

Torathon 2022 Courses

KUGEL AND KREPLACH: KOSHER CULINARY CLASSICS, CONTEXTUALLY SPEAKING

Rabbi Rachel Gurevitz, Congregation B'nai Shalom, Westboro
Rabbi Suri Krieger, Spiritual leader of Chavurah Beth Chai, Westchester, N.Y.
Teacher at Sacred Heart University

Through texts, tales, traditions and trivia, we will take you on a journey into Jewish teachings about food like no other. From the spiritual and mystical to the bizarre and brilliant, we promise an eclectic menu.

IS IT “THE LAW” OR JUST A CUSTOM?”?

Rabbi Yaakov Blotner, Congregation Shaarai Torah West

When thinking about things Jews do or don't do, the question arises as to whether it's a practice bound by halacha (Jewish Law) or just a tradition or custom? What's the difference? Do some customs become Law and vice versa? How does that happen and what are its implications in today's world? Come and Learn!

AMERICAN JEWS, ZIONISM AND ISRAEL

Rabbi Michael Swartz, Beth Tikvah Synagogue, Westboro

There was a time when the vast majority of American Jews were united in our support of the State of Israel. Sadly, it seems, the topic of Israel divides our community more than unites us. This seems to be particularly true among Jewish young adults. We will hear from a few of them who have a range of feelings about Israel as we explore questions such as: why the subject of Israel become so divisive; what are the limits of acceptable criticism of Israel; how can we engage in civil discourse with each other around the subject of Israel?

THE JEWISH CALENDAR: SUN, MOON, EARTH....AND US

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

Rosh Chodesh, the first day of every month, happens exactly at the time of the new moon. Pesach always comes just a few days after the spring equinox. Yom Kippur never falls on the day before or the day after Shabbat: there are never two consecutive days when we are forbidden to prepare food. None of these ritual requirements are met if we go by the civil calendar used in our everyday lives. But the Jewish Calendar neatly manages all of our observances by adding a “leap-month” every few years, along with a few regular, clearly specified adjustments. We will show how our calendar, scarcely changed since Maimonides compiled its rules in the year of the world 4938, manages to stay attuned to the seemingly uncorrelated astronomical cycles of the sun, moon, and earth, while also being true to the requirements of our ancient heritage.

JEWISH THEMES IN SCIENCE FICTION

EJ Dotts, Beth Tikva Synagogue, Westboro

This class will focus on Jewish Themes in the original Star Trek series, specifically the episode "The Enemy Within" and if time permits, "The Apple".

ISRAELI DANCING

Reena and Saul Slovin, Congregation Beth Israel, Worcester

Learn traditional and some not so traditional Israeli dances. Dances from the days of the first Israeli pioneers consist mainly of circle and partner dances of Eastern Europe with Arab and Yeminite influences. Maybe we'll mix in some contemporary steps as well.

"LO BASHAMAYIM HE, IT IS NOT IN THE HEAVENS"...OR IS IT?

Rabbi Aviva Fellman, Congregation Beth Israel

Towards the end of the Torah, we read "Surely, this Instruction which I enjoin upon you this day is not too baffling for you, nor is it beyond your reach. *Lo Bashamayim He*, It is not in the heavens, that you should say, "Who among us can go up to the heavens and get it for us and impart it to us, that we may observe it?" An understanding of these verses is that Torah study is accessible to all, including for figuring out the resolutions to debates. AND YET, there are a number of places in the Talmud where a heavenly voice emerges from heaven to weigh in on the discussion. We will be looking at some of the passages (or all- time permitting) in the Talmud where a Bat Kol, this heavenly voice joins the debate.

STEPPING OUT OF COVID INTO RELATIONSHIP

Mitch Gordon, sacred drummer, musician, and worship leader

No, this is not a session about dating! It is a session about having conversations...about stepping into the world and interacting with each other and trying to find commonality and kindness in our dialogue - where "Every Conversation is a Relationship". How can we have a conversation when we absolutely disagree with the other person? How do we separate the person from the problem? Or what if the person is the problem? We will learn some techniques and insights into having a conversation without losing your cool.

DISCOVERING OUR OWN WORCESTER PLAYWRIGHT!

Marcia Tannenbaum, Attorney, Mediator, WISE Teacher

Come learn about our own Worcester playwright, world renowned S N Behrman whose memoirs and plays are lauded and historically significant. Who could resist a play that was produced on Broadway in 1958 to critical acclaim and loved by the audience which starts and ends in Worcester? What can we discover in *THE COLD WIND AND THE WARM* about ourselves and our city? We will look at our history in *THE WORCESTER ACCOUNT* and in a later memoir *PEOPLE IN A DIARY* much of which first appeared in *The New Yorker*.

JEWISH COMMUNITY THROUGH THE (ONLINE) LENS OF THE “SCREEN”

Rabbi Valerie Cohen, Temple Emanuel Sinai

Jews, more than ever before, are participating in Jewish activities and rituals in places other than communal buildings. This is not a phenomenon brought about by Covid; Covid only instantly propelled into the present the trend that had already begun. How can we better serve our online Jewish communities? How can we integrate those who attend online and those who attend in person so they all feel included and connected? Join in a discussion and brainstorming session as we acknowledge and respond to the reality of our Jewish community.

ISRAELI MUSIC: THE SONGS PEOPLE LOVE TO SING

Gitit Shoval, Cantorial Soloist and Music Director at Temple Emanuel Sinai.

Join Cantorial Soloist Gitit Shoval for singing and learning- enjoying some all-time favorite Israeli songs, and learning some new tunes too. Plus, you will learn about what's happening in the music scene in Israel today.

JUDAISM AND FOOD JUST GO TOGETHER!

Rabbi Eve Eichenholtz, Congregation Agudat Achim, Leominster

Join Rabbi Eichenholtz in the kitchen as we look at rugelach. Compare recipes from around the Jewish world and see what lessons we can learn using recipes as our source texts. Dough variations and filling choices can teach us a lot about who is making the cooking and why. Hands on cooking and of course eating included. Recipes will be Dairy/Vegetarian

THE THIN LINE BETWEEN ANTI SEMITISM AND ANTI ZIONISM

Tommy Ben Basat, Israeli Shaliah

Join our Shaliah, Tommy Ben Basat for a lively discussion! We will zero in on the differences between Anti Semitism and Anti Zionism and how these phrases confuse people and add to the problems. Your interpretation will be a valuable part of this course.

OPTING IN: THE BLESSING OF CONSENT

Rabbi Aviva Fellman, Congregation Beth Israel, Worcester

The Torah and our tradition offer guidance of how to embrace the everchanging world around us. Come learn how we embrace, practice, teach, and model autonomy, consent, equality, and individuality in the practice of an ancient faith that is grounded in gender roles and hierarchy.

GOD'S LOVE LANGUAGE

Rabbi Moshe M. Liberow, Associate Rabbi of The Torah Center, Director- Boston Bet Din (Rabbinical Court)

Dr. Gary Chapman made headlines with his bestseller the 5 Love Languages, exploring the art of interpersonal relationships. What about G-d and our relationship with Him? Is it defined by what we deem most appropriate? A magical understanding beyond our comprehension? A mixture of both? Join us as we investigate Talmudic and Kabbalistic texts in attempt to reveal G-d's languages of love strengthening our bond.

DOING JEWISH ALONE: WHAT'S IT LIKE TO LIVE WHERE THERE ARE VERY FEW JEWS?

Dale Rosenberg, Education Director, Congregation Beth Israel, Worcester

Jews live all over the world. In every country except for Israel we are in the minority. In the United States - depending on how you count – we are somewhere between 1 and 2% of the population. That small amount, though, is not evenly distributed throughout the country. In some areas – particularly urban and suburban centers in the Northeast – there are large Jewish communities with infrastructure and supports of various kinds. In some rural areas there may be only one or two Jewish families in a town. What is it like being Jewish in places where your neighbors know nothing about Judaism? Where there is no synagogue or other Jewish institution nearby? How do Jews try to maintain identity in such situations? How do clergy and educators and others try to serve those populations? Are these areas more or less subject to anti-Semitism?

SACRED DRUM AND CHANT

Mitch Gordon, sacred drummer, musician, and worship leader

The drum is the external manifestation of our heartbeat. When we drum together we connect at a primal level - heart to heart lev b'lev. Bring an open heart (chesed) and join Sacred Drummer Mitch Gordon for a program of drum, chant, meditation, and mindfulness rooted in Jewish text, themes, and kavanah (intention). Come to this session and get refreshed, energized, and centered through connection to each other and the pulse of the universe through our drums and chants (including chants by Shefa Gold, Taya Ma, YofiYah and others). Bring a drum if you have one, some drums will be provided. No drumming experience required (although certainly welcome).