

## Tri-Valley Cultural Jews

Your East Bay Secular Humanistic Jewish Community

**TriValleyCulturalJews.org**

[info@tri-valleyculturaljews.org](mailto:info@tri-valleyculturaljews.org)

(925) 399-8029

**Affiliated with the Cultural and Secular Jewish Organization**

**Our mission statement:** A Secular Humanistic community serving those who identify with the Jewish People through family, culture and history, rather than through religion.



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<https://www.facebook.com/trivalleyculturaljews/>

## February 24th 2024

### TVCJ Community News

TVCJ is an accepting, welcoming, diverse community of Cultural Jews and their families, affiliated with CSJO. Call or email us at **(925) 399-8029** or [culturaljews@gmail.com](mailto:culturaljews@gmail.com) for an Evite or for more information about our community. You can find us at [trivalleyculturaljews.org](http://trivalleyculturaljews.org). Free to members, suggested \$15 donation per non-member adult if you are able. Masking is optional when social distancing is possible.

You can make donations to TVCJ through PayPal or Venmo. Our handle is Tri-Valley Cultural Jews.

**Calling all crafters!** Wanna get together? Email [culturaljews@gmail.com](mailto:culturaljews@gmail.com) if this sounds like fun!

## Upcoming Events

### **It's Not A Book Club! -- 03/03/24**

Our members-only Not A Book Group will meet Sunday, March 3rd at 3:00 p.m. at Judy and David's house to discuss *The Maid* by Nita Prose.

### **Philosophers' Cafe Next Meeting 3/07/24**

Our February Philosophers' Cafe topic was sex work. We explored the differences between different types of sex work, discussed whether prostitution is inherently demeaning, and considered the value of legalization. Our next meeting will focus on the roots of anti-semitism. Join us on zoom Thursday, March 7th at 7:00 p.m. for a friendly and civil discussion.

### **Israelism 3/09/24**

Join us for a potluck and viewing of the critically acclaimed film Israelism on Saturday, March 9th at 4pm. For more info on the film and its creators, visit: <https://www.israelismfilm.com/> An alternative movie will be available for younger viewers.

**Please bring a dish to share!** Email us at [culturaljews@gmail.com](mailto:culturaljews@gmail.com) or call (925) 399-8029 for more info or to get on our Evite list.



Tri-Valley Cultural Jews

Secular \* Humanist

# JEWVIE MOVIE

AND POTLUCK

FEATURING



SATURDAY 03.09.2024 4PM  
CASTRO VALLEY, CA

## Purim 3/24/24

Join our Purim Celebration on Sunday, March 24th at 10:30am in Livermore. Come for crafts, games, hamantaschen making and don't forget the spiel! Bring your favorite hamantaschen filling and a snack to share.



# CELEBRATE

*Purim*

SUNDAY, MARCH 24TH, 10:30-12PM  
LIVERMORE, CA

**GAMES HAMENTASCHEN SPIEL CRAFTS**



Tri-Valley Cultural Jews  
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# The Purim Story



Purim is one of those holidays where we don't tell the whole story. (See my blog at [secularjewishweddings.com](http://secularjewishweddings.com) for details and commentary on that.) But it is more than that we don't tell the whole story. It's that we don't see the whole people.

The book of Esther, on which the holiday is based, is a historical fiction, written about 400 years after the events the book tells about in an almost-real Persian empire. When we think of the main characters – Esther, Mordechai, Haman and Akhashverosh, we remember them only as stereotypes: the pretty brave girl, the heroic and clever hero, the evil villain and the drunken stooge.

But when we look closer at the two heroes, we see a really mixed view. Sure, Esther is pretty (or good in bed, actually – read the book) and brave. But she is also devious. She hides her Jewishness and she tricks the king, plying him with food and wine, into a generous state so she can convince him to allow the Jews a fighting chance. And Mordechai? He's sneaky – eavesdropping on the guards – and he seems to have no compunctions about using his young relative to get in good with the king, even though it involves a degrading audition. Both of them are pretty hard for me to like.

So why should we celebrate Purim? The bad guys are bad and so are the good guys!

We celebrate because there are elements of this holiday that speak to the human condition and teach some good lessons. It's finally spring after a hard winter (ok, not in California, but there are Jews who live elsewhere, after all). A little revelry at surviving seems to be in order. Check out all the other raucous holidays celebrated by other cultures throughout the northern hemisphere at this time of year. And the lessons? Well, it is important to stand up for yourself and defend yourself. But the lesson I like best is the one about generosity. On Purim, it is traditional to dress up and bring treats to your friends

and neighbors. It's sort of a reverse Halloween. A holiday about survival and generosity seems to me to be worth celebrating, despite the difficulties of the story we tell about it.

**By Judith Seid**

**Photo By: Maria Gabriela Bertolini**

## **Passover Family Day - 4/21/24**

Come to Tri-Valley Cultural Jews' Free Passover Open House and find out what Jewish Culture School is all about! JCS meets twice a month for kids Kindergarten through Brit Mitzvah and provides a secular/cultural experience for all. Come see what we're all about on Sunday, April 21st from 10:30-



# PASSOVER FAMILY DAY

**SUNDAY**  
APRIL 21  
10:30-12

Come to our Free Passover Jewish Culture School Open House and find out what Jewish Culture School is all about!

- ✓ Matzoh Making
- ✓ Crafts
- ✓ Music



**Tri-Valley Cultural Jews**  
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## Passover Seder 4/27/24

Join our Secular, Humanist Passover Seder on Saturday, April 27th for a 5pm ceremony and a 6:30pm potluck in Livermore, CA. Come celebrate freedom from slavery with us. We'll sing our songs, drink our

wine (or grape juice) and tell stories of liberation. In-person and Zoom options available.



# *Passover Seder*

Saturday, April 27, 2024

5pm ceremony

6:30pm potluck

In person & on Zoom



**Tri-Valley Cultural Jews**

**Secular \* Humanist**

**Jewish Culture School**

JCS 2/18/24

What makes a good relationship? Kindness, trust and balancing each other's strengths and weaknesses were some of the ideas kids suggested at our JCS on the Jewish tradition of marriage. We walked our stuffed animal friends through a marriage ceremony, danced the hora, and made delicious stuffed grape leaves for afterwards.



## Our TVCJ Library

We have a dozen new books for kids and adults in our library! Members are welcome to check them out.

### **For adults:**

*A Treasury of Jewish Folklore*, edited by Nathan Ausubel

*Passover, Its History and Traditions* by Theodor H. Gaster, one of the great Jewish anthropological folklorists.

*The New Country*, edited by Henry Goodman. Short stories about Jewish life of (mainly) the immigrant generation in America.

*We Lived There, Too: Pioneer Jews and the Westward Movement of America 1630-1930*, primary documents (photos and memories) collected and edited by Kenneth Libo and Irving Howe.

*One People: The Story of the Eastern Jews: Twenty Centuries of Jewish Life in North Africa, Asia and Southeastern Europe* by Devorah and Menahem Hacoen. Includes photos.

*The Old Country: The Lost World of East European Jews* by Abraham Shulman. Mostly photographs of the shtetl, children, women, hasidim, work, religion and secularization.

*Great Jewish Short Stories*, edited by Saul Bellow.

*Happy New Year! and Other Stories* by Sholom Aleichem, translated and edited by Curt Leviant.

*The Jewish Trivia & Information Book* by Ian Shapolsky.

### **For kids:**

*A First Jewish Holiday Cookbook* by Chaya M. Burstein

*Our People in Olden Days* by Ben Israel. A non-religious look at ancient history from King Saul to Bar Kokhba.

*Our People Through the Middle Ages, Book One and Book Two* by Henry Goodman. A non-religious look at Jewish history all over the world from after the Bar Kokhba rebellion through Napoleon.

*Let's Steal the Moon: Jewish Tales, Ancient and Recent* retold by Blanche Server-Bernstein.

## **Repro Rights Shabbat**

Thank you to everyone who made our Repro Rights Shabbat such a moving and deeply personal experience. Many thanks to Solomon and Jamie for hosting, and to everyone who shared their stories, including Rachel, Kevin and Marissa who shared theirs by email.

Here are some ways you can support reproductive rights today (from the NCJW):

- **[Sign the pledge](#)**: With two potentially catastrophic cases before the US Supreme Court, now more than ever we must raise our Jewish voices in support of abortion *because* of religion, not in spite of it. **[Join NCJW to pledge your support for abortion access](#)**.
- Get a jumpstart on **Abortion Care Provider Appreciation Day** coming up on March 10. **[Show your local abortion providers some love](#)** for their dedication, compassion, resilience, and courage using our **[print-at-home postcards](#)**. You can also **[buy pre-printed postcards](#)** from the NCJW shop.
- **[Donate to the Jewish Fund for Abortion Access](#)**. The Jewish Fund continues to make a collective impact as the best way to give *Jewishly* for abortion access.



## **BOOK REVIEW**

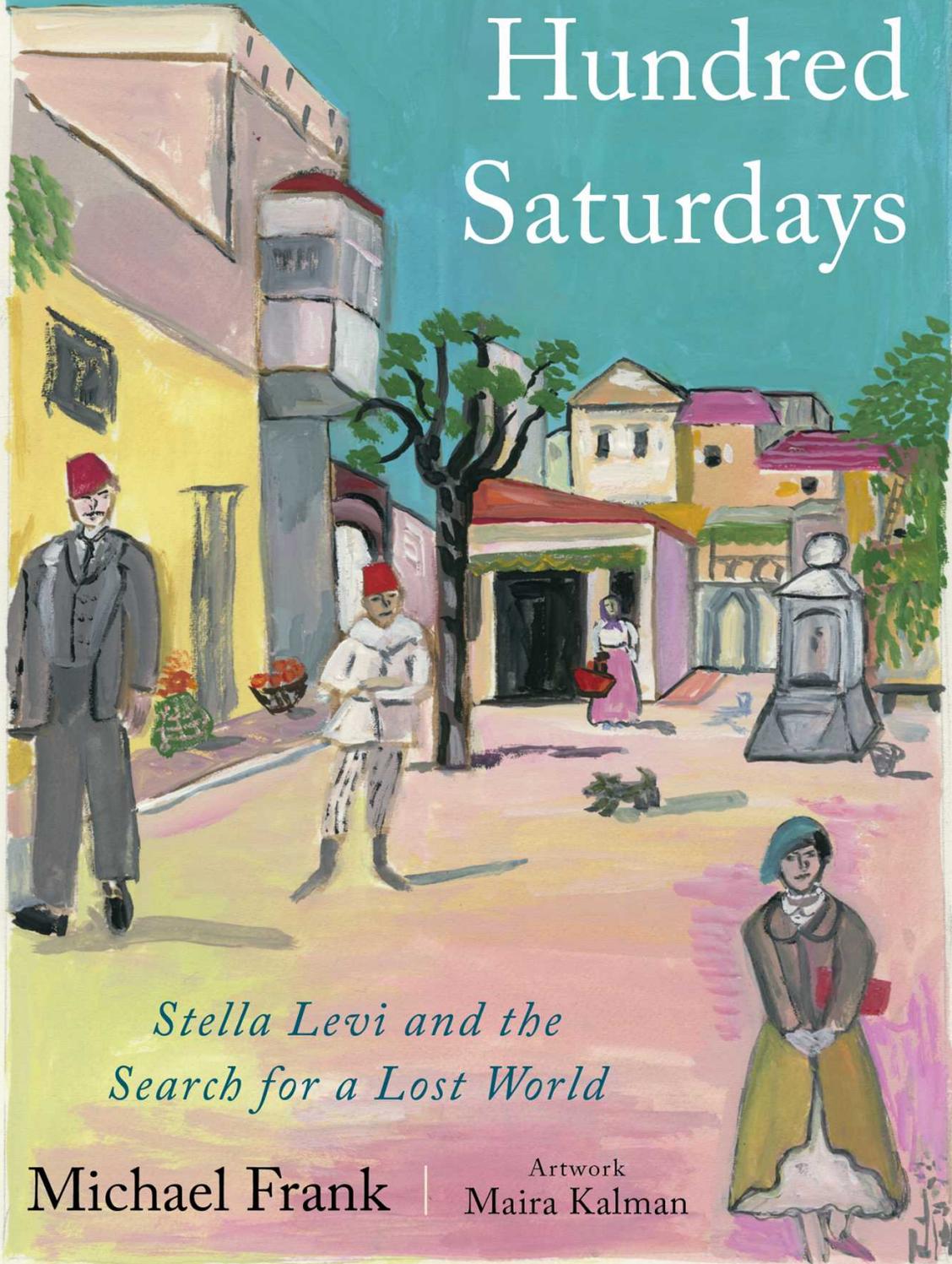
# **ONE HUNDRED SATURDAYS: STELLA LEVY AND THE SEARCH FOR THE LOST WORLD**

**By Michael Frank**

“Beautiful, sober, and affecting—a  
testament to remembrance and friendship.”

—DALIA SOFER

# One Hundred Saturdays



*Stella Levi and the  
Search for a Lost World*

Michael Frank | Artwork  
Maira Kalman

This remarkable one hundred two-year-old woman tells her story to the author for the first time. I feel that there are three main parts to her memoir:

- The first is the time she grew up in the Juderia, which is a Jewish neighborhood in the Jewish island of Rhodes.
- The second is her time as a prisoner in Auschwitz.

- The third is the time she was liberated and spent her remaining life in the United States.

In the time of her youth, she was isolated in the close family consisting of parents, grandparents and other relatives. Even then they recognized her as someone special. They saw that she had her own mind and was not interested in following the local traditions. She was very bright and loved languages.

The second phase of her life consisted of her Internment in Auschwitz along with her family. She became an inspiration to so many of her fellow inmates. It was fascinating to see how she used her cunning and her facility with languages in order to survive. I felt that the most interesting part of her life was after her liberation. At this time, she met the author of this memoir. She spent several years telling him her story, which she never told before publicly.

I have to admit that before I started reading this book, I thought that it would be just another holocaust story. However, as I continued on, I found it to be so much more. At this point, she is able to tell and analyze the events and people of her life and to describe how important they have been to her. [If you are interested in purchasing this book, then you can find it on Amazon by clicking here.](#)

**Reviewed by Jerry Zwick**

# Emor

THE INSTITUTE FOR BOLD JEWISH THOUGHT

**Emor is excited to announce the open call for submissions for Fragments Issue 3, on Democracy.**

In the modern era, many Jews have viewed the U.S. as a unique democratic refuge. But today, **anti-democratic actors are seeking to win control of the United States**. They are tapping into the existing fears of different groups of Americans, and fomenting new fears, in order to divide the electorate and consolidate their own hold on power. They offer imagined protection for some at the expense of the safety of others, mainly racial and religious minority groups.

As we prepare for a momentous election, **the Jewish community is grappling with similar questions of power and belonging**. The fact is that not all Jews have had access to democracy in

the U.S., nor is there yet racial equity within the Jewish community. Our ability to protect and advance democracy will be shaped by **how well we address these dynamics**, internally and in our coalitions with non-Jewish allies.

Our third issue of **Fragments** asks:

**How can Jews work toward a vibrant multiracial democracy from a stance that is not fear-based?**

**What aspects and institutions of our democracy are we fighting to protect, fighting to win back, or fighting to create?**

**How does Judaism in particular — our sacred texts, history, and literature — teach us about this struggle and point ways forward?**

### **Submit Articles to Emor**

Fragments seeks articles of 1,000 or 2,000 words that address our core questions from a wide range of fields and perspectives: Jewish text, history, political science, economics, sociology, literature, explorations of antisemitism, and more.

[Submit pitches using this form](#). Please do not submit full articles.

#### **Timeline:**

**Pitches accepted until March 5th.**

**We will respond to accept or reject pitches by March 12th.**

**First drafts are due April 16th.**

**Second drafts are due May 28th.**

Compensation:

\$400 for 1,000 words

\$750 for 2,000 words

\$100 “pass fee” for submitted first drafts that we opt to pass on and not continue with editing and publication.

Questions can be directed to Emor’s Director, [Rabbi Lev Meirowitz Nelson](#).

### **Artistic Submissions to Emor**

Fragments is interested in publishing a wide array of artistic or personal responses to our core questions: poetry, short fiction, personal essay, memoir, photography, visual art, audio or video recordings (will be published with a QR code), and more.

[Submit complete pieces using this form](#).

**Submissions are due March 5th.**

Compensation:

\$300 for a poem, video/audio recording, or other creative format.

Prose pieces will be paid on the same scale as articles, above.

\$150 for photography or visual art.



## Learn Modern Hebrew

**CLASSES START THE WEEK OF APR 1st**

[REGISTER HERE BY MAR 25](#)

There are many reasons to learn a new language – to connect with a family member abroad, to prepare for a business trip or vacation, to better understand a culture, or just for personal growth. Online and in-person classes are taught by native-speaking instructors in an engaging and supportive environment.

## QUEERCORE TORAH: ORIGINAL INK ENGAGE THE MIND, HEART & SPIRIT

**7-WEEK SESSION STARTS APR 14 // ONLINE**

[REGISTER HERE BY APR 3](#)

We will encounter and grapple with the Torah's account of sibling rivalry, jealousy and the price of uncontrolled emotion. How does trauma impact our story? What is the cost of passion? We will conclude by turning our attention to the Talmud's take on this passage, leading us to one of Judaism's most potent values.

## INTERFAITH INTERCONNECT

***Interfaith Interconnect Virtual Religion Chat, Wednesday, March 13, 2024.***

**Presentations: 5-6 p.m. Optional breakout discussion groups: 6-6:30 p.m.**

**Topic: *Nearly all religions have a version of "thou shalt not kill." How does your religion/congregation deal with the reality of war?***

**Speakers:** Manish Singhvi, Jain; Troy Witt, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

**Online via Zoom:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82295909602> Meeting ID: 822 9590 9602

Zoom room opens at 4:45.

**All are welcome.**

**Religion Chat Topic for April 10th**

"When bad things happen to good people: How does your religion/ congregation help someone heal following a significant loss or tragedy?"

**Interfaith Interconnect Facebook**

**Page:** <https://www.facebook.com/InterfaithInterconnect/timeline>

We now have a PayPal page where you can quickly and easily donate to Tri-Valley Cultural Jews. Simply scan the QR code or

visit: <https://www.paypal.com/us/fundraiser/charity/2326042>



### **In February We Remember**

Benjamin Gorman  
Rachel Hubbard  
Dena Luborsky  
Jeanette Maddon  
Elinor Peel  
Donald Wright



### **February Birthdays**

Galina Arkhipova  
Derek Greenberg  
Phoebe Shulewitz

### **Who We Are**

**Rabbi:** Judith Seid **925-485-1049**

**Madrikha:** Jamie Ireland

**Board Members:**

David Gates

Jazz Salwen-Grabowski

Jamie Ireland

Kai Mogilefsky

Rachel Rose

Judith Seid

**Newsletter:** Joy Randel

**Webmaster:** Noah King

**JCS Teachers:** Jazz Salwen-Grabowski, Judith Seid

**Holiday Coordinator:** Jazz Salwen-Grabowski

**Movie Coordinator:** Bret Mogilefsky

**Our mission statement:** A Secular Humanistic community serving those who identify with the Jewish People through family, culture and history, rather than through religion.

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