



HOLY BLOSSOM TEMPLE

ק"ק פרחי קדש

Melton Graduation 5780

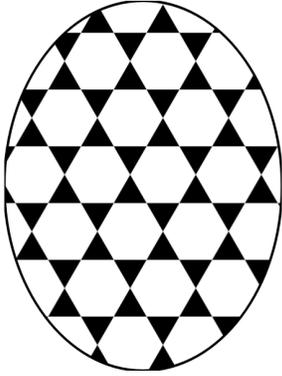


May 24, 2020
1 Sivan 5780

Shavuot, May 29, 2020
6 Sivan 5780

Our Graduates

Yoel Abells
Michael Davis
Aubrey Freedman
Donna-Lee Kauffman
Wendy Melvin
Debra Merowitz
Kathy Morrisey
Geri Prendergast
Henny Rappaport
Les Rothschild
Mark Schlossberg
Janet Shiner
Nikki Stiavnicky
Barb Wiseberg



When Karen and I were pregnant with our first child, we agreed to go to prenatal classes. I thought it was important for us to go together and spend time focused on our pregnancy, particularly since I was doing my residency at the time and was often not around. The only reluctance I had about doing the course was the feeling that I would gain very little educationally from it because, after all, I was in the field. Frankly, I thought I could teach the class. It turned out I was wrong. To be honest, I learned many things during those weeks that we attended.

I tell this story because it is relevant to what I'm going to write about my experience doing the Melton programme. I have always loved Jewish education but over the past two decades, career and family demands had gotten in the way of my doing Jewish study more formally. This is not to say that I did not do any formal courses but these were often very short in duration (the exception being when I studied to be a Mohel). So when the Melton program was offered, I thought this might be an opportunity to spend an extended period of time (two years) meeting regularly (weekly) to study Jewish themes and most important, Jewish texts. But much like when I went to prenatal classes, I was a bit concerned about the amount of new knowledge I would gain and the depth of study that would be required. Would I be challenged in the way I wanted to be? This is not a statement of conceit but rather a recognition that the intent of the course (at least to some degree) was to introduce themes and texts at a basic level and I knew that I was more interested in 'more'. Regardless, I decided to commit for at least the first year.

Admittedly, particularly in the first year, some aspects of the curriculum were less than challenging. And yet, when it came time to commit to the second year of the program, I could not resist. Why?

The answer—or rather answers—underline the reason that I believe this course is very much worth taking.

First, the Rabbis used the Melton curriculum as a means of introducing sophisticated layers of study. By so doing, they were able to intricately weave a tapestry of study that spoke to every level of learner.

Second, we all were open to teaching and learning from one another because we all recognized that each of us had a wealth of knowledge and experience that directly or indirectly gave texture to and infused our studies in unique ways.

Third, I felt that I had made an implied commitment to do the full two years of study. This was a three pronged commitment: to the Melton community, to HBT and (most important) to my fellow HBT 'Meltonites'. Indeed, we have 'grown up' together educationally but we have also simply grown 'together'. I will miss these study sessions tremendously but I will very much miss spending time with those of you who have been my classmates for the past two years. Because of this, I hope that we will continue to study as 'one' in the future.

Take care everyone. Be safe and stay healthy.

Yoel Abells

Over the last 2 years of Melton , I have had the honor to study with our Rabbis , who have demonstrated such a profound depth of knowledge and insight, and with my fellow students , who have stimulated me, every Tuesday night .

I looked forward to Tuesdays at the shul and online almost as much as I look forward to Shabbat. It was one of those important things that marked my weekly schedule.

The three hours we spent together was always too short, as the topics were so deep and interesting I could have studied with the group all night .

I will miss what has passed , but look forward to continuing studies together , I hope, in the future.

Michael Davis





The last two years have been incredible and gone by too quickly. It's been more than a course, there is a true community in this weekly class. And I will miss it greatly. I began the class pregnant with my third child - my fellow

classmates watched me come to class pregnant, and then, on occasion, with a brand new baby. With three children at home, it isn't always simple to get out or find time for yourself, and I truly cherished this time to connect with others and to spend time learning.

We delved deeper into topics that I had a previous understanding but now have an entirely new appreciation for (older and wiser!). Our weekly study has given further regard and connection to many of our mitzvot and I'm proud to pass this learning on to my children.

The rabbis, and fellow Meltonites, have been fantastic teachers and I truly enjoyed this experience. Learning, in any capacity, is always something we should make time for and I look forward to my next learning adventure!

Aubrey Freedman

Class of Melton 2020 - thoughts from a graduate

Did I initially have misgivings for signing up for a 2 year Melton stint? Yes. Was I wrong? Yes!

Exploring concepts from the differing perspectives of our diverse Modern Orthodoxy, Conservative and Reform movements, provided important nuances to the material we were learning. I enjoyed finding where mitzvot and ethical dilemmas, discussed in the Mishna and rabbinic teaching in our study books, linked to the Torah; it gave me a new layer of insight into the wisdom of the Torah, making it more relevant and meaningful.

Did I benefit from taking the Melton course? A resounding, Yes!

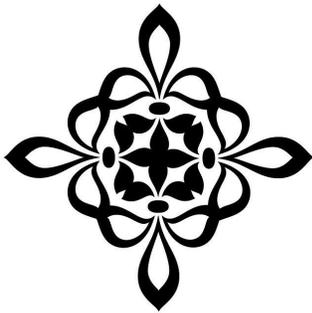
With much gratitude to our Melton teachers, Rabbis Splansky, Goodman, Tepper and Satz,

Donna-Lee Kauffman

Prior to participating in the two year Melton program, I had very little exposure to formalized education. My spiritual connections were formed more from being an observer during synagogue visits and from the repetition of holiday rituals.

Having studied and shared conversations about Jewish life with my class colleagues for two years, I now use a completely different dashboard when I think about the rhythm of my week, of my seasons and even more frequently, when I apply critical (ethical) thinking to daily personal and professional encounters. This was truly a core building experience.

My class colleagues have been nurturing when I've shared my perspective in class, a group quality for which I am very grateful. Good friends have emerged. The Rabbi's have provided a safe environment to discuss very complex issues and I am always amazed by their knowledge, poise and profound insight. The organization around the two year program is the very reason our studies were so exciting.



Wendy Melvin

Reflections on the Florence Melton Course 2018-2020

As I near the completion of this two year course, I want to firstly say that this program has been very worthwhile. The course content comprises four topics . The Rhythms of Jewish Living, the Purpose of Jewish Living, Ethics of Jewish Living and Crossroads of Jewish History. It is comprehensive, sources are varied, ranging from classic to contemporary texts with diverse viewpoints on the topics at hand , that challenge one's opinions and stimulate discussion. Clearly a lot of research and work has gone into the planning of this course by the Florence Melton School of Adult Jewish Learning. The volume of material presented with each module could easily take more than an hour to review and discuss, to do it justice!

The success of any program depends in part on our teachers and we have had extraordinary teachers ,to guide and encourage our learning.Rabbi Splansky, Rabbi Goodman, Rabbi Tepper, Rabbi Satz and Rabbi Helfman ,on a number of occasions ,have shared with us their knowledge, experience and dedication to learning. They have shown respect towards our group members when divergent opinions were expressed and when sensitive topics have been explored. Their commitment to our continued learning and personal growth is greatly appreciated!

I also want to thank Debbie Spiegel, Neomi Offman and whomever else behind the scenes, worked out a plan to assure that we could continue studying together from a distance, when COVID-19 made it not possible to meet face-to-face.

I am also appreciative of the broad range of knowledge and experience shared by fellow group members. We are a very diverse group and because of that we have had the opportunity to benefit from being together and learning from each other over these past two years. Thank you also for the weekly treats!

For myself, this course confirms for me that a "Jewish heart" can guide and reinforce all aspects of life. Judaism is grounding. The course also reinforces all the reasons why I became Jewish. A decision that makes me proud. Proud to be part of such a resilient,determined , vibrant group of people, whose desire to learn and be challenged is valued. I look forward to continuing to learn and study here at Holy Blossom.

Kathy Morrissey

My reflections are in a short prayer I found in one of my favorite books "on the doorpost of your house"

At a time of achievement

I have aspired , and labored ,and achieved !My heart is filled with joy for I said

"God give me hills to climb and strength to climb them"

My prayer was granted.

You have given me so much,have given me the strength of will to achieve.Give me one thing more,O God -a grateful heart.And a wise and constant spirit, one aware of my debt to others for what I have achieved.You are the strength of my hands ,O God, and the light of my life.All that I am and all that I may yet be,I owe to the creative power that You have implanted within me.

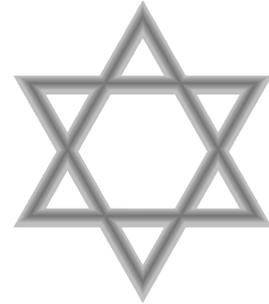
Even as I exult in the success of my labors so may I glory to be kind in thought, gentle in word,and generous in deed,that others may rejoice in my accomplishments.Give me a grateful heart and a loving disposition. that I may be Your messenger of blessing for the poor the helpless and the sick.Thus would I give thanks for the blessings that have come to me.

Thank you for all you have done to make this course possible

Kind Regards,
Gerry Prendergast

It has been an enormous privilege to study with a committed and vibrant group of students that were led by multiple rabbis over the past two years. Rabbis Satz, Tepper, Helfman, Goodman, and Splansky approached each lesson with passion and we all benefited from their individual unique style, wisdom and perspective.

I loved the links between ancient texts and modern day issues that foster the continuity of the Jewish people over centuries.

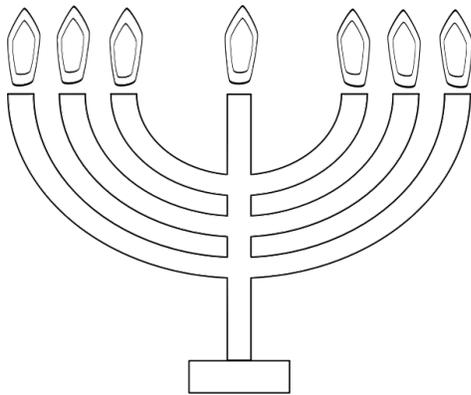


Debbie, thank you so much for all your help facilitating this and having the patience to deal with the Covid 19 related challenges. An additional thanks to everyone who made this such a special learning opportunity.

Henny Rappaport

When I started to investigate bringing Melton to Holy Blossom Temple I really didn't know what to expect. It had a great reputation in other places so it seemed to be not too much of a risk. It has been a wonderful educational two years- A very positive learning experience.

The course material is really amazing in it's breadth and detail. The fact that each session is, in many cases, a stand alone topic makes it easy to participate, especially if you have to miss a class or two. The material is also so very up to date . Our Ethics of Jewish living course included articles that sometimes were not more than a year old. That made the course relevant and so fascinating.



Our rabbis did a wonderful job of identifying which texts were appropriate and important to understand. Their insights and knowledge made the topics come to life. The rabbis created a comfortable and informal learning environment

And it could not have happened without the continuing dedication of Debbie Spiegel

I look forward to having the possibility of attending more Melton programs in the future.

Les Rothschild



The course gave us a new, broader, and deeper understanding of and appreciation for Judaism and what it means to be Jewish.

The class discussion was thoughtful and brought a closeness and camaraderie between the students of all ages.

Mark Schlossberg

I enjoyed the two-year Melton course, especially learning with Rabbis Splansky, Tepper and Goodman, and I am proud to be a graduate from this inaugural class. Each Rabbi is



knowledgeable, compassionate and warm and it has been an uplifting experience to study with them and to have this opportunity to read and discuss the wisdom of our great Jewish thinkers.

My classmates are all intelligent and thoughtful and learning with them made me feel good. I found learning about Jewish Ethics especially interesting and the course content always gave me something meaningful to think about each week.

I would recommend this course with its rich curriculum to anyone interested in thinking more deeply about Judaism and enhancing their Jewish knowledge. I thank my teachers and classmates for this experience.

Janet Shiner May 21, 2020

Melton & Me.

My last “Jewish” class was in grade 9. But for whatever reason, that small ad in The Canadian Jewish News seemed to speak to me – even though I let countless other Jewish learning opportunities pass me by.

- Perhaps I found the ad intriguing.
- Perhaps it was the timing.
- Perhaps I was just feeling vulnerable and felt it was time to try something new.

Regardless, I signed up, and I have never looked back. My 2-year commitment in this class has been transformative. The content of each lesson has been carefully developed – to inspire thought, dialogue and personal reflection. I must admit the best part has been the dialogue amongst my classmates, and the Rabbi teaching each class. I can freely discuss ideas, thoughts and beliefs amongst others who care about learning more. I am a “Melton – convert”; and look forward to participating in many more learning opportunities down the road.

Barb Wiseberg

