



The Bet Ha'am Weekly Email

Words of Torah from Rabbi Saks

The Israelites' redemption from Egyptian bondage begins in this week's Torah portion, *Va-eira*, when God speaks to Moses, saying, "Go and tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites depart from this land" (Exodus 6:11). Moments before this, God reminds Moses of the divine promise to his ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to bring the people to the Promised Land. But when Moses shares with the people the promise that their redemption is near, "the Israelites would not listen to Moses, their spirits crushed by cruel bondage" (Exodus 6:9).



Chizkuni, the 13th century French commentary by Rabbi Hezekiah ben Manoah, explains that the Israelites were too afraid to accept what Moses said to them on account of the recent worsening of their condition as a result of Moses's intervention and Pharaoh's reaction to it. Chizkuni states that at this stage, Pharaoh had succeeded in making the people forget their dreams of freedom by having made their lives more burdensome. In spite of this, neither Moses nor God give up. They continue to pressure Pharaoh to free the people. As we know, he resists and the plagues wreak havoc not only for Pharaoh, but for all of Egypt. Still, we know that Israelites' redemption ultimately arrives, in spite of their lack of faith that it will and Pharaoh's best efforts to stop it.

These days, redemption, freedom, and even democracy seem to be slipping our grasp. We find ourselves like the Hebrew slaves, with spirits crushed. We must muster the Moses within us and keep pressing forward. Redemption will come and people are counting on us.

Worship Schedule

Friday, January 15

Shabbat Worship 7:30 PM

Please join us to thank Rachel Lefkowitz for her work the past two years. Rachel and Jay Sherwin will light the Shabbat candles. Thank you to board member Kira Wigoda for making announcements. The registration link is in the blue "Registration" box below.

Saturday, January 16

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 registration link is in the blue "Registration" box below.

Shabbat Morning Worship 10:30 AM

Thank you to Rachel Stamieszkin for reading Torah in memory of her grandparents, Sylvia Bronstein and Lillian Asher, on their yartzeits, and in honor of her own birthday. The registration link is in the blue "Registration" box below.

Wednesday, January 20

Morning Minyan 7:30 AM

Led by congregant Daniel Oppenheim. The registration 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 have lost the link, do not reregister. Instead, please [email us](#) before noon on Friday.

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

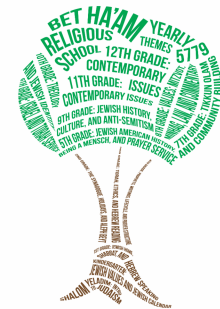
Religious School on Zoom

Sunday, January 17

No Religious School (Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Weekend)

What's Happening?

Sam thanks Rachel Lefkowitz for her administrative guidance and assistance with the religious school over the past two years.



Youth Group

January 19, 7:00-8:00 PM

Please join us at the Bet Ha'am Virtual Game Night. All 8th-12th graders are welcome! [Email Andrea Levinsky](#) for the Zoom link.

Havdalah Together

January 16, 6:00 PM

Havdalah Together

Winter is here, which means Statewide Havdalah. This month we will be led by Rabbi Sruli Dresdner and Rebbetzin Lisa Mayer of Temple Shalom, Auburn and Rabbi Carolyn Braun of Temple Beth El, Portland. Join Jews from all around Maine as we say goodbye to Shabbat and welcome a new week. This gathering is sure to be spirited and musical!



Please register to receive the Zoom details. You'll receive a confirmation email that contains the link, and a reminder email the Friday before the service.

And, mark your calendars for Havdalah on Saturday, February 13 at 6 p.m.

Havdalah Registration

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.

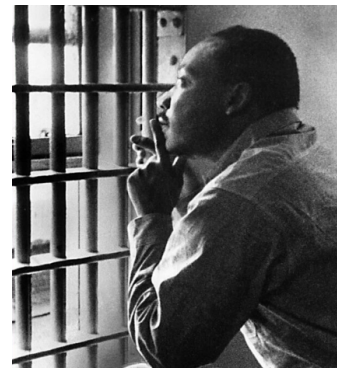
Please register by January 15 at noon. Please register each person in your household who plans to participate; it is preferable as well that each person have a separate device. Registration limited to twenty-five people.

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

Register Here

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, **Monday, January 18 at 12:15 PM**, Rabbi Saks will be joining with the BTS Center, the Maine Council of Churches, and other faith leaders from across Maine to honor the life and legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by sharing in a reading of his April 16, 1963, essay, *Letter from Birmingham Jail*. As we well know, the work of racial justice is far from finished. Until every person is respected as a *tzelem Elohim*, an image of God, there is still work to be done. Please join Rabbi Saks for "Committed to Listen" to recommit ourselves to continue to work and legacy of Dr. King.



"Committed to Listen" will be available as a gathering on Zoom and [streamed to Facebook Live](#). It will feature multiple voices reading straight through the letter, beginning with a little bit of contemplative music to set a prayerful tone, and followed by some prayerful space for people to respond with their own prayers in the chat box.

Read More and Register

USM Judaica Collection Talk

Digital Resources from the USM Judaica Collection

January 27 at 12:00 noon on Zoom
(Rescheduled from January 20)

Explore the rich archive of historical photographs, documents and materials available digitally through USM's Judaica collection. Presented by Susie Bock - USM Library Coordinator of Special Collections, Director of the Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine.

A free lunch and learn program from USM and the JCA, co-sponsored by Congregation Bet Ha'am, Temple Beth El, Shaarey Tphiloh and the Maine Jewish Museum. **Advanced registration is require by January 26.**

[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.

Want to know more? Click below to read a history of the festival and a description of our seder, find activity resources for children (decorate a paper tree like the one shown here!), and more. We will be adding to our resources page through January 19; check back then so that you can download (or otherwise have available) all

that you will need to participate in our Tu BiSh'vat seder.

Want to join the seder? Click the registration button below (before noon on January 27) and we'll send you the Zoom link.

[Tu BiSh'vat Fun](#)

[Register Here](#)

"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

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](#)

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.

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

Purim Together
February 25 at 6:30 PM

We could all use a little celebration! Get your costumes ready, grab a festive drink, and join us for Purim. There will be a *spiel* presented by Temple Beth El (the one in Augusta), a chance to share some unusual hamantaschen combinations, and a special challenge for our local clergy (shhh....it's a surprise). As part of the fun we'll invite you to send in a picture of yourself modeling your Purim costumes; we'll string the images together into a video. Serious prizes will be awarded. More details to come!

But wait, there's more. We'll also have a traditional reading of the *megillah*, so get out your groggers and make some noise!

Half of all donations for this program will go to support Maine's Good Shepherd Food Bank, feeding the hungry in our state. It's an easy opportunity to fulfill the Purim mitzvah of providing gifts for the needy.

To receive Zoom details, please register below. After you sign up, you'll receive a confirmation email with the program link.

[Purim Together Registration](#)

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](#)

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