

**TEMPLE ISRAEL'S
JOYS OF JEWISH LEARNING PROGRAM**

TWO JEWS WALK INTO A BAR

**EXPLORING JEWISH HUMOR:
A YEAR OF LAUGHTER AND LEARNING**



2025/2026

To Our Temple Israel Community:

Who says not having a parking lot is a bad thing?
It's just our clever way of helping members get their steps in
- consider it your warm-up before services!

Welcome to another exciting year of fun and engaging adult
Jewish education at Temple Israel!

This year, we invite you to join us as we dive into our theme:

TWO JEWS WALK INTO A BAR
EXPLORING JEWISH HUMOR: A YEAR OF LAUGHTER AND LEARNING

Jewish humor is known for its warmth, intelligence, and resilience. It's a way for our community to laugh at itself, cope with challenges, and find connection through shared experiences. Together, we'll celebrate what it means to be part of a strong, vibrant community — honoring our past, embracing the present, and looking forward to all that's yet to come.

I encourage you to find at least one program in this year's diverse offerings and come learn with us.

I hope every member will join us at some point —

I guarantee you'll walk away having learned something new and having contributed to the strength of our congregational community.

We are truly blessed to have a community that supports Temple Israel's adult education program year after year. Thanks to these generous donors, we can offer our classes and programs at little or no cost to TI members and beyond. Thank you to our Joys of Jewish Learning Patrons, new and old, for your partnership.

May 5786 bring you joy in both the big moments and the small ones. May laughter find its way to your heart, and may the jokes keep you smiling even through challenging times. Here's to a wonderful year of learning, laughing, and being together!

Because no matter how tricky the parking is,
being part of this community is what truly makes it special.

Sharon Amster Brown

Director of Education and Congregational Engagement



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**PLEASE RSVP FOR ALL PROGRAMS
TO CHARMAINE
AT CLW@TILB.ORG**



Jonathan Friedmann

HERE'S AN OLD JOKE: THE ANCIENT ROOTS OF JEWISH HUMOR

with Cantor Jonathan Friedmann, PhD.

Saturday, October 11 at 8:45 am
Torah Study and Breakfast

Jewish humor is much older than the terms “Jewish” and “humor.” The Hebrew Bible is filled with situational comedy, classic one-liners, and plenty of satire. Talmudic discourse resembles a writers’ room, with rabbis one-upping each other in often humorous ways. Explore how the culture of Jewish comedy grew from these ancient sources.

Cantor Jonathan L. Friedmann, Ph.D., is admissions director and associate professor at the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism, cantor and community leader of Adat Chaverim Congregation for Humanistic Judaism, Los Angeles, vice president, academic dean, and director of programs at Ezzree Institute, president of the Western States Jewish History Association, director of the Jewish Museum of the American West, and co-host of Amusing Jews, a YouTube/podcast interview show celebrating Jewish contributors and contributions to American popular culture. He is the author or editor of over thirty books, most recently *Chai Noon: Jews and the Cinematic Wild West* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2025).

A TASTE OF YIDDISH HUMOR

Thursdays, October 23 and October 30 at 7:00 pm
Teacher: Joe Bennish

What’s a shlimazl and what’s a shlemiel and what’s the difference? If you know, that’s great. If you don’t, if you are Yiddish challenged, not a problem. Learn Yiddish expressions, jokes, aphorisms, proverbs, and curses. It says a lot that Yiddish is a language in which the word for joke is also the word for wisdom (khokhme, a word which comes from Hebrew). No class on Yiddish humor would be complete without mentioning Sholom Aleichem, universally acknowledged as the greatest Yiddish humorist, and his three most memorable characters: Tevye the dairyman, Motel the cantor’s son, and Menachem Mendel, the irrepressible shlemiel.



Movie Screening and Discussion:
DEFENDING YOUR LIFE

Tuesday, October 21
7:00 pm
 Facilitator: Eric Shatzkin

Daniel Miller (Albert Brooks) isn't having a good week. For starters, he died after he got hit by a bus. Then he discovers that in the afterlife he must defend his actions on Earth in order to ascend to a higher plane of existence. While awaiting judgment, he falls in love with Julia (Meryl Streep), whose near-perfect life on Earth seemingly makes her a shoo-in for ascension. Daniel's actions in his lifetime, however, might not be enough for him to move on.

ALBERT BROOKS MERYL STREEP

Defending
your Life



BEGINNING HEBREW

Tuesdays, October 21 - December 16 at 7:00 pm
 Teacher: Janet Liss

Have you ever wanted to learn the Alef Bet but thought that you just could not do it? It was too hard. You are not good at languages. You do not want to embarrass yourself. Well, now's the time to put all those false beliefs to bed. This 10-week Beginning Hebrew class is painless and fun and by the 10th week of study, you will be reading Hebrew! We guarantee it. Come join other adults who, just like you, want to read Hebrew too. This is not your father's or mother's Hebrew class!

Cost \$120

ART JOURNALING

In partnership with Temple Israel Sisterhood

Mondays at 10:00 am
October 27, November 17, December 15, January 26,
February 23, March 23, April 27, May 18
 Facilitator: Amy Rosenberg

Discover the joy of combining art and journaling in this fun and relaxed class. You will learn easy ways to fill the pages of your journal with color, collage, and other artistic expressions - even if you have never done art before.

We will encourage experimentation with paint, rubber stamps, and paper layering. We will practice mixed media techniques to create your own, one-of-a-kind art journal filled with pages that are uniquely you. Your journal will be a great place to connect creativity to Jewish traditions and holidays and help explore and express our connection to Jewish values.

No prior art experience is required - just bring your curiosity and a willingness to try something new in a supportive environment.



HEALING THE HEART WITH HUMOR

Sunday, November 2 at 2:00 pm

Teacher: Susan Matthieu

Numerous studies show that humor and laughter have a positive effect on aging and life satisfaction. Humor is a powerful force with psychological and physiological effects on the body. Humor and laughter can improve the immune system, heart functioning, and mental health among other benefits. Join us to discover how humor can be just the prescription you need.

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE MOVIES: JEWISH COMEDY FROM MEL BROOKS TO ANNIE HALL TO SEINFELD (AND BEYOND)

Wednesdays, November 5, 12, and 19 at 7:00 pm

Teacher: Ellen Fox

Join us for a joyful exploration of Jewish comedy in American film and television, from the slapstick genius of Mel Brooks to the neurotic wit of Annie Hall to the everyday absurdities of Seinfeld. In this three-session class, we'll watch classic clips that contain Jewish humor of all kinds. Come ready to laugh, giggle and reminisce as we discover what makes Jewish comedy a beloved part of our lives!





DELI CLASSICS COOKING SERIES: PICKLES AND STUFFED CABBAGE

In partnership with Temple Israel Sisterhood

Sunday, November 9 at 10:00 am

Teacher: Amy Lipeles

Don't you love the free pickles you get when you sit down at a deli? Learn how to make them as well as an updated version of your grandmother's stuffed cabbage. Let's cook together!

Cost: \$10



Monica Piper

AN EVENING WITH MONICA PIPER: "FARMISHT, FARKLEMT, AND FARBLUNGET!"

In partnership with Temple Israel Sisterhood

Saturday, November 8 at 7:00 pm

Emmy Award-winning comedy writer, Monica Piper explores her Jewish roots and present life in this hilarious and heartwarming blend of standup comedy and storytelling. "Audiences leave laughed out, a little teary-eyed, and happy to be Jewish. Even those who aren't," Ronda Spinak, artistic director The Braid, formerly Jewish Women's Theatre.

Monica Piper is an Emmy and Golden Globe Award-winning comedy writer, actor and comedian. She has written for sit-coms *Roseanne* and *Mad About You* and was the head writer of the #1 children's animated series *Rugrats*. She starred in her own Showtime Network special, "No, Monica, Just You" and was nominated by the American Comedy Awards as one of the top five female comedians in the country. Monica is proud to be an artist-in-residence with The Braid. Her critically acclaimed one-woman play, "Not That Jewish" ran to sell-out crowds in LA, before a smash hit run Off Broadway.



Pamela Schuller

PAMELA SCHULLER: THE COMEDIAN WHO TURNS HUMOR INTO CONNECTION

Lapid Scholar-in-Residence

Friday, November 14 - Sunday, November 16

Friday Night, "The Appetizer" Drasha, during Kol HaNeshama Shabbat Services at 7:00 pm

A taste of stories and Jewish values about inclusion and disability-before tomorrow's full comedy feast.

Saturday Night Comedy Show at 7:00 pm

Laugh-out-loud comedy meets true stories of disability, self-acceptance, and inclusion. It's a hilarious, heartfelt reminder that the things that make us different are exactly what make us shine.

Sunday Morning at 11:30 am

Talking About Disability & Resilience

A discussion-based session on how to talk about disability with kids, build resilience, and encourage them to ask for help. Leave with simple, concrete resources you can use right away. **This opportunity is for current Torah Center parents only.**

SUNDAY MORNING PARENT DISCUSSION WITH THE CANTOR

**Sunday, November 23
10:00 am**

Come join Cantor Cooper for coffee and conversation and enjoy this opportunity to connect with the clergy and meet other parents. We'll discuss current events, explore big Jewish questions, and have a little fun along the way.

This opportunity is for current Torah Center parents only

Pamela Schuller is what happens when you mix stand-up comedy with a master's degree in advocacy and just the right amount of neurological chaos. She's a professional stand-up comedian, storyteller, and internationally known disability and mental health advocate who doesn't just talk inclusion — she lives it, teaches it, and makes it hilariously unforgettable.

Once diagnosed with one of the most severe cases of Tourette Syndrome documented, Pamela transformed a life of tics, OCD, and a lot of curveballs into a powerhouse career inspiring audiences across the globe. Standing at 4 foot 6 (and a half), she commands every stage she steps on, converting her extraordinary experiences into laugh-filled lessons about authenticity, inclusion, and the courage to take up space exactly as you are.

Pamela speaks to audiences of all sizes — from Fortune 500 companies and national nonprofits to college campuses, educators, and student events — blending comedy, storytelling, and research-backed strategies to ignite conversations that actually lead to change. Her dynamic keynotes and workshops leave audiences laughing, learning, and thinking differently about disability, mental health, leadership, and the power of showing up as your full self. Pamela doesn't just tolerate what makes her different — she celebrates it and dares audiences to do the same.

A TASTE OF JUDAISM WITH RABBI FOX

**Wednesdays at 7:00 pm
December 3, 10 and 17**

This class is especially designed for unaffiliated Jews, intermarried couples, those seeking an initial orientation into an adult approach to the study of Judaism, and all those searching for an entry into Jewish life.

DRAWING LAUGHS: AN EVENING WITH NEW YORKER CARTOONIST ASHER PERLMAN

**Thursday, December 4 at 6:00 pm
via Zoom**

Come learn how to make cartoons with Asher Perlman (The New Yorker, “The Late Show with Stephen Colbert”), who NPR calls “one of today’s great New Yorker cartoonists.” In this information-packed workshop, Asher walks you through everything you need to know about crafting the perfect gag cartoon, from brainstorming ideas to perfecting the caption. Whether you want to become a professional cartoonist or you just want to stretch yourself creatively and have some fun, this class is for you. **Zoom Link:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88563886263>



Asher Perlman is a comedian, writer, and cartoonist, based in Brooklyn. He has won a WGA Award and a Peabody Award, and has been nominated six times for an Emmy Award. Currently he is a writer for *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* and a cartoonist for *The New Yorker*.

IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT PICKLE: FIELD TRIP TO BENJIE'S NEW YORK DELI IN SANTA ANA

**Sunday, December 7 at 5:00 pm,
meeting place in Long Beach TBD**

It's a dilly – or should we say deli – of a field trip! Are you a corned beef connoisseur? A matzo ball maven? A pastrami professor? A chopped liver champion? Join us as we visit some nearby delis to check out their food, ambiance, and of course, their pickles! You have two dates and two delis to choose from – come to one or both! Benjie's Deli in Santa Ana was founded in 1967 by Stan Weinstein and is still run by his son and daughter-in-law. New York Deli in Torrance, which we will visit in March, was opened in 1985 to bring a taste of New York to the South Bay. *We'll be carpooling from Long Beach. Please bring cash or a credit card to cover your meal.*



SUNDAY MORNING PARENT DISCUSSION WITH THE RABBI

**Sunday, December 7
10:00 am**

Come join Rabbi Fox for coffee and conversation and enjoy this opportunity to connect with the clergy and meet other parents. We'll discuss current events, explore big Jewish questions, and have a little fun along the way.

**This opportunity is for current
Torah Center parents only**

Movie Screening and Discussion: CROSSING DELANCEY

Thursday, December 11 at 7:00 pm
Facilitator: Linda Keiles

Thirty-something Isabelle "Izzy" Grossman (Amy Irving) spends her time going from her tiny, solitary West Side apartment to that of her grandmother (Reizl Bozyk) on the Lower East Side. In between, Izzy builds a glowing reputation at the swank bookstore where she works. While her grandmother plots to find her a romantic match, Izzy is courted by a married, worldly author, Anton (Jeroen Krabbé), yet can't seem to shake the down-to-earth appeal of Sam (Peter Riegert), a pickle vendor.



BYOJ (BRING YOUR OWN JOKES): AN EVENING OF HOMEGROWN COMEDY

In partnership with Temple Israel's Membership Committee

Saturday, December 13 at 7:00 pm

One night only – the Catskills come to Long Beach! There are many hilariously talented members of the Temple Israel Family. Dust off those jokes that have been part of your family's lore and get ready to share at a special "open mic" night at Temple Israel. Bring your best setups and punchlines or observational humor. We're giggling already!

Please note that this will be an adult comedy night. We also ask that you submit your jokes or comedy set ahead of time to Sharon Amster Brown at sab@tilb.org.





INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM

Wednesdays, January 7 - May 20 at 6:00 pm

Teachers: Rabbi Fox and Ellen Fox

We invite you to join with learners of all backgrounds in our Introduction to Judaism course. The course will cover a broad cross-section of topics related to Judaism in a discussion-based format with experts in the field. This class is ideal for anyone looking to explore Judaism for the very first time, seeking conversion, or for folks who would like to fill in pockets of knowledge in a tradition that takes a lifetime to learn. Everyone is welcome. We look forward to your joining us.

Cost: \$200



DELI CLASSICS COOKING SERIES: GET YOUR HOMEMADE BAGELS!

Sunday, January 11 at 1:00 pm

Teacher: Paul Levitt

A customer walks into the local bagel shop and says: “I would like to buy a bagel with cream cheese” to which the waiter calmly replies, “I am sorry...we only accept cash!” Your attempts at making bagels at home can often have humorous if not discouraging outcomes so join others as you are guided step-by-step through the bagel making process to see how easy and fun it can be. Come learn about bagel history and symbolism Participants will be making a bagel and be able to taste it when baked with some selected shmears.

So what kind of bagel can fly? A plain bagel.

Enrollment limited to 12.

Cost: \$15



Bruce Thompson

FUNNY YOU SHOULD ASK: A WEEKEND OF JEWISH HUMOR AND HERITAGE WITH BRUCE THOMPSON

Friday, January 23 - Sunday, January 25

Friday, January 23, during Shabbat Services at 7:00 pm **JEWISH JOKES AND THEORIES OF JEWISH COMEDY**

Why do the words Jewish comedy seem to roll off the tongue, like French cuisine or Scottish terrier? Why have there been so many great Jewish comedians during the past century, and so many great Jewish jokes? And by the way, how do Jewish jokes differ from other peoples' jokes? Which aspects of Jewish culture and experience have Jewish comedians drawn upon in creating their distinctive brands of comedy? Is there a single shared Jewish comic sensibility or have there been several?

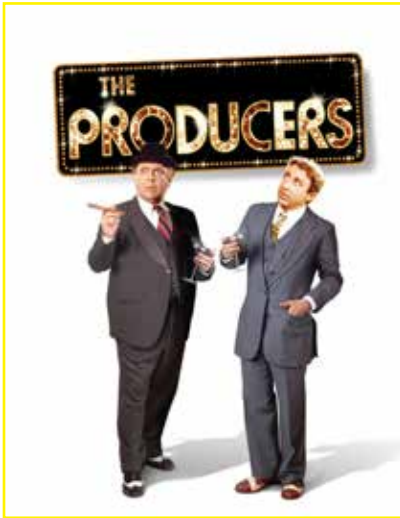
Saturday, January 24 at 7:00 pm (location TBA) **HAPPY CENTENARY YEAR, MEL BROOKS!**

Born in 1926, Mel Brooks will celebrate his 100th birthday on June 28. He is one of the select group of EGOT winners, i.e., a recipient of the Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, and Tony awards. Perhaps the best way to understand his extraordinary career is to examine it biographically, in successive phases: Brooklyn Jewish childhood, pool-side tumbler at a Borscht Belt hotel; service in WWII; writing for Sid Caesar's pathbreaking variety show during the formative period of American television; breaking through (along with his great friend Carl Reiner) with his classic comedy album, *The 2000 Year Old Man*; creating a series of classic comic films over four decades, parodying one American film genre after another; and finally migrating to Broadway with the musical version of his hit 1967 film *The Producers*. How did he, as much or even more than any other comedian, mine the traditions of Jewish comedy to reach the pinnacle of American popular entertainment?

Sunday, January 25 at 10:00 am **AMERICAN JEWISH CARTOONISTS**

Again, there have been so many great ones: William Steig, Saul Steinberg, David Sipress, Mort Gerberg, Jules Feiffer, Bob Mankoff, Roz Chast. Like any good joke, a funny cartoon detonates laughter by taking a familiar topic and treating it from an unexpected perspective, provoking simultaneous feelings of recognition and surprise. How have Jewish cartoonists succeeded in creating so many brilliant cartoons, dominating the field for more than a century? And what specific aspects of American Jewish culture have they drawn in creating their distinctive cartoon universes?





Movie Screening and Discussion:
THE PRODUCERS

Thursday, January 29 at 7:00 pm
 Facilitator: Wayne Slavitt

Down and out producer Max Bialystock (Zero Mostel), who was once the toast of Broadway, trades sexual favors with old ladies for cash contributions. Max's new accountant Leo Bloom (Gene Wilder), offhandedly muses that if Max found investors for a new production that turned into a flop, he could legally keep all the extra money. The duo begins to put together the worst play possible, titled "Springtime for Hitler," with a terrible director and a hippie-freak star.



**BREAKING THE LAUGH CEILING:
 JEWISH WOMEN WHO CHANGED COMEDY
 — FROM TORAH TO TODAY**

In partnership with Temple Israel Sisterhood

Teacher : Lena Shupper

Thursday, February 5
6:00 pm - Wine, Cheese, and Chocolate
7:00 pm - Presentation

"She is clothed in strength and dignity, and she laughs at the days to come." From Sarah the Matriarch's ancient laughter to Sarah Silverman's fearless punchlines, Jewish women have used sharp self-deprecation, biting satire, clever wordplay, and warm storytelling to challenge norms, break barriers, and bring people together. In this lively class, we'll spotlight trailblazers from Torah heroines to the last century's comedy icons such as Fanny Brice, Gilda Radner, Joan Rivers, and Ilana Glazer — celebrating the wit, timing, and courage that have made Jewish women a driving force in comedy for generations.



PURIM MASK MAKING

In partnership with Temple Israel Sisterhood

Thursdays, February 19 and 26 at 7:00 pm

Teacher: Cheryl Avirom

Can't find the perfect mask for Purim, cosplay, or a masquerade? Learn to make your own! We will be using the technique of papier maché, which dates back thousands of years and is still one of the most used mask making methods. Week One will be building our masks, with a week to let them dry. Week Two will be the fun of painting and decorating our very own creation. And best of all, you can wear yours for Purim!

Ages 16 and up.

Cost: \$25

JEWISH COMEDY AND MUSIC

**Friday, February 20 at 4:30 pm,
before Short & Sweet Shabbat**

Teacher: Cantor Cooper

We, the Jewish people, have long turned to humor as a source of strength and comfort throughout a history marked by tragedy and exile. Humor is woven into all aspects of our culture, including music. In this program, we'll explore how Jewish humor and music intersect from the vaudeville stage to modern times, highlighting artists from Fanny Brice to Adam Sandler.



DELI CLASSICS COOKING SERIES: BORSCHT, ANYONE?

In partnership with Temple Israel Sisterhood

Friday, February 27 at 5:30 pm

Teacher: Eve Lunt

Borscht, a simple beet soup, has deep roots in Jewish cooking. Not only can it be eaten hot in the winter or chilled in the summer, this vibrant pink soup is such a big part of Jewish Cuisine that it gave its name to the Borscht Belt, the upstate NY area that housed Jewish vacation hotels and camps in the 1950s. Join Eve Lunt, as she teaches you how to make a simple homemade vegetarian version of borscht. **Cost: \$10**



IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT PICKLE: FIELD TRIP TO NEW YORK DELI IN TORRANCE

**Saturday, March 7 at 12:00 pm,
meeting place in Long Beach TBD**

It's a dilly – or should we say deli – of a field trip! Are you a corned beef connoisseur? A matzo ball maven? A pastrami professor? A chopped liver champion? Join us, as we visit some nearby delis to check out their food, ambiance, and of course, their pickles! You have two dates and two delis to choose from – come to one or both! Benjie's Deli in Santa Ana, which we will visit in December, was founded in 1967 by Stan Weinstein and is still run by his son and daughter-in-law. New York Deli in Torrance was opened in 1985 to bring a taste of New York to the South Bay. We'll be carpooling from Long Beach. Please bring cash or a credit card to cover your meal.

Movie Screening and Discussion: **700 SUNDAYS**

**Thursday, March 12
7:00 pm
Facilitator: Steve Gordon**

Billy Crystal tells the stories of his youth, growing up in the jazz world of Manhattan, his teenage years, and finally adulthood. The Tony Award-winning show is a funny and poignant exploration of family and fate, loving and loss.

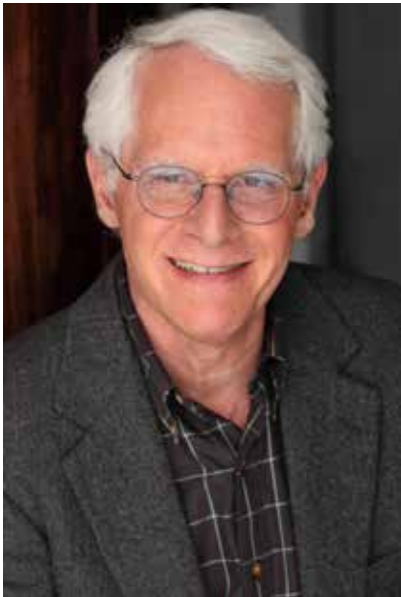
PUNCHLINES & PEOPLEHOOD: JEWISH COMEDIANS WHO SHAPED STAND-UP

Sundays, March 8, 15, and 22 at 9:45 am
Teacher: Rabbi Fox

Why are so many of the world's greatest comedians Jewish? From the Borscht Belt to Brooklyn to the comedy clubs of LA, from Milton Berle to Sarah Silverman, Jewish comics have been holding up a mirror to society—and making us laugh at what we see. At its best, comedy serves as modern social theory—explaining why the world feels like such a mess and why we humans act in such beautifully ridiculous ways. And in times like these, when everything feels upside down, we need that perspective more than ever.

Join Rabbi Fox, as he explores his favorite Jewish stand-up comedians and reveals why comedy isn't just entertainment—it's essential to how we make sense of our world.





Rabbi Bob Alper

A WEEKEND OF LAUGHTER & INSIGHT WITH RABBI BOB ALPER

Pilger Scholar-in-Residence

Friday, March 27 - Sunday, March 29

JJL Patrons recognition event on Saturday, March 28 at 6:00 pm, before the evening's program

Join us for an unforgettable weekend as Rabbi Bob Alper brings his one-of-a-kind blend of humor, heart, and humanity to Temple Israel. Multiple performances throughout the weekend including a Friday night Shabbat sermon, a night of pure, hilarious stand-up comedy on Saturday evening, and a "Spirituality of Laughter" program on Sunday morning.

You'll laugh. You'll reflect. You'll leave uplifted. Don't miss this rare and remarkable weekend!

Friday Night Drash, during Shabbat Services at 7:00 pm

***Saturday Night Stand Up Comedy Show,
with opening act by comedian Rachel Bennish at 7:00 pm***

Sunday Morning: Spirituality of Laughter at 10:00 am

A nationally renowned comedian and ordained rabbi, Bob Alper has performed alongside comedy legends such as Lewis Black and Judy Gold. Alper appeared on Comedy Central, *Good Morning America* and has entertained audiences across the globe — all while keeping it smart, clean, and delightfully inclusive.



Rachel Bennish is a Long Beach native (Wilson High alum) and is now a comedian, storyteller, and actor in Los Angeles. In 2022, her self-produced comedy pilot *Rachel Rama* — which she co-wrote and starred in, premiered at the Dances With Films Festival in Hollywood. You can catch her doing stand-up, storytelling and improv, or all three simultaneously around LA.



AN EXPLORATION OF ART & POETRY DURING THE HOLOCAUST

Thursday, April 16 at 7:00 pm

Facilitators: Linda Keiles and Eve Lunt

Jewish artists and poets have used creative expression to process the trauma of the Holocaust. In this session, we will explore some of these powerful works and draw inspiration from them to create our own literary or visual pieces, expressing our emotions and reflections on the Shoah.



Daryl Messinger

ISRAEL, REFORM JUDAISM, AND YOU

Daryl Messinger, Chair of Association of Reform Zionists of America

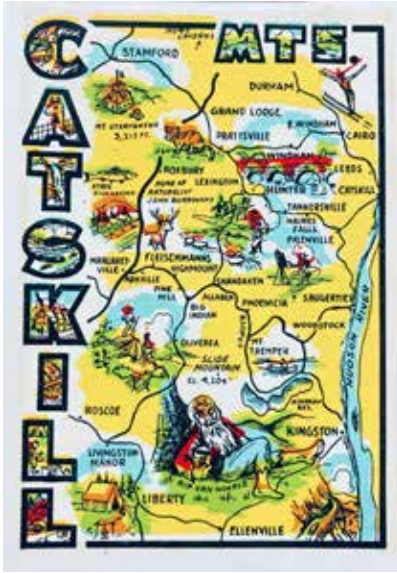


**Tuesday, April 21 at 7:00 pm
via Zoom**

As we approach the 78th anniversary of Israel's independence, Daryl Messinger, chair of the Association of Reform Zionists of America (ARZA) will discuss why, now more than ever, she believes the Reform Movement and each of us need to be champions for and defenders of the values inscribed in the Israeli Declaration of Independence -- democracy, pluralism and egalitarian ideals.

Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84743238393>

Before becoming chair of ARZA, Daryl held several leadership roles within the Reform Movement, including as Chair of the URJ and Chair of the Reform Pension Board – the first woman to serve in each of those roles. In addition, she serves on the boards of the Jewish Agency For Israel, Hebrew Union College, Israel Policy Forum, and Leading Edge. She and her husband, Jim Heeger, reside in Palo Alto, California.

APRIL

"SO A JEWISH FARMER WALKS INTO A BAR..." EXPLORING THE AGRICULTURAL ROOTS OF THE BORSCHT BELT

A presentation by Borscht Belt Museum's Peter Chester, founding board member of the museum, historian, and former Catskills hotel waiter

**Tuesday, April 28 at 6:00 pm
via Zoom**

The Catskills resort era is well known for launching the careers of the 20th century's most celebrated and influential comedians, from Jerry Lewis, Danny Kay, and Mel Brooks to Joan Rivers, Jerry Seinfeld, and Robert Klein. But less well known is the Borscht Belt's origins as a utopian agrarian experiment that drew thousands of Eastern European Jews from the cramped tenements of the Lower East Side in the 19th century. Join historian Peter Chester as he takes you through the history of the Borscht Belt and its agrarian roots.

Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88042841045>



BEGINNING HEBREW

Tuesdays at 7:00 pm

April 28 - June 30

Teacher: Janet Liss

Have you ever wanted to learn the Alef Bet but thought that you just could not do it? It was too hard. You are not good at languages. You do not want to embarrass yourself. Well, now's the time to put all those false beliefs to bed. This 10-week Beginning Hebrew class is painless and fun and by the 10th week of study, you will be reading Hebrew! We guarantee it. Come join other adults who, just like you, want to read Hebrew too. This is not your father's or mother's Hebrew class!

Cost: \$120



FRANK MEEINK: A FORMER SKINHEAD SPEAKS OUT AGAINST HATE

**Friday, May 8 at approximately 8:15 pm,
after Kol HaNeshama Services**

Frank Meeink is a renowned speaker, author, and activist, widely recognized for his efforts in combating racial hatred and extremism. Meeink is the author of *Autobiography of a Recovering Skinhead*, and his story has been featured in numerous documentaries and news outlets, including Steven Spielberg's *Why We Hate*, and on major networks such as CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, MTV, VH1, BET, and NPR, highlighting his expertise and experiences in the field of hate group dynamics and reform.

In addition to his literary contributions, Meeink has been an active voice in community outreach and education. He has spoken widely about his experiences, and co-founded "Life After Hate," an organization dedicated to helping individuals leave extremist groups. His journey took a profound turn when he discovered his Jewish heritage, leading to his transformation into Judaism and reinforcing his commitment to promote love over hate.

Recognized for his impactful work, Meeink received the Civil Rights Hero of the Year award from the Anti-Defamation League in 2016. His testimony before the United States Congress on the infiltration of white supremacy in police departments further underscores his commitment to societal change and his role as a leading figure in the fight against racism and extremism.

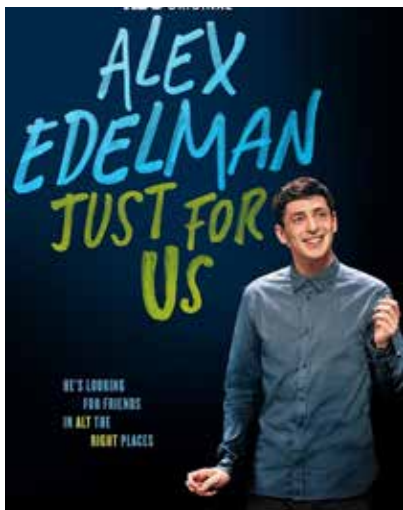
TIKKUN LEIL SHAVUOT

Thursday, May 21 at 8:00 pm



The moment of receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai was a moment so powerful that its echo reverberated down the generations to the present day. To ritualize this moment the 16th century Kabbalists of Safed created an evening of all-night study, which concluded with a service at the break of dawn.

Join us for our version of Tikkun Leil Shavuot, as we embrace this tradition of late-night study, celebration, and wonder. This year's Shavuot learning will focus on a conversation about The Ten Commandments. Together with experts on each of the topics, we will discuss the Commandments' relevance in our modern lives and how they guide us to be the best versions of ourselves. Yummy cheesecake included!



Movie Screening and Discussion:
ALEX EDELMAN: JUST FOR US

Thursday, June 11 at 7:00 pm
in Sharon Amster Brown's backyard
 Facilitator: David Jacobson

In the wake of a string of anti-Semitic online threats, comedian Alex Edelman heads to Queens, where he covertly attends a meeting of white nationalists and comes face-to-face with the people behind the keyboards in this HBO comedy special.

Bring your lawn chairs or blankets for a fun evening of laughter and conversation.

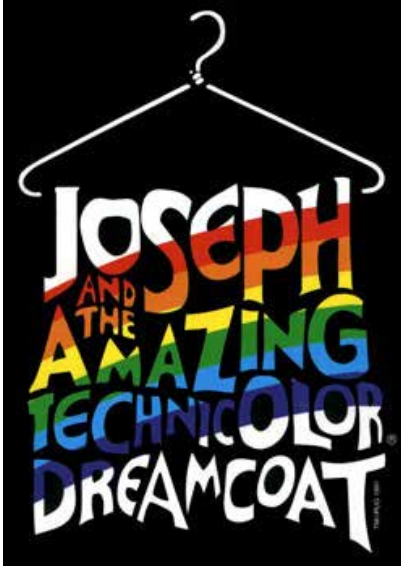


DELI CLASSICS COOKING SERIES:
FOUR GUYS, ONE KUGEL:
A JEWISH KITCHEN COMEDY

Friday, June 12 at 5:30 pm
 Teachers: Ron Artstein, Seth Hillbrand, Seth Linden,
 and Justin Perlman

Join four food enthusiasts, as they unlock the secrets of the perfect sweet noodle kugel, blending bubbie-approved techniques with modern twists and plenty of good-natured kitchen banter. From achieving the ideal creamy-to-crispy ratio to settling the great jam versus sour cream or both debate, this hands-on class serves up traditional recipes with generous helpings of humor and the kind of culinary camaraderie that makes every dish taste better. Come discover why sweet noodle kugel is the ultimate Jewish comfort food and leave ready to become the designated kugel-maker at every family simcha!

Cost: \$10



OUTING TO MUSICAL THEATER WEST'S PRODUCTION OF "JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT"

Sunday, July 12 matinee

Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's multi award-winning show *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* has been performed hundreds of thousands of times including multiple runs in the West End and on Broadway and international tours in over 80 countries worldwide. It has become one of the world's most beloved family musicals. Featuring much loved pop and musical theater classics, including Any Dream Will Do, Close Every Door, There's One Angel in Heaven, and Go, Go, Go Joseph, this show will leave you with a song in your heart and a smile on your face.

Join us for an afternoon matinee performance by Musical Theater West at the Carpenter Center at Cal State Long Beach. We can't wait to enjoy this classic, fun show together!

More details TBA





TORAH STUDY

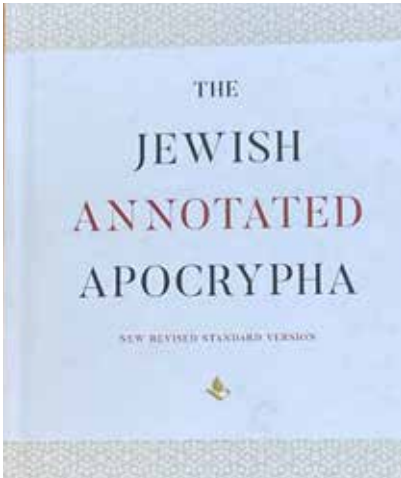
Saturdays at 8:45 am

In person and via Zoom

Facilitator: Rabbi Scott Fox

Each time we study Torah, we find something new in its verses and in ourselves. Join Rabbi Fox in our engaging Torah study. Each week, an enthusiastic group examines the parashat hashavuah (weekly Torah portion) and discusses its meaning and relevance using traditional commentaries, personal reflection, and lively debate. This Torah study is for everyone - no previous background or knowledge of Hebrew is required! Come one time - or every week! Join us as we discover and re-discover the timeless teachings in our Torah and see what the “Torah study buzz” is all about!

Zoom Link: <https://zoom.us/j/163280737>



TANAKH STUDY GROUP

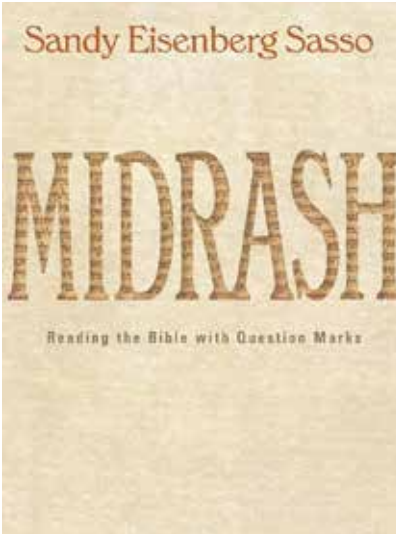
Thursdays at 10:15 am

In person and via Zoom

Facilitator: Martine Korach

Have you ever wondered about the biblical-era writings that didn't “make the cut” into Biblical Canon? Well, wonder no more! The Thursday Tanakh group will be diving in and studying these fascinating materials, known as the Apocrypha, that were not included in the Tanakh.

Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86029516690>



MIDRASH STUDY GROUP

Mondays at 9:45–10:45 am
via Zoom

Facilitators: Jo Ann Schneider Farris and Dan Farris

The Torah has gaps. The role of The Midrash is to fill in those gaps with imaginative explanations. Many of the interpretations are helpful and entertaining! Utilizing the book *Midrash: Reading the Bible with Question Marks*, this group discusses what the Midrash adds to learning Torah. Come join us. Fun and learning guaranteed!

Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82285979629>



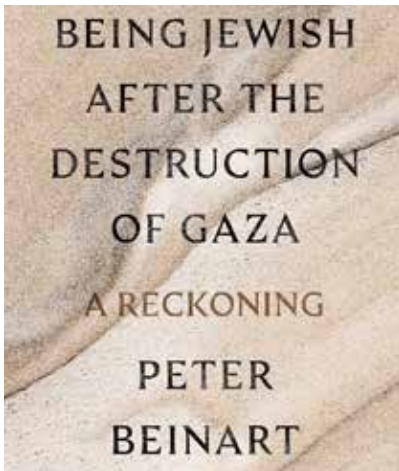
WOMEN'S BOOK CLUB

Wednesdays at 7:00 pm (via Zoom)

We have selected an exciting array of books for the 2025-2026 season. Read with us for a taste of many forms of Jewish literature, whether you can attend one or all of our meetings. Temple Israel women and their guests are encouraged to join our spirited discussions, led by member facilitators.

For more information, contact Donna Mitnick at (714) 287-4069 or donna.mitnick@gmail.com.

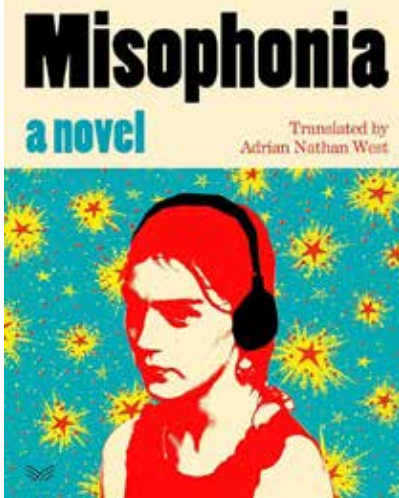
Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87285748108>

***Being Jewish After the Destruction of Gaza: A Reckoning***

by Peter Beinart

Wednesday, September 10

In Peter Beinart's view, one story dominates Jewish communal life: that of persecution and victimhood. It is a story that erases much of the nuance of Jewish religious tradition and warps our understanding of Israel and Palestine. According to Beinart, after Gaza, where Jewish texts, history, and language have been deployed to justify mass slaughter and starvation. Jews must tell a new story. After this war, whose horror will echo for generations, they must do nothing less than offer a new answer to the question: What does it mean to be a Jew?

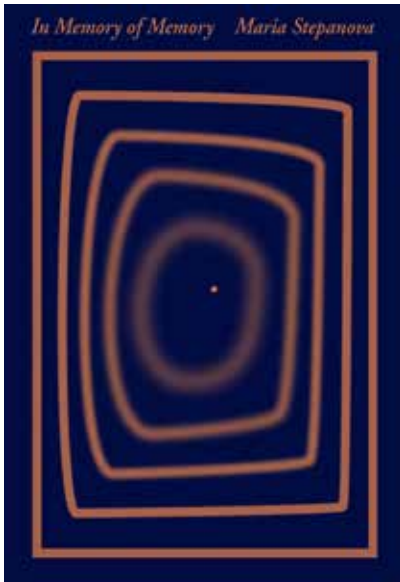
***Misophonia: A Novel***

by Dana Vowinckel

Wednesday, November 12

It's another scorching summer in Chicago and fifteen-year-old Margarita is spending her vacation as usual under the not-so-watchful eyes of her aging maternal grandparents. All told, the plucky teen would much rather be at home in Germany exploring Berlin with her best friend Anna or with Avi, her doting Israeli father, a cantor at their local synagogue with whom she has shared a special bond ever since her mother Marsha abandoned the family. Instead, she's stuck halfway around the world, homesick and tortured by the sound of her grandparents' chewing.

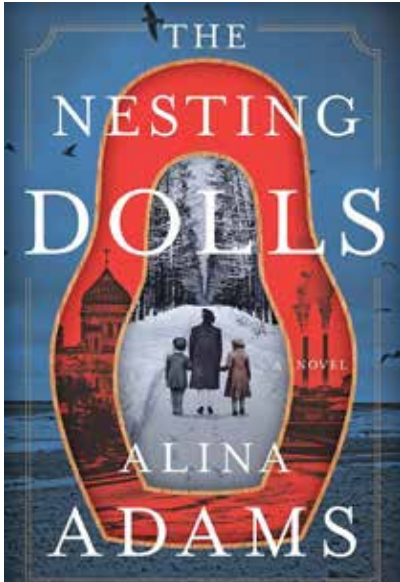
But when arrangements are made behind her back for her to meet Marsha in Israel before returning to Germany, Margarita is blindsided. She wants no part of this overdue reconciliation with a mother she hardly knows. When her mother fails to show, however, things go awry. Meanwhile, in Germany, Avi tries to fill the hole left by Margarita's absence with a trip of his own, embarking on a personal journey, both hope-inducing and despairing. Expertly straddling the two narratives of daughter and father, *Misophonia* is a graceful exploration of imperfect family relationships and larger cultural displacement.

***In Memory of Memory***

by Maria Stepanova

Wednesday, January 14

With the death of her aunt, the narrator is left to sift through an apartment full of faded photographs, old postcards, letters, diaries, and heaps of souvenirs: a withered repository of a century of life in Russia. Carefully reassembled with calm, steady hands, these shards tell the story of how a seemingly ordinary Jewish family somehow managed to survive the myriad persecutions and repressions of the last century. In dialogue with writers such as Roland Barthes, W. G. Sebald, Susan Sontag, and Osip Mandelstam, *In Memory of Memory* is imbued with rare intellectual curiosity and a wonderfully soft-spoken, poetic voice. Dipping into various forms [essay, fiction, memoir, travelogue, and historical documents), Stepanova assembles a vast panorama of ideas and personalities and offers an entirely new and bold exploration of cultural and personal memory.

***The Nesting Dolls: A Novel***

by Alina Adams

Wednesday, March 11

Odessa, 1931. Marrying the handsome and wealthy Edward Gordon, Daria - born Dvora Kaganovitch - has fulfilled her mother's dreams. But a woman's plans are no match for the crushing power of Stalin's repressive Soviet state. To survive, Daria is forced to rely on the kindness of a man who takes pride in his own coarseness.

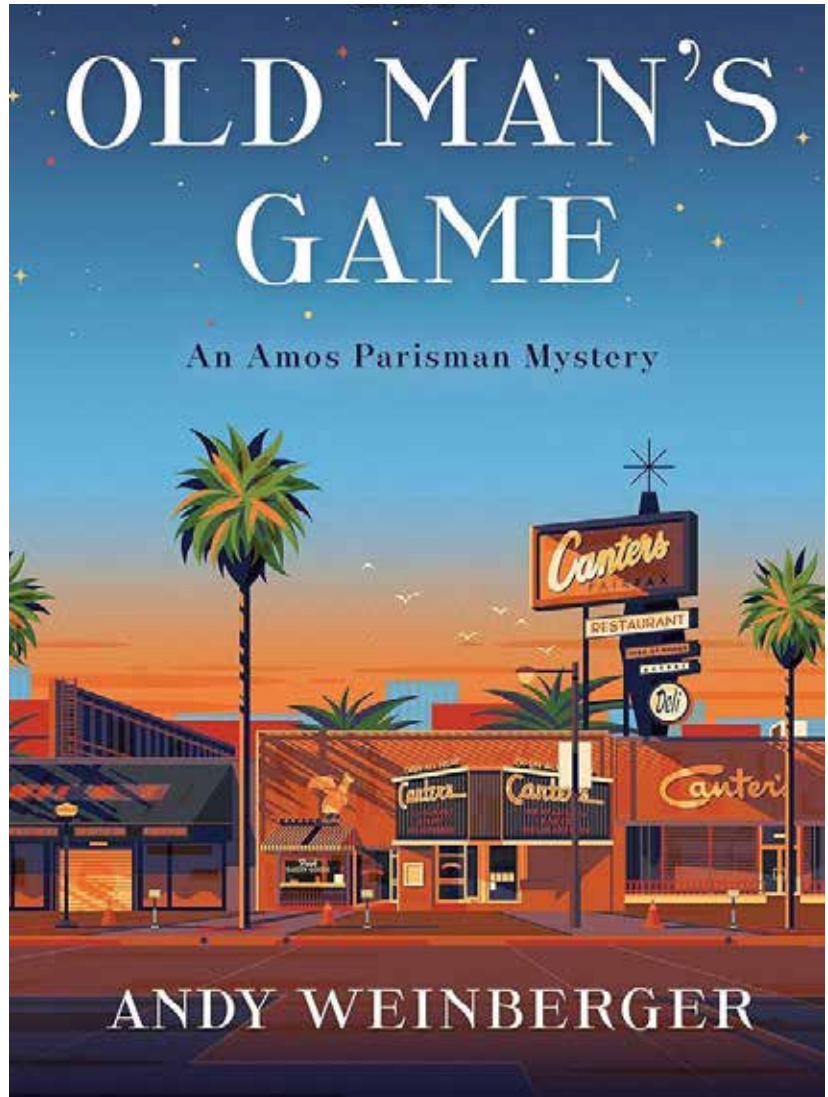
Odessa, 1970. Brilliant young Natasha Crystal is determined to study mathematics. Unfortunately, the Soviets do not allow Jewish students, even those as brilliant as Natasha, to attend an institute as prestigious as Odessa University. With her hopes for the future dashed, Natasha must find a new purpose that leads her into the path of a dangerous young man.

Brighton Beach, 2019. Zoe Venakovsky, known to her family as Zoya, has worked hard to leave the suffocating streets and small minds of Brighton Beach behind her only to find that what she's tried to outrun might just hold her true happiness.

Moving from a Siberian gulag to the underground world of Soviet refuseniks to oceanside Brooklyn, *The Nesting Dolls* is a heartbreaking yet ultimately redemptive story of circumstance, choice, and consequence and three dynamic unforgettable women, all who will face hardships that force them to compromise their dreams as they fight to fulfill their destinies.

***An Old Man's Game: An
Amos Parisman Mystery***
by Andy Weinberger
Wednesday, May 13

When a controversial celebrity rabbi drops dead over his matzoh ball soup at the famed Canter's Deli in Los Angeles, retired private eye Amos Parisman—a sixtyish, no-nonsense Jewish detective who lives with his addled wife in Park La Brea—is hired by the temple's board to make sure everything is kosher. As he looks into what seems to be a simple, tragic accident, the ante is raised when more people start to disappear or die. Amos uncovers a world of treachery and hurt that shakes the large L.A. Jewish community to its core.



BECOME A PATRON OF OUR JOYS OF JEWISH LEARNING PROGRAM

Temple Israel's Joys of Jewish Learning Program is self-sustaining, seeking to bring top quality teachers, speakers, and programs to our community. We therefore invite you to please consider becoming a Joys of Jewish Learning Patron of our ongoing tradition. With your generous support, we will be able to continue to offer our many unique programs and grow our adult education program for many years to come.

After reading through this Joys of Jewish Learning catalog, we hope you will see the value in supporting adult education at Temple Israel. Gifts and sponsorships for any particular event are also gladly accepted, as are contributions to our various adult education special funds.

For more information, please contact our Director of Education and Congregational Engagement, Sharon Amster Brown.

With special thanks to our Joys of Jewish Learning Committee and Volunteers

Martine Korach, *Chairperson*

Justin Perlman, *VP of Education*

Sharon Amster Brown

Director of Education and Congregational Engagement

Marielli Cardona, Kim DeCelles, Bill Giser, Elyse Gordon, Jill Granek, Dawn Haldane,
Bobbi Horowitz, Laurie Pearlman, Eve Perlman, Alain Silverston

We are always looking for new ideas and creative perspectives on our Joys of Jewish Learning program at Temple Israel. If you're interested in getting involved, please feel free to contact us at any point during the year.

Thank you to Temple Israel's graphic designer, Michelle Techau, for her beautiful work on this catalog.



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