



# Jewish Insights From Fiddler on the Roof

**Rabbi Michael Lotker**



# Welcome to Our Class!

**Our Subject**  
**Our Dates**  
**Our Topics**

*Insights from the music of*  
**Fiddler on the Roof**

Explore Jewish traditions & perspective  
with Rabbi Michael Lotker

**March 10, 17 & 24 7pm PST**

Sponsored By:  Jewish Federation  
VENTURA COUNTY

RSVP: [Lotker.com/rsvp-intro.html](http://Lotker.com/rsvp-intro.html)



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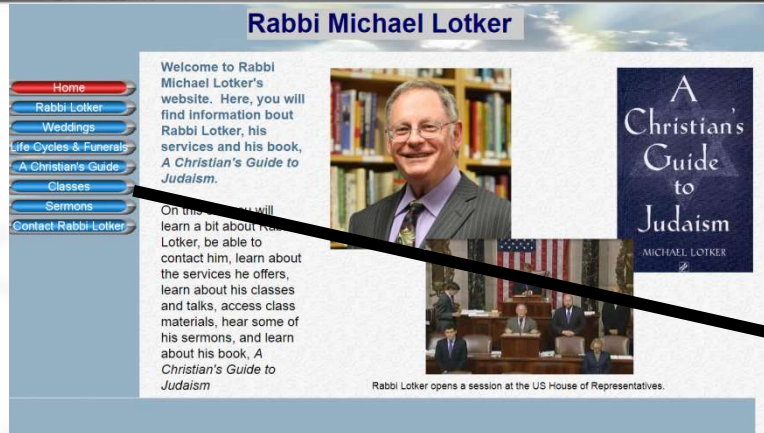
**Jewish Federation**  
OF VENTURA COUNTY

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THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

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& Recordings of the Sessions  
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### ***Deep Jewish Insights from the Music of Fiddler on the Roof***

*Although it may not be apparent on the surface, there is quite a bit of Jewish tradition, insight and depth in the music and story of "Fiddler On The Roof." In this class, we will enjoy many of the scenes and songs from the movie and discuss such issues as our relationship with God, perspectives on the afterlife, Jewish superstitions, a reason for Jewish intelligence (and all those Nobel Prizes), Talmudic logic, the true meaning of "Mazel Tov," Jewish understanding of miracles, Jewish marriage customs and a lot more. It's even OK to sing along with the wonderful music!*

*The class will take place on 3 consecutive Wednesday evenings, March 10, 17 and 24 from 7-8:30 in my Zoom room.*

**[>>> TO REGISTER FOR THE CLASS, CLICK HERE<<<](#)**

**[>> Click for recording of session #1<<](#)**

**[>> Click for Powerpoint Slides<<](#)**



# About “Fiddler on the Roof”

## **The Show (1964)**

- **Musical set in Russia 1905**
- **Based on the stories of Sholom Aleichem**
- **Achievements**
  - **1<sup>st</sup> Broadway musical to run more than 3000 performances**
- **Awards**
  - **9 Tony Awards: Best:**
    - **Musical, Composer/Lyricist, Actor, Actress, Scenic Design, Costume Design, Choreography, Director, Producer, Author**
    - **Special award in 1972 for longest running musical in Broadway history (It held the record for 10 years)**
  - **Total Awards for various productions**
    - **20 won**
    - **Additional 37 nominations**

## **The Movie (1971)**

- **Awards**
  - **Best Cinematography, Sound & Music [nom. for 5 more]**
  - **Total: 9 Awards and 11 additional nominations**



# About “Fiddler on the Roof”

- Opening night reviews (Detroit and Cleveland)
  - “Everything is ordinary about *Fiddler* except Zero Mostel
  - The songs unmemorable, the sets, costumes, and lighting merely “serviceable”
  - The direction “workmanlike”
  - The choreography “pedestrian”
  - “There isn’t a hit or catchy tune in the score” (Peter Bellamy)
- Initial movie reviews: 8 favorable, 6 negative, 2 mixed.
- An early question from potential backers: “When we run out of Hadassah benefits, what other audience would we expect to entertain?”
- Some 50 songs written for show.
- At opening Marc Chagall and Sholem Aleichem’s daughter and granddaughter were there.
- In June 67, Topol briefly left the London production to join in the Six Day war.



# About “Fiddler on the Roof”

- **Director/Producer Norman Jewison had to break to UA:**
  - **“What would you think if I told you I’m a goy?”**
  - **UA Chairman Krim’s response: “Why would you think we asked you to to direct this film? We don’t want a piece of Yiddish kitsch.”**
  - **“Sunrise Sunset” was played at his wedding which included a chuppah and a rabbi.**
  - **The cast in Yugoslavia was so happy that they made him an honorary Jew and changed his name to Normal Christianson.**
- **Danny Kaye [a Russian Jew – real name David Daniel Kaminsky] was the actor who most wanted to be the movie Tevye. Jewison thought he was too red-haired, too light on his feet, too professional.”**
  - **Jewison even turned down Frank Sinatra for the role – to the astonishment of his agent.**
- **Isaac Stern played the violin for the film.**

# About “Fiddler on the Roof”



Many actresses had their Broadway debuts in *Fiddler on the Roof*, including (left to right) three of the women playing Tevye's daughters: Adrienne Barbeau (Hodel), Bette Midler (Tzeitel), and Tanya Everett (Chava). Everett originated the role of Chava. *Photofest*

## A Vanished ROMAN

With a fore



Sholem Aleichem, author of the Tevye stories, with his one-and-a-half-year-old granddaughter Bel Kaufman, in 1912. Kaufman was the author of the 1965 bestseller *The Immigrant*, and the author of the 1965 bestseller *The Down Staircase*, celebrating her one hundredth birthday on May 10, 2011. *Photo courtesy of Bel Kaufman*



# About “Fiddler on the Roof”

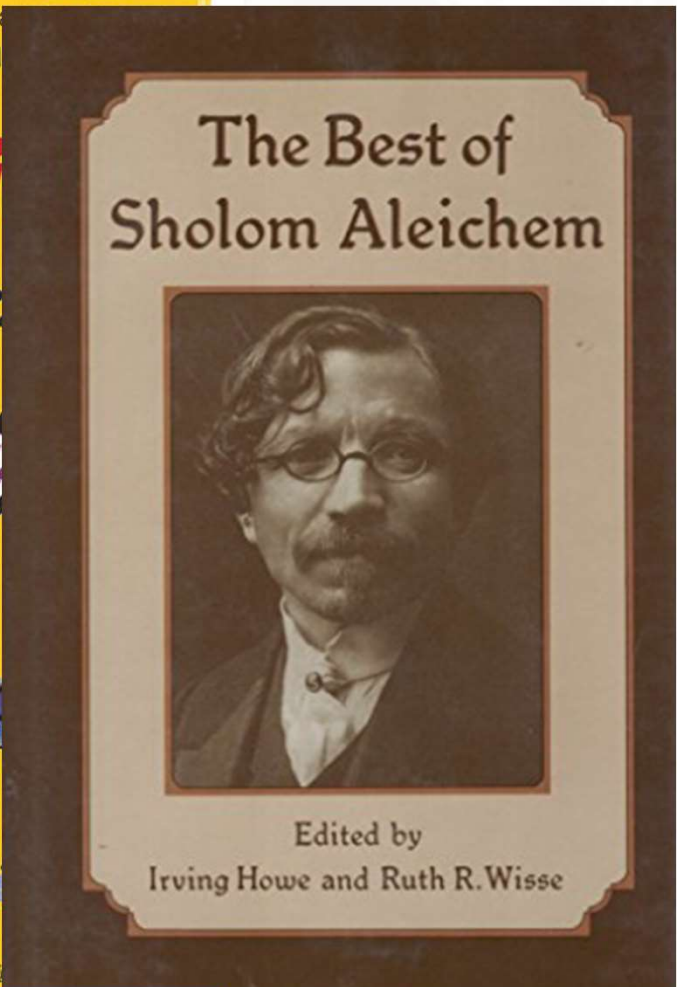
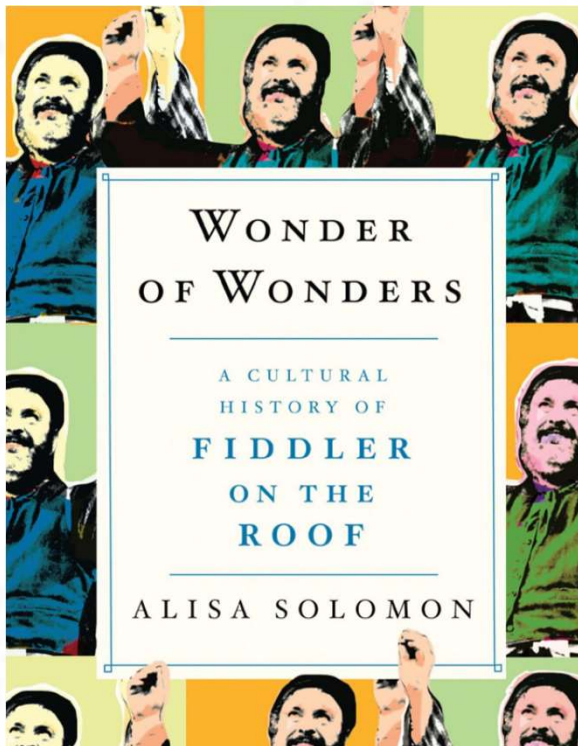


# Bozemand Montana, June 2019





# Some Resources





# Let's Watch Some Fiddler

- **I will be pausing the recording of our class during the film. This will allow me to post our discussions on Youtube.**
- **Please jot your questions in the chat as they occur to you.**
- **After each film clip, we will have a brief discussion and I will try to address your questions.**
- **I hope we will have time for a brief general discussion – but we have lots of participants!**
- **And first, a brief poll.**



## One More Thing...

I have been invited to give a TEDx talk on Saturday, March 20. The program begins at 2PM and I should be on at about 2:30. Here's an overview of my talk.

**The Hebrew Bible is the foundational document for the spiritual paths of about half of the world's population and an inspiration for many more. But Hebrew is a wonderfully rich and ambiguous language which accounts for the wide variety of interpretation of this text. Rabbi Lotker will lead us through some of the various translations of key words and show how these interpretations have changed the course of history.**

The link to learn about the program for the day and registration is <https://www.tedxoxnard.com/program-and-reservations.html>