM

Theology and Beliefs

- Basic Theology, Nature of and Belief in God
- Fundamental Principles of Belief

Reading: Kaplan's Maimonides Principles and Handbook to Jewish Thought

Survey of Tanach

- Survey of major events and personalities in Tanach
- Process of Torah interpretation, Midrash vs. literal meaning

Reading: Stone Chumash; Artscroll Tanach; Living Each Week, Rabbi Twerski

Experience: Study weekly Parshah

Survey of Jewish History

- Major periods, movements, and personalities
- Picture of contemporary Jewish world
 - Traditional ideologies
 - Organizations
 - Challenges
 - Assimilation, Inter-marriage
 - Jewish Education
 - Modern Anti-Semitism

Reading: Triumph of Jewish History, Rabbi Berel Wein; The Holocaust, Martin Gilbert

Israel and Zionism

- Place of Israel within Jewish thought
- History of Zionism
- Contemporary Picture of Israel
- Cities and sites
- Aliyah

Experience: Visit Israel, if possible; commemorate annually Yom HaShoah, Yom HaZikaron, Yom HaAtzma'ut, and Yom Yerushalayim

Halachic Process

- Structure and methodology
 - Written and Oral Torah
 - Biblical and Rabbinical laws
 - Minhag
 - Differing opinions within Halacha
 - Majority
 - Precedent
 - Extraordinary circumstances
 - Stringencies and leniencies
 - Role of a Rabbi
 - Accepting a Rabbi upon oneself
 - Asking a shailah

- Personal matters
 - Talmud, Shulchan Aruch, Responsa
- Maintaining spirituality amid details of observance

Experience: Meet and discuss Halachic issues with sponsoring Rabbi on a regular basis

Prayer

- Philosophy
 - Why pray?
 - Do prayers affect God?
 - Response to prayer
- How to pray?
- Structure of each prayer service
- Selected prayers
 - Bircat HaShachar, Shema, Shemonei Esrei, Aleinu, etc.
- Kavanah
- Individual vs. communal prayer
- Spontaneous prayer
- Berachot for food and various occasions
- Tallit, Tefilin, Tzitzit for men; head covering (men and woman)
- Hebrew (taught outside our program)

Reading: To Pray as a Jew, Artscroll or Koren Siddur and Machzor

Experience: Regular synagogue attendance, daily prayer

Shabbat

- Meaning and Philosophy
- Positive Mitzvot of Shabbat (candles, kiddush, bircat habanim, etc...)
- 39 Melachot

Reading: Shemirat Shabbat, Rav Yehoshua Neuwirth; Peninei Halacha, Rabbi Melamed; The Sabbath, Dayan Grunfeld; the Sabbath, Rabbi Heschel

Experience: Practice Shabbat

Chagim - Taught as they occur

- Meaning and Philosophy
- Positive Mitzvot
- Practical Observance

Reading: Book of Our Heritage; Shemirat Shabbat (chapters on Yom Tov), Rav Yehoshua Neuwirth; Peninei Halacha (chapters on Yom Tov), Rabbi Melamed

Experience: Practice Chagim in Shul and at home

Kashrut

- Ethics and Spirituality
- Principles
- Practical Observance
- When to ask a question
- Staying informed

- VAAD Mailing list, etc.

Reading: Practical Guide to Kashrut, Rabbi S. Wagschal

Experience: Implement practice of laws as they are learned; tour a supermarket with a tutor/mentor

Gender Issues

- Differentiation of men's and women's roles in Jewish life

Family Purity

- Tzniut
- Dating
- Marriage
- Intimacy
- Romance
- Shalom Bayit

Reading: The Secret of Jewish Femininity

Experience: Visit to a Mikveh

Ethics

- Business Ethics
- Medical Ethics
- Middot Tovot – Positive personality traits
- Slander, Gossip
- Confidentiality
- Law of the Land
- Modesty
 - Dress
 - Behaviour
- Honouring Parents
- Raising Children
- Gemilut Chassadim
 - Tzedakah
- Human Rights
- Kiddush HaShem

Experience: Put into practice as they are learned

Life Cycle Events

- Details and significance of each

Experience: Attend at least one of each life cycle event