

GERTRUDE LEDERMAN FAMILY CONTINUING EDUCATION

WINTER COURSES 5785

The Gertrude Lederman Family Continuing Education courses at North Suburban Synagogue Beth El offer a wonderful chance to deepen your understanding of Jewish thought, culture, and identity.

Winter Quarter Courses

The fee for Continuing Education courses is \$60 per quarter for NSS Beth El members and \$125 per quarter for guests. Payment for one course includes any additional classes during the same quarter at no additional charge. **ANNUAL PASS:** Beth El members can purchase an annual pass for \$180 (\$360 for guests) which includes all classes during the 2026 winter, spring and summer quarters.

Register at <https://nssbe.shulcloud.com/form/continuing-education-winter-class-registration-2026.html>

Talmud: Tractate *B'rachot* with Rabbi Michael Schwab

**Tuesdays, 8:30 – 9:30 am, January 6 – March 17, 2026
(no class January 20 & 27 and March 3 & 10)**

Rabbi Schwab takes students on a journey through the mainstay of the Jewish oral tradition, its rich history, structure, and famous personalities. New students welcome! **Class will meet in person and on Zoom. Winter Quarter Fee**

Breaking Jewish News & Views with Carl Schrag

Wednesdays, 9:45-11:00 am, January 14 – March 18, 2026

This class zooms in on local, national, and global news through a distinctly Jewish lens. We'll navigate the ever-evolving post-October 7 reality as we talk about politics, Israel, anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, rifts in our Jewish community, and more. Carl Schrag, former editor of The Jerusalem Post, brings a journalist's probing questions to every topic. **Class will meet on Zoom. Winter Quarter Fee**

Liberal Zionism: Between Crisis and Aspiration with Carl Schrag, Rabbi Freedman & Rabbi Schwab

Tuesdays, 8:00-9:00 pm

February 10 – March 17 and April 14, 2026

Using the iEngage curriculum from the Shalom Hartman Institute, we'll explore the core tensions and values of liberal Zionism, responding to the dominant critiques of Israel and Zionism in a post-October 7 reality. **Class will meet in person** (Zoom link provided upon request). **Winter Quarter Fee**

Hebrew Classes

Introduction to Conversational Hebrew II with Pnina Arser

Wednesdays, 6:15-7:30 pm, January 14 – March 18, 2026

Continuing with the *Brandeis Modern Hebrew* textbook, this course will focus on Hebrew language skills through listening, reading, speaking, and vocabulary. **Class will meet in person.**

Winter Quarter Fee

Café Ivrit: Intermediate Conversational Hebrew with Pnina Arser

Tuesdays, 6:15 – 7:30 pm, January 13 – March 17, 2026

Using the *Brandeis Modern Hebrew: Intermediate to Advanced* textbook, we will continue to improve our listening, reading, and speaking skills and explore aspects of Israeli culture through language, literature and current events.

Class will meet in person. Winter Quarter Fee

Sicha B'Ivrit: Advanced Conversational Hebrew with Shlomit Hoch

Thursdays, 6:00 – 7:30 pm, January 15 – March 19, 2026

Using the textbook, *Kriat Beynaim* from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, we will explore an array of enriching materials including news articles, songs, literature, and much more. We will also have fun with online games and engaging warm-up activities to enhance our learning experience.

Class will meet on Zoom. Winter Quarter Fee

NOTE: Our Hebrew classes are continuing from the fall. New students are welcome but reach out to Rachel Kamin at rkamin@nssbethel.org to determine which level will be best for you. And, if we don't have a Hebrew class for you, let us know and we'll try to form one!

Open Conversational Hebrew

Sundays, 9:30-11:00 am

Practice Hebrew conversation informally with other participants. For information, contact Judy Farby at judyfarby@yahoo.com or 847-372-1700. **Class will meet on Zoom. FREE**

USED BOOK SALE:

**The NSS Beth El Annual Used Book Sale is
Wednesday, January 21 – Tuesday, January 27, 2026**

All hardcover books \$2.00; all paperbacks \$1.00.

Cash, check, Visa & MasterCard accepted.

Plan to drop off gently used books for both children and adults on any subject between December 14 – January 20.

Free Classes

Israeli Politics 101 with Mike Hollander

Thursdays, 11:15 am – 12:15 pm, January 8 and January 22, 2026

Mike Hollander, an experienced Jewish educator and licensed tour guide in Israel, will provide a fool-proof explanation of how the fragile and complicated Israeli political system works. Mike will join us on Zoom from Israel for this two-session series. Students can login together at Beth El (after HAZAK Fitness) or from the comfort of their own home. **FREE**

Writer's Beit Midrash

Wednesdays, 9:30 – 11:00 am, January 14 & 28; February 11 & 25; and March 11 & 25, 2026

All fiction, non-fiction, poetry, memoir, and essay writers (published or not yet published) are welcome for discussions, exercises, camaraderie, and critique every other Wednesday morning.

Class will meet in person. FREE

Grief Support Group

Thursday, 1:00 – 2:30 pm, January 15 & 29; February 5 & 19; and March 5 & 26, 2026

Combining the comfort of human connection with the spiritual support of Jewish tradition, this in person group, hosted by Beth El and facilitated by JCFS professionals Daniel Bahner and Leah Shefsky, is for adults who have experienced the death of a loved-one within the past two years. **Group will meet in person. FREE**

The Fours of the Passover Seder with Rabbi Freedman

Thursdays, 11:15 am – 12:15 pm, February 12 & 26 and March 12 & 19, 2026

Prepare spiritually for the Passover Seders by delving into the sets of four found in the Haggadah: cups, questions, children, and mothers, exploring different windows into the story of the Exodus and its significance for us. **Class will meet on Zoom and in person** (after the HAZAK Fitness class). **FREE**

What's UP with Hagba?

with Rabbi Freedman & Hazzan Greenberg

Saturday, February 21, 12:30 pm (after Kiddush)

Have you ever been curious about the practice for lifting the Torah scroll at services? Learn about this tradition and then some of our Beth El *Magbi'im* (Torah lifters) will demonstrate best practices. And then you can give it a try too! ALL are welcome - both men and women and post-B'nai Mitzvah teens - as we ELEVATE our Shabbat afternoon, RAISING our understanding of this ritual. **FREE**

Because the cost of tuition should never be a barrier to participation in our NSS Beth El classes, we do offer financial assistance. Please contact Marcie Eskin at meskin@nssbethel.org for scholarship information.

Sisterhood Torah Fund

Book Club facilitated by Rachel Kamin

My Childhood in Pieces by Edward Hirsch

Saturday, February 7, 12:30 pm

A darkly comic and sharp-edged portrait of a poet's coming-of-age in a tough, witty, middle-class Jewish family, told through punchy microchapters that capture the humor, struggles and lessons shaping his journey from childhood to independence.

Meet the author on Zoom on Monday, January 26 at 8:00 pm.

Rules for Ghosting by Shelly Jay Shore

Saturday, March 14, 12:30 pm

While trying to save his family's funeral home from financial ruin, Ezra, who can see ghosts, is haunted by his crush Jonathan's gone-too-soon husband. The Association of Jewish Libraries 2025 Jewish Fiction Honor Award Winner.

The Book Club will continue on May 9, 2026 – stay tuned for more details. New participants are always welcome!

Family Book Club

Don't Feed the Lion by Bianna Golodryga & Yonit Levi

Sunday, January 25, 12:00 pm

Follows three Chicago middle school students who confront bullying and bigotry after a swastika appears on a locker and a professional athlete posts an anti-Semitic message online. For 3rd-6th graders and adult readers of all ages.

Open Play: Mahjong & Canasta

Mondays, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm, January 12, February 9, March 9 and April 20, 2026

Join the Sisterhood for open play of mahjong or canasta, your choice!

Participants in the Book Club and Open Play Mahjong & Canasta are encouraged to make a minimum annual donation of \$54 to the **Torah Fund Campaign**. Questions? Contact Maria Ponsillo, Torah Fund VP, at Maria.Ponsillo@gmail.com.

Field Family Lecture

Shuly Rubin Schwartz, Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Irving Lehrman Research Professor of American Jewish History

Thursday, February 12, 7:00 pm

The eighth Chancellor, Shuly Rubin Schwartz is the first woman to serve in this role since JTS was founded in 1886. She was also one of the first women on the faculty and played an instrumental role in introducing Jewish gender studies into the curriculum. As part of the JTS Scholar Weekend, Chancellor Schwartz will deliver a D'var Torah on **Friday, February 13**, during Kabbalat Shabbat Services, and the sermon on Shabbat morning, **February 14**. A post-Kiddush conversation will also follow.