

**CONGREGATION B'NAI ISRAEL**  
**COMMUNITY SCHOLAR PROGRAM**

**2011-2012**

**THINKING ABOUT GOD:**

**RADICAL FRONTIERS**

I am so excited about our 5772 scholar series, “Thinking about God: Radical Frontiers.” With this series, we open up a communal conversation about the core of our mission as Jews in the realms of thought, spirit and action. We live at a time that demands we ask bold questions of our tradition and of ourselves. But as we will see through this series, our tradition has always insisted on digging as deep as we can. And so, we hope the frontiers we share through this series are radical in two senses: unearthing our assumptions of about what Judaism teaches and beliefs about God while connecting us more strongly to the deepest and most profound roots of ineffable mystery. Please join us – we look forward to hearing your thoughts and questions!

B’shalom,

Rabbi Justin David

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 18**  
**SERVICES AT 7PM FOLLOWED BY**  
**ONEG AND PRESENTATION**

**AARON LANSKY**

Religion, Secularism and  
Other Extreme Forms of  
Modern Jewish Identity

Aaron Lansky is the founder and president of the Yiddish Book Center and the author of *Outwitting History: The Adventures of a Man Who Rescued a Million Yiddish Books*. He lectures widely and is the recipient of numerous awards and recognitions, including a “genius grant” from the MacArthur Foundation.

Ever since the Enlightenment, Jews have been trying to figure out how to live as Jews in a modern world. Some in America took what had been a vast, multifaceted civilization and recast it as a religious denomination, divorced from culture. Others did the opposite: they rejected religion and tried to fashion a secular identity rooted in culture alone. This talk will look at the limitations and sometimes comical excesses of both approaches, and ask whether it might finally be possible to split the difference and create a more holistic modern Jewish identity.

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17 AFTER KIDDUSH**

**RABBI NANCY FLAM**

Embracing Imagination:  
God as “You”

Rabbi Nancy Flam’s accomplishments include co-founding the National Center for Jewish Healing (1991) and directing the Jewish Community Healing Program of Ruach Ami: Bay Area Jewish Healing Center (1991- 1996); co-founding the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, where she served as founding Executive Director (1999 – 2004), and now serves as Co-Director of Programs (2005 – present); and editing the informational, inspirational series *Lifelights*. She writes, publishes and teaches widely on Judaism, healing, prayer and spirituality.

We all know that Judaism prohibits making an image of God. At the same time, the tradition encourages us to engage our imagination every time we address God as "You." We will explore the ways in which our own religious experience may flourish when we embrace the act of addressing God as "You."

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3 AFTER EVENING SERVICES AND POTLUCK AT 6:00 PM  
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4 AFTER KIDDUSH

**RABBI DAVID SEIDENBERG**

Tu B'Shevat:  
God and the Earth

Rabbi David Seidenberg is a theologian, dancer, activist, an advocate for embodied Judaism, and one of the foremost scholars working on Judaism and ecology today. He teaches eco-Torah and nigunim (Hasidic singing) around the world and through his website, [neohasid.org](http://neohasid.org). He also created and leads the Hasidic-egalitarian Prayground Minyan in Northampton. David was ordained both by the Jewish Theological Seminary and Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, and he received a doctorate for work on ecology and Kabbalah.

David will join us on Shabbat Shirah--the Sabbath of song which precedes Tu Bish'vat--when he will be sharing with us a spirited Prayground Minyan Kabbalat Shabbat service, and teaching from his ground-breaking research on Torah of the Earth, and on the Kabbalah of Tu Bish'vat, both Friday night and Saturday.

FRIDAY, MARCH 16 SERVICES AT 7:00 PM  
FOLLOWED BY  
ONEG AND PRESENTATION

**RABBI EDWARD FELD**

A God Without God

Rabbi Edward Feld is the senior editor of the new mahzor *Lev Shalem* (Conservative) for which he was listed as one of the Forward 50 - the 50 outstanding American Jews of 2010. Currently, Rabbi Feld is at work on a new siddur for Shabbat and Hagim. He is the Director of the Rabbinic Companionship Program counseling and coaching rabbis in the field and the author of *Spirit of Renewal: Faith After the Holocaust* (Jewish Lights).

What is the meaning of religion for someone who doesn't have a personal sense of the divine? Can we recite the words in the prayer book when they do not reflect our literal beliefs? Rabbi Feld will speak about his personal faith and will lead a discussion.

SATURDAY, APRIL 28 AFTER KIDDUSH

**LOIS DUBIN**

God and Reason: The Ever-Radical  
Maimonides

Lois Dubin, Professor of Religion & Jewish Studies at Smith, teaches courses in Jewish history and thought as well as world religions, and women and religion. She has written widely on Jewish culture and politics in 18th and 19th century Europe, as well as contemporary feminist theology and ritual. She is currently working on an exploration of key ideas of the great philosopher, Torah scholar, and physician Moses Maimonides (1135-1205). How do his philosophical approach to God and his close linkage between religion, science, and philosophy remain challenging and inspiring?

SATURDAY, MAY 19 AFTER KIDDUSH

**LARRY FINE**

Jewish Mystical Spirituality in a Contemporary Mode

Larry Fine is Irene Kaplan Leiwant Chair of Jewish Studies and professor of Religion at Mount Holyoke College, and a celebrated scholar of Jewish mysticism. His most recent work is *Jewish Mysticism and the Spiritual Life--Classical Texts, Contemporary Reflections* (Jewish Lights, 2010)

Contemporary Jewish Spirituality in America has been influenced in a great variety of ways by classical kabbalistic and Hasidic traditions. Notions of the immanence of the divine, embodied religious practice, emotionally expressive spirituality, and embrace of the natural world as a locus for the spiritual, are among the ways a new form of Jewish mysticism is being fashioned.

**ADULT EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

John Clayton, Chair; Jane Brodwyn,  
Julius Menn, Jeff Stoloff, Maxine Stein and  
Rabbi Justin David

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**[www.cbinorthampton.org](http://www.cbinorthampton.org) • 413 584-3593**