

# *Lifelong Learning Catalog*



Temple Shaari Emeth



**2024-2025**

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**How can we exercise  
our humanity in the  
direction of goodness?  
By freely choosing  
what God would have  
us do.**

**– Rabbi Harold Kushner**

Dear TSE family,

As we enter the year 5785, our hearts are filled with anticipation for the journey of Jewish exploration, connection, and growth that lies ahead. Our Lifelong Learning initiative this year includes a diverse array of sessions that touch upon areas of Jewish culture, history, contemporary issues and more.

At its core, Judaism is not just a set of beliefs; it's a way of life, a lens through which we interpret the world around us, and an anchor that roots us in centuries of tradition and wisdom. At Temple Shaari Emeth, we are motivated by the belief that each of our Lifelong Learning offerings serves as a bridge that connects our vibrant community to the vast tapestry of Jewish history, thought, and culture.

Recognizing the beautifully varied tapestry of our own community, we remain committed to ensuring that everyone can find a way to participate. Our program this year is a reflection of that commitment as we aim to strike an appropriate balance between program access and meaningful, in-person participation. While many of our programs will be accessible via Zoom, we highly encourage those who can to join us in person at TSE. It's in these in-person gatherings where conversations flourish and spill over into the parking lot, where laughter resonates a tad longer, and where our community feels most vibrant. However, for those moments when in-person participation may not be feasible, we are grateful for the digital avenues that ensure our community remains connected. Not all programs lend themselves to a hybrid format; while some will be available to join over Zoom, other programs will only be accessible in person at the temple or live-streamed when possible. Please consult the program descriptions in this catalog for details regarding each event's online availability.

On behalf of the TSE clergy team, we warmly invite you to join us in this year's Lifelong Learning voyage. We hope that, as you traverse through the following offerings, you feel the same sense of energy and dedication with which they were crafted. We're excited for the shared moments of discovery and spiritual growth that lie ahead!

L'shalom,

Rabbi Jonathan Falco  
Assistant Rabbi

# Sunday Series

In person and Zoom: [tselinks.org/sunday](https://tselinks.org/sunday)



## **From the Catskills with Love**

*September 15, 2024*

The now mostly shuttered summer resorts of Southeastern New York's Catskill Mountains—Grossinger's, Kutsher's, the Concord, and others—provided the formative years for many prominent Jewish comedy stars up through the 1970s. Discover the origins of the Borscht Belt and how such youngsters as Woody Allen, Shelley Berman, Totie Fields, Milton Berle, Joan Rivers, Jerry Lewis, and Danny Kaye left their audiences in stitches. Plus, we take a look at the movies inspired by the "Jewish Alps."

FilmShul is an informative, engaging and fun presentation on Hollywood and the Jewish American Experience, curated by noted film historians Irv Slifkin and Laurence Lerman and specifically designed for Zoom interactivity. FilmShul also focuses on the history and role of Jews in the entertainment industries, which they have been involved with since the earliest days. The Jewish people were trailblazers in all mediums--vaudeville, theater, radio, movies and television--and their stamp has remained indelible throughout the decades.

The role of FilmShul is to reflect on and relate to the American Jewish experience so audiences will be informed and entertained, and recognize the valuable contributions made by entertainment innovators of the Jewish faith.

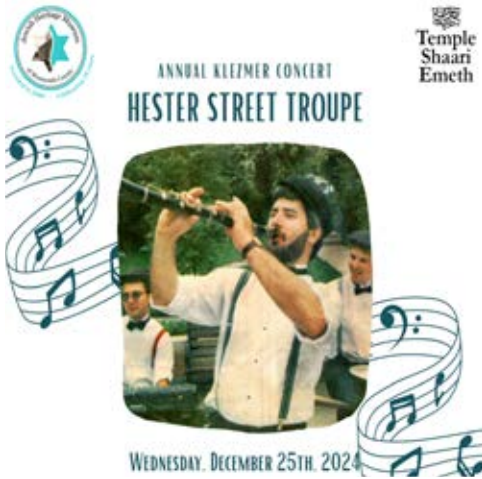


## **The History of Jewish Names**

*November 17, 2024*

Discover the rich history and evolution of Jewish names in our workshop with professional genealogist, Rabbi Scott Kalmikoff. This engaging session will delve into the origins and meanings of Jewish given and last names, revealing how they reflect historical migrations, cultural exchanges, and religious traditions.

Rabbi Scott's hope is to excite you about genealogy & empower you to conduct the research on your own. For Rabbi Scott, genealogy isn't just a hobby or profession. Genealogy is a journey of personal exploration & self discovery. While learning about our ancestors we learn about ourselves. While learning about our history we connect with & deepen our Jewish identities. Jewish history & our families' stories are our story & deeply influence who we are today in ways we may never fully comprehend. Genealogical research provides us with a precious gift we can pass to the next generation, L'Dor VaDor.



## **Klezmer Concert at the Jewish Heritage Museum of Monmouth County**

*December 25, 2024*

Join TSE at the Jewish Heritage Museum of Monmouth County for a special Klezmer performance by the Hester Street Troupe at 2pm! With Alan Sweifach on clarinet, Jay Sweifach on keyboard, and Jim Bazewicz on drums, it's sure to be a great time. This ensemble's dynamic performance is a must-see event that promises to be both entertaining and culturally enriching. Tickets are \$25 and spaces are limited, so reserve your spot now at:

[tselinks.org/klezmer](https://tselinks.org/klezmer)



## **Inheritance Tax – The Presentation**

*February 9, 2025*

This is the tax no one wants to talk about but will affect us all. Join Lisa Elkin-Wallis, from New Jersey's Inheritance and Estate Tax Branch as she discusses the role of an executor or administrator, types of beneficiary classes, if taxes are owed, filing requirements, how to obtain waivers, and other important information you should know followed by a Q & A session.

Lisa has been with the New Jersey Division of Taxation for 14 years. Throughout this time, she has gained extensive experience as an Auditor in the Inheritance and Estate Tax Branch. Lisa's various roles within the department include auditing, special projects, interacting with and aiding the public with Inheritance and Estate Tax issues and training. Prior to her employment with the State of New Jersey, Lisa was an accountant in the private sector. Her knowledge and comfort with both the private and public sector have played an integral part in her success with Taxation and desire to educate the citizens of New Jersey about the Inheritance Tax. In addition, Lisa has been a member of Temple Shaari Emeth since 2009, and has been a proud part of the teaching staff on and off for the past 9 years. In her spare time, Lisa enjoys spending time with her kids, Olivia and Ethan, going on adventures with her husband, Larry, or hanging out with her dog, Sophie, and two cats, Mia and Delilah.



## **Progressively Passionate: Jewish Women in Politics** *March 16, 2025*

Like many other minority groups, Jewish women faced very little political representation in history. Hidden heroines to the American political sphere, Jewish women formed a distinctive activist identity drawing on their gender, religious/ethnic identities, as well as their social class. Organizations such as the National Council of Jewish Women, National American Woman Suffrage Association, and the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods granted women a platform for their political activism while forging connections to other American political constituencies. In this talk, attendees will learn about Jewish women in local, state, and federal politics.

Jessica Solomon is an experienced museum professional specializing in curation, museum operations, and grant writing. She earned a BA in History and International Studies from Rowan University, focusing on Economic History and Globalization, and an MA in History from Monmouth University. During her studies, Jessica was inducted into several honor societies for history and leadership. She received the Rowan University History Department Chair's List Award for outstanding academic performance and contributions to historical research. She was also recognized as the Highest-Ranking Degree Recipient in the History Program from Monmouth University in 2022. Additionally, Jessica holds a Non-Profit Management Certification from Brookdale Community College. Jessica's scholarly work has been featured in the *Armstrong Journal of History*, *Portmanteau*, and *New Jersey Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. She began her career in public history as a Collections Intern at the Gloucester County Historical Society, where she developed experience in museum archiving, appraising, museum operations, and data management. Jessica's professional journey includes serving as the first Executive Director of the Jewish Heritage Museum of Monmouth County in Freehold, where she has been for over five years.



## **On the Map** *May 4, 2025*

Still demoralized after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Israel was hungry for a collective uplifting event. *ON THE MAP*, a fast-moving, emotional and awe-inspiring documentary, recounts the story of how one Tel Aviv team no one thought could win toppled the four-time defending European Champions and put Israel firmly on the map.

Featuring interviews with the Jewish-American athletes who made history, *ON THE MAP* combines the pulse-pounding action of a high-stakes game with an incendiary political situation at the height of the Cold War to deliver a film that honors Israeli heroes, mesmerizes fans of the game and captures the spirit of a nation triumphant and victorious against all odds.



# Shabbat Speaker Series

Join us for services four times a year in the months below to learn from our guest speakers. The knowledge they will share and the passion they bring will make for an exciting series of Shabbat teachings.



## **To Life: A Story of Survival and the BRCA Gene** *October 25, 2024*

Join us at services on October 25th for a special conversation with TSE member Felice Hyman who will share her story of surviving the BRCA gene and hope for the future. Come for a discussion about the true threat this gene poses to the lives of the Jewish community, the need for wider recognition throughout the Jewish world, and the actions that must be taken to potentially save lives.



## **Veteran's Day Shabbat: Manhattan to Freehold with a Layover in Saigon** *November 8, 2024*

Allen Rothman was President of Temple Shaari Emeth from 1998 to 2000. He has also been President of Men's Club and chaired numerous committees. He and his wife Evelyn have been members for close to 40 years and their two children, Nancy and Larry, had their bat and bar mitzvah and confirmations here.

After serving on active duty for 3 years, Allen served in reserve capacities for another 25 years retiring in 1996 as a Lieutenant Colonel. In his concurrent civilian life, he was an actuary, leaving the corporate arena in 2009 to form his own actuarial consulting firm (killed by the pandemic) and to teach computer science as an adjunct at Brookdale Community College.



## **Combating Anti-Semitism in Schools and the Workplace**

*January 24, 2025*

Come for Shabbat services on January 24, 2024 to hear TSE member Seth Ptasiwicz share about his legal work countering anti-Semitism and his involvement with the newly instituted Jewish Bar Association of New Jersey (JBAR) that advocates for Jewish causes and the rule of law, both in legal spaces and the general public.

Seth Ptasiwicz is a Partner with the law firm of KHPP. Mr. Ptasiwicz brings over 30 years of experience representing the interests of employees, management, ERISA plans, and unions in all facets of labor and employment, including litigating numerous claims involving employment discrimination, workplace harassment, retaliation, wage and hour disputes, family medical leave, accommodation of employee disability, violation of prevailing wage laws, and unfair labor practice before the federal and state courts in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and more. In addition, Mr. Ptasiwicz has provided counsel to employees, management, and unions on their rights and responsibilities under federal, state and local employment and labor laws. Mr. Ptasiwicz has a strong commitment to giving back to the community. In that capacity, he has provided countless hours of pro bono legal services as well as served on various court committees.



## **Bearing Witness: A Holocaust Survivor's Story**

*April 25, 2025*

In 1939, two Jewish Americans by the name of Gilbert and Elanor Kraus embarked on a risky mission to the heart of Nazi Germany, rescuing 50 Jewish children in Nazi-occupied Vienna. Paul Beller is one of those 50 children. Paul will share about his memories of life in Nazi-occupied Vienna and the covert efforts that saved him.



## **Pride Shabbat**

*June 20, 2025*



Judaism, as an all-in-one ethnicity, religion, and civilization, is as vibrant and multifaceted as the greater world in which we live. In our Reform Jewish tradition, we embrace radical welcoming and champion diversity as a means to enrich our communal life as well as our individual understandings. Join TSE in celebrating Pride Month as we welcome a Keshet representative to come speak to us about the intersection of LGBTQ+ identity and modern Jewish life.

Keshet envisions a world in which all LGBTQ Jews and our families can live with full equality, justice, and dignity. By strengthening Jewish communities and equipping Jewish organizations with the skills and knowledge they need to make all LGBTQ Jews feel welcome, we work to ensure the full equality of all LGBTQ Jews and our families in Jewish life. We also create spaces in which all queer Jewish youth feel seen and valued and advance LGBTQ rights nationwide.

**Without surrendering the right to think and act in freedom...I can believe in a very literal sense in the God who revealed the Torah to Israel. And I can try to carry on the Jewish traditions of study, worship, and deeds of love.**

– Rabbi Bernard J. Bamberger

# Adult Hebrew



## Class for Beginners

**Instructor:** Marilyn Beutel

Weekly on Tues. starting on Oct 29th at 7:00pm; Divided into 2-semesters (2nd semester final class is June 24, 2025)

\$180 per semester for TSE members; \$250 per semester for non-Members

Have you ever been interested in learning to read Shabbat prayers? Have you wanted to help your child prepare for his/her b'nai mitzvah? Have you missed out on your own bar/bat mitzvah service? Or are you just intrigued about learning something new with other interested adults? If so, this year Shaari Emeth is offering our Adult Hebrew Class for Beginners! We will start the year with learning the Aleph Bet and continue with the study of the Shabbat prayers. It will be instructed by TSE member Marilyn Beutel, an experienced Hebrew and Judaic studies educator.

Classes will begin on October 29th at 7:00pm and continue on Tuesday nights throughout the school year. Ready to tackle what your children have been studying for years? Sign up and join us!



## Class for Adults B'nai Mitzvah

**Instructor:** Rabbi Jonathan Falco

6pm on Tuesdays:

Nov 12, 26

Dec. 10;

Jan 21, 28; (2025)

Feb 11, 25;

March 11;

April 1, 22;

May 6, 20;

June 17, 24 \*rehearsal dates

\*June 28, 2025 – Adult B'nai Mitzvah Service

A continuation of Adult Hebrew for Beginners, this 14 week program covers myriad aspects of Jewish identity, history, prayer, holidays, and more as we work up to the Adult B'nai Mitzvah service on Saturday, June 28, 2025. Service preparation includes meetings with the clergy to prepare liturgy and Torah readings. \$200 fee associated with this program.

# Clergy Courses

In person and Zoom: [tselinks.org/learningwithclergy](https://tselinks.org/learningwithclergy)



## **Rabbi Falco's mini-course**

### **Chosen for a Purpose: Jewish Identity and the Concept of "Chosenness"**

Wednesdays 7:00pm - 8:00pm

This six-week mini-course explores one of Judaism's most fundamental and complex ideas: the notion of being a "chosen people." Together, we will examine how chosenness is presented in the Torah, interpreted by rabbinic sages, and reimagined by modern thinkers. Participants will engage with key texts and grapple with the ethical, theological, and communal implications of this concept. By the end of the course, we will reflect on what chosenness means for Jewish identity and practice in today's world.

#### **Schedule:**

November 6: The Origins of Chosenness: A Covenant with God

November 13: Chosenness in Torah: A Blessing & Challenge

November 20: Chosenness in Rabbinic Literature: Interpreting Identity & Mission

December 4: Modern Perspectives: Embracing or Reimagining the Idea of Chosenness

December 11: Modern Challenges: Chosenness in the Face of Inclusivity & Universalism

December 18: Personal & Communal Reflections: What does Chosenness Mean Today?



## **Rabbi Melinda Panken's mini-course**

### **Understanding Israel: The Legacy of the Past and the Challenge of the Future**

Thursdays 11:00am - 12pm

This six session course delves into the critical events of 1947 and 1967—building upon the 1917 Balfour Declaration—as key moments when Zionism inspired new perspectives on Jewish identity for future generations. It invites Jews to participate in an open and diverse discussion about Jewish identity, community, ethics, and theology, especially as they relate to nationhood, land, sovereignty, Jerusalem, occupation, and moral boundaries.

#### **Schedule:**

January 9: 1917 – The Balfour Declaration: The Idea of a Homeland for the Jewish People

January 16: 1947 – The United Nations Partition Plan: The Jews in the World

January 23: 1967 – The Six Day War: Power, Land and God

January 30: Judea and Samaria – Occupation or Liberation

February 6: One State, Two States – Moral Red Lines

February 13: Jerusalem of God, Prayer and Peoplehood and Wrap Up



### **Cantor Wally's mini-course**

**"Do Jewish melodies wear a kippah? A history of Jewish music, arranged in six parts."**

*Wednesdays 7:00pm - 8:00pm*

What defines inherently Jewish music? How do these melodies impact our spiritual lives? What is the "authentic" tune for my favorite prayer? Explore with our cantor the origins of the singing and chanting in which we participate at Temple Shaari Emeth, from melodies so old they could have been given on Mount Sinai along with the Torah, to recent compositions. Learn a musicological vocabulary to discuss the melodic choices we make. Together we will examine the expression of our liturgy and sacred texts through music, and what the melody choice might say about our own experience of Jewish practice.

#### **Schedule:**

February 19: An Introduction to the Study of Jewish Music -  
establishing a musical vocabulary

February 26: What Is Jewish About This Music?

March 5: Why We Sing What We Sing When We Sing It -  
Music of the Jewish Calendar

March 12: Who Changed My Service?

March 19: The Music of Liberal Judaism in America Now

March 26: That Doesn't Sound Jewish at All - The Music of K'lal  
Yisrael (Jewish communities around the world)

**Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations?  
Speak if you have understanding.  
Do you know who fixed its dimensions  
Or who measured it with a line?  
Onto what were its bases sunk?  
Who set its cornerstone  
When the morning stars sang together  
And all the divine beings shouted for joy?**

**– Job 38:4-7**

# *A New Shabbat Experience at TSE: The Table*



Join us at the Shabbat dinner table for small-group discussions on hot contemporary issues, facilitated by moderators.

Registration Required: [tselinks.org/table](https://tselinks.org/table)

In a world increasingly marked by division and animosity, The Table serves as a powerful antidote. This innovative program is designed to bring together individuals from diverse generations and ideologies, fostering meaningful dialogue and mutual understanding. At The Table, we believe that by sharing our stories and perspectives, we can bridge the gaps that divide us. The program encourages participants to engage in open and respectful conversations, where differing viewpoints are not just tolerated but embraced. Through structured discussions, The Table creates a safe space for dialogue, allowing participants to explore complex issues, challenge assumptions, and discover common ground. In a time when hatred seems to overshadow our shared humanity, The Table reminds us that, at our core, we are all human beings navigating the same world, despite our differences. By sitting together, listening to one another, and sharing our experiences, we can cultivate empathy and build connections that transcend ideological divides.

Join us at The Table, where every voice matters and every story counts. Together, let's transform our conversations into pathways for understanding and unity.

On nights when we offer The Table we will hold a brief Shabbat service and then those who wish to participate will be split into smaller groups during oneq Shabbat to discuss the following questions over refreshments:

**Friday, November 22, 2024**

**Friday, January 31, 2025**

**Friday, March 28, 2025**

**What are your thoughts on the War in Gaza?**

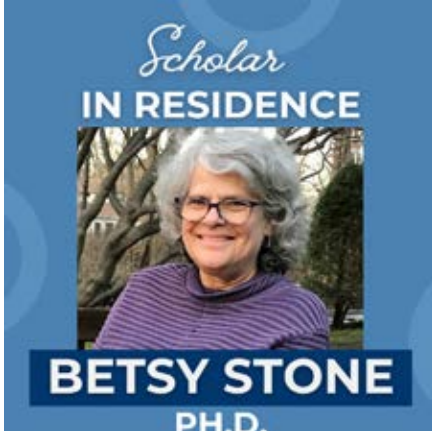
**How are you feeling post elections?**

**What is your understanding of God?**

**The Architect of the universe creates anew each day.  
Therefore each day is an utterly new creation.  
Take as much as you can from what each day has to offer.**

**– Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav**

# Scholar in Residence



## **Betsy Stone, Ph.D.**

Betsy Stone, a retired psychologist, is an engaging speaker whose passion for wellness in the lives of families has brought her invitations to teach throughout North America and Europe. She leads groups for clergy, as they navigate the complexities of their personal and professional roles, as well as serving as a Scholar in Residence for Congregations and Clergy groups. In the past, she has taught on topics such as Post-Traumatic Growth, Grief, Anxiety and Stress, Character Strengths, Generational Differences, and many more. We're excited to welcome Betsy as TSE's Scholar in Residence for the 5785 year! See the schedule of her visit with us below:

### **Friday, February 21, 2025**

7:30pm Shabbat services featuring Betsy Stone, Ph.D. as speaker

### **Saturday, February 22, 2025**

11:15-11:30 Nosh & Coffee

11:30-12:45 Session 1 (Generational Differences)

12:45-1:30 Lunch in social hall

1:30-2:45 Session 2 (Trauma & Post-traumatic Growth)

2:45-3:00 Coffee break

3:00-4:00 Session 3 (Anxiety & Anti-Semitism)

### **Sunday, February 23, 2025**

9:00-11:00 Schmear & Schmooze with Parents: *Managing Your Stress & Anxiety So You Can Manage Theirs*

11:15-1:00 Professional Development for Religious School Teachers: *Students in a Post-Covid Society*

**“...the word of God came to Abram in a vision, saying,  
‘Fear not, Abram:  
I am a shield to you and your reward shall be very  
great...  
Look to the heaven and count the stars...so shall your  
offspring be.’  
And because he put his trust in God,  
God reckoned it to his merit.”**

**– Genesis 15:1,5,6**



# Saturday Torah Study w/Rabbi Falco



Saturdays at 9am in TSE Moadon, followed by minyan at 10am

**Zoom link:** [www.shaariemeth.org/torah](http://www.shaariemeth.org/torah)

A lively discussion and thoughtful study of the weekly Torah portion. Guided by discussion questions rooted in the text, our dialogues veer into realms ranging from the ethical/philosophical to the legal and much more. Grounded in Torah, there's no limit to the subjects we cover. Torah study led by Rabbi Falco begins at 9am followed by Shabbat minyan at 10am led by community members and R. Falco on a rotating basis. Stay for one or the other, or come for both! Each session occurs in person and participants are welcome to join either one or both by Zoom. No Hebrew or prior knowledge is necessary to attend. All are welcome to join.

# Wednesday Torah Study with Rabbi Panken



Wednesdays 11am-12pm in the TSE Moadon

**Zoom link:** [www.shaariemeth.org/torah](http://www.shaariemeth.org/torah)

Rabbi Panken continues word by word, line by line through the Book of Deuteronomy in a close reading of the text. No Hebrew or prior knowledge is necessary, just a desire to discuss Torah with a nice group of people sharing ideas and a cup of coffee. Participants may join by Zoom or in person. All are welcome.

# Tikkun Leil Shavuot w/TSE clergy



June 1, 2025 from 4pm-7:15pm

Come to TSE for a special Tikkun Leil Shavuot program with our clergy members on the teachings of Shavuot, starting with a serving of blintzes! Rabbi Panken, Cantory Wally, and Rabbi Falco will each teach a class and share their unique insights on a topic related to the holiday. Afterward, come grab a slice of cheesecake, symbolizing the sweetness of Torah and the joys of the Shavuot celebration. Don't miss this opportunity to be together, learn, and celebrate the beauty of our heritage. All are welcome!

# Rabbi Panken's Jewish Interest Book Club



**Thursday**  
**6:00 p.m. on Zoom**  
**(Registration Required)**

**7:00 p.m. in person at the Temple**

Zoom Link: [tselinks.org/bookclub](https://tselinks.org/bookclub)

Teach me Your way, O  
God, and I will walk  
in Your truth; let my  
heart be undivided in  
reverence for Your name

– Psalm 86:11

**November 20, 2024**

**Uncomfortable Conversations With a Jew by Emmanuel Acho and Noa Tishby**

For Emmanuel Acho and Noa Tishby no question about Jews is off-limits. They go there. They cover Jews and money. Jews and power. Jews and privilege. Jews and white privilege. The Black and Jewish struggle. Emmanuel asks, Did Jews kill Jesus? To which Noa responds, "Why are Jewish people history's favorite scapegoat?" They unpack Judaism itself: Is it a religion, culture, a peoplehood, or a race? And: Are you antisemitic if you're anti-Zionist? The questions—and answers—might make you squirm, but together, they explain the tropes, stereotypes, and catalysts of antisemitism in America today.

**January 29, 2025**

**Kantika by Elizabeth Graver**

A dazzling Sephardic multigenerational saga that moves from Istanbul to Barcelona, Havana, and New York, exploring displacement, endurance, and family as home. A kaleidoscopic portrait of one family's displacement across four countries, *Kantika*—"song" in Ladino—follows the joys and losses of Rebecca Cohen, feisty daughter of the Sephardic elite of early 20th-century Istanbul. Exploring identity, place and exile, *Kantika* also reveals how the female body-in work, art and love-serves as a site of both suffering and joy. A haunting, inspiring meditation on the tenacity of women, this lush, lyrical novel from Elizabeth Graver celebrates the insistence on seizing beauty and grabbing hold of one's one and only life.

**March 19, 2025**

**The Amen Effect by Rabbi Sharon Brous**

In a time of loneliness and isolation, social rupture and alienation, what will it take to mend our broken hearts and rebuild our society? Sharon Brous—a leading American rabbi—makes the case that the spiritual work of our time, as instinctual as it is counter-cultural, is to find our way to one other in celebration, in sorrow, and in solidarity. It is through honoring our most basic human instinct-- the yearning for real connection-- that we reawaken our shared humanity and begin to heal. This kind of sacred presence is captured by the word amen, a powerful ancient idea that we affirm the fullness of one another's experience by demonstrating, in body and word: "I see you. You are not alone."

**May 28, 2025**

**The Lost Shtetl by Max Gross**

A remarkable debut novel about a small Jewish village in the Polish forest that is so secluded no one knows it exists . . . until now. For decades, the tiny Jewish shtetl of Kreskol existed in happy isolation, virtually untouched and unchanged. Spared by the Holocaust and the Cold War, its residents enjoyed remarkable peace. It missed out on cars, and electricity, and the internet, and indoor plumbing. But when a marriage dispute spins out of control, the whole town comes crashing into the twenty-first century.