

SHAVUOT



ACROSS BROOKLYN

SUNDAY JUNE 1, 2025



Schedule at a Glance

9:00 PM

Contemporary Creative Service led by local clergy and ritualists (Chapel)

9:45 PM

Traditional/Egalitarian Service (Rotunda)

10:20 PM

Welcome and Introduction to Learning (Rotunda)

10:30 PM

Learning throughout the buildings. See following page for a breakdown of sessions.

*asterisks indicate sessions that use instruments, electricity, or writing

Each session is 55 minutes, followed by a 10 minute break

This year we will have some special treats between sessions 2 & 3 and 4 & 5 to help us make it to sunrise!

5:00 AM

Sunrise Shavuot morning services (Chapel)

Locations:

Sanctuary Building (271 Garfield Place) and Temple House (274 Garfield Place)

Boardroom: Temple House, 1st floor off the lobby (to the right)

Chapel: Temple House, 1st floor as you walk in the Garfield entrance

Social Hall: Temple House, 1st floor, next to the bathrooms as you are walking toward the lobby

Rotunda: Sanctuary building, lower floor. Enter via staircases on left and right side of the main vestibule to the sanctuary, or via staircase or elevator through blue vestibule on Garfield Place.

Classrooms are named after Hebrew letters, alphabetized from left of entrance to the Rotunda:

Aleph, Bet, Gimel, Dalet, Hay, Vav

Our Pluralistic Approach

Shavuot Across Brooklyn is one of the crown jewels of Brooklyn's pluralistic Jewish calendar. People of every denomination, identity, and political perspective are invited to teach and learn and no one approach is representative of the whole. The Rabbis taught that there are 70 faces of Torah, and every one of them is precious. As we encounter ideas that are different from our own, we expect all participants to treat one another with dignity, compassion, and respect.

<p>Block One (10:30 PM):</p> <p>Larry Magarik - Aleph</p> <p>Rabbi Dr. Barat Ellman - Bet</p> <p>Rabbi David Kline - Gimel</p> <p>*Iain Levine - Dalet</p> <p>*Chloe Nassau - Hay</p> <p>Rabbi Dr. Lisa Grant - Vav</p> <p>Carrie Bloss, Clara Goetz, and Sue Yavin - Sanctuary</p> <p>Rabbi Michelle Dardashti - Chapel</p> <p>*Leslie Goldberg and Naomi Rabeeya - Social Hall</p> <p>*Rabbi Leora Kaye and Rabbi Josh Weinberg - Board Room</p>	<p>Block Two (11:35 PM):</p> <p>Larry Magarik - Aleph</p> <p>Rabbi Regina Sandler-Phillips - Bet</p> <p>Rabbi Madeleine Fortney - Gimel</p> <p>*Yvette Zzauer - Dalet</p> <p>Rabbi Royi Shaffin - Hay</p> <p>Rana Bickel - Vav</p> <p>Tamar Nachmany - Sanctuary</p> <p>Rabbi Matt Green - Chapel</p> <p>*Shira Kline - Social Hall</p> <p>*Sonia Alexander and Sophie Ellman-Golan - Boardroom</p>
<p>Block Three (12:40 AM):</p> <p>*Lior Lekner - Aleph</p> <p>Joshua Krug - Bet</p> <p>Rabbi Josh Weinberg - Gimel</p> <p>*Sonia Chajet Wides - Dalet</p> <p>*Yasmin Edison - Hay</p> <p>Yoni Nachmany - Vav</p> <p>Dr. David Brodsky - Sanctuary</p>	<p>Block Four (1:45 AM):</p> <p>Phil Getz - Aleph</p> <p>Jonah Pitkowski - Bet</p> <p>Joey Yudelsohn - Gimel</p> <p>Stav Appel - Dalet</p> <p>Isaac Brosilow - Hay</p> <p>Nigun Collective BK - Sanctuary</p>
<p>Block Five (2:50 AM):</p> <p>Rana Bickel - Aleph</p> <p>Rabbi Regina Sandler-Phillips - Bet</p> <p>Shoshi Finkel - Gimel</p> <p>Dov Greenwood - Dalet</p> <p>*Jeremiah Lockwood - Sanctuary</p>	<p>Block Six (3:55 AM):</p> <p>Solomon Fox - Aleph</p> <p>Sam Mellins - Gimel</p> <p>Russ Agdern - Sanctuary</p>

**asterisks indicate sessions that use instruments, electricity, or writing*

Class Descriptions and Teacher Bios

Block One (10:30 PM):

[“The Tikkun in the Zohar” with Larry Magarik \(Aleph\)](#)

Why do we study tonight? The origin of the Tikkun Leyl Shavuot is the Zohar, a Kabbalistic work published in Spain around 1295. We will study the Zohar's formulation. We will examine alternate meanings of the word "tikkun." We will also discuss what meaning mysticism might have in our world. All texts available in translation.

Larry Magarik is a member of Altshul, has taught at Shavuot Across Brooklyn, Altshul Bet Midrash, Prozdor at Jewish Theological Seminary and National Havurah Institute, and published articles in Kerem and Jewish Bible Quarterly.

[“What is Ha-aretz for a migratory people?” with Rabbi Dr. Barat Ellman \(Bet\)](#)

The Hebrew Bible may rightly be understood as migration literature - stories about migration and migratory people whose relationship to the land of Israel undergoes shifts and transformations. This session will explore attitudes of biblical authors (themselves products of exile) toward the Land of Israel that can be inferred from texts in Genesis, Leviticus, Ezra-Nehemiah and Jeremiah.

Rabbi Barat Ellman, Ph.D. is a progressive rabbi dedicated to the flourishing of all people, and a justice activist committed to anti-racism, criminal justice reform, and police accountability, and to immigrant, refugee, and undocumented people's rights. She teaches theology and Biblical Literature at Fordham, in adult and interfaith education settings, and was formerly on the faculty of the Bard Prison Initiative. Rabbi Ellman is a member of Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ) and T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights. She is a founding member of Rabbis4Ceasefire. In addition, she is on the Advisory Committee for Faith Communities for Just Reentry, an active member of CloseRikers/the Freedom Agenda, #CommunitiesNotCages, #HALTSolitary, and the Coalition to Restore Voting Rights to Incarcerated People in NY State.

["Torah Zionism" with Rabbi David L. Kline \(Gimmel\)](#)

Zionism entered Jewish thought and aspiration in the words of Y'chezkel/Ezekiel the prophet during the Babylonian exile, 6th century BCE. A second prophet, whose words are included in the Book of Isaiah, added meaning and purpose: Israel would be a light to the nations on the path to peace. The teaching became part of Torah. Another kind of Zionism began as response to antisemitism in the 19th century. Both are torah but one has led to dire war.

Rabbi David L Kline, HUC 1962, is retired and lives with his wife in Brooklyn where his three children and five grandchildren also reside. He leads H'evrah Torah on Shabbat mornings.

[*"War crimes in Gaza? a Jewish perspective" with Iain Levine \(Dalet\)](#)

The Gaza conflict has become so polarizing that a reasoned discourse on what human rights and the laws of war have to say about the conduct of Hamas and the IDF is almost impossible. The Israeli government and much of the American Jewish establishment have sought to avoid accountability for Israel's conduct through weaponizing charges of anti-Semitism. And many supporters of the Palestinian cause have sought to justify Hamas's conduct by citing Israel's oppression. But what do the laws of war say about what constitutes a just war? Have the IDF and Hamas committed war crimes and how do we know? And can one charge both sides with war crimes and atrocities without being anti-Israel or anti-Palestine? Tough questions but what better a time to grapple with them?

Iain Levine is a long-time member of CBE, where his wife sits on the board of trustees and his two children were bat and bar mitzvah. His career has been spent working on international human rights and humanitarian issues, including ten years in conflict zones in Africa, over a decade with UNICEF, and senior positions with Amnesty International, Human

Rights Watch, and the human rights team at Meta. He has particular expertise in documenting and reporting on violations of human rights and the laws of war in conflict zones.

***"Writing our Grief" with Chloe Nassau (Hay)**

We invite you to an evening of guided grief journaling. Together, we'll explore the healing power of writing as a tool for reflection, connection, and emotional release. This is a welcoming, inclusive space for anyone navigating loss in its many forms. Through thoughtfully designed prompts, we'll support you in expressing your feelings, uncovering insight, and moving gently toward healing.

Chloe Nassau is a social worker and community building professional with 10+ years of experience leading Jewish non-profits. She most recently consulted at Shomer Collective, an organization committed to elevating end of life conversations in the Jewish world. She is a CBE member along with her husband and two young children.

"Receiving Torah in Deeply Disrupted Times - Contemporary Poets Wrestling With Torah" with Rabbi Dr. Lisa Grant (Vav)

This is a time of great disruption where many of us are asking new questions and seeking new answers from our sacred texts. Torah is timeless and yet, the way we make meaning from this ancient text, is ever changing. In this session, we will closely read 5 poems by American and Israeli poets that invite us to enter into a creative conversation with Torah as we struggle to hold fast to her in these challenging times.

Rabbi Lisa Grant, PhD. is a long-time faculty member at the Hebrew Union College and immediate past Director of the NY Rabbinical Program. Lisa is a member of Kolot Chayeyinu and is also an active member of CBE, as a teacher of adults, and member of the Ritual Committee and Climate Team. In 2011, she and her husband Billy Weitzer moved from the suburbs of Connecticut to Brooklyn and recently moved to Red Hook to be just a few short blocks away from her granddaughter (and her parents).

"Writing Your Spiritual Autobiography" with Carrie Bloss, Clara Goetz, and Sue Yavin (Sanctuary)

For two years in a row, Rabbi Matt Green and CBE member Carrie Bloss have facilitated a workshop designed for participants to write their own spiritual autobiographies. A spiritual autobiography is a short essay about your life and how you've come to be who you are as a Jew. In this session, three participants will share part of what they wrote. We will then discuss some of the prompts we used to help us write and the process that we went through.

CBE members Carrie Bloss, Clara Goetz, and Sue Yavin will be presenting excerpts from their spiritual autobiographies. They have each participated in the workshop for two years in a row - writing, adding to, and refining their autobiographies.

"Bringing Back Bikkurim: Engaging with Shavuot from the Bottom Up" with Rabbi Michelle Dardashti (Chapel)

In this session, we'll explore how the biblical name for this festival—Hag HaBikkurim, Festival of First Fruits—shifts our understanding and experience of the holiday. By looking back at its agricultural roots, we'll consider how Shavuot invites us into gratitude, renewal, and spiritual growth today.

Rabbi Dardashti became Kane Street Synagogue's Spiritual Leader in Brooklyn less than three years ago, following nine years as Associate Chaplain and Rabbi at Brown University and Brown RISD Hillel, in Providence, RI. She was ordained and received a Masters in Jewish Education from the Jewish Theological Seminary; she is trained in Congregation Based

Community Organizing, and before Brown, she served as the Fellow at Congregation B'nai Jeshurun in Manhattan and as Director of Community Engagement at Temple Beth El in Stamford, CT. Rabbi Dardashti has spent time living and working in the Jewish community of Montevideo, Uruguay as well as four years in Jerusalem, where she was a student at Hebrew University, a Dorot Fellow, and a volunteer and staff member at a number of NGOs working in the realms of democracy, dialogue and cross-cultural exchange. Dardashti was named as one of New York Jewish Week's 36 To Watch in 2023 and her sisters, Danielle and Galeet were named as one of the 36 last year for their production of The Nightingale of Iran, a podcast about music, identity and belonging, telling their family's story.

***"Piyyutim for Shavuot" with Leslie Goldberg and Naomi Rabeeya (Social Hall)**

Join Naomi Rabeeya and Cantorial Intern Leslie Goldberg to mark the 84th anniversary of the Farhud - a violent riot against the Jews of Baghdad on Shavuot - with the study of Iraqi and Moroccan piyyutim (liturgical poems/ songs) that celebrate Shavuot. This session honors the deep and enduring contributions of Sephardi and Mizrahi culture to Judaism, especially through rich musical and poetic traditions. We will be drawing from the newly published book of piyyutim and accompanying video recordings from Hibba: The Israeli Heritage Movement.

***Leslie Goldberg** fell in love with piyyutim, or Jewish liturgical poems and their musical settings, during her first year of cantorial school while studying with Chazan Roni Ish Ran and attending baqashot services at Ades Synagogue. She has since continued to study these Sephardic-Mizrachi spiritual technologies and found ways to incorporate them into her personal practice and, along with Cantor Breitzer, the prayer life of CBE. **Naomi Rabeeya** graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and Sociology and a minor in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies from Brandeis University. She earned a Master of Public Administration in Nonprofit Management and Public Policy from New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. Naomi currently serves as Senior Manager of Donor Stewardship at Hebrew Union College. Her father, Dr. David Rabeeya, z"l, was born in Baghdad, Iraq, and immigrated to Israel as a refugee during Operation Ezra and Nechemia (1951-1952). A respected scholar, Dr. Rabeeya wrote extensively on Jews in Arab and Muslim lands and the cultural and religious ties between Islam and Judaism. Naomi is passionate about learning, reclaiming, and sharing the history and culture of Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews."*

***"How Not to Talk about Israel/Palestine on Social Media" with Rabbi Leora Kaye and Rabbi Josh Weinberg (Boardroom)**

In a time of heightened polarization, social media has become a battleground for conversations about Israel/Palestine—often amplifying misunderstanding, outrage, and division. This session explores the pitfalls of online discourse around the conflict and offers a critical look at how well-intentioned posts can backfire or oversimplify. We'll examine common traps: virtue signaling, dehumanizing language, performative allyship, and the spread of misinformation. Together, we'll reflect on how identity, trauma, and power dynamics shape digital engagement, and consider what more thoughtful, productive communication might look like. This is not a session about taking sides, but about how we talk—what's gained, what's lost, and who gets hurt in the process. Whether you're an activist, a casual poster, or someone who stays silent out of fear of "getting it wrong," this conversation will help build awareness around the responsibilities and challenges of speaking out in the digital age.

***Rabbi Leora Kaye** is the Director of Rabbinic Career Services for the Central Conference of American Rabbis. She is a seasoned storyteller with significant experience in media (social and otherwise). She lives with her family in Brooklyn. **Rabbi Josh Weinberg** serves as the Vice President of the URJ for Israel and Reform Zionism and is the Executive Director of ARZA, the Association of Reform Zionists of America. He was ordained from the HUC-JIR Israeli Rabbinic Program in Jerusalem, and is currently living with his family in Brooklyn. He spends a great deal of time following Israel discussions online and in a wide range of media outlets.*

Block Two (11:35 AM):

"The Heavens Declare the Glory" with Larry Magarik (Aleph)

We will study Psalm 19, one of the Pesukey Dzimrah, the early morning psalms recited on Holidays and Shabbat. Our focus will be on the poetic, psychological and philosophical structure of this well-known psalm. In addition to text study, we will examine some musical versions. The goal is to understand the words and make them our own vehicle for expression.

Larry Magarik is a member of Altshul, has taught at Shavuot Across Brooklyn, Altshul Bet Midrash, Prozdor at Jewish Theological Seminary and National Havurah Institute, and published articles in Kerem and Jewish Bible Quarterly.

"Golem 2025: "Do Something!" with Rabbi Regina Sandler-Phillips (Bet)

Long before Frankenstein, there was the Golem. The original Golem was the first Adam of Genesis 2:7, formed of clay and animated by God with the breath of human life. Later narratives tell of rabbis replicating this divine experiment on inanimate forms — whether for debate, domestic purposes, or protection against antisemitism. Some describe disastrous unintended consequences; others describe relatively peaceful victories. We will explore passages from Golem literature and reflections on their resonance for our times — including questions of how we ourselves may become "Golemized."

Rabbi Regina Sandler-Phillips, MSW, MPH offers "How to Mourn AND Organize" guidance through Ways of Peace, a social microenterprise that renews justice and kindness across lines of diversity and throughout the life cycle (waysofpeace.org/how-to-mourn-and-organize). She lived and worked for five years in the mixed/divided cities of Haifa and Jerusalem during a previous period of war, offered spiritual leadership in the NYC post-9/11 disaster relief, and organized a nationwide remote vigil during the pandemic that has been renewed since 10/7/23.

"Names as Revelation: Identity, Calling, and Change" with Rabbi Madeleine Fortney (Gimel)

Who are you becoming—and what name does that version of you carry? The midrash teaches: "We have no fixed names; our names change according to the service we are called to perform" (Bereshit Rabbah 78:4). Names in Jewish tradition are never just labels—they're revelations. They mark turning points, divine encounters, moments of transformation. Just as Torah was revealed at Sinai, so too can our truest names—and deepest purposes—be revealed over time. Join us for a session that journeys through ancient stories of sacred name changes, uncovers the spiritual power of naming in Jewish culture, and invites you to consider: What might shift in your life if you changed your name? What if a new name could awaken a new calling?

Rabbi Madeleine Fortney grew up in Northern Virginia and fell in love with Judaism as a teen leader. She brings passions for creative ritual, music, and justice to her work, fostering vibrant, intentional communities rooted in meaning-making and relationship. As a rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Madeleine served as the rabbinic intern at Temple Beth El of Northern Westchester in Chappaqua and as the student rabbi at Kolot Chayeinu in Brooklyn. She also earned a Certificate in Jewish Organizational Leadership from the Zelikow School. Madeleine holds a BA in Communication with minors in Jewish Studies and Women's & Gender Studies from Drexel University. Based in Crown Heights, she loves reading in Prospect Park, braiding challah, and spending time with her cat, Luna.

***"The Song of Sinai: Listening for Miriam" with Yvette Zzauer (Dalet)**

Join us for a music-centered exploration of Miriam's song—an evocative yet brief moment in the Torah that invites deeper reflection. Together, we'll delve into themes of women's voices, spiritual expression, transformation through music, and Miriam's vital role in preparing for the receiving of the Torah. We will trace Miriam's legacy from ancient rhythm and dance to Ladino interpretations of "Shirat Miriam" and Debbie Friedman's beloved "Miriam's Song."

Through guided listening and discussion, we'll reflect on how women's music has carried memory, identity, and sacred community across generations. No prior knowledge of music or Torah is required—just curiosity and a willingness to hear familiar stories in new ways. Includes: Historical and cultural context, guided listening, open conversation.

Yvette Zzauer holds a Master's in Musicology from the University of Vienna, where she focused on György Ligeti's Hungarian vocal works set to poems by Sándor Weöres. She later worked in cultural diplomacy at Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, promoting artistic collaboration between Israeli and German institutions. A decade ago, Yvette completed her MBA in the Netherlands and transitioned into management consulting. She now leads large-scale organizational transformations for clients in the pharmaceutical industry. Based in Brooklyn with her husband Florian, Yvette is a regular at Congregation Beth Elohim (CBE) and enjoys staying connected to the city's dynamic cultural, musical, and Jewish life."

"Hot Topics in Jewish Law" with Rabbi Royi Shaffin (Hay)

How did we get from the laws of the Torah to modern day Jewish law? Which topics in Jewish law are still being debated and why? How do courts of Jewish law make their decisions? These questions will be discussed and debated as we take a fascinating look at Jewish law - its past, present, and future.

Rabbi Royi Shaffin is the rabbi of the Bay Ridge Jewish Center. He is a PhD candidate and the author of "The Hollywood Bible" as well as numerous articles.

"Do Your Insides Match Your Outsides? Integrity, Gender, and Ugly Vessels" with Rana Bickel (Vav)

We'll explore a Rabbinic concept called "tocho ki'voro," insides matching outsides, through a variety of Talmudic stories. We'll look at this concept in other Jewish sources as well as contemporary texts about gender, queer, and disability theory.

Rana Bickel (they/she) is a Jewish educator residing in Brooklyn. They have taught in synagogues, Jewish summer camps, and Hebrew schools, and more. She has studied Torah at Hadar, Midreshet Lindenbaum, and Drisha. A published poet, Rana runs a writing group, facilitates grief spaces, and is involved in BK's traditional egalitarian minyanim. She works for CBE. In their free time they enjoy polar plunges, hosting elaborate shabbat meals, and curling up with a book.

"Stop Making Cents: A Jewish Farewell to the Penny" with Tamar Nachmany (Sanctuary)

The U.S. Mint recently began phasing out production of the penny. In this session, we'll explore the coin's fascinating history through a Jewish lens. We'll learn about ancient Jewish currencies, the origin of the tzedakah box, the 'Lincoln cent', Abraham Lincoln's relationship with the Jewish community, and more. Finally, we'll create a ritual to send this special little coin off in style!

Tamar Nachmany is a fiction writer and technologist. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in the Kenyon Review, Electric Literature, and elsewhere. A lover of educational parties and late-night learning, Tamar is thrilled to speak at this year's Shavuot Across Brooklyn. In collaboration with friends and siblings, Tamar has organized learning parties including a day of collaborative research celebrating Yoko Ono, a 'sleep oeuvre' featuring bedtime talks and performances, an unsanctioned takeover of the Red Hook Ikea, and more. By day she is a Senior Software Engineer at Slack and by night she is working on her fiction MFA as a Truman Capote Fellow at Brooklyn College. Say hi at tamarnachmany@gmail.com or after her session. She would love to meet you!

"Who Commands the Commandments, and How Many Are There Really?" with Rabbi Matt Green (Chapel)

Upon receiving the Torah at Sinai, the Israelites entered into a covenant of commandments. But the commandments themselves do not merely reflect the relationship between one single commander (God) and a nation of commanded individuals (Israel). This shiur will explore how the notion of who commands whom is expanded in the Talmud and beyond, returning to a classic text from Emmanuel Levinas.

Rabbi Matt Green is the Associate Rabbi of Congregation Beth Elohim, which he has served in various capacities since 2015. Rabbi Green is also the director of [Brooklyn Jews](#), a community of young Jewish Brooklynites and is co-founder of the New Jewish Culture Fellowship, [recently hailed by Artforum](#) as a leader "toward an alternative for Jewish art." He is the founding rabbi of the Center for New Jewish Culture.

***"Songs and Somatics of Ascent" with Shira Kline (Social Hall)**

The annual ascent can be mapped from your heart's sigh to your mountaintop-mind's eye. Come to follow the way together. Every body body body is welcome here for a session of hummmm, buzzzz, stretch and song to "make sense" of Shavuot's Rainbow Revelation.

Shira Kline is a queer performance and ritual artist, recognized as a revolutionary educator and named one of the new re-engineers of Jewish life today. Co-founder of StorahTelling and Lab/Shul, she serves as Spiritual Leader weaving liturgy, text, story and song. Known in the sanctuary as a spiritual adventurist and on the kiddie rock stage as ShirLaLa, Shira practices in the field of sacred play and collective imagination. She tours extensively locally and globally with a vibrant invitation to connect, for a new and realized conscious world.

***"Antisemitism in NYC's 2025 electoral cycle" with Sonia Alexander and Sophie Ellman-Golan (Boardroom)**

How do we distinguish between actual antisemitism and the mis-use of accusations of antisemitism for political ends? How do we build a city where there is real safety for Jews and for all of our neighbors? How do we ensure a multiracial democracy in the face of rising fascism? The mayoral primaries are around the corner (on June 24!) And we're seeing both genuine antisemitism, and bad-faith accusations of antisemitism, being used in the electoral cycle. Within the larger scary landscape we're living in, let's come together to develop a more intersectional and nuanced understanding of what antisemitism actually is, how to fight it, and how to fight the misuse of it.

Sonia Alexander is member leader of JFREJ's Anti-Antisemitism Working Group and Avodah's New York City Fellowship Director. **Sophie Ellman-Golan** is staff lead of JFREJ's Anti-Antisemitism Working Group & JFREJ's Director of Strategic Communications.

Block Three (12:40 AM):

[**"Between Torah and Tractor – A Musical Journey through Tradition and Renewal" with Lior Lekner \(Aleph\)](#)

Discover how the modern revival of Jewish life in the Land of Israel brought new meaning to Shavuot. Originally celebrated as the festival of first fruits and the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, Shavuot has long held a unique place in the Jewish calendar. But with the return of the Jewish people to their ancestral homeland, this ancient holiday was reimagined in powerful new ways. Early pioneers, inspired by the rhythms of the land and the ideals of nation-building, transformed Shavuot into a celebration of agricultural renewal, Hebrew creativity, and communal belonging. Kibbutzim marked the day with colorful parades of fresh produce, children in white, and public readings that blended biblical tradition with modern poetry and songs. In this learning session, we will explore the transformation of Shavuot, with a special focus on how music, poetry, and culture became integral parts of the modern celebration. Through melodies and stories, we'll bridge the connection between Torah, tradition, and the pioneering spirit of the land. Join us on this musical journey as we discover Shavuot's evolving story and its relevance today.

Lior Lekner serves as the Jewish Agency's Community Shlichah (Israeli emissary) in Brooklyn, working to strengthen the relationship between Israeli society and Jewish communities. She brings extensive experience in informal education and in developing programs that connect identity, culture, and civic engagement. Lior previously led educational initiatives for the Machanot HaOlim youth movement, and worked at the Shitim Institute, where she facilitated Jewish identity workshops for teachers and IDF officers. She has also led secular Kabbalat Shabbat gatherings and community study sessions, and co-founded Asif – Chag Israeli, an online platform for accessible, high-quality Israeli-Jewish holiday content for families and educators. With a deep passion for music as a tool for connection and reflection, Lior often incorporates Israeli songs and communal singing into her educational work—transforming learning into an emotional and cultural journey. She lives in Brooklyn with her partner and their three children.

["In Search of the Meaning of a Life: Abraham Joshua Heschel, 1907-1972" with Joshua Krug \(Bet\)](#)

This session will introduce the thought and legacy of Abraham Joshua Heschel. Born in Poland in 1907 as the scion of a Hasidic dynasty, he received rabbinical ordination at 16, published Yiddish poetry, composed *God In Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism*, taught Jewish Ethics, and marched alongside his dear friend, Martin Luther King Jr. This session will help participants understand who Heschel was at his core – and what his legacy means for Jewish life in the 21st century.

Joshua Krug is a Jewish Studies academic, educator, and writer. He spends the majority of his time in Berlin, Germany.

["What does it mean to be a Liberal/Progressive Zionist - A Textual Exploration" with Rabbi Josh Weinberg \(Gimel\)](#)

Join us for a thought-provoking text study session exploring the foundations and evolving narratives of liberal/progressive Zionism. Through a curated selection of historical and contemporary texts, we will examine how Zionism aligns with democratic values, human rights, and social justice. Participants will engage with writings by early Zionist thinkers alongside classical Jewish texts, considering questions around identity, statehood, coexistence, and activism. Together, we'll explore how Zionism can remain rooted in Jewish self-determination while embracing a vision of equality and dignity for all people in the region. This session encourages open discussion, critical reflection, and respectful dialogue. Whether you're deeply involved in Zionist thought or just beginning to engage with these ideas, this study will offer insight and challenge assumptions. Come with curiosity and leave with a deeper understanding of the complexities and possibilities within Zionism. All perspectives are welcome.

***"Jews and the "Benevolent Empire": New perspectives on Jewish American history" with Sonia Chajet-Wides (Dalet)**

Join Sonia Chajet Wides to hear the fascinating (and sometimes funny) story of the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews, an early 19th century white Protestant group that aimed to convert Jews to Christianity and move those converts to a colony upstate. The Society was (obviously) unsuccessful, but was very popular for a time, with members like John Quincy Adams. It also received fierce backlash from Jewish leaders. Join Sonia Chajet Wides to hear about her research on the Society and its connections to the history of white Christian nationalism, and to discuss what lessons this history may have for us today.

Sonia Chajet Wides just graduated Amherst College with her BA in History, and completed an honors thesis titled "The American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews and the Battle for American Identity." She has worked as a journalist, archivist, community organizer, and teacher. Last summer, she was an intern for the Center for New Jewish Culture. Sonia grew up at CBE and is a proud Yachad graduate.

***"Anatomy of a Jewish Superhero: The Supernatural in Rabbinic Texts" with Yasmin Edison (Hay)**

Did you know that there was a laser-eyed Rabbi 1,500 years before Superman used heat vision? Or that the messianic figure in Frank Herbert's "Dune" has a name that borrows directly from the Talmud? Learn about all this and more in this session. We will trace the history of earth's mightiest heroes – and their powers – over thousands of years back to the deep well of Jewish textual tradition. We will look into the similarities between titans like Superman to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, Paul Atreides to Eliezer, servant of Avraham and Ya'akov from Bereisheet, and King David to a certain star-spangled man with a plan. This class welcomes all comers – especially nerds. We love nerds here.

Yasmin's greatest joy is the pursuit of knowledge, and they try to learn as much as they can from as many people as possible. As Ben Zoma once said, "who is wise? He (or she or they) who learns from all people." From dissecting a sugya with their chevruta in the beit midrash to teaching the importance of mitzvot to their Hebrew school students, Yasmin is a lover of Torah learning in all its forms. When they're not teaching or learning Torah specifically, you can find them walking along the paths of Prospect Park smelling the flowers, practicing their shat"z skills (in both Ashkenazi and Sephardic rites), procuring ingredients to enhance their latest culinary obsession, knitting, sewing, or embroidering a gift for their friends, or catching up on the latest news from George R. R. Martin (and no, they haven't accepted that Winds of Winter is never coming out)."

"The Gleaners and I: Shavuot Through Agnès Varda's Eyes" with Yoni Nachmany (Vav)

The mitzvah of gleaning commands us to leave the edges of our fields for the poor and the stranger—a vision of justice and care at the heart of Shavuot. That same theme has inspired artists for centuries, from Jean-François Millet's 19th-century painting "The Gleaners" to Agnès Varda's 2000 documentary "The Gleaners and I," which follows people across France who collect what others leave behind: misshapen potatoes, discarded market produce, broken tools, and overlooked stories. From rural farmland to city streets, Varda explores how gleaning becomes a way of living, creating, and resisting. In this session, we'll walk through the film's themes and plot, then open a discussion. What do we discard? What do we preserve? And what can gleaning teach us about care, value, and community? No film screening—just shared reflection.

Yoni Nachmany is a data scientist who works with satellite imagery, weather forecasts, and climate models. He grew up on the Upper West Side in a home surrounded by collections of old Jewish objects and modern art, shaped by the music and social justice spirit of B'nai B'rith and regular visits to art museums and arthouse movie theaters. His mother is a Jewish educator and artist. His father grew up on a farm and used to sell historical Israeli documents and coins. His two older sisters live nearby in Prospect Heights. As a family, they share a deep love of Agnès Varda. This is Yoni's first time leading a

Shavuot session, and he's excited to explore "The Gleaners and I" as a lens for thinking about justice, beauty, and what we choose to preserve.

"Who Wants a Perfect God?" with Dr. David Brodsky (Sanctuary)

Putting the Talmud and Targum back in Dialogue with Plato

Dr. David Brodsky is Associate Professor of Judaic Studies at Brooklyn College specializing in Rabbinic Judaism in its Late Antique Hellenistic Roman, Christian Syriac, and Sassanian cultural contexts.

Block Four (1:45 AM):

"The World to Come" with Phil Getz (Aleph)

There is an apparent contradiction between a rule in the Talmud and Maimonides when it comes to the nature of personal responsibility. We resolve this based on a deep and novel reading of these texts.

Phil Getz is the managing editor of SAPIR: Ideas for a Thriving Jewish Future.

"All in the Family: Boaz, Masculinity, and the Kingdom of David" with Jonah Pitkowsky (Bet)

The book of Ruth is well-known as a standalone text for its strong female leads and unique presentation of gender and power dynamics in the ancient world. But the story serves another critical purpose in Jewish tradition: as the origin story of the Davidic dynasty, a lineage of questionably behaved men who achieve the highest levels of power at distinct moments in biblical history. In this session, we will perform close readings of selected male characters in the family of David and compare them to Boaz, one of the heroes of the book of Ruth, in hopes of unearthing a new purpose for the book of Ruth in the biblical canon. We will also work to attain a more complex understanding of the character dynamics within the Ruth narrative and the multiple masculinities at play in the Davidic line. Please note that this session will involve close reading and discussion of biblical texts with nonconsensual and violent relationship dynamics.

Jonah Pitkowsky loves a messy situation. As a crisis communications professional, Jonah spends his days (and often nights) supporting organizations through complex issues in the court of public opinion and telling their stories in their most challenging moments. His love for complex narrative led him to pursue his B.A. in Bible at the Jewish Theological Seminary, where he wrote his senior thesis on masculinity in the Davidic dynasty as understood through the book of Ruth. Jonah loves all of the Megillot equally, though has a soft spot for Ruth. Outside of work, you can find Jonah arriving fashionably late to Atara or Altshul, running through Prospect Park, or perhaps most predictably, looking up at the sky and telling you far too much about the aircraft on final approach to LaGuardia.

"Nonhuman Personhood: Are Angels People? Are AIs?" with Joey Yudelso (Gimmel)

Should demons study Torah? Does a golem count in a minyan? Can an AI be my shabbos goy? Classic Jewish texts live in a world where personhood is not a simple yes/no: the world is full of strange creatures that take upon themselves some of the rights and obligations of humanity, but not all. Together, we'll look through some of these

cases, and see what we can learn about being human l'chatchila. (Only English required, all texts presented in translation.)

Joey Yudelson is a Crown Heightsnik, a lover of Torah, and a researcher working on risks from advanced AI systems. Consequently, he spends much of his time thinking and writing about both AI and Judaism, and is excited to talk about both at once. At the time of this writing he is still successfully counting the Omer, so please give him a high five if you pass him in the halls. Find his Torah writing @ dessertsofwisdom.substack.com

"The Torah in the Tarot" with Stav Appel (Dalet)

Torah student Stav Appel demonstrates that the Tarot de Marseille, the artistic ancestor of the contemporary Tarot, contains an ingeniously concealed depiction of Hebrew letters, Torah stories, Judaic ritual objects, and Jewish Holy Days, revealing that the cards most likely originally served as a secret tool for Jewish education during the centuries of the Inquisition.

Stav Appel is a data scientist and a lifelong student of Torah. Earlier in his career he was the director of the Israeli-Palestinian coexistence organization Nitzanei Shalom, and the director of International Service Programs for American Jewish World Service. He holds an MBA from the Yale School of Management and has studied Biblical Hebrew at Hebrew University and Yale Divinity School.

"Finding Ourselves in the Story of Joseph: A Narrative Approach To Healing and Torah" with Isaac Brosilow (Hay)

In this session, participants are invited to immerse themselves in the story of Joseph. We will be taking a detailed look at the fraught reunion of Joseph and his brothers in Egypt. From within this moment of profound tension and vulnerability, we will endeavor to strip away assumptions and encounter Joseph in all his challenging fullness. Participants of all backgrounds, from those just learning about Joseph for the first time to those for whom the details are well-known, are welcome to explore what it means to find themselves within this story of betrayal and forgiveness. In conclusion, we will wrestle with defining Torat Yosef (The Torah of Joseph) by discussing Joseph's legacy amongst the Israelites, our tradition, and in our present moment.

Isaac Brosilow is an educator currently teaching 5th and 6th grade Judaic Studies at The Senesh School, an open and inclusive Jewish day school where students from all different backgrounds grow into ever more curious, kind, and confident people. He is also a writer with a focus on social movements of the 1960's and '70's and Jewish American identity. His work has been featured in Jewish Currents, Protocols, and more. Isaac holds a Bachelors of the Arts from Bard College at Simon's Rock and attended the year program at Pardes Institute of Jerusalem in 2018-19.

Nigun Collective BK (Sanctuary)

Pretty simple: come sing nigunim (wordless melodies) with us! It will be chill and meditative and nice. Bring a nigun to share if you like, but very much not required.

Nigun Collective BK meets every couple months or so in people's homes to sing wordless Jewish melodies together.

Block Five (2:50 AM):

[“Lighting Fires on Hilltops: How Rabbinic Judaism Won the Calendar” with Rana Bickel \(Aleph\)](#)

Why do we count the Omer? What does it mean? How did the Jewish calendar used to be set? What if I told you these rituals are because of the philosophical arguments and active sabotage between early Rabbinic Judaism and sects of biblical Judaism? What if there were models of a more democratized Judaism in these weird and fun texts? We will explore all of these questions! (Also we'll talk about the moon and who doesn't love the moon).

Rana Bickel (they/she) is a Jewish educator residing in Brooklyn. They have taught in synagogues, Jewish summer camps, and Hebrew schools, and more. She has studied Torah at Hadar, Midreshet Lindenbaum, and Drisha. A published poet, Rana runs a writing group, facilitates grief spaces, and is involved in BK's traditional egalitarian minyanim. She works for CBE. In their free time they enjoy polar plunges, hosting elaborate shabbat meals, and curling up with a book.

[“From Tikkun \(Day 600\) to Tikkun \(Day 50\): An Hour of Shared Vigil” with Rabbi Regina Sandler-Phillips \(Bet\)](#)

Over the past 600 days, a post-10/7 network of vigil-keepers across faith traditions, generations and time zones has been honoring all those lost to ceaseless wars, political persecutions and violence, migrant escape routes, pandemics and beyond — especially the unclaimed and unnamed. Join us for an hour of shared vigil, as we renew ancient traditions of *tikkun hatzot* (midnight repair) and *meit mitzvah* (honoring the unclaimed dead) through study, singing, and silence.

Rabbi Regina Sandler-Phillips, MSW, MPH offers "How to Mourn AND Organize" guidance through Ways of Peace, a social microenterprise that renews justice and kindness across lines of diversity and throughout the life cycle (waysofpeace.org/how-to-mourn-and-organize). She lived and worked for five years in the mixed/divided cities of Haifa and Jerusalem during a previous period of war, offered spiritual leadership in the NYC post-9/11 disaster relief, and organized a nationwide remote vigil during the pandemic that has been renewed since 10/7/23.

[“There is a crack in everything: The Jewish mysticism of Leonard Cohen” with Shoshi Finkel \(Gimmel\)](#)

One of the 20th-21st centuries' greatest poets and the Jewish people's great modern prophets, Leonard Cohen often spoke of his music and lyrics being deeply shaped by his religious upbringing and personal spiritual journey. We will engage in close readings of his lyrics and poetry through the lens of Tanakh, Lurianic Kabbalah, and chassidus. There may be a kumzitz (singalong) at the end too, if the group wants to!

Shoshi Finkel lives in Crown Heights and is a proud member of the local traditional egalitarian community. She organizes Torah classes through Minyan Atara and has led a chaburah on the books of the Prophets at Nolita Open Beit Midrash. She works in labor law and enjoys singing and writing plays.

[“Ritual Workshop: Taking Communal Responsibility for Gaza” with Dov Greenwood \(Dalet\)](#)

There is an unfathomable tragedy occurring in Gaza. Whatever our stance on Israel's campaign, whatever words we use to describe what is happening, the massive loss of innocent life must force us to confront that a war waged in the name of defending the Jewish people's existence has nearly destroyed the means of living for the Palestinians of Gaza. When the dust settles, when some (I pray, righteous) ending comes, we cannot forget. We have an obligation to make this soul-searching part of our ongoing identity as Jews through our ritual practice. In this workshop, we will explore the Jewish tradition for inspiration and guidance. In particular, we will focus on the mitzvah of the "eglah arufah," a biblical ritual of communal responsibility-taking for unsolved murder, and the tradition of removing wine from our glasses at the Passover seder in memoriam the Egyptians who died in the Exodus.

Dov Greenwood lives in Crown Heights. They attended Yeshivat Har Etzion and Yale College, where they wrote their Bachelor's thesis on the intertwined history of Modern Orthodox and Conservative Judaism in America, as viewed through synagogue Bibles (humashim). Dov will be starting a Masters degree at JTS in the fall.

***“Slow burn songs: a late night set” with Jeremiah Lockwood (Sanctuary)**

Musician and scholar of Jewish music Jeremiah Lockwood will bring the late night sounds: Yiddish love songs linked to the Book of Ruth, seasonal khazones (Yiddish spiritual music), and intricate meditative fingerpicking guitar music to exult the dreamy warmth of the early morning before sunrise.

Jeremiah Lockwood's music career began with over a decade of apprenticeship to legendary Piedmont Blues musician Carolina Slim, playing in the subways of New York City. He also trained under his grandfather Cantor Jacob Konigsberg and performed in his choir. Jeremiah's band The Sway Machinery seeks inspiration from diverse realms of experience related to the cultural geography of New York City. The Sway Machinery has played around the world, including stints at legendary music festivals Montreal Jazz, Roskilde, and perhaps most notably, Festival au Desert in Timbuktu, Mali. Jeremiah is a Research Fellow at the Lowell Milken Center for Music of American Jewish Experience at UCLA. His first book, Golden Ages: Hasidic singers and cantorial revival in the digital era, was recently published by University of California Press. He is currently developing Khazones Underground, a record imprint and cultural organization focused on the legacy of khazones, historic Yiddish spiritual music.

Block Six (3:55 AM):

“Cantillation Revelation: What Does It Mean to “Sing God’s Words?” with Solomon Fox (Aleph)

What did the revelation at Mount Sinai sound like? The text tells us “God spoke all of these words” (Exodus 20:1) but further exploration questions what exactly the Israelites heard and how. Join this session to learn about the history and significance of Biblical chant in Jewish tradition, from its roots at the time of the Temple to today. While (spoiler alert) God did not literally chant and transmit the Commandments through our modern form of cantillation, Shavuot has unique cantillation customs from the special division of the Ten Commandments, Megilat Ruth, and a special poem chanted before the Book of Ruth called Akdamut. Come explore the history of revelation at Sinai, learn about the origin and significance of Biblical chant (leyning), and how applying this knowledge can help heighten our connection to this holiday and the practice of “singing God’s words!”

Solomon Fox (he/him) is a proud member of Minyan Atara and local resident of Crown Heights. He graduated in 2024 from the Joint Program with the Jewish Theological Seminary and Columbia with degrees in Modern Jewish Studies and Sociology. The idea for his session at Shavuot comes from a research project he conducted exploring Biblical Chant and LeYning for the Alexander Jewish Leadership Institute (AJLI). Solomon has taught at Park Avenue Synagogue and Ramah Nyack, and spends his days currently as a product manager in financial services.

“Wise Guy: Historical Perspectives on King Solomon” with Sam Mellins (Gimmel)

Jewish tradition maintains that the biblical King Solomon was the wisest of men, for reasons extending beyond his willingness to chop a baby in half or have 700 wives. Throughout Jewish history, scholars have asked: What kind of wisdom did he possess, and how did he acquire it? Was he a philosopher? A rabbi? A wizard? All three? We will explore

how the Jewish canon answers to this question, using sources ranging from the time of the Mishnah to the European Renaissance, in an attempt to understand the mind behind the throne.

Sam Mellins is a native New Yorker who pays the bills by reporting on local politics. He is currently engaged in a years-long project of translating as many papers as possible from his undergrad history degree into Shavuot shiurim and hopes you will join him for this year's installment. Please introduce yourself and tell him about an interesting book you've read recently.

"Songs to help us up the Mountain" with Russ Agdern (Sanctuary)

We've studied, we've learned, we've moved! Now it's time to get ourselves ready to go to the Mountain and receive the Torah together. Come and sing melodies together before the start of Hashkama services. Note: For accessibility (including for the teacher) this session will be mask required.

Russ Agdern is a yid from New York. He's a cofounder of Shir HaMaalot, and helped start this tikkun more years ago than he wants to admit. He loves building Jewish community and singing with people, including you.

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