



# HAPPY HANUKKAH

Dec 16, 2020

2 Tevet 5781 ט"ב

Hello Temple Sinai,

I hope everyone is having a nice light-filled Hanukkah, despite the darkness of winter and the disappointments of distancing. It has been really nice seeing so many of your faces on ZOOM this Hanukkah, and to see distant family members and friends join us. We had a big turn-out for **Yoel Sykes**, and it was a treat to get to sing Shabbat in with **Nava Tehila** tunes and oel Sykes *right there*. I heard from a bunch who loved the service, but I know that it was also long and a bit 'new-agey' for others. That's ok. We are not one-size-fits-all; one of the clear messages from the congregational assessment that was done before I was hired was a desire for a greater variety of music and service styles. Inevitably some are going to fit your style and needs better than others, but I also hope that along the way, you gain a good sense of the breadth of liberal Jewish worship these days. As I've said, we are living in a golden age of Jewish music, both here and in Israel, and I am so grateful for the experience of such great Jewish musician at Temple Sinai. I particularly loved the **Nefesh Mountain** concert, and I am excited at the possibility of seeing them in person at Temple Sinai in the coming year.

I also have to say that **Sebastian Ryder's** reading of **Paula Cope's** *Simple Gift* to the light of the Hanukkah candles was really beautiful and uplifting and perfect for this year. Thank you. And **Saragail Benjamin's** recasting of the Hanukkah classic into ***Hersheliyah and the Hanukkah Goblins***, played with our own Temple Sinai Goblin Players **WAS A BLAST!!!**

I was honored today to be part of the ceremony that finalizes a person's **choosing Judaism**. I have been honored to be part of many of these over the years, and each time I am reminded of how easy it is for

those of us who are born into Judaism to take it for granted and to lose sight of the power of this tradition. **Those who convert are some of the great teachers of Judaism**, and their contribution is immense. Still, it is sadly common for people who convert to experience bias within the Jewish community from people who still think “real Jews” are those born into the community, even if they don’t know or practice any Jewish traditions. In my experience, it is often those who choose Judaism who know the most and are the most committed. I would not want to think of Temple Sinai without our Jews -by-Choice. As we strive to be more and more welcoming, let’s remember to be thoughtful and remember that the Jewish Community includes many Jews who didn’t grow up with the holidays, didn’t go to summer camp, didn’t go on Birthright, and don’t grow up with matzoh ball soup, or chopped liver, or Yiddish words as an integral part of their lives. Jews by choice have found what is powerful and meaningful in our tradition; may they inspire all of us to do the same.

We are taught that we all stood, metaphorically, spiritually, at Sinai, those who were alive and the generations yet to come, and we were also there those who were born Jewish and those who chose it. In a very real sense, we are always standing at Sinai, for each moment challenges us to choose what we will do, what we will create, what we will strive to become. We are always standing at Sinai, reaching out for one another with a sense of fear, of awe, and of commitment to being partners in the repair of this world.

This week, after eight days of Hanukkah events, we are going to “lean-in” to Shabbat.

**FRIDAY NIGHT at 6:30**, we will have a Hanukkah FINALE, and instead of our usual Kabbalat Shabbat songs, we will sing songs of the holiday led by a variety of people. Let’s hold on to the light of Hanukkah just a few more minutes before turning to our Shabbat service from our recent (not the one just for last week) handout.

**SATURDAY MORNING** we will have our chanted service at **9:30** and our **TORAH STUDY** at **10:30**. This week’s portion is **[MIKEITZ](#)** (*click for URJ site*) wherein Joseph interprets Pharaoh’s dream, and has the brothers who wanted to kill him come to ask him, and Pharaoh’s vizier for food. It is full of

ethical complexity, from nationalizing lands to setting up one's brothers to take the hit for a capital crime. Click [here](#) for the text on SEFARIA.

HANUKKAH SAMEACH,

*David*