

Temple Sinai Adult Jewish Learning Schedule: March – May 2024

[Upcoming Courses and Events \(listings of ongoing series and classes are on pages 7 - 9\)](#)

Note that Zoom links are not included in this document. Please call or email the temple office for links, or watch for information in the Sinai Update email.

- **Annual Cohon Lecture**

Lecturer Dr. Joyce Antler

Description Our Cohon lecturer this year is Dr. Joyce Antler, the Samuel J. Lane Professor Emerita of American Jewish History and Culture and Professor Emerita of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Brandeis University

Date Friday, March 1, 7:30 pm, at Shabbat services.

Bio **Joyce Antler** is a social and cultural historian, with special interests in the history of American women; history-as-theater; the history of education, and women's biography. She has written widely on the history of women, and on Jewish women, and is currently working on a book on women's liberation and Jewish identity. She is also a prize-winning historical dramatist and works with her students to create original documentary dramas on matters of social urgency.



- **The Intersection of Cubism and Judaism**

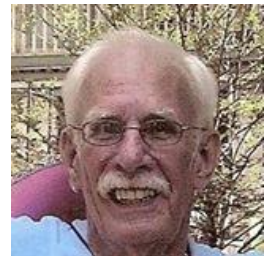
Instructor Amos Lassen

Description Cubism is often considered to be the seminal art movement of the twentieth century and engendered a pictorial revolution through a radical approach to image-making as well as influencing the fields of literature, photography, music, fashion and philosophy. Jews flocked to the new movement, and we will look at several of these Jewish thinkers and their influence on modern Jewish thought.

Date 2 Tuesday evenings: March, 12, 19; 7:30 pm – 9:00 pm

Format Zoom only

Bio Temple member Amos Lassen moved to Brookline in May 2012 after having spent 7 years in Arkansas when Hurricane Katrina changed his plans for a two-year visiting professorship in New Orleans. He lived in Israel for many years. Amos has taught at the Hebrew University, the University of New Orleans and the University of Central Arkansas. He grew up in the Young Judaea movement in New Orleans.



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- **Drawing from the Psalms: Five Contemporary Poems**

Instructor Jenny Barber

Description For many centuries, poets have been influenced by reading the Biblical psalms. In this course, we will study five contemporary poems: “Psalm of the Flying Shell” by Sharon Dolin; “151st Psalm” by Karl Shapiro; “Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God” by Leslie Williams; “A Psalm from the Night College” by Yehoshua November; and “Five Psalms” by Mark Jarman. We will discuss how aspects of the psalms manifest themselves in the contemporary poems, and how the latter differ from each other and from their source. (The poems will provided during the class.)

Dates 2 Sundays: March 10 and 17, 9:30 am – 10:50 am

Format In person at Temple Sinai (no Zoom)

Bio Temple Sinai member **Jenny Barber**, who is Brookline’s Poet Laureate, taught literature and creative writing at Suffolk University from 2004 to 2018. She has also taught at Wellesley College, Bradford College, the Harvard Extension School, and the Brookline Adult and Community Education Program. She is the founding editor of the literary journal *Salamander*, and her most recent collection of poems is *Works on Paper* (The Word Works, 2016).



- **Dissecting Short Stories from the Bible**

Instructor Robin Orwant

Description Many people are familiar with English translations of Biblical stories but lack the ability to study the texts in the original Hebrew. Robin will introduce us to a number of these stories, dissecting the original Hebrew to reveal nuances often not apparent in translation. No knowledge of Hebrew is required.

Dates 4 Wednesdays: March 20, 27, April 3, 10, 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm

Format In person at Temple Sinai and via Zoom

Bio Temple member **Robin Orwant** has taught multiple classes at Temple Sinai, including courses on the Haftarah, chanting Torah, beginning Hebrew, and prayers, as well as summer courses, with Jeremy Wolfe, on a variety of biblical texts. She has also been responsible for teaching Hebrew to the members of Temple Sinai’s recent Adult B’nai Mitzvah classes.



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- **Stars of the Night**

Instructors Caren Stelson, Selina Alko; moderated by Temple Sinai member Richard Asch

Description *Stars of The Night - The Courageous Children of the Czech Kindertransport* is a picture book tells the story of the children who were rescued from Czechoslovakia on the eve of World War II through the efforts of Sir Nicholas Winton. Told from the collective perspective of the children, the narrative is designed for young readers 8 and older, but is suitable for all ages. Author Caren Stelson and illustrator Selina Alko will present excerpts and illustrations and will also provide background information.

The presentation will include a short but powerful video of the “reveal,” when the Nicholas Winton story came to light.

Date Sunday, March 31, 11:10 am – 12:30 pm

Format In person at Temple Sinai and via Zoom

Bio **Caren Stelson** is the author of *Sachiko: A Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Survivor’s Story*, and *A Bowl of Peace, a picture book of Sachiko Yasui’s story*, as well as other works for children and young adults. She has had a long career as a reading specialist, an elementary classroom teacher, a freelance writer for educational publishing companies, and a writer-in-residence in schools. Caren holds a BA in History, a Master’s in Education, and received her MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Hamline University in 2009.



Selina Alko is a writer-illustrator who grew up in Vancouver with a Turkish Jewish father who taught painting, and a Jewish mother who worked in the family’s century-old metal recycling business. As a child, Selina and her family would attend her father’s painting class where they were asked to copy paintings using acrylics. This taught her about the use of color and instilled in her a deep appreciation for painting. Aside from art, Selina’s childhood was also filled with books. The skills her parents imparted to her and the creative environment that supported them are evident in her many children’s books, including *The Case for Loving: The Fight for Interracial Marriage*, *B is for Brooklyn*, *Daddy Christmas & Hanukkah Mama*, *I is for Immigrants*, and *Joni: The Lyrical Life of Joni Mitchell*.



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• **Developing and Maintaining Connection and Purpose in our Lives as We Grow Older**

Instructors Janet Seckel-Cerrotti, Dorian Mintzer

Description What are ways to develop and maintain a sense of connection and purpose in our lives as we grow older? How might our involvement in Judaism play a part?

Dates 2 Sundays, April 7, 14: 9:30 am – 10:50 am

Format In person at Temple Sinai and via Zoom

Bios Temple Sinai member **Janet Seckel-Cerrotti** is the Executive Director of FriendshipWorks, an interfaith volunteer caregiving program serving older adults in Boston. Janet has been with FriendshipWorks since its inception in 1984. Janet holds an MSW degree from the Hunter College School of Social Work and is a graduate of LeadBoston (a program sponsored by the National Conference for Community & Justice). Janet has held a range of senior leadership positions in numerous organizations serving older adults. She is a founding member and former Board Chair of the National Volunteer Caregiving Network, has been a board member of the Boston Partnership for Older Adults and President of the Massachusetts Coalition on Spiritual Well-being of the Elderly. Janet is currently an active member of the MA Healthy Aging Collaborative Advisor Council and the MA Task Force to End Loneliness and Build Community, and serves as an Advisor Board member of Beacon Hill Village.



Also a Sinai member, **Dorian Mintzer** has over 50 years of experience as a therapist, life/retirement transition coach/ money and relationship coach, consultant, speaker, writer and group and workshop facilitator. She works with people who are dealing with "what's next?" and want help to develop a sense of well-being as they navigate the "second half of life." Dori believes in the importance of living a full life with connection, engagement and purpose and meaning. She also works with college students and adults with a variety of life transition issues. She obtained an MSW from the University of Pittsburgh and a Ph.D. from Smith College.



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- **The Rise and Fall of The American Jewish Gangster**

Instructor Larry Lowenthal

Description From 1870 -1924, 2 million Jews from Eastern Europe, escaping pogroms and grinding poverty, poured into America. Within a single generation, many rose to extraordinary heights of commercial, social, and intellectual success. But a significant minority created an underworld culture of prostitutes, pimps, gamblers and gangsters.

Each Jewish ghetto in every major American city produced some of the best known criminals of the time: Monk Eastman, Harry "Gyp the Blood" Horowitz, Big Jack Zelig, Arnold Rothstein, Dutch Schultz, Waxy Gordon, Ben "Bugsy" Siegel, Meyer Lansky, Lepke Buchalter and Gurrah Shapiro, to name a few.

Fascinating questions arise:

What drew young Jews, some from good, middle class families, to crime rather than law or medicine or business? Why did Jewish gangsters bond with Italians rather than Irish? Why were Jewish gangsters essentially a one generation phenomenon in contrast to the Italians? What was the surprising role of Jewish gangsters in the Jewish battle against American Nazis in the 30's and 40's?

Though unsavory, shocking , brutal, and contrary to positive stereotypes of American Jews, the story of Jewish gangsterism deserves to be told. To quote Frank Tannenbaum, a cultural historian: "The criminals themselves are part of the community, in its deepest sense, and are as much its products as are the philosophers, poets, investors, businessmen and scientists, reformers and saints."

Dates 3 Sundays: April 7, 14, and 21, 11:10 am – 12:30 pm

Format In person at Temple Sinai and via Zoom

Bio Dr. Lawrence D. Lowenthal received his Ph.D. in Literature from New York University and taught at Washington State University, Gettysburg College, Hebrew University in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv University. For 20 years he served as New England Director of the American Jewish Committee. After his retirement, he taught in the Jewish Studies Department of Northeastern University for 7 years.



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• **The Business of Beauty: Jews and the Oriental Carpet Trade in Britain, 1860-1930**

Instructor Aviva Ben-Ur

Description Professor Ben-Ur is working on a book on Ottoman (Middle Eastern) immigrants in the West and in particular focusing on Sephardi carpet dealers in the U.K. The project combines an art history approach (emphasizing the beauty of the merchandise) with a consideration of how these Jews introduced their Middle Eastern cultural background and aesthetics to broader British society, struggled to gain British citizenship as enemy aliens during World War I, and their transnational business connections, which extended all over the Middle East and the U.S.

Date Sunday, May 5, 9:30 am – 10:50 am

Format Zoom only

Bio **Aviva Ben-Ur** is a Professor in the Department of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. A historian specializing in Atlantic Jewish history, she is the author of *Remnant Stones: The Jewish Cemeteries and Synagogues of Suriname: Essays* (Hebrew Union College Press, 2012) and *Remnant Stones: The Jewish Cemeteries of Suriname: Epitaphs* (Hebrew Union College Press, 2009), both co-authored with Rachel Frankel; *Sephardic Jews in America: A Diasporic History* (New York University Press, 2009), and *Jewish Autonomy in a Slave Society: Suriname in the Atlantic World, 1651-1825* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).



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Series

- **Building Bridges (sponsored by the Israel Committee)**

Instructor Rabbi Golan Ben-Chorin

Description This highly successful initiative that began in 2020 will continue with 6 sessions during the 2023 – 2024 year. Sessions will be led live from Israel by Rabbi Golan-Ben Chorin of Haifa. Topics to be announced – see the Sinai Update and Lu'ach for more details.

Dates Final session: March 31, 9:30 am – 10:50 am

Format Zoom

Bio Rabbi Golan Ben-Chorin Ed.D. is a third-generation Israeli Reform spiritual leader. An entrepreneurial educator, he has served congregations in Europe, the US and Israel, where he is pioneering inclusive, egalitarian Judaism. He recently produced twelve short movies on spiritual renewal in his home town of Haifa as a way to help address the challenges of the coronavirus. He is currently the rabbi of a startup community in Herzliya and has founded "Finding North – 30 days of inspiration and discovery in Haifa."



- **Cinema@Sinai**

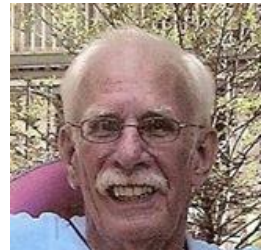
Coordinator Amos Lassen

Description The first film this year will be "The Settlers (2016; English and Hebrew with English subtitles), held on Saturday, October 21. This documentary offers a comprehensive historical and geopolitical view of the Jewish settlers in the occupied territories of the West Bank.

Date Final sessions are on Saturday, March 16 and Saturday April 27, at, 7:30 pm, in the Weintraub Community Room.

Watch for details in the weekly Sinai Update email and on the temple website

Bio Temple member **Amos Lassen** moved to Brookline in May 2012 after having spent 7 years in Arkansas when Hurricane Katrina changed his plans for a two-year visiting professorship in New Orleans. He lived in Israel for many years. Amos has taught at the Hebrew University, the University of New Orleans and the University of Central Arkansas. He grew up in the Young Judaea movement in New Orleans.



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● **Queer Torah Study (sponsored by the Rainbow Committee)**

Instructor Ben Gerson

Description These sessions will continue the study that was successfully introduced during the 2022-23 year. Our study will affirm our journey as LGBTQ Jewish individuals and allies in the context of our sacred text. As we gather together, we will be provided with texts that celebrate identity as well as those that can challenge our current sensibilities. A variety of Torah passages have been used to emphasize the dignity and worth of LGBTQ Jews, while others have been used to denigrate them. In light of modern biblical scholarship, it is important for us to recognize how these texts have been used in their historical context and how we can make sense of them through the nuance of language. All are welcome to join us on several Shabbat afternoons during the year, followed by Havdalah. Light refreshments will be provided.

Dates Saturday at 5:00 pm: April 20, June 8.

Format In person at Temple Sinai

Bio **Ben Gerson** is originally from Marblehead and lives in Cambridge, MA with his husband Kevin. He received his education from Goucher College and completed his Masters of Teaching at Salem State University. He is a middle and high school teacher at a local private school where he teaches Spanish and American History. He also teaches 6th grade pre-B'nai Mitzvah students at Temple Sinai. In his spare time Ben enjoys music, specifically playing classical piano and klezmer accordion.



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Ongoing Classes

- **Shabbat Morning Torah Study**

with Rabbi Andy Vogel

Twice a month on Shabbat mornings, Temple Sinai members gather to discuss the ideas presented by the week's Torah portion. We begin with a bit of singing and then study the text in English. You need not have any prior study of the Torah or Hebrew knowledge, simply an interest in considering the Torah portion as it relates to our contemporary experiences or those of Jews in previous generations. All are welcome for this friendly exchange of Jewish ideas! Come just once to try it out.

*2nd & 4th Saturday mornings of each month at 9:00 am. **Zoom and on-site.** The Zoom link is publicized a few days in advance.*

- **Thursday Morning Study**

with Rabbi Andy Vogel

Join us each Thursday for a lively and friendly class with Rabbi Vogel. We study a wide variety of topics, rotating to a new field of study about every six weeks or so. Thursday Study includes discussions, films, text study, and an occasional guest speaker. Join us each Thursday or feel free to drop in just once! All are welcome.

*Every Thursday, 10:15 -11:45 am. **Zoom and on-site.** Call or email the temple office to be added to the distribution list for information about the session and each week's Zoom link.*

- **Daf Shevui: Talmud Study Group**

This group gathers for an hour on Sunday mornings to discuss a page of Talmud each week. **Zoom only.** Contact karen.keely@gmail.com if you would like to be added to the email list to receive weekly details about the next meeting.