

Torathon 2025

6:00 PM Welcome to Torathon, Havdalah Service, and a special presentation, “American Jewish Music”, with Radio Host Hal Slifer

Sanctuary

SESSION ALEPH

7:15 PM – 8:00 PM

ROOM

MARX BROTHERS VS. THE THREE STOOGES- JEWISH FUNNY MEN IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

Contrasting two families who had their start in Pre-World War II and Vaudeville comedy at the same time- the Marx Bros. and the Howard Bros. (also known as the 3 Stooges). We will look at their styles, how world events influenced their comedy, some of their stock characters and even some of their Anti-Semitic experiences. We will learn and laugh together as we view some funny clips and talk about these famous funny men!

EJ DOTTS, BETH TIKVAH SYNAGOGUE, GRAFTON

**ROOM
4**

GET UP AND DANCE: PSALM 150 THROUGH THE LENS OF ISRAEL

Join us for a joyful exploration of Psalm 150—the exuberant finale of the Book of Psalms. As a celebration of music, movement, and praise, this psalm invites us to move from prayerful preparation into a vibrant dialogue with God. In this uplifting class, we’ll uncover the archaeological and historical context of Psalm 150, revealing how ancient Israel expressed devotion through rhythm and celebration. Together, we’ll discover how this timeless message continues to inspire connection with our past, enrich our present worship, and guide our spiritual future.

RABBI HANNAH ESTRIN, ISRAELI TOUR GUIDE & INTERIM RABBI, JERUSALEM

**ROOM
3**

JEWS AND BOOZE-150 YEARS OF JEWS MAKING BOURBON

Come learn about some of the Jews behind some of the best bourbons in the USA and the fascinating history of Jewish involvement in this quintessential American cultural product. We’ll start back in the 1860s and make our way to 2025, with many great stories along the way.

RABBI RACHEL GUREVITZ, PhD, CONGREGATION B’NAI SHALOM, WESTBORO

Library

WE SHALL DANCE AGAIN-AN ARTISTIC TRIBUTE TO HOPE AND JOY

In the aftermath of October 7th and the tragedy at the Nova Festival, a hopeful movement emerged in Israel called “We Shall Dance Again”, carrying the promise that joy and dancing will never be silenced. Inspired by this spirit of resilience, our community will create individual artwork in wood and glass — a lasting tribute to the power of dance, joy, and life itself.

ZIVA ROSENHAND, HEBREW TEACHER, ARTIST, AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

**ROOM
1**

ISRAELI SONGS AND THE STORIES BEHIND THEM

Join us for a joyful and uplifting musical session as together we explore beloved Israeli songs from across the years. Gitit will accompany the group on guitar, share fascinating stories behind the music, and teach a new song for everyone to sing together by the end of the session. Come and enjoy beautiful melodies, inspiring stories, and the spirit of Israeli music!

GITIT SHOVAL, CANTORIAL SOLOIST, TEMPLE EMANUEL SINAI, WORCESTER

Chapel

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SESSION BET	8:10 PM – 8:55 PM	ROOM
EXPLORING BIBLICAL ART "You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth (Exodus 20:4)". Despite the prohibition of art of the divine, there is a long tradition of Biblical art. In this session we will explore biblical art, including illuminated texts, classical art and contemporary visual midrash. RABBI EVE EICHENHOLTZ, CONGREGATION AGUDAT ACHIM, LEOMINSTER		ROOM 3
JOYFUL HOSTING Having company at your shabbat or holiday table can be stressful but it doesn't have to be. Come join Rabbi Fellman at her "Shabbat and holiday table" and learn some tricks and tips for making the meal more joy and less oy! There's always room for one more...or four... RABBI AVIVA FELLMAN, CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL, WORCESTER		ROOM 4
SINGING HEBREW ROUNDS Join us for a 45-minute participatory class exploring the rich tradition of singing rounds and musical canons! Historically, rounds have been a captivating way for groups to create harmonious music together, fostering both connection and creativity. From medieval European roots to contemporary adaptations, the art of singing rounds has long been a joyful way to engage with music. In this class, we will sing 5-10 Hebrew/Jewish rounds of varying complexity, allowing participants to experience the beauty of layered melodies and harmonies. Come ready to sing, listen, and enjoy the interplay of voices in this engaging and uplifting experience! JEREMY GOLDING, SEMI-RETIRED ACADEMIC FAMILY PHYSICIAN, SINGER MICHELE ROBERTS, RETIRED MEDICAL WRITER, AND EDITOR		Chapel
SINGING HATIKVA AT AUSCHWITZ-THE WORLD'S CONFLICT WITH ISRAEL AND HOW WE GOT HERE Join us for an exploration of the history of the conflict from WWI to the present day. We will examine the events, the figures, and the perceptions that have shaped the conflict. STEVEN SCHIMMEL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JEWISH FEDERATION OF CENTRAL MA		Library
ISRAELI DANCING Join us for an energetic Israeli folk dance session! Learn traditional and newer circle, line and partner dances set to lively Israeli music while enjoying a fun, welcoming atmosphere. No prior experience needed-just bring your enthusiasm and get ready to move!" REENA SLOVIN, CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL		SOCIAL HALL- REAR



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SESSION GIMMEL	9:05 PM – 9:50 PM	ROOM
<p>“FROM VAMPIRES TO VALUES: A JEWISH LOOK AT BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER” <i>(Based on the original TV series from 1997-2003)</i></p> <p>Join Rabbi Valerie Cohen as she leads you through the monster-slaying, quip-filled world of Sunnydale through a Jewish lens. This session will uncover the surprisingly rich Jewish resonances in <i>Buffy</i>, from questions of chosen-ness, exile, and community to themes of power, sacrifice, and hope in dark times. We’ll also highlight moments when the show directly nods to Judaism, from Willow’s identity as a Jewish character to other scattered references. Through clips, conversation, and a bit of playful demon-slaying, we’ll see how <i>Buffy</i> weaves Jewish wisdom into its battles with both vampires and the challenges of growing up.</p> <p>RABBI VALERIE COHEN, TEMPLE EMANUEL SINAI JEWISH STUDIO PROJECT FELLOW</p>		ROOM 4
<p>CONTEMPORARY JEWISH MUSIC AND STORY, VIDEO AND SONG OF THE PAST 10 YEARS</p> <p>Jewish music has expanded geometrically over the last ten years! Working with many contemporary artists, Mitch Gordon, host and producer of Shirim, Jewish Music Radio (right here in Worcester), will present a self-produced program using conversation, insightful stories from popular Jewish musicians, interviews, video, and music. Take this journey and kvell along with Mitch as we dive into some of the newest Jewish music that's out there today...</p> <p>MITCH GORDON, EDUCATOR, MUSICAN, JEWISH RADIO HOST AND PRODUCER</p>		Chapel
<p>JEWISH COMEDY-A HEALTHY ANTIDOTE TO THE STATE OF THE WORLD TODAY</p> <p>The Kvetch ~ Yiddishisms ~ the Accent ~ Self Deprecation ~ Anti-Semitic Presumptions ~ Traditional Stereotypes ... these are some of the elements that make up Jewish Comedy. Join us as we romp our way through a smorgasbord of Jewish comedians that make us laugh, and also give us pause for thought.</p> <p>RABBI SURI KRIEGER, RABBI EMERITUS OF B’NAI OR-JEWISH RENEWAL OF GREATER BOSTON</p>		ROOM 1
<p>“SINGING TO G-D IN GOOD TIMES AND BAD”</p> <p>The Biblical Book of Psalms is a magnificent collection of 150 Hebrew poems, songs, and prayers authorized by King David. These lyrical works express a wide range of human experiences, from praise and thanksgiving to lament and sorrow. Join me as we take a deep dive into the Melodies of King David, the Ultimate Songwriter.</p> <p>RABBI MOSHE LIBEROW, ASSOCIATE RABBI-TORAH CENTER, WORCESTER, MA, AND DIRECTOR OF BOSTON RABBINICAL COURT</p>		Library
<p>“ISRAELI MUSIC POST OCT. 7TH”.</p> <p>We will explore the development of Israeli music, from establishment until today, and its reflection upon the spirit of the Israeli people. These past 2 years have brought with them an emotional overload - and we'll learn how the Jewish and Israeli spirit uses art and song to cope and create during these difficult times.</p> <p>DOLEV STAV, PAST COMMUNITY SHLIHA, CURRENT EDUCATIONAL OPERATIONS COORDINATOR, JEWISH AGENCY IN JERUSALEM, ISRAEL</p>		ROOM 3

**PLEASE JOIN US FOR DESSERTS AND CONVERSATION IN THE BI SOCIAL HALL AT 10:00 pm,
PLEASE REMEMBER TO DROP OFF EVALUATION SHEETS IN THE BOXES PROVIDED. THANKS!**

Torathon 2025



THANK YOU

תודה רבה

Torathon is funded by a grant from the
Jewish Federation of Central Massachusetts
THE **STRENGTH** OF A PEOPLE. THE **POWER** OF COMMUNITY.

Today Rabah to all the volunteers who helped with preparations before and during the evening!!

We thank Congregation Beth Israel, and especially Scott O'Toole for the use and care of the building for Torathon.

We greatly thank JFCM Executive Director Steven Schimmel for his deep dedication and commitment, Stephanie Lyon and Lisa Thurlow for their extreme competence, generosity of time and spirit, and many talents and kindnesses, and Edie Ryan and Mindy Hall for their ever-willing assistance when needed.

We truly are grateful for the rabbis and educators in our greater community who generously, and with deep knowledge, come to Torathon ready to teach and lead, giving of themselves and their time.

And a very special thank you to Bernie Rotman for his ever-present devotion, caring and expertise!