

JCA ADULT EDUCATION



SPRING 2021

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. 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)*

SPRING PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

All programs continue to be held online

Lunch and Learn • Ongoing • 12:30 - 1:30 pm

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

* **The Writers' Café** • *moderated by Jena Schwartz*

Sunday, February 7 • 6:45 - 8:00 pm

* **The Stolen Beam Series: Considering Reparations for African-American Descendants of Slavery** • *developed by the JCA Tzedek Reparations Committee*

Sundays • 7:00 - 8:15 pm • February 14, 21, 28; March 7, 14

* **Jews in America: Part 1** • *Devorah Jacobson*

Thursdays • 9:30 - 10:30 am • March 25, April 1, 8

* **"I Wish My Father": A Memoir in Verse** • *Author Reading with Lesléa Newman*

Sunday, March 21 • 11:00 am

* **Prayerbook Hebrew Literacy** • *Janis Levy*

Sundays • 4:00 - 5:30 pm • April 11, 18, 25; May 2, 9, 16

* **Programs marked with an asterisk** require registration at

<http://bit.ly/aec21Sreg>

LUNCH AND LEARN

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

Wednesdays • *Amy Mittelman*

12:30 – 1:30 pm

Link to join Zoom meetings: <https://zoom.us/j/543405229>

Now in its ninth 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 during the pandemic, it expanded significantly, from a weekly program to a gathering that as a rule takes place every weekday.

On Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, Rabbi Weiner explores the Tractate *Berakhot* of the Babylonian Talmud. On Wednesdays, Amy Mittelman continues to lead discussions of racism in our society.

The conversations are 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 required - please feel free to drop in anytime

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. Now, 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.

THE WRITERS' CAFE

Sunday, February 7 • 6:45 - 8:00 pm

Moderated by Jena Schwartz

JCA Writers' Cafe is a new virtual coffeehouse where JCA members will have the opportunity to enjoy the power of the written and spoken word. We'd like to encourage you to participate by submitting your poetry, personal essays, and storytelling prowess. All ages are welcome! You are also invited to come as a listener. Connection, community, and creativity are the focus of this exciting new program, and we hope this will become an ongoing monthly event.

Guidelines for submissions/writers

- Writers should send their pieces in advance by Sunday, January 31 to Jena Schwartz, who will be facilitating: jenarschwartz@gmail.com.
- Poetry, personal essays, and fiction all welcome.
- No editorials or expletives, please.
- Each reader will have up to a maximum of 10 minutes to read.
- Please practice reading your piece out loud before you submit it, and include the amount of time at the top, along with your name.

Guidelines for comments

- Respectful and kind comments only. We will NOT be critiquing anyone's writing.
- If you'd like to say something about a piece, consider sharing what you loved, what will stay with you, or how a piece moved you.
- In the interest of time, we will not discuss the pieces. However, much like during the Torah discussion on Shabbat mornings, folks are welcome to comment in the chat area between readers (but not during).

As a promptress and coach, *Jena Schwartz* works with clients and groups providing fierce encouragement for writing and life. Her poems and personal essays have appeared in the *New York Times* and *Tikkun* magazine, among other publications. In 2020, she served as High Holidays Poet Laureate for the JCA, where she and her family have been members since 2012. Jena holds a BA in Russian Studies from Barnard College and an MFA in poetry from Emerson College. Learn more about her work at her website: www.jenaschwartz.com.

Registration required for this class at <http://bit.ly/aec21Sreg>

“THE STOLEN BEAM SERIES”: CONSIDERING
REPARATIONS FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN
DESCENDANTS OF SLAVERY

Sundays • 7:00 - 8:15 pm • February 14, 21, 28; March 7, 14

Developed by the JCA Tzedek Reparations Committee

This *5-session class is an opportunity to study and reflect on some of the writings of prominent thought leaders on the topic of Reparations for African-Americans as a path to restorative justice, including a review of the Case for Reparations, House Resolution 40, the particular Jewish case for reparations, and various models of reparations programs, past, present and future. This class is a survey of writings on the topic, not an advocacy for a particular position. Facilitated by the Reparations Sub-Committee of the JCA Tzedek Initiative: *Devorah Jacobson, Karen Levine, Sam Gladstone, Joan Epstein, Jeff Gold.*

***PLEASE NOTE:** This is not a drop-in class but one that we hope you will be able to attend all sessions, except for extenuating circumstances. Thank you.

Registration required for this class at <http://bit.ly/aec21Sreg>



JEWS IN AMERICA: PART ONE

Thursdays • March 25, April 1, 8 • 9:30 - 10:30 am

Devorah Jacobson

In this class, we will take a look at the earliest experiences of Jews in America, beginning in 1654. In the spring, we will focus on the ways in which this first wave of Jewish immigrants negotiated their lives and Jewish identities in response to their new surroundings. We will discuss responses to the first group of Jews arriving in New Amsterdam, the identity of Port Jews, and the role of the colonial synagogue-community. Three classes will be offered in the spring and three more in the fall.

Devorah Jacobson is a longtime member of the JCA. She is a rabbi, serves as Director of Spiritual Life at JGS Lifecare in Longmeadow, and has taught Adult Jewish Education classes for many years.

Registration required for this class at <http://bit.ly/aec21Sreg>

“I WISH MY FATHER”: A MEMOIR IN VERSE

Sunday, March 21 • 11:00 am

Author Reading with Lesléa Newman

Lesléa will be reading from her double memoir-in-verse, *I Carry My Mother* and *I Wish My Father*. The author says: *I Carry My Mother* starts with my mother's cancer diagnosis and ends with her death eighteen months later. Her end-of-life challenges were purely physical; mentally she remained sharp as a tack and did the New York Times crossword puzzle in ink every day until the bitter end. She knew how she wanted to live and how she wanted to die, and my job was to make sure those wishes were carried out, even when I didn't agree with them.

I Wish My Father begins with my mother's death which separated my parents, and ends with my father's death which reunites them in the world to come. My father stayed physically healthy, continuing to play tennis until he was eighty-eight, but faced mental challenges after a series of mini-strokes. It was painful to watch this proud, stubborn, Jewish man rail against going from husband to widow, attorney to retiree, tennis player to spectator, driver to passenger, and homeowner to independent living resident and lifelong New Yorker to new New Jerseyite.

Praise for *I Carry My Mother*:

“In a passionate book, Lesléa Newman chronicles her mother's dying and the phases of her own grieving. The pages seem to tremble with an accurate description of changing emotional states, all born of the closeness, humor, and love in the mother-daughter relationship.” - Naomi Replansky

Praise for *I Wish My Father*:

“My intention was to ‘peek’ at *I Wish My Father* but I couldn't put it down and after the last poem, I started again from page one and read to the end. I got to know the author's dad in all his humanity; he is part of my family now.” - Richard Michelson

More information about Lesléa Newman and her work can be found here:

<https://lesleanewman.com/books-for-adults/poetry/i-wish-my-father/>

Registration required for this program at **<http://bit.ly/aec21Sreg>**

PRAYERBOOK HEBREW LITERACY

Sundays • 4:00 - 5:30 pm • April 11, 18, 25; May 2, 9, 16

Janis Levy

The purpose of this class is to help people become more comfortable in services and at times of prayer, and to encourage participation without judgment. It acknowledges that many adults, for different reasons, feel excluded because they cannot read Hebrew well enough to chant or sing prayers in the sanctuary or at home—unless they have learned them by rote.

Many adults believe that it is too late or too difficult to learn to read Hebrew. That is not so. In this class you will gain confidence in speaking Hebrew words aloud, and although comprehension is not specifically a goal, you will acquire a greater understanding of what you are saying.

This is an opportunity for those with limited or no childhood Jewish education to study prayer book Hebrew with a structure, development and motivational approach specifically developed for the mature learner by a rabbi who devoted his life's work to adult education.

Janis Levy has been a member of the JCA since 2011 and currently helps to coordinate communications for the community. Previously, along with other volunteer and professional work in Jewish communal life, she was involved in leading services and in Jewish education. For ten years, she helped an area rabbi launch and teach classes for a major adult Hebrew literacy program in the valley. She began teaching in the Adult Education program at the JCA in the fall of 2018.

Registration required for this class at <http://bit.ly/aec21Sreg>