

Tikkun Leil Shavuot Session Descriptions

Interfaith Relations

The Living Torah and its Relation to Christian Interpretation

Ed Gaskin

Tuesday, June 11, 9:00 pm - Benjamin Vestry

What is the relationship between Biblical interpretation and antisemitism? Join author, Ed Gaskin, for a survey of Christian thought about our sacred texts – are they intended to remain rigid and unchanging, akin to being "written in stone," or do they possess a dynamic quality, capable of evolving alongside changing societal contexts? What are the implications of these views for today's Jewish community?

Ed Gaskin has an M. Div. degree from Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary and writes on Jewish, Christian, Jewish/Christian and Jewish Black topics for papers such as the Boston Herald, and Times of Israel. Ed is a member of Temple Beth Elohim.

Spirituality

A Tale Leading to a Rabbinic Question

Joel Sussman

Tuesday, June 11, 7:50 pm - Benjamin Vestry

Joel will lead the group through a story (partially true; partially tall-tale) to ask for recommendations on how to handle a hypothetical personal dilemma.

Joel is a long-time member of Temple Emanuel and The Newton Centre Minyan. As a public performer (with Safam), he is well versed in engaging groups of all sizes in thoughtful and sometime entertaining dialogue.

Tuning into the Torah that You Need for Today: A Guided Meditation Through the Sefirot

Rabbi Jeff Foust

Tuesday, June 11, 11:15 pm – Benjamin Vestry

Torah is G!D's guidance to us for good living. Opening ourselves to that is a central part of Tikkun Leil Shavuot. One powerful way of tuning into that is to open ourselves personally to experiencing the sefirot (life energy centers) of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. This will be the focus of tonight's session. Beginners and advanced students are welcome.

Rabbi Jeff Foust is a longtime student and teacher of embodied Jewish spirituality and Kabbalah. He currently is a Jewish community chaplain, and also served many years as both a university chaplain and congregational rabbi.

Jewish Thought

God's Failures in the Torah and How They Could Be a Model for How We Can Be Successful Human Beings!

Irle Goldman

Tuesday, June 11, 9:00 pm - Gann Chapel

Handout

The Torah may be read as a description of God's many attempts to connect to human beings. Some of these are successful and many fail. What lessons can we learn from God's 'failures'? Irle will explore how especially the Divine stories of failure may be seen as important teachings for us. We will discuss three particular Divine attempts at connection:

- a) The creation of Adam and Eve in the image of Divine Beings
- b) The Revelation at Sinai as the attempt to create a compact with the whole Jewish People
- c) And finally, The God's most intimate relationship with Moses (the only person God speaks to Panim el Panim...Face to Face) and the description of Moshe's death.

We will explore how understanding these may help in guiding us towards better relationships... both with other people and with God.

Irle Goldman is a psychologist/psychotherapist in private practice who teaches his students about how they can use themselves to help others and themselves to heal...to become freer and clearer...to become their best selves and to ascend.

What does it mean to "love your near one as yourself"? Perspectives from German Jewish History.

Abigail Gillman

Tuesday, June 11, 10:25 pm – Benjamin Vestry

The three-word commandment in VaYikra 19:18, ve-ahavta le-re'akha kamokha, may be translated "love your near one as [you love] yourself," or "love your fellow human; he/she/they are like you." This enigmatic commandment, which Rabbi Akiva called a fundamental principle of Torah, has long puzzled Jewish thinkers. In 1935, Bertha Pappenheim and Martin Buber debated it in a series of letters; Pappenheim challenged Buber's (and Hermann Cohen's) interpretations with her own, feminist understanding.

Starting with this episode from German Jewish history, we will explore the tensions posed by the verse and look at how and why Jewish thinkers have wrestled with "Neighbor-Love" and developed their own understandings of it.

Abigail Gillman is Professor of Hebrew, German, and Comparative Literature, and a Core Faculty member of the Elie Wiesel Center for Jewish Studies, at Boston University.

Yeshayahu Leibowitz: Iconoclastic Thinker and Uncompromising Critic

David Rozenson

Tuesday, June 11, 10:25 pm – Gann Chapel

Yeshayahu Leibowitz (1903-1994) was an Israeli scientist, a professor of biochemistry, and an Orthodox Jew who is best known for his controversial writings about religion, Zionism, and the moral dilemmas facing post-'67 Israel. While his work has many admirers, it also made Leibowitz one of the most despised public intellectuals in his country. This session will introduce his central ideas and will invite attendees to evaluate them in light of Jewish thought and Israeli reality today.

David Rozenson is a lawyer and a participant in Summer Shul, Pirkei Avot study and other educational programs at the Temple.

What We Heard at Sinai

Howard Zilber

Wednesday, June 12, 12:10 am - Benjamin Vestry

There have been various accounts of what we heard at Sinai, in the Torah and elsewhere. They seem inconsistent with one another. What are we to make of this?

Howard Zilber was trained in philosophy. For many years he has written mainly plays and musicals. In recent years he has begun writing philosophy and Torah commentary.

Music

Singing at Sinai

Cantor Lorel Zar-Kessler

Tuesday, June 11, 9:50 pm - Benjamin Vestry

Join us for a song session of learning chants and rounds of joy and Torah, creating community with the sound of shared music.

Lorel Zar-Kessler served as the cantor of Congregation Beth El from 1990 through September 2021. She loves learning melodies with Minyan Ma'or and Temple Emanuel, and creating more opportunities for sharing the joyful sounds of our tradition with one another!

Text

Post October 7 Israeli Poetry in Conversation with Traditional Texts

Michael Bohnen

Tuesday, June 11, 7:50 pm - Reisman Hall

Handout

Michael Bohnen is working with Rachel Korazim and Heather Silverman on a bilingual book of powerful Israeli poems reflecting on the tragedy of October 7. Our session will discuss a translated selection of those poems which draw on Biblical or rabbinic texts.

Michael practiced corporate law for 35 years and now works for a private charitable foundation. He has served as Chair of CJP, JCRC, Gann Academy and SSDS.

Project Zug

Tuesday, June 11, 9:00 pm - Sonia & Frank Brezniak Patio

Project Zug is a Havruta study session where attendees study an assigned text in pairs. This session will be conducted around tables on the Brezniak Patio where the chag dinner will be served.

The Seven Jewish Prophetesses

Jenna Andelman

Tuesday, June 11, 9:50 pm - Gann Chapel

Recently, the seven prophetesses have come into the public eye due to a new tradition of including them as "Ushpizot" in our sukkot. But how did the rabbis decide who would make this exclusive list? We will examine the texts upon which each woman's prophetic status is based. Get ready for a wild ride!

Jenna Andelman has been a Jewish lay leader for several decades and has enjoyed a lifetime of rich personal Jewish practice.

Project Zug Recap

Rabbi Elie Lehmann

Tuesday, June 11, 9:50 pm - Reisman Hall

This session will recap the discussions during the prior Havruta session. Attendance at the 9:00 pm session is not a prerequisite. Cheesecake and dessert will also be available in Reisman Hall during this session.

Sefer Habakkuk

Arnie Zar-Kessler

Tuesday, June 11, 10:25 pm – Reisman Hall

Sefer Habakkuk is the eighth book of the twelve minor prophets. Almost nothing is known about Habakkuk, aside from what is stated within the book of the Bible bearing his name, or those inferences that may be drawn from that book.

We'll attempt something of a deep dive into the text to learn about this prophet, his message, and his teaching for us today. Will be using Hebrew text, as well as translation.

Rebellion or Situational Struggle: The Golden Calf Stories of Exodus and Kings and Bet Hillel - Bet Shammai Internecine Violence in the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds

Robbie Fein

Tuesday, June 11, 11:15 pm – Gann Chapel

Handout

We are all familiar with the story of the Golden Calf in the Book of Exodus. There is another Golden Calf story in the Book of Kings during a time of rebellion. Many of us are familiar with the Talmudic references to discussions between the students of Talmudic sages of Hillel and Shammai as the paragon of respectful dialogue and a model for pluralism. There is, however, one story told differently in the Jerusalem Talmud that not only flies in the face of this notion, but also leads to notions of violence committed by the followers of Shammai. And, the Talmuds also specifically refer to the Golden Calf story (which one?) in connection with these stories of violence. We'll try to understand these stories from both a literary and contextual perspective and try to draw lessons on how we engage with disagreement.

A lawyer by training, most of Robbie Fein's career has been spent on the development and financing of high technology businesses. He is also a co-founder and former board member of Gann Academy, a former board member of Gateways and is currently a board member of the Jewish Community Day School.

The Torah In Your Kishkes: Spiritual Texts on The Torah We Each Carry Within Us

Rabbi Elie Lehmann

Wednesday, June 12, 12:45 am - Gann Chapel

Torah is not just law imposed on us from above, but many Jewish texts explore how we actually know Torah from a deep place within ourselves. Let's explore how that works and how it might change our whole view of Judaism in our lives.

Rabbi Elie Lehmann is Director of Hadar Boston. Elie loves learning Torah with people of all backgrounds. He served as Campus Rabbi at Boston University Hillel and was the Inaugural Director of Kulanu's Global Teaching Fellows, with whom he taught and built curricula for Jewish communities in Kenya, Ghana, India and beyond.

Food

Pickling 101

Paul Greenberg

Tuesday, June 11, 7:50 pm - Classroom 24/25

Handout

Would you like to learn how to make dill pickles just like they did in the old country? In this class, we will discuss how a cucumber becomes a sour pickle, the ingredients needed to make pickles, and my family's centuries-old pickling recipe. Then we will do a live demonstration of the art of pickling, and we will finish with a nosh of pickled cucumbers and pickled watermelon.

Paul Greenberg is the keeper of the family pickling craft, passed down from generation to generation dating back to the 19th century (or possibly earlier).

Shavuot Day Sessions

Rabbi Samuel Chiel Main Sanctuary Session

Jewish Thought

Mussar for our Moment: Jewish Spiritual Teachings to Support Us in a Challenging Time

Rabbi Eric Gurvis

Wednesday, June 12, 11:40 am - Rabbi Samuel Chiel Main Sanctuary

We live in an extraordinarily challenging time. The Mussar tradition, which stretches back at least 1100 years, is a lesser known, but increasingly popular part of our rich Jewish Tradition. In this session, we will explore a few teachings from this part of our Jewish tradition which may help us find balance in this dark time.

Ordained at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Rabbi Eric Gurvis has served congregations in New York City; Jackson, MS; Teaneck, NJ; Newton, MA; and Ashland, MA. He is a Senior Rabbinic Fellow of the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. Eric facilitates Mussar groups across Massachusetts, including at Temple Emanuel. He is also a faculty member for Hebrew College's Open Circle Jewish Learning program.

Lift-Off: A Hagbah Clinic

Howard Breslau, Dan Nesson

Wednesday, June 12, 11:40 am Gann Chapel

Have you ever felt too intimidated to accept an honor for Hagbah or Gelilah? Overcome those fears in this session, which will demonstrate the techniques used to make lifting and tying the Torah quite easy.

Ladders: A Metaphor to Guide Us - An exploration of the plight of the Hostages through art

Alisa Kotler Berkowitz

Wednesday, June 12, 11:40 am - Benjamin Vestry

Wednesday, June 12, 1:20 pm - Benjamin Vestry

Alisa has always created unique and personalized spaces that capture important moments and life passages. Alisa credits her late mother, Mozelle, for nurturing this gift of seeing and composing life stories, as an immigrant mother new to this country, living among strangers while her husband traveled for work. Alisa and her mother forged a deep connection as they alone and together explored a new life and new world. It was here that Alisa the newborn and Mozelle the immigrant began connecting life and memories from afar and before, with new moments and experiences in the now.

Her abstract paintings are colorful, exuberant pieces that feel soothing and celebratory all at once. Her layering mimics life and growth, in that what we choose to cover up and reveal tells the world a story about where we've come from and who we are at that moment. Alisa's happiest moments are when she sits with others, hears their stories, and is entrusted with the gift of capturing and preserving their memories of home in her composition.

Joint Sessions After Lunch

Text

Pirke “Imahot” - How Our Mothers Transmitted Tradition

Roberta Gross-Torres

Wednesday, June 12, 12:35 pm – Benjamin Vestry

Pirke Avot, a portion of the oral law, begins saying: “Moses received Torah from G-d at Sinai. He transmitted it to Joshua, Joshua to the Elders, the Elders to the Prophets” and so on.

Rabbi Eve Posen wrote: Miriam received the tradition from G-d at Sinai. She transmitted it to Deborah, Deborah to her daughters. The chain of our tradition is passed from a mother to her children. Women, for centuries, were the links of tradition, passing on Jewish values and Jewish practices through home life.”

This session will urge you to think about transmitting that tradition we received at Sinai using teachings of Pirke Avot, and others, as a springboard.

Roberta Gross-Torres holds a BA in Religion from Boston University and an MJLS from Hebrew College. She has organized the weekly Shabbat afternoon study of Pirke Avot between Pesach and Shavout for about 10 years.

Three Psalms which discuss the Torah

Sid Kadish

Wednesday, June 12, 12:35 pm – Adelson Community Hall

There are only three psalms which mention Torah. These are Psalms 1, 19 and 119. We will read them together, and try to answer the question, “Why is Torah barely found in the Psalms?” There will be time for discussion.

Sid is a retired radiation oncologist with a special interest in Psalms. He has a course about Psalms at the Harvard Institute for Learning in Retirement. His membership at Temple Emanuel has nourished his desire for Jewish learning.

Jewish Approaches to the Theater: Ancient and Modern

Noam Andelman

Wednesday, June 12, 1:20 pm – Adelson Community Hall

In this session we'll look at what the rabbis of the Talmud thought about Jews' attending theater and what actual practice may have been at that time. We'll then turn to some more contemporary sources and see what conclusions we arrive at.

Noam Andelman is an 8th grader at JCDS and regular Minyan Ma'or participant and service leader. He is excited to share some of the results of his capstone 8th grade halacha project about theater with the TE community.