



The Bet Ha'am Weekly Email

Words of Torah from Rabbi Saks

In this week's Torah portion, *Vayeishev*, Jacob's favoritism of Joseph reaches a breaking point when Joseph's brothers decide they must be done with him. They throw him in a pit, intent upon getting rid of him. The text tells us that the pit into which they cast Joseph was empty and then it mentions that the pit had no water in it.



Rashi, the 11th century commentator, asks why the text would have to tell us that the pit didn't have water in it after it has already established that the pit was empty. Rashi proposes that the pit was void of water, but filled with snakes and scorpions. His grandson, Rashbam, finds this to be a little far-fetched and suggests that it is not a bad thing that there isn't any water. True, if there had been water in the pit, the snakes and scorpions wouldn't have been there. However, if the pit had been full of water, Joseph would have surely drowned immediately. Others consider the notion that if there had been at least some water, but not a lot, it would have helped Joseph's chance of survival, providing him with some sustenance after his brothers abandoned him.

When we consider the empty pit, without water, into which Joseph was cast, we are reminded that the outcome of a situation can often be dependent upon how we choose to see it. In a few weeks, when Joseph's brother express remorse for having sold him into slavery, he reminds them that had they not, he would never have been able to save them and Egypt from the famine. He assures them it was all a part of God's plan. Joseph recognizes the bigger picture. As Rabbi Harold Kushner writes, "Much of the time we cannot control what happens to us. But we can control how we respond to what happens to us. If we cannot choose to be lucky, to be talented, to be loved, we can choose to be grateful, to be content with who we are and what we have, and to act accordingly."

Worship Schedule

Friday, December 11

Light Up the Night!
Shabbat Family Worship 6:00 PM

Join us for a fun, festive, interactive Chanukah service together online! Music, dancing, a story, holiday quizzes, and candle lighting. Please bring your menorah with three candles to help us celebrate the second night of Chanukah. Please be sure to download the Chanukah blessings and songs (using the button below) before the service so that you can sing along with us.



[Chanukah Songs](#)

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

Saturday, December 12

Torah Study 9:00 AM

Torah study using *The Mussar Torah Commentary* continues. You may buy a copy [here](#) or [here](#) (be sure to choose Bet Ha'am's Smile account) or from your local book seller. Scholarships are available--please email [Karen Hindall](#). You should also feel free to join Torah Study if you don't have a copy--we'll be reading passages aloud.

Shabbat Morning Worship 10:30 AM

The service link is in the blue "Registration" box below. You will be invited to unmute yourself before *MiShebeirach* and *Kaddish* to share the name of the person you are remembering.

Statewide Chanukah Celebration, 5:30-6:15 PM

Join the Rabbi Saks and the Center for Small Town Jewish Life on the third night of Chanukah for an all-Maine celebration!

- Welcome the new week with a spirited Havdalah led by Cantor Sheila Nesis.
- Bring your chanukiah so you can light candles with Rabbi Darah Lerner of Beth El Bangor.
- Experience a Chanukah play written by Rabbi Lily Solochek, Rabbi Carolyn Braun, and Rebbetzin Lisa Mayer especially for this celebration—performed by rabbis from across the state!
- Enjoy music from Rabbi Sruli Dresdner and Rebbetzin Lisa Mayer.

CSTJL thanks its co-sponsor, the Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine.

[Register for Statewide Service](#)

Wednesday, December 16

Morning Minyan 7:30 AM

Please use the link below to join us for morning minyan led by congregant Daniel Oppenheim.

Registration Links & Notes

Please register **BEFORE NOON ON FRIDAY** to receive the Zoom links for worship and study.

- The Friday night link will work for **ALL** Friday night services (whether at 6:00 PM or 7:30 PM) until the end of December.
- The Saturday link will work for **ALL** Saturday morning worship (including b'nai mitzvah services) until the end of December.

If you lose your links, please [email the office](#) before noon on Friday and we will resend them to you directly. Please be sure to say which links you'd like.

- 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](#).

We will not be able to send links on Shabbat or Sunday.

At Friday night and Saturday morning worship services, you will be invited to unmute yourself before *MiShebeirach* and *Kaddish* to share the name of the person you are

remembering.

We are grateful to the CCAR for providing virtual versions of our prayer books [here](#). If you would prefer to have a real book, you may order one from the [CCAR press](#) ([large print](#) also available) or Amazon. Please be sure to order **Mishkan T'filah for Shabbat, Transliterated** (NOT for Shabbat, Weekdays, and Festivals) so that you'll have the right page numbers. It costs around \$37.

Change Is Coming



Get ready! **Starting in January, we will have all new service links.** You will register for them in the same way as outlined above. However, the links will be good for January only. We will repeat the process and have all new links again in February.

We are making this change to support Zoom security while improving access to services for our guests.

Registration for the January links will open on December 24.

Religious School

Religious School on Zoom

Saturday, December 12

5:00 PM Havdalah- Grades 1-6

Sunday, December 13

9:00 AM Grades 1-6 (Tefillah & Class)

9:30 AM K'tanim

9:30 AM Grade 4 Family Program (normal link)

10:30 AM Shalom Yeladim

5:00 PM Grades 7 & 10

5:30 PM Grades 8-9

6:15 PM Shoko & Sheetuf



What's Happening?

In this week's glimpse into what's happening in the religious school, Education Director Sam Spinrad writes, "In addition to our annual Light Up the Night service, Havdalah, and religious school meetings this weekend, our school will hold grade-level candle lightings throughout the holiday. We will also have a special family Chanukah program for 4th grade on Sunday. Have a joyful and festive winter break!"

Youth Group

December 17, 7:00 PM

Virtual Chanukah Celebration!

Details to come! Zoom link is [here](#).

Questions? [Contact Andrea Levinsky](#).

Chanukah News

Calling all parents with college kids! The Caring Committee would like to let your kids know we're thinking of them this Chanukah. Please email either [Rosie Wohl](#) or [Karen Silverman](#) with the name of your college kiddo (and their address during this Chanukah season) by this Sunday, December 13. Thank you!



Rabbi Saks will be gathering with small groups from our congregation on selected nights throughout the holiday for **Chanukah candle lighting on Zoom**. Sign up below (choose just one night, please) to join one of these gatherings to light candles, sing songs, and play dreidel with each other and with Rabbi Saks. We will send you the Zoom link closer to the date.

[Sign Up HERE](#)

Thank you to everyone who has purchased holiday items from our gift shop! Limited supplies remain:

- Chanukah candles (plain) \$2
- Electric chanukiyot (menorahs) starting at \$10
- Gelt SOLD OUT
- Small dreidels (25 cents) and holiday wrapping paper

Contact Teri Berenson to arrange payment and outside pickup: teri@bethaam.org or call her Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:00am to 2:00pm at 207-879-0028.

News from the Tikkun Olam Council

The Tikkun Olam Council has decided to join a project of the Maine Gun Safety Coalition, a grassroots organization founded in 2000 to protect Maine families and communities from gun violence. The project is called Show Up Network (SUN). It will help participants find effective ways to SHOW UP for gun safety. Please read more on our website [here](#), under the Show Up Network tab.

If you would like to join SUN, please register below.

[Sign Up HERE](#)

News from the Office

Stone Soup

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

Perimeter Amble

If you live near Bet Ha'am and would like to do an easy good deed, stop by some time, walk around the parking lot and gardens, and generally let people know we are keeping an eye on the place. We would be very grateful for the "neighborhood watch."

Reopening Plans

Our recently updated reopening memo is now available [on our website](#).

Adult Learning and Socializing

B'Yachad | Together

Come relax and talk virtually with your Bet Ha'am community before Friday Shabbat services! [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 PM for fun, talk, and insights.

Please email [Wendy](#) for the login or with questions or suggestions for future movies.

December 23: The Other Story. "The story follows the wedding planning of two *Baalei Teshuva*, and the bride's family's plans to sabotage the wedding. The film focuses on the bride's complicated relationship with her father, as well as the divorced parents' relationship with each other." 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

Did you miss **#GivingTuesday**? Or did you remember to give to many organizations, but forget your synagogue? Don't despair! We are happy to accept donations any day of the week, any week of the year. Please click the button below to support the annual fund or another fund that you love. We will be grateful.

[Donate Now](#)

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