



Syllabus

Spiritual Practices for Real Life

Week 1: On Gratitude: Empty Platitudes or Practice Worth Cultivating?

What is the role of gratitude in our lives? In the goal oriented world in which we live, can taking time to appreciate what we have in life help us be more grateful, centered human beings? Is “practicing gratitude” just a trendy buzz phrase or a deep practice worthy of cultivation?

Week 2: “I’m Not Religious, I’m Spiritual”: Toward a Vibrant Jewish Lifestyle

When living in a world that is increasingly more secular, what is the role of religion and spirituality? Do we even need either? Both? What does it actually mean to be spiritual versus religious, and what do we mean when we define our identities in this way? Is it possible to integrate Jewish life/Judaism as a meaningful part of our lifestyle and identity, rather than compartmentalizing it?

Week 3: Not my God: Conceptions of Divinity

Is it important to have a personal concept of God? Does it add value to our lives either way? If so, how do you define God and how would you define your relationship to God? How do we relate to a God we do and don’t believe in

based on the messages/language we have experienced in spiritual and religious settings?

Week 4: On Political and Spiritual Resistance: Protest or Pray?

What is the role of individual resistance when leadership doesn't align with our values? What is our responsibility when we believe the decisions of authorities aren't building towards the kind of society we want to live in? What impact does prayer have? Action? Is one more important than the other?

Week 5: Revelation from the Ruins

What do we do in the face of tragedy? Why do such moments of significant loss occur? Can there be revelation in the ruins?

Week 6: Siyum

Whenever we learn a significant amount of Torah together, our tradition offers us the opportunity to have what is called a *siyum*, which translates as "complete." It's a way to mark a milestone in our learning – a point that we have arrived at a peak. Today we'll celebrate that our community has been gathering in circles of learning for a significant period of time and has uncovered Torah that would have otherwise remained dormant.