

HOW DO WE KNOW?

JUDAISM DECODED:
THE ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF JEWISH TRADITION
A FASCINATING SIX-SESSION COURSE FROM THE ROHR JEWISH LEARNING INSTITUTE

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MAY 2015

6 Wednesday evenings, starting
Wednesday, May 6th/7:30pm-9:00pm

Location
2000 Hollywood Drive/York, PA 17403

Judaism Decoded: The Origins and Evolution of Jewish Tradition

Have you ever questioned the authenticity of our Jewish tradition?

Is there any evidence supporting the veracity of Judaism as we practice it today?

What was invented by the rabbis, and what can be traced back to ancient biblical verses?

And how do contemporary rabbis know how to adapt biblical law for modern times?

Just as science follows the scientific method, Jewish tradition has its own system to ensure its authenticity remains intact.

Judaism Decoded sheds light on the mysteries surrounding biblical interpretation. How do we know our interpretation is true? If it is true, why is it subject to differences of opinion? And with so many interpretations to choose from, how do we know which one reflects its original intent?

Discover the sheer elegance of the “source code” on which Torah law is built; enjoy the razor-sharp reasoning, intelligent debate, and compelling arguments of the Talmudic dialectic; and get a fascinating, behind-the-scenes glimpse of the most intellectually sophisticated religion in existence.

1. THE DYNAMIC DUO

If we have a written law, why do we need tradition? And if we have a tradition, what's the point of a written law? Discover the brilliance of this binary system, and how it has kept Jewish tradition intact for millennia.

2. A FORMULA FOR ETERNITY

Circumstances change, and, in most cases, so do the rules—unless, that is, the rules were created as principles with a unique formula to make them apply to any situation that may arise. Explore the systematic formula through which Jewish law is applied to solve new, modern-day dilemmas.

3. RABBIS MAKING RULES

Is my rabbi allowed to change the law when he deems it necessary? When do rabbis have the power to legislate new laws? And what prevents a rabbi from unilaterally changing the face of Judaism?

4. DEBATING THE DIVINE

The Talmud is filled with all kinds of debates. If the law is Divine, should there be any room for discussion? When there are differences of opinion, how do we determine the law? And why does the Talmud record opinions that were ultimately overruled?

5. LAWS THAT EXPIRE

While most Jewish practices are as relevant today as ever, some laws have reasons that no longer apply. When does a law expire? How is it revoked? And why might we choose to continue a practice even once its rationale is no longer relevant?

6. EVIDENCE FOR SINAI

Judaism encourages us to question. How do we know the Torah is true? Why was Maimonides so convinced about the historic truth of the revelation at Sinai? Is there any empirical evidence to support his claim?

