

**JEWISH COMMUNITIES OF EUROPE: THEN AND NOW:** This offering is based on personal experiences of the presenter as well as scholarship about historical, communal and cultural aspects of Jewish life in contemporary Europe. This “virtual tour” is filled with information about the past and present experiences of Jews spanning the continent, from Barcelona to Helsinki. It will include communities, both large and small, that are vibrant today, as well as communities which are mere shadows of their former glory. Perhaps members of your group will draw some new conclusions about places like Switzerland and Sweden, countries with small Jewish populations which have vacillated between being havens for Jews to being hostile to Jews. Everyone will learn something new about individual Jews from Amsterdam and Prague who had wealth and power even at a time in history when Jews were denied full civil rights, and about how Jews banded together to erect magnificent places of worship over the centuries in Venice and Budapest that can still be visited today, and which in many cases are still used for tefillah on a regular basis.

**CONTEMPORARY ISRAELI SOCIETY AS SEEN THROUGH DRAMA:** This offering includes the viewing of episodes from the TV series "Srugim" followed by discussions of the interpersonal and sociological issues that come up when singles from religious backgrounds seek out their soulmates. The characters in this series are absolutely delightful, and their emotions and ideologies are on display for everyone to see. Their approaches to dating range from the pedantically practical to the impulsively idealistic. The episodes are in Hebrew with English subtitles and are filled with vignettes of life in the Holy City of Jerusalem. Yet, the challenges faced by the characters are common to ordinary people at this stage of life in any milieu. The series is widely known for its balance between melodrama and lightheartedness, and won the top award for a television drama at Israel’s version of the Emmys.