



Rosh Hodesh Heshvan

Sunday, October 11, 2026 @ 11:00 am

Agenda

Welcome

Introductions and Opening Blessing

Candle Lighting

Shehechyanu

Techine for Candle lighting



Society Hill Synagogue Rosh Hodesh Gatherings

Our Community Guidelines

Rosh Hodesh Gatherings at Society Hill Synagogue are an open space where women (cis- and trans-gender) and non-binary people can be in community around issues affecting modern day Jewish women to explore religious, spiritual, and historic topics of Jewish women, womanhood, and the feminine. We acknowledge that these topics are often difficult to discuss, bringing up deep personal connections or strong moral or political feelings. We welcome a wide variety of opinions on these topics and aim to provide a supportive environment where all participants feel free to share their thoughts and opinions without judgement.

To foster this atmosphere of acceptance and support, we ask that all participants follow these community guidelines:

1. Treat all participants with respect. Be mindful of your language, your tone of voice, and the way you take up space in the group. If you are a talker, consider cutting yourself short to give others the floor; if you are not contributing to the conversation, consider offering your thoughts. No insults or curse words will be tolerated. Do not share anything personal from the group without express consent from the speaker.
2. Assume good intentions. Start from the belief that people mean well, even if their delivery is clumsy or triggering.
3. All of us walk into this room with a variety of identities and experiences that inform who we are and how we see the world. Do not make assumptions about people's identities or opinions. Speak from your own experience. Use "I" statements rather than generalizing with "you" or "we" (e.g. "Everyone here believes in the right to abortion.")
4. Be accepting when someone offers an opinion you disagree with; you do not have to share it to hear them out. Start by listening to understand where they are coming from without deciding if they are right or wrong.
5. When offering your own opinion, be mindful of the language you choose. Avoid categorizing a whole group of people (e.g. "All men do this," "All Arabs are like that," "Black people never do this," "Orthodox women are so X," "Latinas are so Y"). Feel free to push back on a thought or opinion you disagree with - that makes for healthy debate - but use respectful language. Consider acknowledging the value of their opinion or thanking them for sharing it before pushing back. Again - this doesn't mean you have to agree; it means you have respect for the person's right to an opinion different from your own.

Introductions and Opening Blessing

Introduce yourself! We invite you to use your Hebrew name and your mother's Hebrew name. If you or your mother do not have a Hebrew name, you are welcome to use any language that you are comfortable with.

Blessings:

*Barukh atah Adonai
Eloheinu melek ha'olam
shehehyanu vekiyemanu
vehigi'anu lazman hazeh*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁהֵחַיָנוּ וְקִיַמָנוּ
וְהִגִיעָנוּ לַזְמַן הַזֶּה

Blessed are you, Adonai, our God, sovereign of the universe
who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season

Techine for Rosh Hodesh

May it be Your will, my God and God of my ancestors, to be gracious to me and to all my family and to give us, and all Israel, a good and long life. Remember us with goodness and blessing, and grant us salvation and mercy. Grant us abundant blessing, and fortify the places we call home. May Your Presence dwell among us as we gather here today. May we be blessed with wise and learned disciples and children, lovers of God who stand in awe of You, people who speak truth and spread holiness. May those we nurture light the world with Torah and good deeds.

Hear the prayers I utter now in the name of our mothers Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah. May Your light, reflected in these candles, surround us always. And let us say, Amen.

Overview - New Year, New Moon, New Programs



We have been meeting monthly for two years to celebrate Rosh Hodesh together, Wow!

Just as we mark the beginning of each new month through the Rosh Hodesh prayers, today we are going to mark the beginning of this year's Rosh Hodesh gatherings by learning about the development of Rosh Hodesh celebrations in the Jewish world, looking at what we've done together as a group in the past, and discussing plans for this new year. Heshvan is traditionally seen as a quiet period after the heavy holiday season of Tishrei (which includes Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot) so this is a good time to do this evaluation.

Learning

Rosh Hodesh is the holiday that marks the beginning of a new Jewish month, and is also considered a "women's holiday." The special connection between women and Rosh Hodesh started with the episode of the Golden Calf. When Moses went up Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, he left the Israelites for forty days and forty nights. The Israelites feared that he would not return and demanded that Aaron make them "a god who shall go before us". Aaron told the Israelites' to bring their golden earrings and ornaments to construct a golden calf idol. However, women declined to participate and refused to surrender their jewelry for use in making it. Some say this women's non-participation stemmed from their greater faith. Though they had just spent more than two centuries in idolatry-steeped Egypt, the women's faith in Adonai remained unshakable. As a reward for their strong faith and loyalty to God, tradition says women were given Rosh Hodesh as a special day of rest and exemption from certain kinds of labor.

Originally, the date of Rosh Hodesh was confirmed by the testimony of witnesses observing the new moon, a procedure known as Kiddush Hahodesh. After the Sanhedrim in Jerusalem declared Rosh Hodesh, news of it would then be communicated throughout Israel and the diaspora by lighting bonfires that would be seen from hilltop to hilltop spreading the word that a new month had been declared. Later, when a fixed calendar was introduced, there was no need for an announcement of the arrival of the new moon. Despite the existence of this fixed calendar, Rosh Hodesh is still announced in synagogues on the preceding Shabbat.

Jews today generally treat Rosh Hodesh as no different from any other weekday. However, the Jerusalem Talmud states that women can refrain from certain kinds of work but only by custom as opposed to law.

For women today, this legacy can serve as a source of inspiration, reminding them of their inherent strength and their capacity to guide and care for themselves and others toward renewal and growth.

In the 1970s, the creation of Rosh Hodesh women's groups grew out of the rise of Jewish feminism and the desire for women to center their Jewish lives around their unique and private experiences and issues. Growing feminist activism in the United States and Israel began challenging male-dominated religious structures and sought active participation in Jewish ritual life. The groups emerged as a response to the need for a space where women could gather, study and explore Jewish women's issues with a particular emphasis on personal spirituality, ritual and celebration that honored female experiences, body cycles, and the divine feminine (Shehinah).

Today, such groups around the world take a variety of different forms. Some focus on religious texts or the meaning of the specific month while others focus on art projects, wellness, or topics related to womanhood and living in a female body. Some focus on specific age groups, like teenagers and the challenges of going through puberty and coming into a Jewish identity. Rosh Hodesh groups have since become a significant part of Jewish life providing women with an opportunity to feel empowered and take charge of their lives.

Two traditions we have established for our Rosh Hodesh gatherings are:

1. Lighting candles on Rosh Hodesh which symbolizes the renewal of the moon, serving as a beacon of hope, warmth, and the transition into a sacred, new time.

Symbolizing Renewal: Just as the moon is renewed, the candlelight represents a fresh start, hope, and spiritual light.

Commemorating Ancient Rituals: It recalls the ancient practice of lighting beacons to spread the news of the new month.

Creating a Sacred Atmosphere: Candles mark the beginning of a holy time, fostering a sense of warmth and sanctity, especially in gatherings.

Connecting with Tradition: It is a way to connect with Jewish heritage, particularly by reflecting on the "hidden light" within the Torah.

2. Shehehiyanu blessing

The Shehehiyanu blessing is said to bring attention back to the miracle of this moment, to the realization of the blessing of being alive, conscious and receptive. The Shehehiyanu is a blessing that expresses gratitude to God for new and unusual experiences and to acknowledge the blessings of life and the gratitude for the power to use life for worthwhile ends.

3. Community guidelines

We have also added our Community Guidelines to ensure that these gatherings are a time where we can all share personal experiences and opinions without fear of harsh judgement. A short version will be printed in every agenda but we will explore a fuller version today.

Discussion/Activity

For the last two years, our gatherings have focused on sessions led by our members on topics related to women and Judaism. We have had many discussions exploring our roles as Jewish women. Here are some of the topics we have discussed:

1. *Hiddur Mitzvah* is the practice of beautifying Jewish ritual objects
2. Women of the Wall
3. Archetypes of Jewish women: Esther and Vashti, the Jewish mother, the JAP
4. Mikvah practice
5. Jewish laws re: laws of *niddah* (menstruation)
6. Henrietta Szold (film and discussion with director)
7. Symbolic ideas around Hannukah
8. Parshas around women taking the initiative

For this new year, we are refocusing our programs a bit to incorporate more activities, trips, and expert-led workshops alongside our lay-led discussions. As part of this refocusing, we wanted to talk about what participants want to get out of this year's gatherings. We will stay together as one group to discuss the following questions:

Why do you come to the Rosh Hodesh gatherings?

What programs from the last two years were most meaningful to you and why?

How has coming to these gatherings help promote inner growth, learning and sharing with one another?

Are there any thoughts on how our meetings are structured that you would like to share? Opening intro/mother's name, prayers, discussion groups, etc.

Here is the calendar of scheduled programs for the upcoming months so far. Are there any topics you would like to suggest for future meetings?

Calendar so far:

Kislev	November 10	5:15 pm	Rebecca Gratz
Tevet	December 8	5:15 pm	Hannukah party
Sh'vat	January 10	11:00 am	HaFrashat <u>H</u> allah
Adar I	February 7	11:00 am	Women's Head Coverings
Adar II	March 9	5:15 pm	Gendered God language
Nisan	April	11:00 am	Women's Tour of the Weitzman

- Jewish women speaking truth to power - Judith Axler will lead this but we have not yet scheduled it.

Additional suggested topics

- Home-based religious practice or tradition
- Madrihim (foremothers)
- Krav Maga for women of all ages
- Jewish Women (local Philly women, famous Jewish woman/women, historic Jewish women, women heroes, etc. Examples: Abigail Levy Franks. Fanny Brooks, Ray Frank Litman, Purim Ball, Cookbook for the Frontier, Rose Schneiderman, Ruth Gruber, Bess Myerson, Betty Friedan, Bella Abzug).
- Jewish spirituality and women/female aspect.
- Making a Jewish home
- Jewish women's movements (examples: Women of the Wall, women's egalitarian movement).
- Female specific Jewish traditions, rituals, rites (examples: mikvah, baby naming and bat mitzvah ceremonies, candle lighting, rosh hodesh, etc.). Please use the Other section to tell us more.
- Tikkun Olam and Jewish women (examples: traditions of charity, social justice, immigration assistance, education, etc.).
- Art (women's writing, visual art, dance, theater etc in Judaism)
- Women's Jewish scholarship
- Health and Wellness from Jewish perspective

THE MOON

by JACKIE HOSKING

There's a moon
On my walk
At the top of the hill
And it's perfectly round
And it's perfectly still
And it holds back the clouds
With its circle of light
And it's perfectly round
And it's perfectly bright
It's as full
As a hug
And as cool as a stare
And it's perfectly round
Even when it's not there.



Coming up at Society Hill Synagogue:



Sew and Kvell (Craft Club)

Thursday, Oct. 15 @ 6:00-7:30 pm

Calling all crafters, makers, doodlers, and daydreamers: Sew and Kvell is here! Come to **work on a project, meet new friends, catch up with old ones, or just enjoy a relaxing evening of crafts.** Knit, crochet, sew, sketch, color, make a collage, write in your journal, or try something completely your own. We

won't be providing crafts or supplies, so just bring whatever you'd like to work on!

societyhillsynagogue.org/sew-and-kvell



Kiddush Lunch 'n' Learn hosted by The Subcommittee for the Inclusion of People of Color

Saturday, Oct. 17 @ 12:00 pm,
following Shabbat Morning Service

The People of Color Subcommittee is hosting a Kiddush Lunch 'n' Learn on Saturday, October 17, **designed for self-reflection on how we listen, engage, and connect across our community** — specifically around the inclusion of people of color. Please join us for storytelling, Jewish text study, and conversation facilitated by **Sarah Kolker**, Director of jkid4all, and **Julia Weekes**, Director of Professional Learning, both of Jewish Learning Venture.



Triple Chai (54+) Presents: Lunch & Music with Les "Doc" Rachlin

Sunday, Oct. 18 @ 12:00 pm
\$10 Society Hill Synagogue Members
\$36 General Public

Join Triple Chai for lunch and a performance by Jewish American folk singer and guitarist Les "Doc" Rachlin. His repertoire includes beloved songs by Jewish American songwriters such as Paul Simon and Bob Dylan, along with surprising favorites you may not know were written by Jewish artists.

societyhillsynagogue.org/triplechai-lunch&music



Monthly Spontaneous Choir

Monday, Oct. 19 @ 6:00-7:00 pm
Included with Society Hill Synagogue Membership | \$72 for General Public

A monthly Monday evening gathering to delve deeply into communal song! In a space outside of Shabbat services, we'll have the opportunity to tap into weekday musical joy and healing, harmonizing, and increasing our spiritual resilience. Make singing together your monthly practice in an increasingly full and chaotic world! If there are Shabbat tunes you'd like to know better or dig into more deeply, and/or if you are yearning to increase your toolbox of singable nigunim (wordless melodies), this is your opportunity! All musical experiences and expertise welcome – none required!

societyhillsynagogue.org/adult-education/



Finding Home in an Unsettled World

Scholar-in-Residence Shabbat with Rabbi Josh Feigelson

Friday, Oct. 30 and Saturday, Oct. 31

What does it mean to feel at home when the world feels anything but? At a moment of political turmoil in the United States and Israel, many of us are struggling to find a sense of stability, belonging, and spiritual grounding.

Drawing on Jewish wisdom and spiritual practice, **Rabbi Josh Feigelson**, President & CEO of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, will **explore the ancient Jewish tension between home and exile** — and what it can teach us about living with uncertainty today. How can we cultivate a genuine sense of at-homeness even when the world around us feels unsettled? And how might Jewish spiritual practice help us remain grounded, connected, and openhearted in turbulent times?

societyhillsynagogue.org/Scholar-in-Residence



Coolanu & Mahj with Heart Present: Mahjong for a Cause

Sunday, Nov. 8 @ 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Society Hill Synagogue Members: \$36 per person

General Public: \$54 per person

Come play, schmooze, and help fight food insecurity! Join us for Mahjong for a Cause, a morning of **American Mahjong Open Play** benefiting Society Hill Synagogue's joint fight against food insecurity with The NeighborHub (formerly Old Pine Community Center).

All playing levels are welcome, though participants must already know how to play American Mahjong. Your registration fee includes brunch and one raffle ticket. Additional raffle tickets will be available for purchase for a chance to win incredible Mahjong-themed prizes. Both event and raffle proceeds will be donated to The NeighborHub, helping **provide meals to 150 families each week**.

Tiles, mats, and racks will be provided. **Please bring your 2026 National Mah Jongg League card.**

societyhillsynagogue.org/mahjong-for-a-cause



Sharim v'Sharot Fall Concert: "A Rich Tapestry of Jewish Songs"

Sunday, Nov. 15 @ 3:00 pm

Advance tickets: \$25/person | At the door: \$30/person

Society Hill Synagogue Members will receive a \$5 discount!

As Society Hill Synagogue celebrates its milestone 60th year, we are excited to welcome **Sharim v'Sharot: People of Song** back to our Sanctuary for their 2026 fall concert, "A Rich Tapestry of Jewish Songs." The concert will feature a **diverse selection of Jewish music** from Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Mizrahi traditions, in English, Hebrew, Yiddish, and Ladino, with Hazzan Jessi Roemer as guest soloist. A light reception will follow the concert.

societyhillsynagogue.org/sharimv'sharot