

TVCJ Happenings [View this email in your browser](#)

Tri-Valley Cultural Jews

Your East Bay Secular Humanistic Jewish Community

TriValleyCulturalJews.org
info@tri-valleyculturaljews.org
[\(925\) 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

Like and Share on Facebook

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 for an Evite or for more information about our community. You can find us at 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.)

May 30th, 2026 Newsletter

Upcoming Events

Philosophers' Cafe - 06/04/26 7:00pm



Our monthly friendly discussion group, Philosophers' Café, enjoyed a conversation about when and how we can talk with people who disagree with us.

Join us on zoom at 7 p.m. Thursday, June 4. We'll be playing a game!

BOOK REVIEW
ONE DARK NIGHT
BY
ROCHELLE DREEBEN



This memoir took place during the holocaust. It tells the harrowing story of a mother and her young daughter as they face the horrors of the holocaust, but with their wits and determination succeed in surviving it.

The mother, Leonia, and her daughter, Rachel live a comfortable middle class life in Poland. When the bombing starts, along with the anti-Jewish pogroms,

The parents realize they cannot stay in their house if they are to survive. Like many other Polish Jews they sell all of their possessions and search for a safer place to live. Leonia took a job as a housekeeper in a neighboring city while Rachel's father stayed to fight with the resistance. However, it is too dangerous for Rachel to stay with them so she is placed in a convent. After many tears her mother finally agreed to this arrangement. The sisters there are very nice but they insist that they cannot protect a Jewish girl so they raise her as a Catholic.

Years pass by, the war ends, and mother and daughter are reunited. The problem now is that Rachel no longer recognizes her mother. This starts a new chapter in their lives.

This true story highlights the horrors of the holocaust as well as the strength of family ties. It is well written, and I would recommend it.

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

Book Review By Jerry Zwick

[Jewish Culture School](#)



JCS 5/17

Our last Jewish Culture School was a celebration of everything we love about JCS: learning, music, and food! Our students worked together to answer questions about what they learned throughout the year, sang their favorite songs (as well as practicing the ones they'll sing to support their friend Tai at her Brit Mitzvah in June), and baked delicious sugar cookies...because who doesn't want to end the year with something sweet?

[For more information click here: Jewish Culture School](#)

Our Watch Party and Potluck PBS Documentary

Black and Jewish America: An Interwoven History?

We gathered together to watch the final installment of the PBS Documentary Black and Jewish America. Many thanks to Judy and David for hosting, and for the delicious bean chili! After a quick potluck, we enjoyed the documentary, and then relaxed for a discussion of the whole series. So glad that Jerry and Leslie could Zoom in!

Celebrating Shavuos Together

TVCJ came together for our annual Shavuos Bookfest, one of our favorite traditions throughout the year. With delicious food and thoughtful conversation, we shared our favorite books, podcasts, and projects that inspired us this year. It was another reminder that one of the best parts of the TVCJ community is great book recommendations!! And the potluck desserts were drool-worthy!

Books People Shared:

Advice for Future Corpses (and Those Who Love Them): A Practical Perspective on Death and Dying, Sallie Tisdale.

This book was chosen from Castro Valley Reads. The book blends practical guidance with reflections on mortality and caregiving. It encourages readers to think of end-of-life choices and the importance of preparing with care and dignity.

Raising Hare, Chloe Dalton

A memoir of the author's experience rescuing and raising a newborn wild hare during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Personal Librarian, Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray

A historical novel inspired by the life of Belle da Costa Greene, the personal librarian to J.P. Morgan. The book explores her career and difficult choices she made as a Black woman passing as white in early 20th-century America.

109 East Palace: Robert Oppenheimer and the Secret City of Los Alamos, Jennet Conant

The story of the Santa Fe guest house that served as the entry point for scientists and families arriving to work on the secret Manhattan Project in Los Alamos during World War II.

Diet, Drugs, and Dopamine: The New Science of Achieving a Healthy Weight, David A. Kessler

An exploration of how highly processed foods, addictive substances, and modern habits interact with the brain's reward system to shape behavior and cravings.

The Wedding People, Alison Espach

A fun, romantic novel about an unexpected connection during a lavish wedding weekend.

Autocracy, Inc., Anne Applebaum

An examination of how modern authoritarian governments cooperate across borders to maintain power, weaken democratic institutions, and control information and wealth.

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption, Bryan Stevenson

A memoir that follows the author's work as a lawyer defending people who have been wrongly convicted or unfairly sentenced, particularly in the American South. Through individual cases--especially that of Walter McMillian--the book exposes deep injustices in the legal system.

When Women Were Dragons, Kelly Barnhill

A coming-of-age novel that is delightful and timely. To say any more would be spoiling the fun!

Light from Uncommon Stars, Ryka Aoki

The tale of a young transgender violin prodigy whose talent draws the attention of a cursed violin teacher and interstellar refugees running a donut shop in California's San Gabriel Valley. The story explores identity, chosen family, and the possibility of redemption through connection and care. The audiobook is also excellent.

The Rook, Daniel O'Malley

A supernatural spy thriller about Myfanwy Thomas, a woman who wakes up in a London park surrounded by dead bodies with no memory of who she is. As she uncovers her identity, she discovers she is a high-ranking member of a secret British organization that battles paranormal threats.

The Boston Girl, Anita Diamant

A coming-of-age novel told through the memories of Addie Baum, the daughter of Jewish immigrants growing up in early 20th-century Boston.

Nine Women and One Dress, Jane L. Rosen

A lighthearted novel that follows several women whose lives unexpectedly intersect through a single dress displayed in a department store window.

The Wild Trees, Richard Preston

A nonfiction account of the scientists and adventurers who discovered previously unknown ecosystems high in the canopies of California's giant redwood trees.

Homegoing, Yaa Gyasi

A multigenerational novel that follows the descendants of two half-sisters born in 18th-century Ghana--one who remains in Africa and one who is sold into slavery in America.

Never Split the Difference: Negotiating As If Your Life Depended On It, Chris Voss
Former FBI hostage negotiator explores communication and negotiation techniques rooted in empathy, active listening, and emotional intelligence. The book shows how understanding human behavior can lead to more effective negotiations.

Sunrise on the Reaping, Suzanne Collins

This novel returns to the world of Panem to explore the events surrounding the Fiftieth Hunger Games and examine the cost of living under an oppressive regime.

All Quiet on the Western Front, Erich Maria Remarque

A novel that shows the brutal realities of World War I and destroys the innocence, humanity and future of an entire generation.

7 1/2 Deaths of Evelyn Hardcastle, Stuart Turton

Part whodunnit mystery, part Groundhog Day, part Quantum Leap, the novel tells the story of a man trapped in a time loop who must solve the murder of Evelyn Hardcastle before the day repeats again.

The Man Who Saw Seconds, Alexander Boldizar

A sci-fi thriller about a man who has the ability to see five seconds into the future, which gives him an uncanny edge but also draws him into deepening dangerous conflicts.

All Systems Red, Martha Wells

The first book in the Murderbot Diaries series, following a security android that has hacked its own control system and secretly gained free will.

Detective Aunty, Uzma Jalaluddin

A mystery about a widow who unexpectedly steps into the role of amateur detective after her daughter is accused of murder. It touches on themes of community, family, cultural pressures, and being a nosey aunty!

Bread of Angels, Patti Smith

A memoir reflecting on memory, loss, and the passage of time through personal stories and poetic observations. Patti Smith emerged in the 1970s as a key figure in the New York punk rock movement.

The Anomaly, Herve' Le Tellier

A literary thriller about passengers on a flight who mysteriously experience a duplicate version of themselves after a strange turbulence.

The Course of Love, Alain de Botton

The novel follows a couple from their first meeting exploring how love changes over time.

Streetwise: Getting to and Through Goldman Sachs, Lloyd Blankfein

A memoir by the former CEO of Goldman Sachs that traces his rise from a working-class childhood in Brooklyn to leading one of the most powerful investment banks in the world.

The Secret of Secrets, Dan Brown

This novel follows symbologist Robert Langdon in Prague, where a lecture by his partner is disrupted by a murder and her sudden disappearance.

A Streaming Documentary Series:

Doug's Geology Journal

A PBS show following geologist Doug Prose as he travels through dramatic landscapes, explaining the powerful geologic forces that shape the Earth.

A Podcast Shared:

Moonshots Podcast with Peter Diamandis

Features conversations with entrepreneurs, scientists and thinkers exploring breakthrough ideas, emerging technologies, and "moonshot" innovations that aim to

solve major global challenges.

An Update On AI From Diego:

Diego shared how his use of AI has evolved significantly over the past year. He described a shift toward more independent, tool-enabled research, along with a more structured internal dialogue, where the AI explores multiple approaches, evaluates options, and then develops a clear action-plan. Overall, he noted that AI has increasingly become an assistant in his day-to-day work.

Annual Meeting Recap

A big thank you to everyone who continues to make Tri-Valley Cultural Jews possible. Special appreciation goes to Joy for our monthly newsletter, Noah for maintaining our website, Jazz for consistently stepping up wherever needed, and Judy and David for generously hosting many of our events. We're also grateful to Jamie and Solomon for continuing to give Jewish Culture School a place to meet.

This year, Jewish Culture School met monthly with six students, along with one Brit Mizvah student. The Death Over Dinner group continues to meet, with one opening currently available. Additional programming included hikes, adult gatherings, and movie events.

Our strongest attendance was at Tu B'Shvat, Chanukah, and Shavuos. Other holiday events saw lighter turnout, with Passover attendance only at around 20 participants and Lag B'Omer ultimately canceled due to low registration.

We continue to face challenges securing a permanent gathering space, and progress on the website redesign has paused due to unforeseen complexity.

For financial details, members who were unable to attend are invited to reach out to Judy Seid.

We also confirmed our board for the coming year: Jamie continues as Present, Judy as Treasurer, and Jazz as Secretary, with Diego and Rachel serving as board members. We're happy to welcome Noah King back to the board and introduce Keren Tellias as our new teen representative. Noah and Judy will remain authorized signers.

Interfaith Interconnect of the Tri-Valley

Invites You to an In-Person Religion Chat

Topic: *“What does your religion teach about the presence of evil in the world?”*

Presenters: **Rev. Steve Wilde, Pastor**, First Presbyterian Church Livermore and **Rev. Amelia Marie Petersen, Minister**, Unitarian Universalist Church in Livermore.

Wednesday, June 10, 2026, 7:00-8:00 p.m. Doors open at 6:45pm.
Optional discussion following, 8:00-8:30pm

Location: **First Presbyterian Church, 2020 5th St, Livermore**
Enter through courtyard on K Street. Parking on 5th and K streets.

All are welcome!

We look forward to having you join us for Religion Chat on June 10.

Marcia Elchesen
and the Interfaith Interconnect Leadership Committee

Our Mission: To enrich, inform, and educate ourselves and others about the great diversity of faiths and cultures in our Valley.

Find us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/InterfaithInterconnect/>
Please email us with any questions: Interfaith.interconnect@gmail.com

UC Davis Hibel Lab Research
Looking for Participants

UC Davis Hibbel Lab

Calling All Jewish Moms

We are inviting Jewish moms living in California with children born around the time of the October 7th attack to participate in a study on the experiences of Jewish identity, culture, and antisemitism

Mishpacha Project

Requirements:

Jewish mom aged 18 or older, residing in California, with a biological child **born between September 1, 2022 and September 30, 2023**

Participation Involves:

filling out a 60-minute survey with questions on Jewish identity, family cultural practices, and experiences with antisemitism



Compensation:

eligible participants will receive a \$20 Amazon gift card

How to Get Involved:

contact us at HibbelLab@ucdavis.edu to confirm eligibility and receive the survey link

Jewish Film Institute presents: *The 46th San Francisco Jewish Film Festival*
July 16 – August 2, 2026

[Click Here To Learn More About The Jewish Film Festival](#)

The 46th San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, presented by the Jewish Film Institute, will be returning to the Bay Area soon from **July 16 – August 2, 2026!** Mark your

calendars for the world's most exciting celebration of Jewish culture, stories, and cinema and discover new premieres of acclaimed films and exciting stories from up-and-coming filmmakers.

Mark your calendars for these key dates:

- **June 16:** SFJFF46 Program Reveal & JFI Members Pre-Sale
- **June 18:** General Public Sales Begin

The best way to experience SFJFF is as a member! Unlock benefits like early ticket sales, exclusive savings, and exclusive events & receptions. [Join as a Jewish Film Institute member today!](#)



Joke: Why did the sheep get invited to the Torah reading?

Answer: He was great at being the ba'al koreh.



Bluesky

TVCJ is on Bluesky now.

[@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 May We Remember
Chaparral Ireland



May Birthdays
Rosita Gorel-Wong
Peter Grabowski
Ember Ireland
Kai Mogilefsky

Who We Are

Rabbi: Judith Seid 925-485-1049

Madrikha: Jamie Ireland

Board Members:

David Gates

Jazz Salwen-Grabowski

Jamie Ireland

Maggie Pino

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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