

NAPLES JEWISH CONGREGATION

LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAM

2025-2026

THE MYSTERY OF HEBREW NUMEROLOGY

FRIDAY OCTOBER 17, 2025

Gematria is a Kabbalistic tradition that interprets Biblical verses on the basis of the numerical equivalents of Hebrew letters. Until now, these teachings were locked away, reserved for those who could decipher the ancient mystical texts. Not anymore. Join us for a thrilling three-part journey inside the world of Hebrew numerology. Learn the rules that govern Hebrew numerology, gain the skills to decode letters, words, and phrases, and discover astonishing secret meanings that lie hidden beneath the biblical text. We will expose the secrets of numerology, and its mysticism.

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THE VIRGIN BIRTH: THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH UNDERSTANDING

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 14, 2025

What is the “Virgin Birth?” It is the story of the supernatural birth of Jesus to his mother Mary (“Miriam” in Hebrew) told in only two of the Gospels. Does this story really derive from Isaiah 7:14? If true, does the Virgin Birth prove that Jesus is God? Join us for this fascinating course and discussion. No prior knowledge or background is required.

WHO SHALL I SAY IS CALLING? INSIGHTS ABOUT THE NAME(S) OF GOD IN JEWISH TRADITION

FRIDAY DECEMBER 19, 2025

Jewish spiritual wisdom has put many names on the experience of encountering the divine. This course offers some unexpected insights from the Bible, rabbinic literature, and Kabbalah about what it means to give a name to the Transcendent: from the Torah's ineffable four-letter Name to unusual metaphors, to the Kabbalists' 72- (actually 216-) letter mystery, and beyond. This course will explore familiar and unfamiliar sources, with an emphasis on articulating and clarifying our own spiritual awareness.

THIS TOO IS TORAH: EXPLORING SEX IN THE TEXTS

FRIDAY JANUARY 23, 2026

Rabbi Herman will teach in this class about attitudes of the Rabbis toward sex and human sexuality. We will look at how those attitudes were shaped and how they became mainstream Jewish thought. In this session we will examine our assumptions about what Jewish tradition has to say about sex and pleasure, discussing various texts, and creating our own collective Jewish values around sex today.

MEANING AND MUSSAR

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 27, 2026

Rabbi Herman leads a discussion about the weekly Torah portion and “Mussar” – the Jewish study of applying personal ethics to our daily lives. Mussar is a Jewish spiritual practice focused on self-improvement and developing virtues to live a more meaningful and ethical life. It emphasizes the importance of cultivating inner character traits known as “middot” and aims to help individuals become more aware of their soul traits and bring them into better balance.

JEWISH ETHICS IN MODERN LIFE: SCENARIOS FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES ETHICIST

FRIDAY MARCH 13, 2026

In this session we will discuss several real-life ethical dilemmas sent into the New York Times Ethicist Column. Our class will focus on real life scenarios relating to desire, want, need, freedom and choice. Next, we will explore situations involving offering and receiving monetary rewards. And lastly, we will talk about dilemmas which arise when friends and relatives exhibit bad behavior that leaves us questioning our humanity.

