



The Ziegler School
of Rabbinic Studies

בית המדרש ע"ש זיגלר

Walking with the Jewish Calendar

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דרכיה דרכי נעם

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

INTRODUCTION

This book, the fourth in the Ziegler Adult Learning series, is designed to provide high quality, stimulating and challenging materials that enable adults to expand their understanding of the basic concepts and tenets of Conservative Judaism by exposing them to the thinkers, texts and ideas which underpin our tradition. The audience we have in mind is the questioning congregant who might not yet be familiar with Jewish sources.

The book comprises thirteen self-contained adult education units, each dealing with some aspect of the Jewish calendar, its festivals and holy days. Within each unit you will find:

- an essay
- a set of four havruta study texts, with questions
- a fifth text for group study with topics for discussion

To aid the facilitation of these learning sessions this volume also contains Session Suggestions which provide an overview of each unit's contents and ideas as to how to structure discussion. Finally, there are Resources for Further Study at the back of the book.

All these materials can be downloaded from the Walking With website (www.walkingwith.org). Follow the link to ***Walking with the Jewish Calendar***.

RESOURCES

For each session you will need:

- the essays (which participants should be encouraged to read in advance)
- copies of the texts and any supplementary study materials (see Session Suggestions)
- materials (paper, pens etc) for participants to record their thoughts

SEQUENCING

With the exception of the first two units, the contents of which are not time-specific, the units are arranged sequentially according to the order of the Jewish calendar. As such, should you choose to schedule your discussions on a monthly basis commencing in the late summer/early fall, you may wish to begin with Unit 3 (Rosh Hashanah) or to combine Units One and Three, and then to precede through the following four units (up to Tu B'Shevat) in order, returning later to the study of Shabbat (Unit Two). This sequencing will maintain an approximate correspondence between the material and the external calendar.

SUGGESTED SESSION LENGTH AND FORMAT

The recommended length of the session is between an hour and a half and two hours, depending on the participants' interest and background. If a session will last longer than ninety minutes, you should schedule a short break in the middle (perhaps preceding general discussion of the texts).

We suggest you begin each session with a brief (20-30 min.) discussion of the ideas raised in the essay – perhaps even encouraging participants to take turns preparing questions or talking points for group discussion based on their advanced reading.

The bulk of the sessions (approximately an hour) should then be left for the preparation and discussion of the texts. In general, text study is most effective in a small group context. As such, we recommend that you split the participants into groups corresponding in number to the number of texts you intend to cover in that session. Have each group focus



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initially on just one text, which they can read and discuss among themselves using the included study questions as a guide. Once the break-out groups have worked through their task (typically about 30 mins.), bring the groups together to present their ideas to the class, and open the floor to comments (it would be helpful at this point if all participants had access to copies of all the texts). Then proceed to a discussion of the Group Study text, which is typically of a more integrative nature.

You will note that for some of the units the Session Suggestions provide guidelines for making selections among the texts or recommend activities or discussion topics which might replace the designated Group Study text. Feel free to make these and other substitutions or to otherwise adapt the recommendations to suit participants' needs and experience.

RITUAL

While this book is not specifically designed to provide direction in ritual observance, its subject matter naturally lends itself to discussion of holiday preparation or observance in many instances. You might wish to designate a block of time toward the end of the session during which participants can reflect on ways in which the ideas raised might be incorporated into their own ritual life.

CONCLUSION

In the introduction to *The Sabbath*, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel described Judaism as “a religion of time aiming at the sanctification of time.” He went on to say “Judaism teaches us to be attached to holiness in time, to be attached to sacred events, to learn to consecrate sanctuaries that emerge from the magnificent stream of the year.”

It is our hope that the materials in this book will inspire those who use it to regard with fresh eyes the holy moments and sacred events which bind and define us as a people and will bring to your individual and communal life an enhanced appreciation of and dedication to the work of consecrating time.





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