

*Remember, all
classes are on
Tuesdays at noon
in the
Blachschleger
Library*

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An invitation to

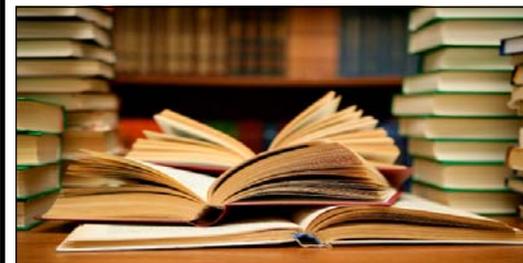
study with

Rabbi Stevens

In Torah, the Israelites are commanded again and again to study, as when Moses orders: “Gather the people – men, women and children, and the strangers in your communities – that they may hear and so learn.” In traditional Jewish culture the elite of society were not princes or warriors, but scholars, and they – not business or political leaders – were the most desirable marriage partners. As the Talmud teaches: “No one is poor except he who lacks knowledge. A person who has knowledge has everything. A person who lacks knowledge, what has he?”

This year’s study program with Rabbi Stevens offers something for everyone – on Jewish history and culture, practices and prophets, controversies and humor.

Join us! – and bring a friend, everyone is welcome. We meet in the Blachschleger Library. All classes are free and are on Tuesdays at noon, and meet for about an hour.



THE THEMES AND PRACTICES OF ROSH HASHANAH

This two-session class reviews the underlying themes of these two holiest days on the Jewish calendar, and explores the background of traditional Jewish practices.

Sept. 20, Rosh Hashanah • Sept. 27, Yom Kippur

THE JOY & PATHOS OF JEWISH HUMOR

Jewish humor has its own distinctive flavor, reflective of the historical experience of the Jewish people. Even Torah's humor was unique in its day, though much of that humor is literally lost in translation. This class will explore different genres of Jewish humor and story-telling through the ages.

October 18 • October 25 • November 1

ETHICAL DILEMMAS: USING JEWISH SOURCES TO GUIDE US TOWARDS ETHICAL SOLUTIONS

We will examine several real-life dilemmas and, after reviewing some Jewish textual sources (in English), see if we can agree on the best possible outcome.

November 8 • November 15

THE HIDDEN STORY OF CHANUKAH

The Hidden Story of Chanukah. We think we know the story of Chanukah – how the heroic Maccabees overthrew the Assyrian invaders and how their cruse of holy oil miraculously lasted eight days. The history is far more complex, often surprising yet no less inspirational. This one should generate lots of discussion.

November 29

THE PROPHETS

The biblical books of the Hebrew prophets are among the most beloved and spiritually meaningful writings we have. Many passages in the Jewish prayer book derive from these writings; indeed, the words attributed to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Hosea and the other prophets constitute perhaps the best known literature in the world, after the stories of Torah.

The prophetic period lasted for hundreds of years over the first millennium BCE. This course of five classes will present some historic background; discuss the nature of prophesy from a Jewish perspective, and read selected passages and commentaries.

January 10, The prophetic period in the context of Jewish history, the nature of prophesy, and selected readings to illustrate the prophetic method.

January 17, The prophecies of the three Isaiahs.

January 24, The prophet Jeremiah: His life and writings.

January 31, The prophet Ezekial and his mystical visions.

February 7, The "minor" prophets, including Amos and Hosea.

GREAT CONTROVERSIES IN JEWISH HISTORY

We Jews have almost always faced threats from the outside world – from the Greek Empire to the Romans; from the religious threats and persecutions of Christians and Moslems; from the racism of anti-Semities to the anti-Israel threats from Israel's Arab neighbors.

But we have also faced internal challenges, as our community has tried to define itself through the ages. From the Biblical period when priests and prophets vied for the right to define Judaism's religious message, Judaism has never been monolithic. This course will explore five intense conflicts in Jewish life that, in some cases, came close to threatening schism. Join us at Temple Beth Or for an adult education program that will cast Jewish history in a new light, as we take up these subjects.

February 21, The Saducees vs. the Pharisees.

February 28, The House of Hillel and the House of Shammai.

March 7, The Karaites and the Rabbinites.

March 14, The Hassidim and the Mitnagdim.

March 21, Reform Judaism and Orthodox Judaism.

JEWISH ETHICAL WILLS

This class will explore a fascinating genre of Jewish literature that addresses some of life's basic questions: What have I learned, and what would I teach, and what kind of good name do I want to leave for those who follow? What are the values we hold most dear, and how should these be passed on to our children? How many of us can recall what our parents taught us, along the lines of, "My father used to say," or "My mother used to say"?

In Judaism, there is a way to gather these thoughts in writing, and it is called the Ethical Will. Usually written in old age, but not immediately before the writer's death, ethical wills are deeply personal, private, charmingly natural and unaffected, rather than formal treatises on ethics. Since they were not designed for publication, the ethical will is a clear revelation of the writer's innermost feelings and ideals. Many of them are also of historical interest, telling of the author's childhood or wanderings or how they became educated. In these two sessions we will read and discuss some fine examples.

April 4 • April 18,

PIRKEI AVOT: THE WISDOM OF THE SAGES

Pirkei Avot: The Wisdom of the Sages. Part 1 of 2. This collection of rabbinic wisdom, now 1,800 years old, summarizes the central teachings of Judaism. Many sayings are well-known, some less so, but most remain amazingly relevant in our day.

May 2 • May 9,