

Learn to disagree constructively JFCS urges 'Planning Ahead'

In the current political climate, most people concur that civil discourse has deteriorated to an extent that endangers democratic government. We are unable to listen to one another, let alone understand each other. We



Mahloket Matters instructors: Emily Simon, left, and Sharon Pollin, right.

have progressively tuned in to the exclusive echoes of our own silos.

Is it possible to find the courage to productively engage those with whom we disagree? Can text study of Biblical stories and their diverse interpretations empower us to engage more constructively in disagreements today?

Emily Simon and Dr. Sharon Pollin are both graduates of the Pardes Institute's Mahloket Matters program. They recently spent eight weeks learning from classic and contemporary Jewish texts to engage productively in conflict conversations "for the sake of Heaven."

"Our Jewish tradition has long recognized that there are both constructive and destructive ways to express differences, *mahloket*," says Pollin. "The Pardes program taught us that there is a way to engage constructively across differences by examining our traditional and contemporary texts in the format of the traditional *beit midrash* (study hall). And, by learning how to disagree respectfully over Jewish texts, we can use this model to shine a light on problems that we face in our society today and to facilitate civil discourse."

According to Emily Simon, "the power of 'the *beit midrash way*,' sitting respectfully with one another and really being open to intent listening and understanding, yields amazingly rich and productive con-



versations. The contradictory nuances of our texts, along with diverse opinions from the group, demonstrate how we can engage more constructively in all kinds of debates, especially including those that are polar-

ized politically and ideologically."

Pollin and Simon are excited to share the Mahloket Matters curriculum with the Portland and Ashland Jewish communities. They will be team teaching a five-week class Sundays, 3:30-5 pm, Oct. 23 until Nov. 20. The Portland group will meet in person with Dr. Pollin in Portland at the Eastside Jewish Commons, and the Ashland group will meet in person with Ms. Simon at Temple Emek Shalom. With the magic of technology, they will present shared simultaneous robust class offerings even though the two groups will be approximately 300 miles apart.

An introduction to the **Rabbinic Concepts of the Beit Midrash Way** starts the program.

The curriculum will continue with:

- **Meet or Refuse to Meet?** From Korah and Moses to Political Adversaries Today
- **Fear War or Trust Peace?** From Jacob and Esau through Chamberlain and Menachem Begin to Today
- **Xenophobia or National Security?** From Pharaoh and the Israelites through Japanese Internment to Today
- **"Fake News" or Uncovering the Truth?** From Joseph and his brothers through Jefferson and Hamilton to Today.

Cost for five-session class is \$36. Register for the Portland group at tinyurl.com/ms8v8c9m.

To register for the Ashland group, email Emily Simon at esimonesq@gmail.com.

Jewish Family & Child Service believes in the importance of anticipating the future and invites you to do the same.

On Friday, Oct. 28, JFCS presents "Planning Ahead: A Jewish Imperative to Plan for the Unmentionables" by Jerry Cohen, JD, MPA.

Cohen is a retired attorney and immediate-past state director for AARP Oregon. The free morning session – from 10 to 11:30 am at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center – focuses on end-of-life planning, specifically on Advanced Directives. These crucial documents provide information to care providers and loved ones about specific, personal desires. There will be time for Q&A, and refreshments will be served.

Cohen says his workshop breaks down and uses language that the "nonexperts" among us can understand to demystify the process of "developing plans for loss of mental capacity or end of life."

"From a Jewish ethical perspective, it's imperative to plan ahead for one's family and to express in advance one's personal wishes," he says. "I expect attendees to leave with a better understanding of advanced planning and with the motivation to begin or revisit the next steps to develop or implement such plans. I hope people will take action because of this workshop – for themselves and their loved ones."

Missy Fry, LCSW, CAGCS, who is JFCS' behavioral health social worker, invited Cohen to present the program.

"By offering this workshop, we hope to promote empowerment and choice, particularly during a time when one has the potential to feel powerless," says Fry.

This opportunity is thanks to generous funding provided by Jewish Federations of North America.

Reservations are not required. For questions, email missyfry@jfcs-portland.org.



After 2-year hiatus, Celebration of Art returns

ORA Northwest Jewish Artists will once again sponsor the Celebration of Art after a two-year pandemic hiatus. The Celebration of Art will take place at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center, 6651 SW Capitol Hwy., Portland, OR 97219.

Twenty-two ORA artists will show and sell their work 7-8 pm, Saturday, Oct. 29, and 10 am-4 pm, Sunday, Oct. 30. Artwork will include paintings, drawings, jewelry, glass, fiber arts – wearable and decorative, pottery, sculpture, woodturning and photography.

ORA is a group of Jewish artists in Portland who create opportunities to exhibit members' works of art, conduct educational workshops and strengthen our community through shared experiences. For more information, visit northwestjewishartists.org.

Left: Painting of a girl by Edith Crever, a senior in high school. Right: Necklace by Victoria Epstein is called Counterweight.

