



## The Bet Ha'am Weekly Email

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### Words of Torah from Rabbi Saks

This week, we began the book of Exodus with its first Torah portion, *Sh'mot*. After a short accounting of the descendants of Jacob living in Egypt, the text tells us, "A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, 'Look, the Israelite people are much too numerous for us. Let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they may not increase; otherwise in the event of war they may join our enemies in fighting against us and rise from the ground.' So they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor; and they built garrison cities for Pharaoh: Pithom and Rameses" (Exodus 1:8-11).



This is, in my opinion, one of the most defining moments in our history. This is the moment when Israelite slavery begins in Egypt, starting our redemption narrative. It's that narrative that is central in every facet of Jewish life. Each time we recite Kiddush at Shabbat, we utter the phrase, *Ki hu yom t'chilah l'mikra'ei kodesh, zecher y'tziat Mitzrayim*, 'As first among our sacred days, [Shabbat] recalls the Exodus from Egypt.' A similar phrase appears in Kiddush for other holidays as well. Our liturgy calls to mind our redemption, most notably in connection with *Mi Chamocha*. Even our Shabbat candles evoke this defining narrative of our people. We light two Shabbat candles, one for the commandment to remember the Sabbath day as a symbol of creation (Exodus 20:8-11), and one for the commandment to guard Shabbat as a remembrance that God redeemed us from slavery in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:12-15).

The story of our redemption is symbolic of the ultimate redemption, the perfection of our world. While God redeemed us from Egypt, it is clear that our *b'rit*, our covenant with God, demands that we be God's partners in bringing about that ultimate redemption. If we are to take our Judaism seriously, we must be committed not only to our own redemption, but to the redemption of every victim of oppression, especially those at greatest risk, as our ancestors were in Egypt.

## Worship Schedule

**Friday, January 8**

**Shabbat Family Worship 6:00 PM**

Thank you to board member Kira Wigoda for making announcements. The service link is in the blue "Registration" box below.

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**Saturday, January 9**

**Torah Study 9:00 AM**

Torah study using *The Mussar Torah Commentary* continues--but you don't need to own a copy. Read more [here](#), under the "Torah Study" heading. The study link is in the blue "Registration" box below.

### **Shabbat Morning Worship 10:30 AM Learners' Shabbat and B'nai Mitzvah Family Shabbaton**

Perhaps you are new to Jewish worship. Perhaps you've been coming to Shabbat services for years. Either way, Rabbi Saks hopes that you'll join us this Saturday morning for our annual Learners' Shabbat, which is also our B'nai Mitzvah Family Shabbaton. Don't be fooled by the name: everyone is welcome.

We will cover the structure of the service, the meanings of the prayers, and the choreography of worship. But we will also explore deeper questions. What does it mean to pray? What is the purpose of prayer? How can prayer draw us closer to each other and to God? When is prayer challenging? Is it okay if we don't believe in God?

Prayer and Shabbat services can serve many purposes. Come explore what being together in worship might mean for you.

Thank you to Robert Morrison for reading Torah for our Learner's Shabbat. The service link is in the blue "Registration" box below.

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**Wednesday, January 13**

### **Morning Minyan 7:30 AM**

Led by congregant Daniel Oppenheim. The service link is in the blue "Registration" box below.

## **Registration Links for January**

Please complete **new registrations** before noon on Friday. If you **previously registered** but lost the link, do not reregister. Instead, please [email us](#) before noon on Friday.

Links will be sent around 4:00 p.m. on Fridays. We cannot send links after 4:00 p.m. on Fridays.

These are the links for JANUARY:

- For **Friday night worship**, [click here](#).
- For Saturday morning **Torah Study**, [click here](#).
- For **Saturday morning worship**, [click here](#).
- For **Wednesday morning minyan**, [click here](#).

Read more about our service and our prayer book [here](#).

## **Religious School**

### **Religious School on Zoom**

**\*Register for January Zoom Shabbat services today!\***

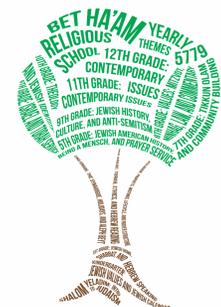
#### **Friday, January 8**

6:00 PM Family Shabbat Service  
Part of the curriculum for Grades 1-6

#### **Saturday, January 9**

10:30 AM Grade 6 Shabbaton  
Following the Learner's Shabbat Service, Grade 6 families remain on Zoom to complete part III of the B' Mitzvah Family Program.

#### **Sunday, January 3**



### What's Happening?

Grades 7-12 will meet at 9:30 AM on February 7 for a special program on water diplomacy. There will be no school conflict with the Super Bowl later in the day.

## Community-Building Workshop

**Sunday, January 17, 3:00-4:30 PM**

Open to new as well as previous participants.

Our relationships are enriched by personal sharing. Congregant Asherah Cinnamon, with assistance from her team of local facilitators, is pleased to offer a community-building workshop on Zoom for Bet Ha'am members. This is an opportunity for adults to express the personal impact of current events, including COVID-19, the tensions of US elections, and the rise in visibility of anti-Semitism. In large and small listening circles, each participant has an equal opportunity to be respectfully listened to. This will be a participatory group (not a discussion) designed to strengthen our connections with each other. Asherah will open with Introductions and with a very brief talk on "What is anti-Semitism, why is it everyone's concern, and how may it impact you and yours?"

Asherah is a trained facilitator with decades of experience bringing people together. Her bio may be found on her website at [www.asherahcinnamon.com](http://www.asherahcinnamon.com).

**Please by January 15 at noon.** Please register each person in your household who plans to participate; it is preferable as well that each person have a separate device. Registration limited to twenty-five people.

Please contact Asherah directly by email at [acinnamon@meca.edu](mailto:acinnamon@meca.edu) with questions. The zoom link will come from Asherah's email the weekend before the event.

Register Here

## Tu BiSh'vat!



Tu BiSh'vat, the Birthday/New Year of the Trees, will be celebrated on Zoom on **Wednesday, January 27, at 7:00 p.m.** The rabbi and members of the Garden Committee have been working on an engaging program that will be interesting and fun for all ages. There is more information to come next week, but please save the date.

## "Sing Unto God" Event from HUC

Long before Rabbi Saks was a rabbi, he loved singing with his classmates and cantor in religious school and family services. Growing up, Jewish melodies inspired him and helped him to fall in love with Judaism and Jewish life. As a teenager, through his involvement in NFTY (the North American Federation of Temple Youth), he learned that much of the music that stirred his soul was written or inspired by Debbie Friedman, of blessed memory. In fact, much of our contemporary Jewish music, both in Reform Jewish life and in

Jewish life around the world. On **Thursday, January 28, at 8:00 p.m. eastern**, join Rabbi Saks by tuning in to *Sing Unto God*, an evening of song and memory celebrating the legacy of Debbie Friedman.

**Kumsitz** 



Commemorate  
Debbie Friedman's  
legacy on the occasion  
of her 10th yahrzeit

[Read More & Register Here](#)

## Social Justice

For my **Bat Mitzvah project**, I researched period poverty, and by talking about it, you are erasing a little bit of the stigma around it. I also decided to create a fundraiser to raise money for purchasing period products. Period poverty affects one in four women, and can lead to women and girls missing school and work. This means that they are given less education because of something so normal as a period. At my school, I did a presentation talking about why period poverty is bad and why we need to fix it. My goal is to raise awareness and to also provide women with period products through the Michael Klahr Jewish Family Services food pantry. I am raising awareness, products, and funds so that we can make a bigger difference in our world.

If you want to give to my project, you can donate through [my fundraiser page on Facebook](#), or you can [donate online](#) to Michael Klahr Jewish Family Services (in the tribute line please say that it is for period products/Sophia Gavin's Bat Mitzvah Project). You also can send a check to Michael Klahr Jewish Family Services, Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine, 1342 Congress Street, Portland, ME 04102. Please include in the memo line that the donation is for period products.

Thank you so much for considering my project! ~Sophia Gavin

## Ongoing Programs

### Shabbat Candle Lighting

Please consider signing up to be a candle lighter at an upcoming Zoom Friday night service. You may choose to do this in memory of a loved one for whom you're observing yahrzeit, in honor of a celebration in your life, or just because you want to engage in this ritual. You can read more from Rabbi Saks [here](#); learn the candle lighting blessing [here](#) (on track 420); and find the words [here](#).

[Sign Up Here](#)

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### Stone Soup

Stone Soup is a Shabbat gift to our congregants. Read all about it [here](#) (on the Stone Soup tab). Many thanks to those who have donated to support Stone Soup.

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### B'Yachad | Together

Come relax and talk virtually with your Bet Ha'am community before Friday Shabbat services! We will not meet this week. [Read more here](#). [Register here](#). Please contact congregant [Wendy Hayes](#) with questions.



### TV Discussion Group

Please join congregants Melissa Montefel and Wendy Hayes, co-facilitators, for a discussion group about Jewish-themed shows. The group meets at 7:00 p.m. for fun, talk, and insights. Please email [Wendy](#) for the login or with questions or suggestions for future movies.

**January 20: "The Woman in Gold."** Maria Altmann, an octogenarian Jewish refugee, takes on the Austrian government to recover artwork she believes rightfully belongs to her family. Available on Amazon Prime.



### Curbside Library Borrowing

Although the building remains closed, you may borrow a book from our wonderful library using curbside pick up. Read more on our [library page](#).

## Notable Upcoming Services

**Saturday, January 23**  
**Sophia Gavin Bat Mitzvah**

## Donate to Bet Ha'am

Please consider donating in any amount to Congregation Bet Ha'am. The \$700 shown here is thanks to Clynk donations from congregants ([email us](#) and we'll send you tags). We also have an Amazon Smile account. Or you can give directly to the annual fund. It all helps us offer services, educate children, upgrade our HVAC and AV, and provide help to people struggling in these times. We are grateful for your support.



[Donate Now](#)

Congregation Bet Ha'am | 81 Westbrook Street, South Portland, ME 04106

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