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Monday, September 21, 2020

Dear New CBI member,

I wanted to let you know a new benefit of becoming a member of Congregation B'nai Israel for those of you who joined during the past year, 5780. Our congregation took the step of becoming an affiliate of the nationally recognized Miller Introduction to Judaism Program this summer. As an expression of our commitment of offering outstanding Jewish learning to our congregants, we are offering you free enrollment in the Miller Program tuition. The standard tuition for this program is \$270 with a discount for CBI members of \$135. But as a new CBI member, the only cost to you is for basic study resources for a total of \$20,

What is the Miller Introduction to Judaism Program?

The program originates from the American Jewish University of Los Angeles where I did a portion of my rabbinic training. It is a product of the Conservative movement and takes a pluralistic perspective on Jewish life. The curriculum has been developed by well-regarded Jewish educators and rabbis. The curriculum covers 18 broad subjects such as the Sabbath and Jewish festivals, Jewish home and life cycle, the Jewish library, Jewish thought and history, perspectives on God and ethics, modern Jewish history, understanding anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, and the significance of Zionism and the State of Israel. Beginning Hebrew is built into the curriculum, reflecting the view that the language of the Jewish people is an important way to understand Jewish culture.

The materials are lucid and well organized. The class sessions invite curiosity, encourage reflection, and maintain intellectual honesty. I will serve as the lead teacher, with knowledgeable congregants serving as guest instructors for selected topics. 35 hours of instruction are offered over weekly Tuesday evening classes from the beginning of October through mid-May.

The program is designed for Jewish persons who want to build a solid foundation of Jewish knowledge, for parents in the religious school who aspire to be a Jewish role model for their children, for couples of different religious backgrounds who want to explore the role Judaism will play in their lives, and for persons seriously considering conversion to Judaism. I believe it is an excellent opportunity for new CBI members to build community through learning, engaging, and discussing the meaning and relevance of living a Jewish life and the outlook of Conservative Judaism.

Because we cannot still gather in-person, the class sessions will be offered on a secure Zoom Video connection. When there is an "all clear" concerning the pandemic, we will start in person instruction with an option for Zoom Video participation for those in remote areas. The Miller Introduction Program at B'nai Israel will assemble for our first class on Tuesday, October 6, 2020, 7-8:30pm. More information about the curriculum, the reading, the schedule and the application can be found at <https://www.bnaisrael-nm.org/learn/miller-intro-to-judaism>.

I invite you to consider joining the Miller Intro to Judaism Program and enjoying this benefit of Jewish growth as part of your membership at B'nai Israel.

For more information on the Miller Introduction to Judaism or to request an application, contact volunteer coordinator, Suzy Savage, at YourwaytoJudasim@gmail.com or calling her phone at: 505 600-5530. Also, feel free to contact me with questions.

Shanah Tovah,

Rabbi Dov Gartenberg