

**7:30**

**Rabbi Jeffrey Brown**

Scarsdale Synagogue Temples Tremont and Emanuel

Did Moses' Thanksgiving Table Look Like Mine? Complicated Family Dynamics Then and Now

In the run up to our upcoming Thanksgiving season of family reunions, we'll use snippets of Moses' biography in the Torah (as well as later commentaries) to find connections about his family dynamics and ours. With a little light humor, we'll find a small measure of reassurance that the challenges of getting along with family are as old as the Torah itself.

**Rabbi Jennifer Goldsmith**

Jewish Education Program

**Rabbi Howard Goldsmith**

Congregation Emanu-El of Westchester

Israel Travel for Young Families (Grandparents, too!)

Want to take a family trip to Israel but intimidated by the idea of trans-Atlantic travel with little ones? Rabbis Howard and Jennifer Goldsmith share the tips and tricks to make your family's trip to Israel the best vacation ever! From choosing the right tour provider to creating your own itinerary, these veteran family Israel travelers will help you answer key questions when traveling with children or grandchildren: Hotel or apartment? Rent a car or get a driver? Get a guide or go solo? Go with a big group or just your family? Falafel or Pizza? And most importantly . . . how to make it a meaningful and FUN trip for every family member, no matter their age. Come learn how to bring Torah to life by walking in Abraham's footsteps with every generation of your family.

**Rabbi Shai Held**

Mechon Hadar

The Gifts of God Flow through You: A Jewish Vision of the Spiritual Life

Jews are often reluctant to talk about "grace;" they fear it sounds "too Christian." Yet, as we will see, grace is fundamental to Jewish theology and spirituality. In this session, we'll explore the connection between grace, gratitude, and generosity of spirit and think together about how they animate (or should animate) our religious lives. We'll think through the idea that God's gifts are meant to flow *through* us, and not just *to* us.

**Rabbi Evan Hoffman**

Congregation Anshe Sholom

What Really Happened at Your Wedding?

The Jewish and civil wedding ceremony from the perspective of the rabbi, including details not always revealed to the bride and groom.

**Rabbi David Holtz**

Temple Beth Abraham

Seeking Everyday Holiness: An Introduction to Mussar

In the 1960s and 70s, many Jews looked for spirituality in eastern religions. They had no idea that the same ideas and practices that made those religions seem so attractive have been part of Judaism for centuries. Even Benjamin Franklin seems to have known of them! Mussar is a spiritual perspective and a discipline of practices that can change the way we act in the world. Alan Morinis has called it "a way of life that leads to realizing our highest spiritual potential." I'll give a brief historical overview, and an explanation of what Mussar is all about, and then you'll have an opportunity to try a taste of it for yourself.

**Rabbi Jennifer Jaech**

Temple Israel of Northern Westchester

Why Write the Torah?

One day an eight-year-old came home from religious school and asked the following question about the stories in the Torah: "Since no one could have known what really happened, why were these stories made up?" There are a variety of

ways to answer this question, and in this session, we will explore one way: namely, looking at selected stories from the Torah as a reflection of political and religious disputes in ancient Israel.

### **Rabbi Steven Kane**

Congregation Sons of Israel – Briarcliff Manor

#### Stairway to Heaven According to the Zohar

How does Judaism's mystical Tradition help us explore the story of Jacob's encounter with G-d? We will read and study how the Zohar, the classic book of Jewish mystical interpretation, uniquely understands Jacob's encounter with God in a dream. In our exploration we will utilize Daniel Matt's magnificent new translation and commentary. Included will be general background material on the Zohar and its author.

### **Rabbi Chaim Marder**

Hebrew Institute of White Plains

#### Golden Calf versus Two Sapphire Tablets: A Collision of Symbols and Meaning

In this session we attempt to answer these questions: Why would the Midrash maintain that the Ten Commandments were made of precious stone? What does that convey about them, the movement from Sinai, and the possibility of the Sacred being present in our world? And how does it stand in opposition to the calf that the Israelites fashioned?

### **Rabbi Daniel Rosenfelt**

Fleetwood Synagogue

#### Rabbi Akiva's Three Most Famous Teachings: How Are They All Connected?

Come learn the important message of our great Sage, Rabbi Akiva. We will study his three most famous teachings, which connect around a common lesson for our lives.

### **Rabbi Alex Salzberg**

Pelham Jewish Center

#### Eating Ethically

Grocery stores carry an abundance of options. Our food can be gluten-free, non-GMO, organic, fair trade. Meat can be kosher; it can be grain-fed, free-range. We are each faced with decisions about which of these labels matter to us, and how much they matter. But what should our relationship be with the food that we eat, particularly the meat? What do Jewish sources say about the place of meat in our diets, and how should we view it?

### **Rabbi David Schuck**

Beth El Synagogue Center

#### Does God Cry from Our Pain? *An Examination of the Theological Impact of One Hebrew Letter*

The notion that God feels pain when we feel pain is one that brings many Jews comfort. This class will examine a Biblical text which could potentially suggest such a theology. However, through an investigation of various manuscripts, there exists uncertainty around one letter in this text, resulting in variant readings and the possibility for two totally different theological interpretations.

### **Rabbi Jordan Soffer**

Carmel Academy

#### Teaching for Today or For Tomorrow?

What may seem like an obscure case regarding the laws of Cohanim (Jewish priests) visiting a cemetery is actually an opportunity to explore a contemporary pedagogical debate. Rabbi Jordan Soffer will facilitate a fascinating conversation about the connection between education today and the educational philosophy of our sacred texts regarding the teaching of priestly responsibilities to the child of a Cohen. The comparison will be based on the ideologies of contemporary scholars of education. We will discuss the basic question: Do we teach for today, or for tomorrow?

### **Rabbi Jay Stein**

Greenburgh Hebrew Center

#### Talmud 101 – Text Study with a Cliff-Hanging Twist

No background or extensive experience needed. Together we will examine a few bizarre pieces of the Talmud. This session will be an entirely new way to look at one of the fundamental sources of our tradition.

### **Rabbi Seth Sternstein**

Yorktown Jewish Center

#### Rabbi Akiva: The Man who lost Everything and Gained Even More

Rabbi Akiva sustained terrible losses throughout life and, ultimately, life, itself. Yet he endures in the Jewish world as an exemplary model almost without peer. Through an exploration of Rabbi Akiva's life, we will explore the valuable lessons about loss that can help improve our lives.

### **Rabbi Joshua Strom**

Congregation B'nai Yisrael

#### My Brother's Keeper: A Deeper Exploration of Cain and Abel

Cain and Abel, the first human-born children in the Torah, are also the perpetrator and victim of the world's first fratricide. What does our tradition say about why it happened? How did their birth order and occupation contribute? Was it murder or manslaughter? And what ultimately are we to learn? Rabbi Joshua Strom will explore the legacy of Cain and Abel, and how their story continues to resonate today.

## **8:45**

### **Rabbi Adam Baldachin**

Shaarei Tikvah

#### The Power of Community amidst Pain

Rivka offers us a window into the human condition through her experience of pain during pregnancy. By studying this Biblical account and corresponding rabbinic commentaries, we will explore the ways in which human beings can offer each other solace through the most difficult of circumstances.

### **Rabbi Morris Barzilai**

Sinai Free Synagogue

#### Truth and Trustworthiness in the Age of Fake News and Social Media

We know that truth and honesty are virtues, but how do we really ever know the truth, especially in this age of 'Fake news,' "alternative facts," and "truthiness?" How does social media and the internet impact truth and our trust in what we read and hear? Are there ever times when we don't have to share the "whole truth?" Together we will explore these issues and what insight we can learn about truth and trust from Jewish sources.

### **Rabbi Jeffrey Beer**

Westchester Hebrew High School

#### The Inventions of a Fast-Paced World through the Eyes of Rav Kook

We will look into the teachings of Rav Kook and his understanding of the explosion of ingenuity and creativity of mankind over the last 100+ years and how it relates to our more pronounced need for spirituality.

### **Rabbi Aaron Brusso**

Bet Torah

#### Can You Say Kiddush over Beer Instead of Wine?

With the explosion of high-quality craft beer, and enthusiasts who even think it superior to wine, is it time to switch out the beverage over which we say Kiddush? We will explore Talmudic and later rabbinic sources in trying to answer this critical question! Includes a tasting of craft beer.

### **Rabbi Fredda Cohen**

White Plains Hospital

#### Can Spot Get a Mi Sheberach?

What Judaism teaches us about the treatment of animals and providing for our pets.

### **Rabbi Billy Dreskin**

Woodlands Community Synagogue

#### Would God Bet Three Dimes on the Davis Cup?

Is OTB (Off Track Betting) sanctioned in the Bible? Are we jeopardizing our portion in the world-to-come when we wield our dreidels on Hanukkah? A spirited exploration of Jewish attitudes on gambling.

### **Rabbi Andrew Ergas**

Shames JCC on the Hudson

#### Top Ten Things that Might Surprise (or Worry or Excite) You about the Hebrew Language

Hebrew scholar Sharon Avni writes, "Hebrew is not a single signifier, but rather has multiple roles as referent, icon, and performative. . . . [It can] imbue a speech event with symbolic, spiritual, and religious meaning, and iconically . . . mark written or spoken discourse as Jewish." This session will be both playful and thoughtful, exploring ways in which Hebrew has shaped and been shaped by the Jewish experience over the past three millennia and offer an opportunity to think together about the ways in which the language of the Jewish people speaks to us today.

### **Rabbi Jonathan Jaffe**

Temple Beth El of Northern Westchester

#### Moses the Idolater and Others Adventures in Rabbinic Commentary

Explore the world of rabbinic commentary, with all of its creativity and bluster, in which no idea is off limits. Focusing on three verses from the book of Exodus, we will discuss the variety of opinions and interpretations offered by our Tradition and how this inventive approach surfaces in our own modern practices and habits. No familiarity with Hebrew or past text study required. Jump into the world of rabbinic commentary in which, seemingly, all options are on the table.

### **Rabbi Nuriel Klinger**

Young Israel of Scarsdale

#### Myth Busters: The Truth about the Afikoman and Its Message to Jews in 2017

This session will challenge the traditional understanding of the Afikoman, which is consumed towards the end of the Passover Seder. We will analyze Talmudic sources and historical sources (with full English translations available) to explore this issue. Through this, we will realize that the Afikoman that we know and love from our annual Passover Seder is not exactly what we always thought. We will explore the great significance of this new understanding and decipher the message that the rabbinic sages of 2000 years ago wanted to get across to the Jewish people.

### **Rabbi Jason Nevarez**

Temple Shaaray Tefila

#### Chanukah: The Untold (and Unedited) Story

As we prepare to fill our homes with lights and latkes, join us to better understand how this fun, family-oriented holiday has never been more relevant than today. We will explore how the continuation of the story after the big miracle took place prompts penetrating lessons that have endless implications for us in 2017.

### **Rabbi Beth Nichols**

Temple Israel of New Rochelle

#### And Hannah Spoke from Her Heart

When Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel, prayed silently to God, the priest thought she was drunk. What did the rabbis think? Explore the rabbinic responses to Hannah's prayer and see how Hannah can serve as a model for challenging God through prayer.

### **Rabbi Harry Pell**

Schechter Westchester

#### A Virtual Trip to Jewish Poland

Using large format projected photography, we will “travel” across Poland and also across time, experiencing images that attest to 800 years of Jewish growth and prosperity in Poland; the murderous years of the Shoah in Nazi-occupied Poland; and the rebirth of the Jewish community in Poland today. Join us for a window into the incredible story of the Jewish past, present and future in Poland.

**Rabbi Rami Strosberg**

Westchester Torah Academy

Meditation and Mindfulness in the Home and School

*Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop to look around once in a while, you could miss it.* Schools and homes are busy places – sometimes even overloaded with action and turbulence. Teaching our children, our students and ourselves to take a moment to breathe can unlock our potential in ways we deeply need and seldom understand.

This class will give you theory and practice for profound relaxation and spiritual connection with simple steps and practical exercises.

**Rabbi Gordon Tucker**

Temple Israel Center of White Plains

Fear of Arrival, or: What I Learned from My Car's Spark Plugs

This session will consider some biblical and midrashic texts, the design of the Tabernacle, a remarkable geological find, the work of a modern poet, and the physics of the internal combustion engine to illuminate a fundamental and universal human truth.