

West End Synagogue

Adult Education

2023 – 2024

5784

Note Please: Most of these events are in person, in our synagogue starting at 7:00 pm. In a few cases the programs on Zoom may start at 7:30. Please check before setting out.



West End Synagogue
A Reconstructionist Congregation

190 Amsterdam Avenue
212.059.0777

www.westendsynagogue.org



ONGOING WES PROGRAMS

"Spiritual Autobiography," Judith Friedman, alternate Mondays, **4:00 – 5:30 pm**. Participants will write and share short pieces on childhood memories, spiritual awakenings, personal understandings of the Torah stories and more. WES members only. New members welcome. Contact Judith Friedman.

"Chug Ivri," 2:00 – 3:00 pm. Led by David Goldfarb. Meetings are held in members' homes, last Shabbat of each month. (Starting in October). A chance to obtain fluency in Hebrew by reading and discussing stories, poetry and articles on current affairs.

"Sunday Study Minyan," 9:30 – 11:00 am, led by Michael Graff. Close study of Jewish writings. Reading in advance of each session required.

"Middah on Mondays Study Group," 7:00 – 9:00 pm, Monthly, third Monday of each month. Led by Susan Schorr. All WES members are invited to join our study of West End's Middah (ethical value/character trait) of the month. Discussions are text-based using materials from both ours and other spiritual traditions, as well as insights from modern authors, pop culture and more.

"Torah on Tuesdays" 7:00 – 9:30 pm, 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month, led by Susan Schorr. All are welcome to join our ongoing study of the Torah which will focus this year on the book of Exodus. We read the text (in English) and consider it from the perspectives of literature, sacred text, religious mythology, family lore, psychology, drama, history, sociology and more. Drop in and join the conversation, or just listen and enjoy. No prior background or knowledge is required.

HaMatmid meets at 2 pm every Saturday. Although it began as a way study the books of the Tanach beyond the Torah, over the past decade we have studied many other topics. These have included how a Torah scroll is created, pre-High Holy Day workshops, deep dives into the Sh'ma and the prayers around the Sh'ma. (Online --but check.)

ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

September 27, 2023. 7:00 pm. Rabbi Jack Romberg will discuss "A Most Unusual Rabbi, Elisha Ben Abuya". Join his interactive program to learn how "unusual" a rabbi Elisha Ben Abuya was!

October 12, 2023. 7:00 pm. Jenna Zark, Author and playwright, will discuss with Tonda Marton, her book "Crooked Lines: A Single Mom's Jewish Journey."

Jenna Zark, a produced and published playwright in Brooklyn, pulled up stakes and moved to Indiana and then Minnesota when her newly-ordained cantor husband found work in Hammond and then St. Paul. When the marriage crashed, she had to leave the congregation, her home (donated by the congregation), and whatever support system she had built up. Her challenges were many. Mainly, she wanted to provide a Jewish framework in which her young son could grow, although she lacked a traditional Jewish background. The surprise for Jenna: her efforts led to a Jewish journey for herself.

October 19, 2023. 7:00 pm. Professor Steven Zipperstein, Stanford University's "Daniel E. Koshland Professor in Jewish Culture and History." Zipperstein is the author and editor of nine books and winner of several book prizes. Currently, he is completing a biography of Philip Roth to be published by Yale University's, Jewish Lives Series. Professor Zipperstein will converse with Henry Saltzman on, "Reflections on Writing a Biography about Philip Roth".

October 30, 2023, January 18, May 16, 2024, 2024, 7 pm. Daniel Van Doren will moderate a reading of selected Jewish Short Stories (in translation) focusing on the story of Lillith. Topics will include: "The story of Lillith and Eve," by M. Dante and, "The Birth of Satan," by Sholem Asch.

November 2, 2023, 7 pm. Dr. Michael Good, will discuss his book: "The Search for Major Plagge, the Nazi Who Saved Jews." Major Plagge, the German commander of a Lithuanian work camp, saved over a thousand Jews in Vilna, Poland during World War II. A book signing will follow Dr. Good's talk.

NOVEMBER 2023. SEPHARDIC MONTH:

Connie Goldfarb is sponsoring a series of Sephardic events in November in memory of her parents, Renee and Selim Serouya. (Dates TBD)

Thursday, November 9, 2023 Debbie Franco will initiate the program with a "Taste of Sephardic Turkish Cooking Class". (Time and Place TBD)

Sunday, November 12, 2023. Sephardic music event.

Weekend of November 17, 2023: Mizrahi Scholar in Residence: Henry Green, Author of Sephardic Voices: the Untold Expulsion of Jews From Arab Lands. Professor Green is Professor of Religious Studies and former Director of Judaic and Sephardic Studies at the University of Miami.



November 30, 2023, 7 pm. Carole Kessner will moderate on Zoom only, a 58-minute documentary film starring A.B. Yehoshua himself which has been shown at many Jewish Film Festivals in the U.S. The title is *The Last Chapter of A.B. Yehoshua*, filmed in 2021. Discussion also on Zoom, will follow.

December 2, 2023, Carol Kessner will discuss Mr. Mani. Author A.B. Yehoshua died in June 2022 at the age of 85. Yehoshua was arguably one of the three greatest fiction writers of modern Israel. His books have been translated into 28 languages. A Sephardi, whose family had lived in Jerusalem for five generations, Yehoshua was a founding leader of the *Sholom Achshav* (Peace Now) movement along with his two Ashkenazi close friends, Amoz Oz and David Grossman. His work is at once full of Yehoshua's celebrated "joie de vivre," while at the same time sensitively attuned to sorrow and despair, to the realities of human life, to moral dilemma, to the political, to love, all with literary innovation and wild humor. We will be reading the novel that many regard as Yehoshua's masterpiece, *Mr. Mani*. **Please read Mr. Mani before this meeting which will be in the synagogue.**

December 5, 2023, 7 pm. Professor Nomi Stolzenberg, of the University of Southern California's School of Law, will discuss her book, "American Shtetl," a study of the controversial Haredi community, Kiryas Joel, in upstate, Orange County, New York.

December 14, 2023. 7 pm. WES's **Jerry Posman** will join with Beatrice Webber, Executive Director of "Yaffed", to discuss this remarkable advocacy organization, a non-profit whose goal is a modern curriculum for the Hasidic and Haredi yeshivas. The subject of countless articles, interviews and news programs locally, nationally and globally, she directs YAFFED, a nonprofit that advocates for education justice in the Hasidic and Haredi community. A mother of 10 and grandmother of 9, Webber left her arranged marriage several years ago, leaving her Hasidic life.

Deprived of a basic education as a child, Webber enrolled in college as an adult, earning her BA and an MBA. Trained as an interfaith minister, Beatrice Webber is now a sought-after public speaker and activist.

January 18, 2024. 7 pm. Daniel Van Doren will moderate a reading aloud of Jewish Short Stories on the theme of war with a focus on war's toll on the soul: "April 19, 1985," by Deirdre Levinson; "Og," by Avner Mandelman and "Her Three Soldiers," by Sophie Judah.

February 20, 2024. 7 pm. Professor Alisa Solomon, Director of Columbia University's School of Journalism, will discuss her book: "Wonder of Wonders: A Cultural History of Fiddler on the Roof." Since its debut in 1964, "Fiddler on the Roof" has inspired religious conversions and secular satire; its songs have been incorporated into sacred ceremonies and hip-hop hits. Alisa Solomon, author of "Wonder of Wonders" considers where the astonishing power of the beloved musical came from and why it has lasted so long.

March 2023, Date TBD 7:00 pm. Safe Haven: Jews in China. With personal narratives and photographs, panelists present their wide-ranging family stories, highlighting the Holocaust years when Shanghai sheltered some 20,000 European Jews. Host, Ellen Kracauer Hartig. Participants Ellen Kracauer Hartig, Lily Klebanoff Blake, Lilly Langotsky, Polly Brandmeyer and Aileen Jacobson. With personal narratives and photographs, panelists present their wide-ranging family stories, highlighting the Holocaust years when Shanghai sheltered some 20,000 European Jews. Host, Ellen Kracauer Hartig. Participants Ellen Kracauer Hartig, Lily Klebanoff Blake, Lilly Langotsky, Polly Brandmeyer and Aileen Jacobson.

March 2024. Date TBD 7 pm. Susan Schorr will discuss "The Jewish Understanding of God in Our Day" as a complement to her ongoing "Evolving God" program. The Evolving God is in process. It will continue in September and October on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays.

April 11, 2024, 7 pm. Dr. Arthur Flug, Director of the Holocaust Museum at Queens Community College, will describe how he used his connections and experience in New York city to turn a basement library of Judaica at the college into a thriving and important learning laboratory for tolerance.

May 2, 2024. 7 pm. Amanda Beckenstein Mbuvi, Vice President of the RRC, to speak on "Reimagining Diversity and Jewish Belonging: A Journey Through Genesis". Serving as Academic Dean of the RRC, Doctor Mbuvi oversees "a larger goal of the new RRC curriculum to train a rabbinate that reflects the expansive diversity of Jewish communities". This fits in with one of Reconstructing Judaism's central goals: to join in the Jewish efforts to dismantle systemic racism, and to advance racial diversity in the movement and the Jewish world.

May 16, 2024, 7 pm. Daniel Van Doren will moderate a reading aloud by WES congregants of three Jewish Short Stories focusing on the problems of Jews from Morocco and Ethiopia: "The Fire Keepers," by Gabriel Bensimhon, "Black" by Avner Mandelman, and "Home" by Zeeva Bukai.

May 22, 2024, 7 pm. Karen Kolodny, will discuss, "Jewish Communities from the very old to the new, from around the world: Czechoslovakia to Dubai".

TBD, 2024, 7 pm. David Prager and Sarah Wright will present a songfest: "Listening to Sondheim".