

...increases ties and connections to Israel.

Since its inception, the Conservative Movement has believed in, and helped to further, the cause of Zionism. As Conservative Jews, we must find ways to increase our ties to Israel in concrete ways.

- Join MERCAZ (the Conservative Zionist Organization).
- Travel frequently to Israel.
- Send your children on Israel programs.
- Support Israel financially.
- Consider making aliyah (immigrating to Israel).

...studies to increase his or her knowledge of Hebrew.

Hebrew, as a language, unites us with Jews across time and space. It is the eternal language of our people and connects us with Jews in Israel and throughout the world. It is also the Jewish language of prayer and study. Yet for many of us, it is not a language but a series of letters we can read but not understand.

It is imperative that we not only maintain Hebrew in our services but increase our personal knowledge of Hebrew as a language.

- Take classes in Hebrew as a living language.
- Study the prayers and their meanings.
- Plan to study at an ulpan in Israel.



The "Ideal" Conservative Jew: Eight Behavioral Expectations

by Rabbi Jerome Epstein

- The ideal Conservative Jew supports a Conservative synagogue by participating in its activities.
- The ideal Conservative Jew studies as a Conservative Jew a minimum of one hour per week.
- The ideal Conservative Jew employs learned Jewish values to guide behavior even when it conflicts with personal feelings or inclinations.
- The ideal Conservative Jew increases personal Jewish living out of commitment and as a result of thought, by adding a minimum of three new mitzvot a year.
- The ideal Conservative Jew employs the values of tikun olam to help in the world's continual repair.
- The ideal Conservative Jew makes decisions about Jewish behavior only after considering the effect these decisions will have on Klal Yisrael.
- The ideal Conservative Jew increases ties and connections to Israel.
- The ideal Conservative Jew studies to increase his or her knowledge of Hebrew.

Many people mistakenly believe that Conservative Judaism is "pick and choose" Judaism -- that there are no rules or expectations. In truth, however, Conservative Judaism is committed to Jewish tradition and to the observance of mitzvot.

The teachings of our Movement should affect the way we live our lives -- for if Judaism does not shape our daily decisions and lifestyle, then it is meaningless. An ideal Conservative Jew is a striving Jew, one who is always trying to grow in commitment and knowledge. Each of us should continually climb the ladder of observance. Conservative Judaism asks us to learn and to grow.

Below, we offer eight behavioral expectations to help you build the foundations of a strong and committed Conservative Jewish lifestyle.

The Ideal Conservative Jew ...

...supports a Conservative synagogue by participating in its activities.

Judaism is a communal religion and our Jewish lives are infinitely enriched when we play an active part in a synagogue community.

- Attend services on Shabbat and Festivals.
- Participate regularly in a daily minyan.
- Support synagogue social justice programs.
- Attend synagogue social events.

...studies as a Conservative Jew a minimum of one hour per week.

Our approach to study is distinct. We study texts critically and we bring knowledge from other disciplines to help us better understand our own heritage. At the same time, we approach the text with a commitment to preserve our sacred traditions.

Jewish study is essential because it allows us to appreciate our past, understand our present, and chart where we wish to go in the future.

- Attend synagogue adult education classes.
- Spend time reading Jewish books.
- Discuss Jewish issues with your family/friends.
- Study the Torah portion each week.
- Take advantage of the Internet and other modern resources.

...employs learned Jewish values to guide behavior even when it conflicts with personal feelings or inclinations.

Judaism is meaningful only if it affects the way we live our lives. Our tradition teaches that study is meaningful only if it leads to action. Judaism must have a strong voice when we make the daily decisions in our lives.

- Learn what Judaism teaches about the critical issues of our times.
- Act on the teachings of Judaism.
- Don't follow the crowd; follow what our tradition teaches to be right.

...increases personal Jewish living out of commitment and as a result of thought, by adding a minimum of three new mitzvot a year.

Conservative Judaism is unique in its approach to halakhah and mitzvot. For us, halakhah is both evolving and binding. Each of us must continue to grow in our commitment and observance.

- Add new mitzvot to your Shabbat observance.
- Climb the ladder in your observance of kashrut.
- Become more aware (and observant) of the mitzvot of gemilut hasadim (acts of loving-kindness).
- Add to your observance of mitzvot connected with the family.
- Look for opportunities to recite berakhot.

...employs the values of tikun olam to help in the world's continual repair.

We are God's partners in safeguarding His creation. A Conservative Jew does not just believe in repairing the world, but works towards that goal. The Conservative Jew is not only pained by human suffering, but does something to relieve it.

- Participate in synagogue social justice programs.
- Give tzedakah regularly.
- Volunteer to work for a local homeless shelter.
- Make bikur holim (visiting the sick) a regular activity.

...makes decisions about Jewish behavior only after considering the effect these decisions will have on Klal Yisrael.

Klal Yisrael, the unity of the Jewish people, is a central value of the Conservative Movement. In making decisions about our lives or our religious practices, we must think about their impact on the entire Jewish community. We must avoid taking actions that will divide us from other Jews.

- Make an effort to be involved in synagogue programs to ensure their success
- Make personal decisions only after considering how they will affect the greater community.
- Consider the impact your choices will have on the health of your community.