

Hello Temple Sinai!

You really surprised me this week – we had around 70 people come to our Tu B'Shevat Seder/Service on Friday Night. I also want to thank all the people who came to the first meeting of the revitalized Social Action Committee. These are all very good signs about our future.

I also want you all to know that a group of us is working steadily on a big shindig for Purim, with a wacky spiel that tells the story of Purim through the lens of Freddy Mercury and Queen. **PURIM - March 23 – Save the Date!**

We have some special services and **a discussion about Israel, Palestine, and Anti-Semitism on Saturday afternoon**. Here are the details:

“TOT” SHABBAT -

Friday Night, January 25—5:30pm

This week, we will have a “TOT SHABBAT”, which at Sinai will mean a service geared **to children 10 and under and their families** (not just ‘tots’). The service will begin at 5:30pm, include some simple songs, a few prayers, a children’s blessing, Israeli dancing and “S’Torah-telling” about the **giving of the Torah and the 10 Commandments**. The service will end by 6:15pm. Please let your friends with younger children know!

KABBALAT SHABBAT WITH 10 COMMANDMENT READING!

Friday Night, January 25—6:30pm, Oneg to follow.

This week’s Torah Portion includes the 10 Commandments, and so at our Friday Night Kabbalat Shabbat Service, **we will include a short Torah service and public reading of the 10 Commandments** (*Aseret haDibrot*) from the Torah (this will add a few extra minutes to the service but well worth it!) The sermon will be rooted in Judith Plaskow’s book, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective*” one of the seminal theological works on women in Judaism.

SHABBAT MORNING SERVICES.

Saturday Morning, January 26—9:30am

Honor Shabbat by joining us for our uplifting, calming, chanted traditional morning service that has lots of greatest hits of Jewish music we only hear on Shabbat mornings. It lasts one hour.

TORAH STUDY SALON.

Saturday Morning, January 26—10:30am – 12noon

This week’s Torah portion is [Parashat YITRO Exodus 18:1–20:23](#) that includes the giving of the Ten Commandments, as well as some other very interesting passages about how to avoid burn-out. We will be considering the idea of covenant, the imagery used to convey the disruptive nature of revelation, as well as the very upsetting line “do not go near a women’ that occurs just before the revelation.

Our Torah Study is inclusive and discussion-centered, where we endeavor to understand the Torah portion of the week, and relate it to the issues of the day and the issues in our lives as modern people. Join our vibrant group of people for an intellectual and spiritual reflection and exchange of ideas.

COFFEE, TEA, and OPEN CONVERSATION WITH THE RABBI ABOUT ISRAEL, PALESTINE AND ANTI-SEMITISM

Saturday Afternoon, January 26—4:00pm, Havdalah to Follow

With Pittsburgh and the Women’s March, there has been a great deal of discussion about Israel, anti-Israel activism and anti-Semitism. We also know that the BDS Movement (Boycott/Divest/Sanction Israel) is active at UVM, and is being discussed among several local organizations. It is clear that this is on the minds of many in our community, and quite a few people have come to talk to me about how distressed they are at feeling less and less safe as Jews in progressive circles.

When two related editorials appeared in the New York Times this week, I decided to get started. One is by the excellent writer and scholar, Michelle Alexander (author of *The New Jim Crow*) who on January 19 penned a very critical (and in my view, very flawed) editorial entitled [“Time to Break the Silence on Palestine.”](#) Then Bari Weiss, an editorial columnist at the Times wrote a very different column on Jan 21 entitled [“Ilhan Omar and the Myth of Jewish Hypnosis.”](#)

The goal is to create a space where our community can discuss this issue as openly and respectfully as possible. We also need a place to talk about this all feels and how it impacts our relationships. Please come prepared to listen, not to persuade. **Because of the sensitive nature of the topic, I ask that only people who consider themselves part of the Temple Sinai community attend.**