

The European Days of Jewish Culture 2026: LOVE

Exploring LOVE as a central theme for the EDJC 2026

An old Rosh Hashanah greeting postcard (<https://encyclopedia.yivo.org/media/1025>) carries a Yiddish verse whose candidness belies hidden depths: *"Float high and fast, my blessing / It's a new year, after all / Bring my beloved consolation and hope / Bring her happiness and joy!"*. This is the voice of a people who knew how to love deeply, even within the constraints of tradition.

For thousands of years, a familiar narrative held sway: that Judaism is more about its Laws than about Love. From Biblical times to the Eastern Europe shtetl life, with its arranged marriages and careful separation of the sexes, the strictures of Judaism appeared to leave little room for romance.

Yet Love in Judaism expressed itself in countless ways: the protective love of a father for his daughter, the quiet devotion between a rabbi and his aging wife, a consuming love story told in the heart of a Hasidic court, the love of a scribe for his sacred scroll, of an artist for the Holy Ark he carved with his own hands, the paired study of sacred texts, a revolutionary force used by the modernisers of the Haskalah. What other love can claim to have a hand in the depths of psychoanalysis and another in the mystical traditions of Kabbalah?

Love in Jewish life has always been daring, representing both the intricate beauty of communal life and the force that can stretch a community to its breaking point. Jewish life in Europe has always lived in conversation—sometimes tense, sometimes tender—with the cultures that surround it. The love that Judaism teaches is not a love that builds walls; it is a love that builds bridges, that seeks dialogue, that finds in difference not a threat but an invitation. To love another way of seeing—this too is a profoundly Jewish act, rooted in the understanding that life in its complexity cannot be contained within any single perspective.

In this way, Love becomes a force of connection—between people, between communities, between generations. It is the thread that runs through centuries of Jewish life in Europe, binding the mystical to the rational, the ancient to the modern, the particular to the universal.

What we, gathering under the banner of European Days of Jewish Culture, are invited to rediscover is that Love and Judaism are intertwined, inseparable, each giving the other its depth and meaning. For Love, in the Jewish tradition, has never been confined to the romantic or the personal alone. It radiates outward as an architecture for being in the world.

Let us honour this legacy in all its complexity. Let us recognise that Love—romantic, familial, spiritual, communal—has always been the beating heart of Jewish civilisation. It has endured through pogroms and persecutions, migrations and modernisations. It has been whispered in

lullabies and shouted in literature, inscribed in sacred texts and scribbled on holiday postcards.

Love is never simple, but let us be in Love! And Love, real Love, is choosing this beautiful, complicated, messy table where we all sit together, bound to each other, arguing over bread, sharing wine, stumbling through each other's languages and cultures and yet somehow... understanding. Let us be in Love with what we are becoming — together.