



Frequently Asked Questions

What is Chavruta?

Chavruta is a classical Jewish way of studying texts that goes back at least 2000 years. It is also a great way of building relationships in community through learning. It is also a mode of learning and studying together that is perfect for our time, in which it is impossible to be together in big groups.

How does the Alyth Chavruta Project Work?

Every Friday (starting 26 March), we will send out a text pack. This pack will contain the text to be studied in Hebrew and English, along with some questions to guide your conversation. We will also include some supplementary texts which may throw some light on the Mishnah, or introduce a new problem. At the end of the pack will be a section containing definitions of key terms and explanations of unfamiliar concepts.

It will be up to you to organise with your partner where and when you will meet up to study the texts (as long as it is within current Covid-19 guidelines!). The Thursday after you have received the pack there will be a session for all chavruta pairs at 7pm on Zoom with one of the Alyth clergy. In these sessions, we will spend some time making sure everyone understands the texts and addressing any questions, before delving into a particular area or idea that has been brought up by that week's study.

How does chavruta work?

Chavruta essentially just means studying Jewish texts with other people. Here are our **top tips** for getting the most out of it:

- **Take time** – set aside time without other demands on you.
- **Have patience** – if you're new to chavruta study it may not feel super comfortable straight away, but as you build familiarity with the text and with your study partner(s) it will begin to feel more natural.
- **Keep resources nearby** – if you have a copy of the Bible or Tanach, it is a good idea to keep it nearby in case you need to consult it. We would recommend the Jewish Publication Society Tanach, or the Jewish Study Bible, both of which are solid translations.
- **Say the blessing** – there is a standard blessing that we say before studying Jewish texts, which we will include with every text pack.
- **Read the text out loud** – this is perhaps the most important and distinctive thing about chavruta study! Read the text once all the way through without interruption, and then go back over it, this time stopping to make sure you all understand what the text is saying, and asking questions of the text as you go.
- **Read the guiding questions** – the guiding questions are there to help you to get the most out of studying the text. You can read these together before beginning to study, or you can read the texts first and then go back to the questions after.



Do I have to be able to read Hebrew?

No. Although we would definitely encourage those who would like to push themselves, there is absolutely no requirement to engage with the Hebrew if you're not comfortable with it. Chavruta is about engaging with Jewish texts at a level you feel comfortable in.

Does chavruta have to be just two people, or can I do it in a group of three?

The most important thing about chavruta is that it is interactive. Although it is traditional to do it in pairs, it is absolutely fine to do it in a group of three, four or more.

How long should we spend studying?

We would recommend an hour a week, but really whatever you can manage, and if you want to study for longer then go for it!

Are there any resources you would recommend?

Everything you need will be in your weekly text pack. However, if you want extra materials, then we do have some suggestions.

If you want to check anything in the Tanach (Hebrew Bible), we would recommend the JPS translation (which is available in a [pocket version](#)) or the [Jewish Study Bible](#).

If you are intending to look up Hebrew words, then the most accessible dictionary is Marcus Jastrow's *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature*, which is also available on [Sefaria.org](#).

For those interested in the terminology of rabbinic literature, there is a very good reference guide by [Adin Steinsaltz](#) (z'l). This guide will also give you some historical background and details about the different generations of rabbis.

As noted above, none of these are necessary to take part, as everything you need will be in the text pack.

If you have any further questions, please be in touch with us (acp@alyth.org.uk)

Happy Chavruta Learning!