

Adult Education Initiative 5780:

Dear Ahavat Achim,

This year we embark on a bold new adult educational initiative, entitled “An Integrated Torah Lifestyle”. An Integrated Torah Lifestyle is a new formulation of both a practical and idealistic way to look at Modern Orthodoxy. An Integrated Torah Lifestyle begins with a few assumptions, in line with modern orthodoxy. It assumes a belief in the written and oral Torah, and in rabbinic authority. It also assumes that Torah study and mitzvot provide us with a blueprint to live a more meaningful life and experience the world in a rich, enlightened way, within which we can have a relationship with Hashem. Finally, it assumes that there is value in secular education, scientific reality, and recreation. An integrated Torah lifestyle accepts that for many these valuable secular institutions have a significant impact on our viewpoint.

As such, living an integrated Torah lifestyle means primarily two things:

1. Trying to integrate Torah into the sociological/cultural/educational/physical/secular world in which we live
2. Trying to enrich our Torah lifestyle/Judaic experiences/*Yahadut* with dedication, understanding, meaning, and intentionality

The learning we do this year will be oriented towards accomplishing that integration and enrichment, with the following programs:

1. Weekdays, between mincha and maariv: At the start of Elul we began learning the *Minchat Yosef*, which provides explanation and insight into tefilla. Since we are coming from prayer and going to prayer, we hope to enrich that prayer with this course of study.
2. *NEW* Monday mornings, beginning after Simchat Torah we will begin a 5-minute “podcast” recording to be sent out via the Torah for your Commute whatsapp group. We will use the *Aruch Hashulchan*, from the 19th century chief Rabbi of Kovno, R’ Yechiel Michel Epstein. The *Aruch Hashulchan* is known for its comprehensive breadth and its nuanced and balanced approach to Halacha, designed primarily for lay people first and secondarily for scholars. We begin this course of study to integrate “halacha”, a path/way as we go on our way and begin our work week.
3. Thursday morning parsha recording: Continuing to help us get into the mindset of the parsha as the week begins to wind towards Shabbat.
4. *NEW* Friday night, between kabbalat Shabbat and maariv: At the beginning of Elul we also began “Presenting a Distinctively Jewish Approach to Marriage and Family Life” or “PADJAMA FL”. As we light Shabbat candles and bring peace into our homes, prepare to recite Eishet Chayil, and give our children blessings this course of study will hopefully engage our thinking in re-establishing the type of family life we value so dearly.
5. Fundamentals of Jewish thought: As the tranquility of Shabbat sets in, we take that peace of mind and engage in contemplation and conversation on the most central tenants of Judaism.

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6. The Shabbat Afternoon Gemara shiur will continue until the clocks change and gives those with some Talmudic familiarity the opportunity to authentically engage with our Mesorah and absorb the development of Halacha.
7. The Beginner Talmud Class on Monday nights @ 8:15 will continue through the winter and gives everyone the opportunity to wade in the sea of the Talmud, understand how the Talmud operates, and genuinely study the most consequential halachic work of our Sages.
8. *NEW* As part of our attempt to live an integrated Torah life, the oneg series this year will focus on various scenarios where Torah values/halacha conflict with secular mores and sensibilities. Issues that we will address include, organ donation (Elul matters), women’s involvement in ritual life, homosexuality, and topics TBD.
9. “Everyone is invited to Seudah Shlishit, where this year in the Mesorah in Reverse we will continue to discuss the lives and world of the Amoraim, the sages of the Talmud.
10. Parent-child Megilla Series with Rebbetzin Chana and other speakers to enable parents and children to both learn together creating a bond over Torah and helping us get into the mindset of the upcoming Megilla to make the reading/hearing a more meaningful experience. (Everyone is welcome to attend the Parent-child megillah series.)
11. [Your ideas here].

Looking forward to another interesting, enriching, and inspirational year with you all.

K’tima V’Chatima Tova,

Ely Shestack

Congregation Ahavat Achim

High Holiday 5780

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K'tima V'Chatima Tova,

Rabbi Ely Shestack

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