



TEMPLE SINAI LIFELONG LEARNING SPRING 2008/5768

Rabbi Gershon's Friday Night Teachings

MARCH 7

Why The Book of Esther Still Speaks to Us Today

MARCH 14

Rabbi Avi Friedman Will Teach in Celebration of Our Annual Solidarity Shabbat with the Summit Jewish Community Center

MARCH 28

Reflections on the Dedication of *Mishkan Tefillah* as the Official Prayerbook of Temple Sinai

APRIL 4

The Meanings of *The Shema* for the 21st Century

APRIL 18

How to Make Your Passover Seder More Meaningful

APRIL 25

The Ten Plagues and Climate Change

MAY 9

Cantor Merel Will Present a Sermon-in-song on "Israel at 60"

MAY 16

Conquering Poverty: A Jewish Approach

MAY 23

Is Peace between Palestinians and Israelis Any Closer?

MAY 30

Why The Book of Ruth Still Speaks to Us Today

JUNE 6

Some Spiritual Teaching for Shavuot, the Festival of the Giving of The Torah at Mt. Sinai

JUNE 13

The Purpose of the 613 Commandments in Judaism

JUNE 20

"The Twelve Scouts": Facing Our Fears with Courage

JUNE 27

Improving Your Jewish IQ: Some Summertime Reading

THE MEANING OF FREEDOM

Freedom is the right to ask questions, about what we are told, what we are expected to believe, and what we are expected to think, and then to ask more questions about the answers we receive. But with that right comes the responsibility to exercise our minds, to challenge accepted dogma and the conventional wisdom, in all areas of life. And it carries with it the risk that we will find what we once believed to be untenable, what we once held true to be false, and what we once held sacred to be in doubt. To be free means to be uncertain, unsettled, even confused. Freedom frightens authority (secular and religious alike) because the greatest threat to any order is the persistent question.

Andrew Polsky, Chair, Lifelong Learning Committee, Chanukkah Service, December 2007

THIRD FRIDAY NIGHT GUEST LECTURE SERIES

You are cordially invited to attend the service at 7:00 PM and stay for the talk or attend the 8:15 PM lecture. Guests are welcome!

How to Become a Jewish Novelist without Really Trying WITH DARA HORN

March 21st

Co-Sponsored by the Temple Sinai Sisterhood

Dara Horn is an award-winning novelist, essayist, and scholar. Her first novel, *In the Image*, received a 2003 National Jewish Book Award, the 2002 Edward Lewis Wallant Award, and the 2003 Reform Judaism Fiction Prize. It was also chosen as one of the Best Books of 2002 by the *San Francisco Chronicle* and one of the Top Five Novels of 2002 by the *Christian Science Monitor*. Her second novel, *The World to Come*, recently received the 2007 Harold U. Ribalow Prize, awarded by *Hadassah Magazine*, in which she published her first article at age 15. Ms. Horn has also worked for *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *The New Republic*. She has taught courses in Jewish literature and Israeli history at Harvard and at Sarah Lawrence College, and has lectured at universities and cultural institutions throughout the United States and Canada. Raised in Short Hills, NJ, she lives with her husband and daughter in New York City. She is currently a doctoral candidate in comparative literature at Harvard University, studying Hebrew and Yiddish.



Sisterhood Book Group

As a follow-up to the Friday evening talk by Dara Horn on March 21st, the Sisterhood Book Group invites you to participate in a conversation about Ms. Horn's novel, *The World to Come*, on Monday, April 7, at 7:30 pm in the Lounge. This will be our third session this year.

The World to Come takes place after a singles night at a museum at which Benjamin Ziskind, a lonely young man who writes questions for quiz shows, steals a Marc Chagall painting that he is convinced belonged to his parents. Benjamin tries to evade the police while his twin sister, Sara, investigates the provenance of the painting and tries to make a convincing forgery to return to the museum.

The World to Come has been called "at once a mystery, Jewish history and folklore, biography, philosophical treatise, love story, and fantastical adventure." *Time Magazine* described it as a "deeply satisfying literary mystery." It was the winner of the 2006 National Jewish Book Award for Fiction, a New York Times Editor's Choice, and an Entertainment Weekly's Editor's Choice.

If you have any questions, comments, or book suggestions, contact Nancy Gorman, gormankaufman@aol.com or 908-277-1609, or Dana Langerman, langerpeople@aol.com or 973-467-5757.



SUNDAY EVENINGS

JANUARY 13, 27, FEBRUARY 3, 10, MARCH 2 AND 9

"Meditation is always transformation. Meditation always moves us from one place to another; from unconsciousness to awareness, from tension to relaxation, from being scattered to being centered, from a shallow relationship with our environment and ourselves to a deeper one, from sleep to wakefulness, from a sense of God's presence to the sense that God was in this place all along, and I didn't know it." (Rabbi Alan Lew)

"Jewish meditation is a spiritual tool that enables a person to experience Judaism in a personal, deeper, and more powerful way." (David Malchman)

Come learn what it's all about as instructor David Malchman from the MetroWest Jewish Health and Healing Center leads a series of six Jewish meditation sessions at our synagogue.

Classes are open to both members and non-temple members and no prior meditation experience is necessary. There is a fee of \$90.00, payable to Temple Sinai, which includes all the sessions. Class participants should wear comfortable clothing and may also choose to bring a pillow or cushion for supporting their back or on which to sit.

Please contact Dr. Patrick Jobe at Patrick@TempleSinaiNJ.org or (908) 273-4921, ext. 16

LIFELONG LEARNING FILM SERIES

The Temple Film Series combines the opportunities for entertainment, stimulating discussion, personal development, and spiritual growth. The evenings start at 7:00 pm with refreshments and socialization. The presentations begin promptly at 7:30, and are followed with meaningful discussion (and refreshments redux). Guests are invited.

Moolaade

Date in April to be announced

Watch the Tempo and the Calendar

The initial film this spring, *Moolaade*, is a rather unusual one in that it was written and directed by the Senegal-born Ousmane Sembene, the first African director to achieve international recognition. It is uncommon in that the movie was filmed in Senegal, and gives an authentic view of village life. But it is also out of the ordinary in its subject matter, female circumcision, a procedure which it has been estimated 100 to 140 million women in the world have been subjected to, mostly across north-central Africa. The movie focuses on the assertion of rights by the females of the village. Roger Ebert describes it as "a story vibrating with urgency and life. It makes a powerful statement and at the same time contains humor, charm and astonishing visual beauty." Among its numerous awards is the Best Foreign Language Film of 2004 from the National Society of Film Critics.

Keeping Up with the Steins

Date in May to be announced

Watch the Tempo and the Calendar

After four years of some pretty heavy dramas, it is time for a laugh-out-loud comedy, although one close enough to our experience that we will be impelled to consider its serious aspects afterward. Its subject is the over-the-top, ostentatious Bar Mitzvah, a phenomenon familiar to all of us (there are other funny situations, too). Seriously, this is a film that every parent who is planning a B'nei Mitzvah will want to see and discuss.

All films will be shown by projection on a large screen. Contact Gene or Sondra Helfand (908-464-0351) for further information or transportation assistance.

THE SEFARDIC EXPERIENCE

The Monumental Impact on Jewish History, Religion and Culture of the Spanish & Portuguese Jews

ALLAN NADLER
DIRECTOR AND PROFESSOR JEWISH STUDIES,
DREW UNIVERSITY
PH.D., HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Tuesdays, 7:00-8:30pm, March 4, 11, 18, 25; April 1, 8
Course Fee: \$270

Contact: Patti Kahn, 908-273-3617;
patti@templesinainj.org

Please pre-register by February 21.

In this 6-week Tuesday evening course, Dr. Nadler will offer an overview of the history, religion and culture of the Jews of Spain & Portugal, from the Golden Age in the 9th-11th centuries, through to the expulsion in 1492 and its aftermath. The unique and multifaceted cultural and theological innovations of the Sefardic Jews and their lasting influence on Judaism until today will be explored. Among the creations of the Sefardim are: the development of a uniquely "secular" form of medieval Hebrew poetry; the emergence of medieval rationalist philosophy which reached its culmination in the work of Maimonides; the emergence in Gerona of the school of medieval Jewish mysticism known as Kabbalah; a crypto-Jewish identity that formed the background for some of the most infamous heretics on the pre-Modern era, most famously Baruch Spinoza.

TOPICS BY WEEK:

- 1) Overview of the history of Jews in Muslim Spain.
- 2) The Christian Reconquista and its Impact on the Jewish Community from 1391-1492.
- 3) Spanish Hebrew poetry and the Culture of the Jewish Courtiers.
- 4) The Origins of Medieval Jewish Rational Philosophy and Maimonides.
- 5) Spain as the Birthplace of the Kabbalah; The Creation of the Mystical Center in Safed by Sefardic refugees.
- 6) The Lasting Impact of the Sefardim on Jewish Modernity: The "Shearith Israel" Congregation of Amsterdam (Spinoza) London, New York & Montreal.

Dr. Allan Nadler (B.A., McGill, M.A. and Ph.D. Harvard), Professor of Jewish Studies, has been on the Drew faculty since 1998. Prior to his appointment at Drew, Dr. Nadler was, for seven years, the Director of Research at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York City, and Dean of YIVO's Graduate Training Program, the Max Weinreich Center for Advanced Jewish Studies. From 1991-94 Dr. Nadler was Visiting Professor of Jewish Studies at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY. In 1994-95 he served as Adjunct Professor at the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University. In 1998 he was the Ezra Sensibar Visiting Professor at the Spertus Institute for Jewish Studies in Chicago. In 2005 Dr. Nadler was Visiting Professor of Jewish Studies at McGill University in Montreal, where he had previously been a faculty member from 1982-1990. An ordained rabbi, Dr. Nadler served the Charles River Park Synagogue in Boston and Congregation Shaar Hashomayim in Westmount (Montreal), Canada's largest traditional Jewish congregation.

The Bible and Critical Scholarship: ***Must Faith and Historicity Collide?***

Moderated by Malcolm Schwartz

March 12, 7:30pm

As the 2007 Henry Dorfman Memorial Scholar in Residence at Temple Sinai, Dr. David Sperling challenged us to relate to Tanakh in a different way – in the context of the writers and their times, and not in the context of us readers and our times. His presentation, based upon his research as a Professor of Biblical Studies at Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, was enlightening but also perhaps disturbing. For example, in the Q-and-A at one of his sessions, a member of the audience was moved to remark: "If I accept what you say, then my children might as well not go to Sunday School any longer, and we might as well become atheists." Yet Sperling himself is not just a critically trained scholar but also a yeshiva student and a Reform Rabbi who does not concede that his faith has been undermined by the historical and archeological record.

The Lifelong Learning Committee would like to promote further discussion of Dr. Sperling's provocative book, *The Original Torah: The Political Intent of the Bible's Writers*. In it, Dr. Sperling concludes that biblical figures and their heroics are not historical, but came to life as allegories to support historical leaders. What is the basis for his claims? Are there implications for us and our faith?

Please join a conversation on *The Original Torah*, moderated by Mal Schwartz of the Lifelong Learning Committee, to explore the implications of Sperling's scholarship. The session will begin with a summary of the book prepared by Mal, but participants will find it helpful to read the book, at least the Introduction and Chapter 3, "The Allegory of Servitude in Egypt and the Exodus". The book is relatively brief and very readable. Copies of the chapters will be sent to those who pre-register. To participate, please pre-register by February 21.

LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE

Marvin Chasek	Andrew Polsky
Eric Friedman	Stacey Rauch
Harvey Feuer	Aaron Rosenberg
Rabbi Stuart W. Gershon	Jack Rossen
Eugene Helfand	R. Malcolm Schwartz
Patti Kahn	Lennard Wharton
Lori Pine	

LUNCH & LEARN

Join us for thought-provoking discussion and
lunch is provided by the Lifelong Learning Committee



**SPINOZA:
Why the Heretic of
Amsterdam Still Matters
Sunday, March 2, 1:15pm
With Rabbi Gordon Tucker**

In the 17th century, the Jewish community of Amsterdam excommunicated Baruch Spinoza, intending to distance him forever from the Jewish world. But even

though they were unorthodox, Spinoza's ideas and writings endure for us, presenting fascinating challenges to contemporary Jewish thought. We will explore some of these aspects of Spinoza's philosophy, which include his views of God, of the Bible, of human freedom, and of salvation.

Gordon Tucker has been the Senior Rabbi of Temple Israel Center in White Plains, NY since August 1994. He is, concurrently, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Jewish Philosophy at The Jewish Theological Seminary of America. He is also Honorary Chairman of the Board of the Masorti Foundation for Conservative Judaism in Israel.

Rabbi Tucker has an A.B. from Harvard University, a Ph.D. from Princeton University, and Rabbinic Ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary. He has taught at the Seminary since 1976, and in 1979-80, served as a White House Fellow in the administration of President Jimmy Carter.

From 1984 to 1992, Rabbi Tucker was the Dean of the Rabbinical School at the Seminary. His numerous memberships and affiliations have included the Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, the Board of Directors of UJA-Federation of New York, and the Board of Advisors of Jewish Lights Publishing. He has published many articles on Jewish philosophy and law, and on Jewish affairs, and has recently published a translation and commentary on Abraham Joshua Heschel's three-volume work on Rabbinic theology, under the title *Heavenly Torah*.

Rabbi Tucker is married to Amy E. Cohn, and has three children – Ethan (married to Ariela Migdal), Becky, and Micah, and two grandchildren.

NEW!

SUNDAY CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

**Come enjoy these
Sunday Lifelong Learning classes**

**The Effect of the Enlightenment on
Modern Jewish History: From the Ghettos of
Eastern Europe to a Share in Western Civilization**

with Arne Salkin
March 2, 11:00am-1:00pm

**Dilemmas & Decisions in Jewish History:
The Future of the Jewish People
vs Individual Survival**

with Sandy Schlanger, R.J.E.
March 9 and May 4, 11:00am – 1:00pm

Middot—Jewish Values to Live By

with Cantor Flo Merel
March 30, 8:30-10:30am

**The History and Contemporary Issues
of Modern Israel**

with Tsipi Israel
April 27, 8:30-10:30am

The above courses are the adult sessions of
the Family Connections Program.

The Lifelong Learning Committee wishes to express its deep appreciation to
Barbara Friedman for designing this brochure.

HEBREW LITERACY

LEARN TO READ HEBREW IN 5 EASY LESSONS!

Are you a Hebrew novice? Then this course is for you. Come learn the alef-bet in 5 easy lessons on Monday mornings.

5 Monday Morning Sessions, 10-11am

Beginning March 3rd

Instructor: Loren Hurwitz

This course is tuition-free. There will be a book fee.

Contact Patti Kahn: 908-273-3617; patti@templesinainj.org

Please pre-register by February 21.

READING HEBREW

Join the temple members who requested this Tuesday evening basic Hebrew class. Once you've learned the simple phonetic system, move on to understanding and fluency of Shabbat prayers. You can do it—we can help!

Instructor: Tsipi Israel

8 Tuesdays, March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 1, 8, 15

Course Time: 7:15-8:15pm

Course Fee: \$100

Contact Patti Kahn: 908-273-3617

patti@templesinainj.org

Please pre-register by February 21.

Women's Torah Study

Instructor: Sandy Schlanger

This ongoing group meets monthly to engage in traditional Torah study. New participants (including men!) are welcome at any time.

Dates: February 18th, March 10th

Time: 12:00 Noon -1:15 pm