

LEARNING SESSIONS

2024 - 2025

Learning sessions for a range of ages, interests, and educational backgrounds. Topics draw on Jewish sources for context and connect to our current lives through texts, discussion, interactive activities, songs, and videos.

LEARNING SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS

HOLIDAY RELATED

Unlocking the Gates Meaning in Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur

Much of the liturgy and themes of the High Holidays use the imagery and metaphor of gates. This class will look at different ways to interpret this imagery and how it can give us new ways at looking at this important period of self-reflection.

Chanukah Songs & Videos - More Than Just Fun

Take a trip down memory lane with popular Chanukah song videos. Since 1994, Chanukah videos and songs have become a defining part of the Jewish Festival of Lights. We will see and hear the clever musical takes on the holiday and explore what the different styles, lyrics, and themes say about how the holiday is experienced in different communities around the world and how it remains relevant in so many ways.

Holiday(s) of Light

Explore winter holidays from diverse cultures worldwide that celebrate light as a symbol of hope, renewal, and warmth during the darkest part of the year. This class looks at traditions, stories, and rituals associated with other winter festivals to find the similarities and differences with the Jewish holiday of Chanukah.

LEARNING SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS

Trees Get Their Own Holiday?

Jewish texts are full of references to trees, both the physical tree and the metaphoric tree. Trees are part of our agricultural traditions and spiritual traditions. What makes the tree so special that it is only a central symbol in Jewish texts for generations, but that it also gets its own holiday on the Jewish calendar? This class will explore examples of trees in text, how the references grew and developed, including through Kabbalah, and the ways metaphoric trees are part of our lives and our families through today and the future. Available as a single session.

How Can Happiness Be Commanded?

There is a tradition that when the month of Adar arrives, we should increase our joy. Adar is the month with Purim, a very happy holiday, but there is still a question. How can people be commanded to increase joy? Can emotions be commanded? This class will explore the generations of interpretations of this emotional command and others.

Prepping for a Seder to Remember

As the saying goes "a little preparation goes a long way" and while we often focus on the preparation of our homes and meals, it's equally important to focus our attention on preparing for a meaningful seder. The details of what this looks like will vary depending on the makeup of your seder guests, but together we will explore ideas, options, and resources that can help make your seder a seder to remember.

Connection of “The Yoms” (HaShoah, HaZikaron, Ha’atzmaut)

Within the Jewish calendar there are periods of time when holidays are connected to each other and, in their connection, add another layer of meaning to the days. So too with Yom HaShoah, Yom HaYizkaron, and Yom Ha'atzmaut. This class will look at each holiday's meaning and how their connection amplifies and enhances the individual days.

How the Waves of Aliyah Shaped the State of Israel

In 1948 the population of Israel was 800,000 people. By 2022 the State of Israel has grown to a population of 9.5 million people. This growth was largely driven by waves of immigration from Jews from all over the world. As these immigrants settled in Israel they had far reaching impacts on many aspects of Israel. In this course, we will focus on the impacts of these new olim (immigrants) on the nation's culture (food, music, inclusivity, art, etc.) Available as single session or multi-session class.

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Everyone Loves a Torah Parade

Delve into the ins and outs and ups and downs of the Torah service. Participants will learn about how a Torah is created, when it is read and why at that those times, the meaning and source of the texts used in the Torah service, the choreography and symbolism of this part of our service and how it connects to the revelation at Mount Sinai when God first gave the Torah to the Jews, which is celebrated on Shavuot.

Shavuot Sounds of Silence

Explore the connection between Bamidbar (desert or wilderness,) and the giving of the Torah. By examining what makes the wilderness well-suited as the place where revelations occurs, we will reflect on the how silence impacts us, both spiritually and physically, using ancient, traditional texts, modern interpretations and scientific research. Available as single session class.

The Two Tablets – Challenging Assumptions, Deeper Meaning

This class invites students to examine their assumptions about the traditional presentation and meaning behind the ten commandments. By questioning familiar aspects, such as the layout and language, we will explore how these details shape understanding. Discover how testing ideas deepens the connection to and appreciation of the text.

DIVERSE JEWISH THEMES AND TOPICS

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them in Judaism

Judaism has a long and winding history of ritual and texts related to the supernatural - sorceresses, demons, mystical creatures, and more. Starting from the biblical texts and ending with comics and Anime, this class considers the growth of interest in fantastic creatures from the bible through rabbinic literature. The class also traces the liturgical origin of a few specific creatures, how their stories developed in conjunction with the needs of the community and how they've wound their ways into modern culture. Available as a single or multi-session class.

Lilith: From First Wife to Demon to Feminist

Building off of Torah and Rabbinic texts, this class will review attitudes towards magic and demons in Judaism. The focus of our discussion will be the character of Lilith, whose story grew and changed over the ages, reacting to the needs and imaginations of the Jewish people. Available as 1 session class.

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Hakarat HaTov - Recognizing the Good

Most people know that it's good to be grateful. So why can it be so hard to recognize the good in our lives? Using lessons from Jewish texts, modern media, consumer marketing, and advertising, and "The Opposite of Spoiled: Raising Kids Who Are Grounded, Generous, and Smart About Money" by Ron Lieber this course explores what obstacles and environmental factors impact our thinking and presents principles and tools to find the way to Hakarat HaTov - recognizing the good.

This course can be taught to elementary and teen students as they consider how these ideas impact themselves and the world around them. It is also well suited to guardians with customized sections to help adults use the learning not only for themselves, but also in their parenting. Available as single session, though multi-session is preferred.

Life Lessons From Rosh Hodesh

With each new moon, the Jewish calendar marks and celebrates the start of a new month, also called Rosh Hodesh. This class series is taught in connection with Rosh Hodesh and each month's session will explore life lessons we can glean from themes and ideas central to the new month. Available as single session, but recommended as a series.

Parenting Lessons from Jewish Tradition

Jewish tradition is rich with stories, rituals, liturgy, and values that can help navigate the sometimes complicated and challenging job of being a parent. From ancient texts to modern interpretive rituals, Judaism can help ground parents as they work to help their children develop into mensches (at any age.) This class will bring examples and how-to's that incorporate the lessons into everyday life.

Truth vs. TruthS

The definition of "truth" can seem simple, but it is actually layered with complications. Participants in this class will probe the concepts of a single truth versus the potential for multiple truths in a given situation. With examples from traditional midrash, contemporary midrash and contemporary life, the goal of this class is to allow you to think more critically, be open to others, be aware of bias and misperception and how that impacts our thinking. Available as a multi-session class.

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Delicious Ways to Think About Torah

It's always a pleasure to have good food, but you can add another layer of meaning to a meal with purposeful menus. We'll explore creative ways to connect ideas to the food you eat, with a focus on the weekly parsha.

"Pu, Pu, Pu," Red Strings, & Other Enduring Superstitions

Some rituals are so ingrained in a tradition and culture that their origins are forgotten. This class explores the origins of Jewish superstitions, including many well-known ones and some not-as-well known, including a review of how the meaning changes over time. A wonderful add-on is a "Balderdash" style game on superstitions. Available as a single session class.

When A Bridge Crosses More Than Water

The history of the Civil Rights movement teaches the imperative of building bridges across diverse groups, creating true understanding and allies. This class looks at some of those bridges, both metaphorical and physical, where the Jewish community and Black community came together to fight for a just cause. Using the first-hand experience of Tami Arnowitz's educational civil rights journey to Alabama, we will explore the connection points and how we can learn from the past to inform the present.

Scattergories of Jewish Identity

The composite of one's Jewish identity is a complex topic. In this interactive course, participants will begin by answering several survey questions related to Jewish identity. In part 2 of the course, the participants' group survey results will be presented and compared to the larger society using two published surveys on teens and Jewish identity. Course discussion will focus on exploring the various elements that make up a person's Jewish identity. Available as a 2 session class. Suggested age range is 8th - 12th grade.

Riding Through Resilience: Jewish Life in Poland

From the backdrop of my personal experience participating on the Ride for the Living, this class will explore elements of Poland's Jewish history and the remarkable revival happening today. Featuring information about the Jewish Community Center (JCC) in Krakow and the inspiring work they do to rebuild, support, and strengthen Jewish life. Through stories, photos, and reflections, we'll discuss resilience, memory, and the evolving landscape of Jewish identity in Poland today.

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Shabbat Customs From Around the World and Your Home

While some Shabbat customs are universal, Jewish practice on Shabbat is a rich tapestry of traditions that reflect history, familial ties, and the local culture. We will delve into that rich tapestry and from the comfort of our class, we will travel all over the world to learn about how Jews celebrate Shabbat by leaning about their ritual objects, foods, songs, and more. Available as single or multi-session class.

This I Believe

Wade into the complicated and difficult topic of interacting with others when we disagree with them. Using Jewish texts as jumping off points, we will discuss why people should treat others with respect and how to enter conversations that include topics that may trigger us. With the radio program This I Believe as a model, we will look to find common ground in some core beliefs knowing that the goal is not to persuade others to agree on the same beliefs, but to encourage people to develop respect for beliefs different from their own. Available as single or multi-session class.



Tami Arnowitz has a BA from Wellesley College, with a major in Economics. She received her MBA from Columbia Business School and her Life Coach Certification from Life Coach Training Institute. Tami has also studied at Hebrew University and The Conservative Yeshiva.

Tami consults with Jewish communal organizations to help them accomplish a wide range of goals. She also creates customized coaching for clergy, community, or individuals.

Tami has experience teaching in synagogues, Jewish Community Centers, special interest clubs, at Camp Ramah in New England, in person, and over zoom.

She lives in Mamaroneck, NY with her husband, Rabbi Jeffrey Arnowitz, their 4 boys and 2 dogs.

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