



SCAN THE
QR CODE and
REGISTER
TODAY!

Contact Laura Gottlieb, Director
of Cultural Resources for details
at lgottlieb@tbeonline.org or
248-865-0627.

bites & BOOKS

THURSDAYS at NOON



TEMPLE
BETH EL
THE PRENTIS MEMORIAL
LIBRARY

2026

SEPTEMBER 3

Facilitated by Rachel Ellis

Isabela's Way

by Barbara Stark-Nemon

With In-Person Author Appearance For
Discussion!



In early-seventeenth-century Portugal, Spain, France, and Germany, dangers are plentiful—especially for those of Jewish heritage. Non-Catholics have been expelled from Spain, and the Inquisition has come to Portugal to impose its prohibitions. Fourteen-year-old Isabela, an obedient “New Christian”, believes she has nothing to fear from the Inquisition. But when a mysterious woman arrives with a message from Isabela’s traveling father, the girl must leave her home and embroider her way along the clandestine network of sanctuaries created to conduct Conversos, or secret Jews, to safety. A host of supporters and spirit guides, as well as one special young man, assist Isabela as she escapes the Inquisitors. As she travels, she learns of the danger and importance of her work, with its coded symbols, and is shocked to discover her family’s true origins. In this enthralling coming-of-age tale of resistance, love, and danger, Isabela employs her talent and fierce determination to find her way despite the powerful forces that buffet her at every turn.

NOVEMBER 5

Facilitated by Laura Gottlieb, MLIS

All Afternoon

by Susan Kleinman



River Ridge, New Jersey, 1978: As feminism takes root in this tight-knit Jewish community, women are opening businesses, rethinking their marriages, and challenging their synagogue’s long-standing rules. Not Marilyn Weisfeld. Once a promising writer, Marilyn gave up her literary dreams twenty years ago when she married Jerry, a self-important professor of economics. Now, she’s too busy raising children, braiding challahs, and entertaining her husband’s insufferable colleagues to think about what else her life might have held... until the night an old friend comes to dinner.

Bestselling author Henry Goldfarb remembers Marilyn’s early short stories. He remembers HER. When he encourages her to start writing again, she catches glimpses of a more fulfilling life she could be living – if only she can find the courage to reach for it. Caught between the comfort of old rhythms and the thrill of new possibilities, she will have to decide exactly what price she’s willing to pay to live bravely, authentically, and without regret.

2027

JANUARY 7

Facilitated by Rabbi Megan Brudney

Heart of a Stranger

by Angela Buchdahl



Angela Buchdahl was born in Korea and grew up in Tacoma, Washington, the daughter of a Korean Buddhist mother and Jewish American father. Profoundly spiritual from a young age, Angela Buchdahl felt the first stirrings to become a rabbi at age sixteen. Despite the naysayers and periods of self-doubt—would a mixed-race woman ever be seen as authentically Jewish and entitled to lead a congregation—she stayed the course, which took her first to Yale, then to rabbinical school, cantorial school, and finally to the pulpit of one of the largest, most influential congregations in the world.

Today, Angela Buchdahl is revered by Jews and non-Jews alike for her invigorating, joyful approach to worship, and her belief in the power of faith, gratitude, and responsibility for each other, regardless of religion. She does not shy away from challenging topics, be it racism within the Jewish community to sexism she confronted when she aspired to the top job. Buchdahl’s consistent message is that it is up to us to strive for a world of more humanity, especially in today’s challenging times. Here, she has written a book that is both a memoir and a spiritual guide for everyday living, which is exactly what so many of us crave right now.

MARCH 11

Facilitated by Eileen Polk, MLIS

The Love Elixir of Augusta Stern

by Lynda Cohen Loigman



On the cusp of turning eighty, newly retired pharmacist Augusta Stern is adrift. When she relocates to Rallentando Springs—an active senior community—she unexpectedly crosses paths with Irving Rivkin, the delivery boy from her father’s old pharmacy—and the man who broke her heart sixty years earlier. As a teenager growing up in 1920’s Brooklyn, Augusta’s role model was her father, Solomon Stern, the trusted owner of the local pharmacy. But when Augusta’s mother dies and Great Aunt Esther moves in, Augusta can’t help but be drawn to Esther’s curious methods. As a healer herself, Esther offers Solomon’s customers her own advice—unconventional remedies ranging from homemade chicken soup to a mysterious array of powders and potions.

As Augusta prepares for pharmacy college, she is torn between loyalty to her father and fascination with her great aunt, all while navigating a budding but complicated relationship with Irving. Desperate for clarity, she impulsively uses Esther’s most potent elixir with disastrous consequences. Disillusioned and alone, Augusta vows to reject Esther’s enchantments forever. Sixty years later, Augusta is still haunted by the mistakes of her past. What happened all those years ago and how did her plan go so spectacularly wrong? Did Irving ever truly love her or was he simply playing a part? And can Augusta reclaim the magic of her youth before it’s too late?

MAY 13

Facilitated by Rabbi David Castiglione

The Future is Peace

by Aziz Abu Sarah, Maoz Inon



Two lifelong peace activists and tour guides, both of whom have lost family in the conflict, take readers on a revealing life-changing journey across this holy, bloodstained land and discover the mythic, political, and personal history that divides but also binds them and their peoples. Palestinian Aziz Abu Sarah and Israeli Maoz Inon are unlikely peacemakers, dedicated to finding a solution to the bitter war that has decimated historical, ancient land and ended family lines. Despite the losses they have suffered, the resolve of their friendship has taught them that strength and unity are more powerful than the violence of separation. When there have been so many lives lost and families shattered, how can they ever find hope? Their answer is always the same. One cannot find hope. We must create it.

In *The Future Is Peace*, Sarah and Inon take readers on their unforgettable weeklong journey across the holy land while exploring each other’s personal and national histories in a land of competing narratives, amid the turbulent push and pull of near constant war, and the recent devastation that has rocked the world. Their mission—to explain the naivete in believing that more violence can bring security and prosperity to either people while in search of a true and lasting peace. Pairing unapologetic candor and inspirational prose, Sarah and Inon are sending a message to humanity that the people have the power to make change. Peace is achievable, not just between the river and the sea, but throughout the world.

JULY 8

Facilitated by Dr. Lorry Black

The Book of Lost Hours

by Hayley Gelfuso



Enter the time space, a soaring library filled with books containing the memories of those who have passed and accessed only by specially made watches once passed from father to son—but mostly now in government hands. This is where eleven-year-old Lisavet Levy finds herself trapped in 1938, waiting for her watchmaker father to return for her. When he doesn’t, she grows up among the books and specters, able to see the world only by sifting through the memories of those who came before her. As she realizes that government agents are entering the time space to destroy books and maintain their preferred version of history, she sets about saving these scraps in her own volume of memories. Until the appearance of an American spy named Ernest Duquesne in 1949 offers her a glimpse of the world she left behind, setting her on a course to change history and possibly the time space itself.

In 1965, sixteen-year-old Amelia Duquesne is mourning the disappearance of her uncle Ernest when an enigmatic CIA agent approaches her to enlist her help in tracking down a book of memories her uncle had once sought. But when Amelia visits the time space for the first time, she realizes that the past—and the truth—might not be as linear as she’d like to believe. The Book of Lost Hours explores time, memory, and what we sacrifice to protect those we love.