

Torathon Courses starting at 7:00

WHY CLIMATE CHANGE IS A JEWISH ISSUE

S. Leslie Blatt, Professor Emeritus of Physics and Education, Clark University

Scientists today recognize that the earth's climate has been changing more rapidly over the past few hundred years than ever before in the planet's history, as revealed in the geological record. Long-predicted destructive climate-related events, from out-of-control wildfires to "100-year floods" to increased intensities of hurricanes and typhoons, have now become commonplace in our lives. The once-contested connection to human actions and behaviors is now very well established. As Jews, we are commanded to be good stewards of the land, to do no harm to it, and, in the mystical tradition, to help "repair the world." I will discuss some of the science and some of the evidence, some of the Jewish scientists and leaders who have brought this knowledge to light, and, finally, what we can do, as Jews and as humans, to move the world toward a more positive future.

JUST WHAT IS CHASIDISM?

Rabbi Ya'akov Blotner, Congregation Shaarai Torah West

We all know a bit about the so called "major branches of Judaism," but one of the fastest growing movements in Judaism is actually Chasidism. What is it all about? Why was the early 18th century ripe for the rise of Chasidism? Who were the mentors and colleagues of its founder- the Baal Shem Tov? Why were some areas of Europe more receptive than others to its culture? Which of its teachings and attitudes were "revolutionary", and what elements were really embedded in mainstream Judaism? How and why has Chasidism influenced other segments of Jewry today? Come and Learn!

JEWISH SUPERSTITIONS: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UNBELIEVABLE

Rabbi Valerie Cohen, Temple Emanuel Sinai, Worcester

Superstitions can found sprinkled throughout Jewish texts, tradition, culture, and the things we say. The content of these superstitions vary widely, some seeming crazy and obscure to our "modern sensibilities", while others appear to have logical underpinnings. We will explore both popular and lesser known superstitions, their origins and history (if known), and how surrounding cultures may have brought these ideas into our community. Which are *bubbe meises* ("old wives' tales"), and which have real Jewish value? And, for fun, we can each share our favorite Jewish superstition, whether it's something we believe and practice, or we just heard about and found it fascinating.

IS THERE SUCH A THING AS ARTISTS' WAYS OF KNOWING WHEN IT COMES TO JEWISH TEXT STUDY?

Rabbi Carol Glass, Mussar teacher and Spiritual Director in private practice

How might a creativity-based response to text interpretation differ from the more common, cognitive, intellectually-based approach to Jewish text study? Are there 'Artists' Ways of Knowing' that when tapped, can inform or even transform our understanding of Jewish texts—or even all of Jewish Life? Our all-too-brief session will allow you to creatively respond to a short text study. **Please bring a writing implement & paper.** optional items to bring: Drawing

paper; Scissors; Glue & magazine or newspaper pictures; Paints; Crayons; Colored Pencils, other art materials.

This is definitely NOT FOR ARTISTS ONLY! All you need is open curiosity!

SOUL TRAITS FOR NAVIGATING A PANDEMIC

Rabbi Rachel Gurevitz, Ph.D., Congregation B'nai Shalom, Westborough

We have all been tested over these past 8 months as we've navigated the anxieties and challenges of the Covid-19 Pandemic. What spiritual tools can help us navigate these waters? We'll examine some core soul traits, such as patience, lovingkindness, and trust, through the lens of Mussar practice. Through discussion of texts, meditation, and self-awareness, we can exert more choice in how we bring our full selves to respond to whatever arises in our lives.

THE LATE GREAT RUTH BADER GINSBURG: HER LEGACY AND HER LIFE

Marcia Tannenbaum, Attorney, Mediator, WISE teacher

Ruth Bader Ginsburg was born to immigrant parents in 1933, Brooklyn, NY. She was an extraordinary young person: a gifted student, a talented musician and she twirled a baton with her high school marching band. Justice Ginsburg was appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court - only the second woman to be so honored - by Pres. Clinton, and she served there for 27 years until her recent death. She is the first woman and the first Jew to lie in state in the Capitol rotunda. Her Jewish identity and consciousness informed every aspect of her life. There is so much for us to learn together about her life, her career and her legacy.

Torathon Courses starting at 8:00

CRACKING THE CODE OF THE HEBREW ALPHABET

Rabbi Michael Green, Chabad of Westboro

Come explore the mysteries of the aleph bet and unlock its secret code. Discover a new approach to deciphering the amazing world of the Hebrew language. In this class we will consider a bold new approach to paleography and the origin of the alphabet, rediscovering the original pictographic meaning of the letters of the aleph bet and how those meanings are still very relevant in the Hebrew language of the TaNaKh and of contemporary times. In doing so, we'll demonstrate how the Hebrew letter is not just an arbitrary mark to denote a phonetic sound, but actually conjures up imagery that explains its sound and function in the word, and at the deepest level, represents a profound cosmic truth that gives meaning to our entire existence.

“YOU SAY POT-TAY-TO, I SAY PO-TAH-TO”

Rabbi Aviva Fellman, Congregation Beth Israel, Worcester

Sometimes it feels like we are speaking the same language and yet seem unable to communicate in so many important areas- in politics, in relationships, in the workplace, in life. We will start by looking at a story in the Talmud where communication was a challenge. Rather

than “call the whole thing off”, we will take it from there as we learn how to open ourselves up to not only being heard, but also to listening to others to find common ground.

THE RABBI AND THE SCHOLAR: GENERATIONS--LOVE AND CONFLICT

Everett Fox and Rabbi Cherie Koller Fox

Everett Fox- the Allen M. Glick Professor of Judaic and Biblical Studies at Clark University

Cherie Koller-Fox- President of NewCAJE, Rabbi Emerita at Congregation Eitz Chayim, Cambridge

In this session we will take a close look at Genesis 25:19-34 from Parashat Toledot. It is the famous story of Rebecca giving birth to twins, Jacob and Esau, how the boys related to their parents and later struggled over the family “Birthright.” How can a text be read so that its meaning jumps off the page at you? How does a scholar look at the text versus how a rabbi does? What is there about this particular text that speaks deeply to you? We hope that this session will give you a key to reading any Bible text that you come across with new excitement and insight.

*Please note, this course will be taught during 2 time sessions, from 8:00-10:00, with a short break in the middle. Admittance will not be permitted after 8:05.

THE INTER-SECTIONALITY OF ANTI-SEMITISM, ANTI-ZIONISM AND RACISM

Rabbi Suri Krieger, Rabbi of B'nai Or, Jewish Renewal of Greater Boston

Anti-Semitism is defined as “hostility to, prejudice, or discrimination against Jews as a religious, ethnic, or racial group”. Unfortunately, it has been with us since the very beginning of Judaism. Anti-semitism has historically aligned with ultra Conservative Right-wing constituents. Today however, there is a new wave of Anti-Semitism stemming from advocates Left of the political spectrum. Let’s explore the origins and historical examples of “traditional” Right-Wing Anti-Semitism compared to today’s Left-Wing Anti-Semitism, and racism in general.

FACING THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA – A TEL AVIV LESSON IN EVOKING PRAYERFULNESS

Rabbi Amy Loewenthal, Reconstructionist Rabbinical College 2012

Israelis are reinventing Jewish life and Jewish worship. These so-called “secular” Jews (who aren’t secular) are creating a Jewish renewal (which isn’t necessarily Jewish Renewal) in Israel. What can we learn from how non-Orthodox Israelis are reclaiming Jewish prayer? In particular, how are their spiritual leaders providing people unfamiliar with the *siddur* access to the meaning and tone of prayers? And what can we learn from them? We will consider some innovative Israeli prayer practices and find ways to incorporate them into prayer in our home communities.

HERE ALL ALONG

Rabbi Michael Swartz, Beth Tikvah Synagogue, Westboro, Coordinator of Harold Cotton Leadership Center of JFCM, Jewish Chaplain of the Phillips Academy, Andover, MA

Sarah Hurwitz served Michelle Obama as her chief speechwriter for much of the Obamas’ time in the White House. For much of her early life, by her own admission, she was very disconnected from Judaism and the Jewish community. But an Introduction to Judaism class, plus an experience at a Jewish meditation retreat, led Sarah to a deep dive into Jewish teachings, practices and values. What emerged was not only her becoming a much more

knowledgeable and committed Jew, but a fabulous book with a very long and significant title: *Here All Along: Finding Meaning, Spirituality, and a Deeper Connection to Life—in Judaism (After Finally Choosing to Look There)*. My adult ed class at Beth Tikvah had a great time exploring the book last year, and I am excited to explore it with you, as well as to describe my encounter with Sarah!

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THE SUBTLE VOICE OF SILENCE (KINGS 1, 19:12): THE VALUE OF SILENCE IN JEWISH TRADITION

Elena Blotcher, M.D., Ph.D., Director of the Concentration on Contemplative Studies, Brown University School of Medicine, Mindfulness instructor

It seems like we are living through an age of loud voices. There is so much contentious politics at every turn, surrounded by so much noise and misinformation that many of us feel confounded and confused. What, therefore, is the place of silence? We will use text study and group discussion to explore the importance of silence and contemplation in Jewish tradition, and their role in these unprecedented, difficult times.

THE HEBREW BIBLE- AN INTRODUCTION

Rabbi Joe Eiduson, Congregation B'nai Shalom, Westborough

Many people can be confused by what we call THE HEBREW BIBLE. Is that the same as Torah, Prophets, or Psalms? In fact, the Hebrew Bible (TANACH) is comprised of 3 major sections; Torah, the 5 Books of Moses, Neviim, the Prophets and Ketuvim, the later writings. Join me as we learn the structure of the Hebrew Bible, understanding the origins of the texts, and some interesting facts about Biblical interpretation.

ABORTION IN JUDAISM

Rabbi Aviva Fellman, Congregation Beth Israel, Worcester

Roe V Wade has been in the news a lot lately. What does Judaism say about abortion? To begin, Judaism's views on abortion draw primarily upon the legal and ethical teachings of the Hebrew Bible, The Talmud, the case by case decisions of response, and other rabbinic literature. While all major Jewish religious movements allow (or even encourage) abortion in order to save the life or health of a pregnant woman, authorities differ on when and whether it is permitted in other cases. Let's look at the sources and discuss this critical issue.

STORYTELLING: TELLING OUR STORIES - THE TRANSMISSION OF JEWISH VALUES THROUGH STORY

Mitch Gordon, Musician, Sacred Drummer storyteller

My mentor and friend, master storyteller Peninnah Schram wrote, "The Jews are a storytelling people. From antiquity into the present, the Jewish People have been referred to as 'The People of the Book.' ...All persons carry within them an entire tribe ... a whole repertoire of voices, tastes, smells, memories and hopes..." Jewish people, synagogues, organizations, and families

teach, share and learn values through the process of Storytelling. Come and explore your story, and find the storyteller in you.

THE UPSIDE OF CHAOS

Rabbi Moshe M. Liberow, Associate Rabbi, Torah Center, Worcester, and Director of Boston Rabbinical Court

At one point or another we fall victim to routine and when disrupted seek to find our balance. Join in as we explore chaos in our people's history from the destruction of the Beth HaMikdash to the Inquisition, and how to apply the lessons learned then to our world now in the midst of a Pandemic. Talmudic, Midrashic and Chassidic Texts will be explored in this discussion, as we explore the upside of chaos.

RABBINER REGINA JONAS: LOST AND FOUND (first ordained rabbi)

Dale Rosenberg, Education and Programming Director at Congregation Beth Israel, Worcester

Sally Priesand was widely hailed as the first ever female rabbi. The New York Times, in an excess of caution, described her as "probably the first woman rabbi in the history of Judaism." In fact, there had been one woman rabbi ordained before her, and she was not American and not part of the Reform movement.

Regina Jonas was ordained in 1935 in Nazi Germany, where she served a variety of Jewish communities. Deported to Theresienstadt in 1942, she continued to work as a rabbi, until she was sent to Auschwitz and murdered in 1944. Yet none of the famous survivors of Theresienstadt ever mentioned her in any of their writings or public speeches. Her legacy was lost to the next generation. How was Rabbiner Jonas rediscovered? How was she able to become a rabbi? What were her contributions? Why were her significant accomplishments unknown for years? This lecture will begin to answer these questions.