



January 28, 2021  
15 (Tu) Sh'vat 5781 ט"ב

Hello Temple Sinai,

*(Note: we are making some changes to our newsletters and weekly emails; scroll down for info.)*

TEMPLE  
SINAI

**HAPPY TU BISHVAT!** In Jewish tradition, it's the new year for trees. This was originally because of the rule in Leviticus that one doesn't consume the fruit of a tree for the first three years, and the fruit of the fourth year was donated to the Temple. To count this, they needed a date by which all trees would be counted, and Tu Bishvat (the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month called Shvat) was chosen since it is at the very beginning of spring in Israel. Here it is still the heart of winter, (and it's very early this year even in Israel) and so it can almost seem a cruel tease, but it is nice to take a moment and think about the coming spring and the rebirth of life. Tu Bishvat became a larger holiday for the kabbalistic mystics of Tsfat in the 1500's. For them, the tree becomes a metaphor for the tree of life by which the divine energy makes its way to our plane of existence. While not all of us will resonate with that sort of mysticism, I think we all can feel a sense of awe in the presence of great trees and families of trees in a great wood. There is something about trees that speaks to us at a primal level. Perhaps it is the life that flows within them from deep below, reaching up so fluid and yet so strong and resilient. So in this winter of discontent, take some time to look out at the trees and be grateful to live in a world where such things exist, exist and create the air we breathe. Here is the blessing for seeing a beautiful tree:

*Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha-Olam, she'cacha lo b'olamo.*  
Blessed are You, Eternal, who makes such things in this world.

### **TU BISHVAT SEDER AND HAVDALAH, 6 PM on Saturday , Jan 30**

To honor the holiday, Rabbi Jan Salzman and I will be hosting a special event with chef Richard Wittig who will share information on the foods of the day, and Jan and I will offer short teachings and a couple of songs. You can order a meal from Richard to pick up on Saturday afternoon at Temple Sinai. (Check out the newsletter for links for more information.) Join us, with the preordered meal or without. Just have some fruits and nuts and wine or grape juice on hand. [CLICK HERE](#) for a 'do it yourself' Tu Bishvat seder from the URJ.

Yesterday, was **INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY**. As a community, we usually have our official memorials on Yom HaShoah, the day in the Jewish calendar to remember the Shoah, but given the rise in virulent and violent anti-Semitism and the growing impatience with the democratic process, this year it feels important to pause and remember that while the Holocaust was a unique rupture in history, it was perpetrated by humans who are always capable of genocide if convinced by those they respect that it is for the greater good. We are still the central target of modern white-Supremacists today, just as we were then, and we must be clear and vocal in the fight against it, just as we are called to speak out against racial injustice perpetrated by the same movements and ideologies. The Holocaust is the context that frames the modern era, and we have a unique responsibility to the current world as holders of that memory.

**ENCORE CLASS: JEWISH WAY OF DEATH AND MOURNING. SUNDAY, JAN 31 AT 10 AM** Rabbi Amy Small and I had so many questions that we didn't get to, we decided to have another class to answer those questions. Please join us. Same link and password.

### **CHANGES IN TEMPLE SINAI NEWSLETTER AND MY WEEKLY EMAIL.**

Stacie and I have been working with our Communications Committee and VP to streamline and improve the ways we communicate with you, and to get more time for Stacie and I do work directly with you and new congregants to help this community keep growing. To that end, this will be my last regular weekly email. Instead, we are moving the weekly newsletter to Wednesdays and it will combine aspects of both. I will continue with an occasional rabbi's blog that will be sent to you as an email, and will include messages in the weekly newsletter when needed. We are also going to make the newsletter more 'phone friendly' so that it will be more of a series of links that you can quickly scroll through and click on what interests you. We will also be working over the coming months to make the website easier to navigate.

I started writing this email when I started at Temple Sinai because I felt strongly that I needed my own channel of communication with you so you could get to know me better, and I could let you know of the changes and initiatives I was trying. After three years, things feel very different, and while I still will have a direct line of communication with you, it no longer needs to be weekly. I know

this will give me more time to engage directly with the great things this congregation is doing.

## **BLESSINGS FOR GETTING THE COVID VACCINE**

As some among us have begun receiving their vaccine, several congregants have sent me special brachot, or blessings to say upon receiving it. Here are two:

### **1. Blessing Upon Receiving the COVID Vaccine**

- When you are about to receive the vaccine, realize that the Divine is open to you and offer a blessing to all those awaiting their turn.
- Take a deep breath and offer a blessing of gratitude: *Baruch Ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech HaOlam, HaTov v'haMetiv*. Blessed are You Eternal, who is Good and bestows good upon us.
- After the vaccine is administered, recite the Shehecheyanu: *Baruch Ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech HaOlam, Shehecheyanu v'kiymanu v'higiyanu lazman hazeh*. Blessed are you, Eternal, who gives us life, sustains us and has allowed us to arrive at this moment.

### **2. Prayer Upon Receiving the COVID Vaccine**

Av HaRachaman, Merciful One, I am filled with awe and hope -- and a drop of worry -- as I prepare to receive my first vaccination against COVID-19. It has been such a struggle to slog through this past year: to be separated from activities I love and people I love. I yearn to be able to hug my grandchildren without fear; I look forward to eating at a restaurant without fear; I want to be able to go shopping without being afraid of crowds. I anticipate with joy delighting once again in the smiles of those I meet as I go about my daily routine.

I know that this is just the first step, that it will take time before all these dreams can be realized. But today feels momentous. And as I am thrilled to be receiving this injection of blessing, I pray that those most vulnerable in our community, those often overlooked or ignored who are suffering in such great number, will receive this blessing also and be protected very very soon.

I am grateful beyond words for those who have developed the vaccines, who produce them, who expose themselves to danger giving them, as well as those who care for the ones who have been sickened by this virus. May healing of body and spirit come to them and their loved ones.

Thank you, God, thank you! Baruch Attah Adonai, Ha-tov v'Ha-Metiv. I bless and praise You Adonai: You are Good and today you are bringing me Goodness.

## **SERVICES THIS WEEK -**

### **KABBALAT SHABBAT FRIDAY NIGHT at 6:30**

Our usual song-filled joyful Shabbat service to celebrate creation, liberation, and the power of rest. Here is one new song we are doing, one that was featured at the URJ Biennial last year by Chava Mirel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yi1FXxVbIrE>

### **SATURDAY MORNING SERVICE AND TORAH STUDY**

We will have our chanted **Shacharit** service at **9:30**.

**TORAH STUDY** begins at **10:30**. This week, we continue our study of the Book of Exodus with Parashat B'SHALLACH, with the escape from Egypt and the Crossing of the Dead Sea. Click [HERE](#) for the URJ page on this portion, and [HERE](#) for the text on Sefaria.

**TU BISHVAT EVENT AND HAVDALAH: 6:00 pm** Ruach Hamaqom's Rabbi Jan and I will be joined by chef Richard Wittig for a Tu Bishvat short seder/teaching and Havdalah. It will be on ZOOM this week to let in more voices. Join us, and bring friends.

# JEWISH WAYS OF DEATH AND MOURNING



*taught by*

**Rabbi David Edleson and Rabbi Amy Small**

***ENCORE CLASS JAN 31 10 am***