

Congregation Keneseth Israel (KI), Allentown PA

Seth Phillips, Rabbi

Martina Obenski, Program Coordinator, Outreach

Introduction to Judaism Course. Mondays March 7 — April 11, 2022

Summary of each session 2022:

March 7: Jewish Texts: Torah Talmud and Mishna

Rabbi Seth described the important Jewish texts and their connection Jews have to the writings.

March 14: Shabbat: Beginnings & Endings

The class was held in the sanctuary as Rabbi Seth defined the importance and the significance of Shabbat in Jewish life. The parts of the liturgy were explained and two guests, KI's musical director and a member of the congregational choir, enhanced the program with Shabbat and Havdalah songs and prayers.

March 21: Jewish Culture through Language, Food and the Theater

The Program coordinator gave a short introduction to how food and Jewish rituals go together and then introduced the former director of the Muhlenberg College Theater Department. He gave students a 'lively' look at the origins of Jews in the entertainment industry and the influence they had on society. Following a short break, KI's Librarian spoke on Jewish literature - from the Bible to current award winning Jewish authors.

March 28: Life Cycle Events: From Birth to Death

The class began as the Lehigh Valley's official Mohel described the practice of circumcision. Rabbi gave a thumbnail sketch of B'nai Mitzvahs, marriage ceremonies and conversion. Another

congregant and member of the Chevra Kadesha society spoke on the ritual cleansing and shrouding of the deceased.

April 4: Israel, Zionism and Anti-Semitism

The guest for the evening has held many positions within the Lehigh Valley Jewish and secular communities. A well-known Jewish educator, she is the daughter of a Holocaust survivor and thus lectures extensively on the subject. The students were enthralled by the story of how her family menorah, which survived Dachau, came to be on display during a White House Hanukkah reception hosted by then President Barack Obama. The rabbi closed out the evening with a discussion of Israel and the Zionist movement.

April 11: The Jewish Calendar: Holidays and Observances

The Program Coordinator explained the Jewish calendar and the holidays and observances occurring in 2022. Using the Family Haggadah (ArtScroll) Rabbi Seth conducted a mock Seder and explained the ritual and the significance. Students had the chance to taste the matzo, charoset, as well as gefilte fish.

Students completed an evaluation and were gifted with the Family Haggadah as well as a stemless wine glass engraved with “L’chaim” by a local merchant.

For each class, goals were identified and students received handouts germane to the topic. A suggested reading list as well as relevant on-line resources were provided to enhance their learning. Refreshments that related to the topic(s) were served and included Challah (Shabbat), Babka & Rugalach (Culture), Apple Cake, Sutlach (Life Cycle events), Israeli Couscous salad, Hummus, Malabi with Raspberry Syrup and Semolina marmalade loaf (Israel), wine, charoset, matzo toffee, macaroons and Passover key lime pie (Holidays).