

## TVCJ Happenings

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# Tri-Valley Cultural Jews

Your East Bay Secular Humanistic Jewish Community

[TriValleyCulturalJews.org](http://TriValleyCulturalJews.org)

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[\(925\) 399-8029](tel:(925)399-8029)

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



**TRI-VALLEY  
CULTURAL JEWS**  
secular + humanist

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TVCJ is an accepting, welcoming, diverse community of Cultural Jews and their families. Call or email us at [\(925\) 399-8029](tel:(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).

**Events are free for members.** For most events, we suggest a \$15 donation for non-member adults. For High Holiday services, the suggested donation is \$25 per non-member adult, if you are able.

You can make donations to TVCJ through PayPal or Venmo. Our handle is **@Tri-Valley Cultural Jews** (you can also scan our QR code below.)

# **December 27, 2025**

## **Mishpokha**

Keren Rother Telias earned her brown belt and Tai Grabowski earned her brown stripe on her green belt. Mazal tov to both!!

## **Response to Australia Massacre**

Dear TVCJ friends and family,

It took me a couple days to sort our my feelings and ideas about the massacre of Jews in Australia. Here's what I think (and I would like to hear what you think, too):

Every response is needed.

You may – as I have been – struggling with how to think about and respond to the massacre of Jews in Australia last week. I have finally come to the conclusion that every response is legitimate and actually necessary.

You may feel that this is a time to lay low, to downplay your ethnic identity, to keep quiet and blend in. This is a way for an individual to survive. The Warsaw ghetto needed the blonde girls to travel through the sewers to the outside and to smuggle guns and bread back into the ghetto. We needed the uncircumcised boys to live outside so they could survive. We needed those who, like my mother's cousin, were saved by non-Jews who took them in and told them, as my cousin was told, "don't speak Yiddish." Those survivors were precious and we needed them.

You might feel that this is a time to be "out and proud," wear your Star of David, talk about celebrating khanukah, put your menorah in the window and celebrate. This is a way for the Jewish community to survive. As Jazz Salwen-Grabowski said, "intentionally cultivating joy and community feels like an act of resistance."

Throughout the centuries, the Jews of every land have built communities and created traditions that have held our people together. We need those who keep our traditions alive and teach the next generations the Jewish values of dignity, equality, kindness to others, and the responsibility to make the world a better place.

You might feel that this is a time to fight back and punch a Nazi, our own homegrown Jew haters. This is a way for a decent civilization to survive. At khanukah, we celebrate the fighting Maccabees who killed not only the Hellenized Syrians who oppressed them, but also, troublingly, the Jews they saw as collaborators. We honor the fighters of the Bar Kokhba rebellion against the Romans and the ordinary Eastern European Jews who resisted the pogroms of 1881-1883 and 1903-1905. And we revere the partisans in the forests and the heroes of the uprisings in the ghettos under Nazi rule. Those fighters helped to create a world that was safer for Jews and for all despised minorities.

So, hide or celebrate or fight – your response is valid.

**Judith Seid**

## **Upcoming Events**

### **Philosophers' Cafe - 01/08/26 at 7:00pm**

Philosophers' Cafe, our friendly hour-long zoom discussion group will be meeting the second Thursday of the month in January. Zoom in and find out, meet other members, and find something interesting to think about. **Please join us at 7:00 p.m. on January 8** - look for your evite! (Non-members are welcome to attend a couple times before we'll ask you to join TVCJ.)

### **Tu B'Shvat Celebration --**

**02/01/2026 at 10:30am**

SUN. FEB 1. 10:30-12PM. TU B'SHVAT



## CELEBRATE THE NEW YEAR OF THE TREES

Join us for a Tu B'Shvart Celebration & Potluck!

Sunday, Feb 1st, 10:30-12pm

Livermore, CA



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We're thrilled to invite you to a very special Tu B'Shvart celebration on **Saturday, 2/1 at 10:30!** This year, we'll be marking the New Year of the Trees in a way we never have before--by visiting the olive grove of one of our community members. We are incredibly excited and deeply grateful for this opportunity. Join us as we celebrate trees, land, and connection in a hands-on, meaningful way. We hope you'll celebrate with us!

**Repro Rights Gathering --**

**02/22/26 at 2pm**



FEB 22. 2-3:30PM  
LIVERMORE, CA

CHALLAH CRAFTS & DISCUSSION  
IN SUPPORT OF REPRODUCTIVE  
RIGHTS & FREEDOM



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Our Repro Rights Gathering brings us together with a lighter heart, a lot of challah, and plenty of community. It's been a few years since the Dobbs decision, and while we're all still tired (and sometimes sad), we also know the power of showing up together with humor, warmth, and shared values.

Join us on **Saturday, February 22 at 2pm** in Livermore for a relaxed gathering centered on reproductive rights, Jewish Secular, Humanistic values, and community. We'll make and enjoy uterus shaped challah (yes, really), and have an open thoughtful discussion--no heavy lifting required, just honest conversation and connection.

Come for the challah, stay for the community--we promise a space that's meaningful, supportive, and a little bit joyful.

**Purim 03/01/2026 at 10:30am**



Mark your calendars for a joyful Purim celebration on **Sunday, March 1 at 10:30am!** We'll come together for a morning full of fun and connection, including a Purimspiel, potluck, hamantaschen making, crafts, and plenty of time to schmooze.

Purim is our chance to celebrate the triumph of truth over lies, courage over fear, and standing up for what's right--even when it's hard. More details to come!

**Refugee Sunday--Sunday, 03/14/2026 at 1pm**

Save the date for our Refugee Sunday, in conjunction with and inspired by HIAS materials, happening **Sunday, March 14 at 1pm** in Castro Valley, right after Jewish Culture School.

This will be a warm, welcoming gathering to celebrate the richness, resilience and extra spice that immigration brings to our lives and to American culture--flavors, stories, music, and traditions that make our world (and our community) so much more interesting. More details soon--we'd love to see you there!

## **Passover--Saturday, 04/04/2026**

**5:00pm Ceremony | 6:30pm Potluck**

Please save the date for our Secular **Passover Seder on April 4**. We're looking forward to gathering once again for an inclusive, non-religious Seder that honors Passover traditions, while centering the values of freedom, justice and shared humanity.

This will be a warm, meaningful evening of storytelling, discussion and community--followed by a potluck dinner full of familiar favorites and new flavors. Whether Passover is a lifelong tradition for you or something you're still getting to know, you'll find a welcoming space to connect, reflect, and celebrate liberation together. Mark your calendar! We can't wait to celebrate with you!

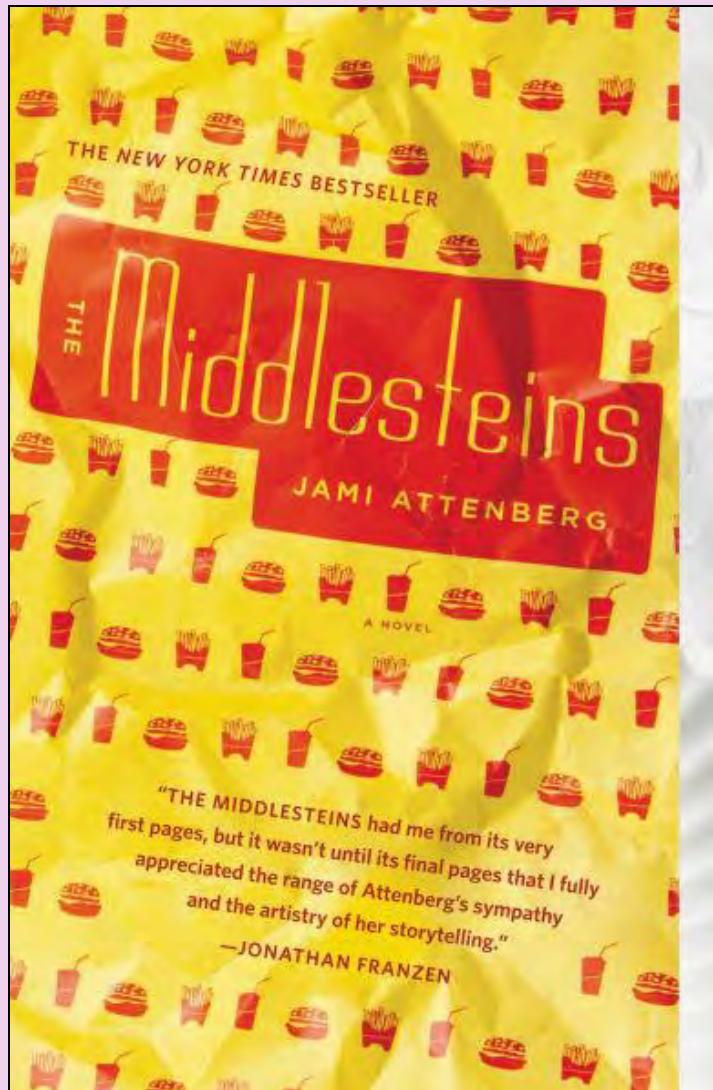
## **Jewish Culture School**

### **12/07/2025 Jewish Culture School**

Our latest Jewish Culture School class was all about how immigrants make our communities richer, more interesting, and more delicious. We were delighted to welcome Adriana Telias, who zoomed in to share her own immigration story and spark a thoughtful, heartfelt conversation.

As always, there was singing (because of course there was) and hands-on creativity in the kitchen. In honor of Hanukkah, we cooked up kimchi and scallion latkes--a perfect mash-up (pun intended!) that captured the spirit of the day. Just like immigrants themselves, the latkes brought something familiar along for the journey, while pickup up new flavors along the way. Delicious!

**BOOK REVIEW**  
***The Middlesteins***  
**By**  
**Jami Attenberg**



This novel takes place in a Jewish section of Chicago. It tells about a mostly dysfunctional family. Each member has his/her own issues and does not seem to know how to resolve them.

The matriarch, Edie's main problem is her weight. Since childhood she could not control her eating. Therefore she has become an obese adult. Some members of her family have tried to help her with this, but her appetite was uncontrollable. Her husband has made some attempts, but has been unsuccessful. Her negative attitude has not helped.

On top of all this is that their's is a largely a loveless marriage, leading to the family breaking up and father walking out. This happened after mother was diagnosed with a serious case of weight-related diabetes.

A highlight of this story is the advent of the niece and nephews' ( twins) Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Mother wanted to attend with her latest lover and father wanted to take his latest partner. What could possibly go wrong?

As can be seen the issues in this family are numerous and complex. This story is told with much humor and drama. I therefore would recommend this book to all.

[If you would like to purchase this book on Bookshop.org click here.](#)

[If you would like to purchase this book on Barnes and Noble click here.](#)

**Reviewed By Jerry Zwick**

## **2026 Calendar Dates:**

- 1/8** Philosophers' Cafe
- 2/1** Tu B'Shvat
- 2/5** Philosophers' Cafe
- 2/22** Repro Rights Gathering
- 3/1** Purim
- 3/5** Philosophers' Cafe
- 3/14** Refugee Shabbat
- 4/2** Philosophers' Cafe
- 4/4** Passover
- 5/3** Lag B'Omer
- 5/7** Philosophers' Cafe
- 5/23** Shavuous

## **Our Hanukkah Celebration**





Our Hanukkah celebration was a warm, joyful gathering that felt especially precious right now. We cooked latkes together, shared a generous potluck, and filled the space with laughter through games and conversation. Everyone brought their own menorahs, and we also lit our community mega-menorah, pausing to make heartfelt dedications for each candle--moments of reflection, gratitude, and hope that reminded us why being together matters so much.

We are deeply grateful to so many people who made this celebration possible: to Solomon, Jamie, and Sophia for opening their home (which probably still smells like latkes); to our wonderful shopper, Jeff, who made sure we didn't run out of potatoes; to our brave cooks, David, Solomon, and Alex, for keeping the latkes coming; to Judy for making sure we sang; to Peter for bringing games and including everyone; to Sarah and Jazz for tackling so many dishes; and to everyone who came, brought food, lent a hand, and helped create such a meaningful night. Thank you for showing up and for helping to make our secular Jewish community feel so alive, caring and connected.

**Eden Area Interfaith Council**



TVCJ participated in the Eden Area Interfaith Council's yearly display at the Castro Valley Library. This year they disposed a collection of multicultural winter recipes from the various groups that are part of the council. We shared a latke recipe.



**Joke:** Why did the turkey join the band?

**Answer:** Because the turkey had the drumsticks.



**Bluesky**

TVCJ is on Bluesky now.  
[@tvcj2.bsky.social](https://@tvcj2.bsky.social). Check it out.

## TVCJ PayPal Giving Fund Page

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



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



#### **In December We Remember**

Elizabeth Evans  
Melvin Luborsky  
Martin Salwen  
Benjamin Sczuchman  
Enye Seid  
Yossi Seid  
Stewart Silverman  
Celia Zuckerman  
Charles Zuckerman  
Sam Zuckerman

#### **December Birthdays**

Isabel Gross  
Ella King  
Ruth Seid  
Keren Rother Telias



## Who We Are

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

**Madrikha:** Jamie Ireland

**Board Members:**

David Gates

Jazz Salwen-Grabowski

Jamie Ireland

Maggie Pino

Sophia Ireland

Rachel Rose

Diego Rother

Judith Seid

**Newsletter:** Joy Randel

**Webmaster:** Noah King

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

**Holiday Coordinator:** Jazz Salwen-Grabowski

**Movie Coordinator:** Bret Mogilefsky

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**Our mailing address is:**

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