

ADULT EDUCATION



FALL 2020

Jewish Community of Amherst
742 Main Street, Amherst, MA 01002
413.256.0160 ~ www.jcamherst.org

JCA adult-education programs reflect religious, secular, practical, and cultural aspects of Judaism. We hope that you will find something that appeals to you.

All our programs this semester will take place online.

NEW THIS FALL

Tefilah with Kavanah • *Janis Levy*

Mondays • 7:30 – 8:45 pm • October 12, 19, 26; November 2, 9

Who Wrote the Bible? • *Rabbi Benjamin Weiner*

Tuesdays • 7:30 – 9:00 pm • October 27; November 3, 10, 17

Beyond Genocide • *Amy Fagin*

Sundays • 1:00 – 2:00 pm • November 1 and 8

Reading the Balfour Declaration • *Aaron Berman*

Sundays • 11:00 am – 12:30 pm • December 13 and 20

To receive access to these programs via Zoom, please register at
<http://bit.ly/aec20Freg>

ONGOING

Lunch and Learn • Weekdays at 12:30 pm • *no registration needed*

Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays • *Rabbi Benjamin Weiner*
Wednesdays • *Amy Mittelman*

Participation in JCA adult-education programs is always open to everyone in our community, regardless of financial need. In the past, we have suggested contribution amounts for some of our courses to help offset the cost of offering them. This fall, mindful of the economic hardships caused by the health crisis, we are making no such suggestions. If, however, you are moved to support our future programming, please visit **<https://jcamherst.org/payments-and-donations/payments>** and choose “Adult Education Class” from the menu. Thank you in advance for any support you can offer.

If you would like to suggest future programming, please contact a member of the Adult Education Committee: Barbara Burkart (*chair*), David Glassberg, Diane Gnepp, Phyllis Herda, Jonathan Lewis, Melanie Lewis, Ina Porth, Ruth Smith, Linda Terry, Boris Wolfson, Rabbi Benjamin Weiner (*ex officio*)

Tefilah with Kavanah

Janis Levy

Mondays • October 12, 19, 26; November 2, 9 • 7:30 – 8:45 pm

In Judaism, prayer (*tefilah*) is considered a “service of the heart.” The Torah says, “You shall serve God with your whole heart” (*Devarim* / Deuteronomy 11:13), and the Babylonian Talmud adds: “What service is performed with the heart? This is prayer.” The concept of *kavanah*, which refers to intention or purpose, has a profound association with prayer and deeds in fulfillment of *mitzvot*. Indeed, Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote that the purpose of Jewish practice is “transformation of the soul.”

These heady concepts are worthy of discussion accompanied by exploration of ways to reach the kind of transformative outcome Heschel envisioned. Our class will involve more than the instructor lecturing: active participation is essential, and everyone will be encouraged to contribute articles, commentaries, and personal observations to our conversations. We will also benefit from exploring insights into different ways of understanding and chanting specific prayers, recorded for us weekly by Rabbi Benjamin Weiner and Hazzan Diana Brewer.

The instructor will provide study topics for each class, moderate the discussions, lead practice of the Hebrew pronunciation of select prayers, and look carefully at different translations/interpretations. Texts will be emailed ahead of each meeting. No purchase of books is necessary. It will be helpful if you are able to read Hebrew out loud, even if you are still early in your acquisition of the necessary language skills.



Janis Levy has been a member of the JCA since 2011, and currently helps to coordinate communications for the community. Prior to that time, along with other volunteer work, she was involved in leading services and teaching in the Jewish community in Northampton. For almost ten years, she worked with a former rabbi there to launch and teach follow-up classes for a major adult Hebrew literacy program. She began teaching Prayerbook Hebrew Literacy at the JCA in Fall 2018.

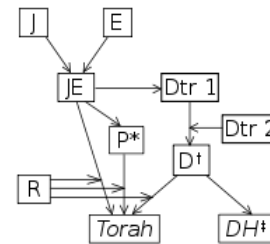
Registration required.

Who Wrote the Bible?

Rabbi Benjamin Weiner

Tuesdays • October 27; November 3, 10, 17 • 7:30 – 9:00 pm

This four-session course will explore the “documentary hypothesis,” the widely-accepted theory that the Hebrew Bible is edited together from a variety of primary sources, which are discernible one from the other in matters of style and theological perspective.



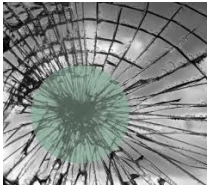
In addition, we will devote time to discussing how different perceptions of the origin of the Bible impact our sense of religious commitment.

Registration required.

Beyond Genocide: Community Conversations, Global Perspectives

Amy Fagin

Sundays • November 1 and 8 • 1:00 – 2:00 pm



Each year, Jewish communities around the world commemorate Kristallnacht (November 9-10, 1938) with creative events that offer solace and a deeper understanding of the tragedy that engulfed European Jewry. This sequence of two workshops uses poetry and visual art to gain insight into the power of genocide commemoration and examine ways in which creative expression can contribute to conflict resolution and reconciliation.

The first session will focus on poems from *Blood to Remember: American Poets on the Holocaust*, edited by Charles Ades Fishman. A selection of texts and discussion questions will be circulated to workshop participants in advance. The second session will focus on Amy's collection of illuminations *Beyond Genocide*. Each workshop participant will select an illumination from a selection shared with the group and lead the group discussion of that work. We will conclude our conversation with a roundtable on the arts' role in commemorating and preventing genocide. Throughout, we will draw on the case studies examined in Cynthia Cohen's essay "Creative Approaches to Reconciliation," an optional reading that will be made available along with poems and art works.

Amy Fagin is a U.S.-based visual artist who specializes in the traditional art form of manuscript illumination. She owns the 20th Century Illuminations print studio and is the author of *Beyond Genocide*, an emerging series of illuminations that narrate a visual-arts documentary on global incidents of genocide and mass violence. Amy is also an independent scholar in genocide studies. She researches global initiatives of memory and memorialization through individual and collective arts expression and the museum experience. She regularly publishes editorials, reviews and essays on genocide, memory, memorialization, art and 21st century expression and education.



Registration required.

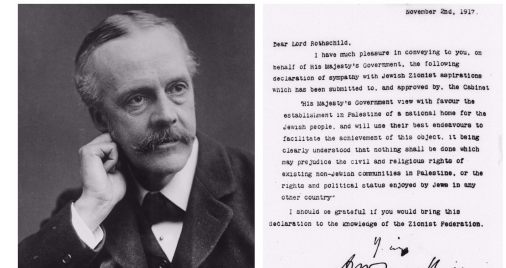
Reading the Balfour Declaration

Aaron Berman

Sundays • December 13 and 20 • 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

The Balfour Declaration, issued by the British government in November 1917, was an incredibly short document that had enormous consequences. By promising to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine, the British simultaneously gave a boost to two young nationalist movements: Zionism and Palestinian nationalism. The Balfour Declaration ensured that the relationship between Palestinian nationalists and Zionists would be contentious and violent.

Together we will read the Balfour Declaration and try to understand the different meanings that Zionists and Palestinian nationalists took from the document. We will discuss the events that led up to the British issuance of the Declaration as well as its historic and tragic consequences.



Aaron Berman, professor emeritus of history at Hampshire College, received his B.A. from Hampshire College, and M.A. and Ph.D. in United States history from Columbia University. He is particularly interested in the history of Jewish and Arab nationalisms, as well as twentieth century United States political and intellectual history. His publications include *Nazism, the Jews and American Zionism*, as well as articles on the Holocaust and Zionism. His current project examines the American encounter with Arab nationalism.



Registration required.

The maximum number of participants is twenty-five.

ONGOING PROGRAM

Lunch and Learn

Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays • *Rabbi Benjamin Weiner*

Wednesdays • *Amy Mittelman*

12:30 – 1:30 pm

<https://zoom.us/j/543405229>

Now in its eighth year, Lunch and Learn continues its investigation of *halakha*, or the tradition of Jewish law. Over the past few years, we have investigated a variety of topics: holiday observance and perspectives on Shabbat, divorce, suicide, death and mourning, purity and impurity, *kitniyot*, the giving of *tzedaka*, and abortion.

As Lunch and Learn transitioned to the online format this spring, it expanded significantly, from a weekly program to a gathering that as a rule takes place every weekday.

This fall, on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, Rabbi Weiner will explore the Mishnah *Berakhot*.

On Wednesdays, Amy Mittelman will continue to lead discussions of racism in our society, which she began facilitating this summer.



The conversation is intellectually stimulating and emotionally expansive, giving participants the opportunity to deepen their traditional Jewish knowledge and process the thoughts and feelings that the material brings to light. Please be assured that if you have not already become a part of this meaningful, oddly exhilarating, and even fun exploration, it is never too late.

No registration needed.