



The Bet Ha'am Weekly Email

Words of Torah from Rabbi Saks

The penultimate plague of the ten described in this week's portion, *Bo*, and last week's, *Va-eira*; it is darkness. When we recall the plagues at the Passover Seder, we often recall this one as not being able to see, perhaps by putting on dark sunglasses or even a blindfold. But the darkness that fell on Egypt just before the Israelites' escape was far darker than anything we can create. The text tells us that the darkness could be touched (Ex. 10:20). Ibn Ezra, the 12th century Spanish commentator, teaches that it wasn't simply that light was diminished, as with sunglasses, or removed, as with a blindfold. Darkness actually fell, a darkness as thick as fog, so dark that the Egyptians could literally feel it. Once the darkness falls, the people cannot see each other or even get up because the darkness is so thick.



We focus on Pharaoh's behavior and his unwillingness to release the Israelites, but this plague reminds us that the Egyptian people were blind to the Israelites' suffering. In this moment, we hear the prophet Isaiah's call to be a light to the nations, and we hear inaugural poet Amanda Gorman's call, "There is always light if only we are brave enough to see it. There is always light if only we are brave enough to be it."

Worship Schedule

Friday, January 22

Tot Shabbat 5:30 PM

Families with children under the age of five are invited to join Rabbi Saks for a special interactive online Tot Shabbat. [Register in advance](#) to join Tot Shabbat. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email with information about joining the service.



Shabbat Worship 7:30 PM

Thank you to Sophia Gavin for lighting the Shabbat candles in honor of her bat mitzvah. Thank you to board member Catherine Share for making announcements. The registration link is in the blue "Registration" box below.

Saturday, January 23

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

Mazel tov to Sophia Gavin, child of Andrea Krasker Gavin and Chip Gavin, who will be called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah.



Thank you to Nathan Szanton for making our board presentations. The registration link is in the blue "Registration" box below.

Wednesday, January 27

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 registrations 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](#).

Registration Links for February

Coming next week!

Religious School

Religious School on Zoom

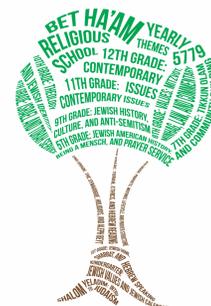
Sunday, January 24

Grades 1-9

What's Happening?

Rabbi Saks leads a 4th grade parent workshop on Zoom at 6:30 PM on Thursday, January 21.

Announcing Bet Ha'am Religious School's 2021 Purim Drawing Challenge! Religious school students of all ages are invited to draw a scene from the Purim story and email a copy to Sam. These will be shared at the assembly closest to Purim. Entries are due February 19.



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 required 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. You can also 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](#)

More fun for Tu BiSh'vat! When you register for the seder, you can also request etrog jam, etrog seeds, or a parsley planting kit (supplies of all are limited). Shown here is the parsley planting kit.



"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

Sophia Gavin Bat Mitzvah Project

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.



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

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 goggers 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.

[Register Here](#)

Donate to Bet Ha'am

Please consider donating in any amount to Congregation Bet Ha'am--with your help, we can close the budget gap! We are grateful for your support.

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