



The Bet Ha'am Weekly Email

Words of Torah from Rabbi Saks

In this week's double portion, *Tazria-M'tzora*, we encounter laws concerning the treatment of people afflicted with *tzara'at*, often translated as leprosy, but more likely a flaky skin condition like psoriasis. Both the ancient Israelites and the early sages understand *tzara'at*, like other ailments that people faced, as the result of divine punishment. Someone afflicted with *tzara'at* has done something that warrants suffering. Of course, this is not our theology today. Today, we understand that bad things happen to good people and that there is no purpose in suffering. But this isn't how our ancestors understood suffering. In the *midrash* (Leviticus Rabbah 16:1), the sages indicate that there are seven acts that bring on *tzara'at*, quoting Proverbs 6:19: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a mind that hatches evil thoughts, feet that are quick to run to do evil, bearing false witness, and one who incites brothers to quarrel. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch indicates that God afflicts all of the limbs of the body of a person who engages in these destructive behaviors because they fail to behave modestly, seek truth, do good, and make peace among people. In the portion that precedes, we encounter Nadav and Abihu, sons of Aaron the High Priest, who die at God's hand when they offer alien fire on the altar. It is another case in which the sages find meaning where we can't understand God's rationale.



In their song *Strange Fire*, the Indigo Girls wrestle with the strange fire of Nadav and Abihu's offering and present the same verse that the sages explore in the *midrash*. Their song may be an exploration of the things about ourselves that others tell us to hide. In spite of this, each of us has an offering to make, one that ought to be accepted and not judged by those who have no claim to speak for God. Below are some of the lyrics to *Strange Fire*. You can listen to the whole song [here](https://youtu.be/ujY0o-D-Gyk) (<https://youtu.be/ujY0o-D-Gyk>).

I come to you with strange fire
I make an offering of love
The incense of my soul is burned
By the fire in my blood
I come with a softer answer
To the questions that lie in your path
I want to harbor you from the anger
Find a refuge from the wrath
Mercenaries of the shrine
Now who are you to speak for God
With haughty eyes and lying tongues
And hands that shed innocent blood
When you learn to love yourself
You will dissolve all the stones that are cast
Now you will learn to burn the icing sky
To melt the waxen mask
I said to have the gift of true release
This is a peace that will take you higher

Oh I come to you with my offering
I bring you strange fire

April Zoom Link Registration

Register now to receive April Shabbat worship and Torah Study links.

We are now using **April** Zoom links for Shabbat worship and Torah Study.

- To register for **Friday night worship**, [click here](#).
- To register for **Torah Study** on Saturdays, [click here](#).
- To register for **Saturday morning worship**, [click here](#).
- To register for **Wednesday morning minyan**, [click here](#).

Registrations close at noon on Fridays. Zoom links will be sent by 4:00 PM on Fridays to all who have registered by the deadline. *We cannot send Zoom links after 4:00 PM on Fridays.*

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

Worship Schedule

Friday, April 16, 5:30 PM

Shabbat, Together, with Rabbi Erica Asch and Rabbinical Fellow Sara Blumenthal in Conjunction with the Center for Small Town Jewish Life

NOTE: *This program will take the place of Bet Ha'am's regularly scheduled Friday night worship service. Please also note that tonight's B'Yachad - Together social gathering will be preempted by the Statewide Shabbat service. We will resume again next week.*

Join Rabbi Erica Asch of Temple Beth El, Augusta, and rabbinical fellow Sara Blumenthal for a celebratory spring Kabbalat Shabbat. Now that the clocks have sprung forward, the Center for Small Town Jewish life is thrilled to offer Kabbalat Shabbat services once again. It's a beautiful way to welcome in the day of rest as a statewide community.

[Register Here for Shabbat Together](#)

Saturday, April 17

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.

Thank you to Daniel Oppenheim for facilitating Torah Study on Saturday. This weekend we read the double portion of Tazria/M'tzora. Daniel will be leading us in a discussion of the chapter on Parashat M'tzora (*Bushah—Shame: The Soul-Trait of Shame*, pp. 173-178).

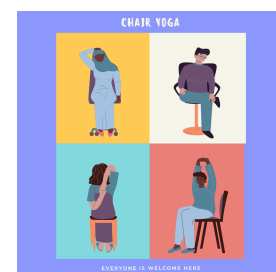
Register to receive the **Torah Study** Zoom link, [here](#).

Saturday, April 17

Seated Shalom Yoga with Ashley Flowers, 10:30 AM

NOTE: *This program will take the place of Bet Ha'am's regularly scheduled Saturday morning worship service.*

Join yoga teacher and Bet Ha'am member, Ashley Flowers, for a morning of gentle chair yoga in place of our regularly scheduled worship. Through gentle stretching, and breathing we will explore how we can use the foundation of our body to connect to the beauty of Torah.



The 19th century Chassidic Rebbe Sfat Emet teaches that everything in the human form hints to divine inner worlds and that the physical body is the doorway to spiritual realities. With Torah study and yoga practice we open the doorways of our body, mind, heart, and soul to ever-deepening inner worlds.

No experience with yoga required. Set yourself up at home with a chair (ideally with no arms) and comfortable clothes you can move in. **Use your regular Zoom link for April Saturday Morning Worship to access class.** If you have not already registered to receive the April links, please see the box near the top of this email for instructions on how to register. To read more about Ashley and her philosophy on yoga visit <https://www.ashleyflowersyoga.com/about/>

Register to receive the **Shabbat Morning Worship** Zoom link, [here](#).

Wednesday, April 21

Morning Minyan 7:30 AM

Led by congregant Daniel Oppenheim.

Register to receive the **Wednesday Morning Minyan** Zoom link, [here](#).

Notable Upcoming Services

Sabina Petrucci Bat Mitzvah, Saturday, May 1, 10:30 AM

Aziza Morrison Bat Mitzvah, Saturday, May 15, 10:30 AM

Religious School on Zoom

Saturday, April 17, 12:00 Noon

Students in grades 8-12: please join Liviah Carignan, Bet Ha'am member and 12th grade president of Eastern Maine Temple Youth group, to view a documentary and discuss on Zoom. The topic is the Jewish perspective on anti-Asian hate. No previous SPORTY attendance is required to participate.

You can access the event [here](#).

Saturday, April 17th

12:00-1:45

Talking about anti-Asian hate through a Jewish Perspective

We will be watching a modern documentary by Eugene Lee Yang, from popular youtube group The Try Guys and getting into some deep much needed conversation about racism, Judaism and much more

NFTYx

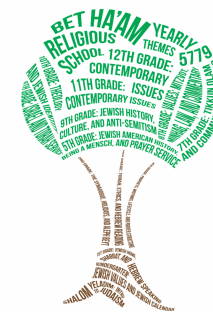
Sunday, April 18

Spring Break: No religious school classes

What's Happening?

8th and 9th graders examined the Jewish practice of prayer last week. Subjects included how Jews pray differently than other religions, why praying is relevant, and personal thoughts on prayer.

If you are interested in enrolling a child or teaching at religious school, email Sam at sam@bethaam.org



Racial Justice Program

Last chance to register!

Space is limited for this program.

Registration closes on April 21 at 12:00 noon.

Zoom links will be sent by 4:30 PM on Wednesday, April 21.

Thursday, April 22, 7:00 PM

**Justice In Our Backyard:
A conversation with DeRay Mckesson**

Join us for a very special evening of racial justice learning. Activist, educator, and author DeRay Mckesson will share his journey from middle school math teacher to acclaimed civil rights leader and social justice advocate. DeRay will also talk about the transformational work he is doing with his organization, Campaign Zero.



Campaign Zero is a project of the non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, WeTheProtesters. Campaign Zero supports the analysis of policing practices across the country, research to identify effective solutions to end police violence, technical assistance to organizers leading police accountability campaigns and the development of model legislation and advocacy to end police violence nationwide.

Read more about DeRay McKesson [here](#).

We look forward to seeing you!

Register for Justice in Our Backyard

Save the Date !

A DRAMATIC AFFAIR

A VIRTUAL EVENING WITH MAINE DRAMATISTS

CONGREGATION BET HA'AM
MAY 1, 2021 AT 8PM

FEATURING PLAYS BY
Brent Askari
Bess Welden
Monica Wood

BROUGHT TO LIFE BY
Mad Horse Theater Company

ASL Interpreting Provided



BETHAAM.ORG/GALA

"A Dramatic Affair" can be experienced by anyone anywhere!

This year's literary-themed Zoom fundraiser features new work by three playwrights

Let's spend a much-needed evening together! Increase the fun by inviting your family and friends to join us! Zoom admissions are available on a sliding scale (\$200-\$0) to make the event accessible to all. All proceeds benefit Congregation Bet Ha'am.

Please click on the link below to buy tickets or to make a contribution. If you prefer, you may register by calling the office at 207.879.0028 or visiting

**Register to Attend. Buy Raffle Tickets. Join the Host Committee.
Make a Contribution.**

Can't Make The Event on May 1?

Anyone who supports our event with a contribution will receive a link to a recording of the entire evening that will be accessible throughout the month of May.

The Adventure of a Lifetime Raffle Tickets Are Now On Sale!

Tickets are \$100 each and only 150 tickets will be sold. One winner will be chosen by drawing to select from our two prize categories, each valued at \$5,000. You can:

Travel the World – Got pent up travel desires? When the time comes to act on them confer with our travel mavens to create the trip of your dreams.

or

Feather Your Nest – Use your winnings to enhance your home or life. Be fanciful or practical. We encourage you to shop local!

**Register to Attend. Buy Raffle Tickets. Join the Host Committee.
Make a Contribution.**

Now's the time to join A Dramatic Affair Host Committee!

The generous support of our hosts lays the foundation to ensure A Dramatic Affair is a successful and profitable event. For a \$250 fully tax deductible donation you will be named and thanked on our host list which will appear in the Bet Ha'am weekly email, email blasts, and the digital event program. You will receive two household admission links for A Dramatic Affair so you can share one with family or friends.

Click the button below to join the host committee. For more information, contact story@bethaam.org.

Join the Host Committee

New this year!

This year we are also offering the opportunity to promote your business while you support this event through advertising. Click the button below to learn more.

Purchase Advertising for the Event

"A Dramatic Affair" - Saturday, May 1 at 8PM

This year's literary-themed fundraiser for Congregation Bet Ha'am features three world premiere plays brought to life by Mad Horse Theater Company. ASL interpreting will be provided:

Tikkun Olam, by Brent Askari



A humorous and insightful examination of how one congregant's crisis of faith results in some unexpected advice from his rabbi.

June 20/20 reVision(s): A Fire Diary, by Bess Welden

A brand new, totally untested solo performance text-in-progress of truer than true tales about whiteness, Jewishness, and what she inherited from her father.

The Male Gaze, by Monica Wood

A woman feeling overlooked by her husband asks an older neighbor for advice. Be careful—very careful—what you wish for.

David Bass-Clark will return as Master of Ceremonies, and Q&As with the playwrights will be moderated by Andrew Kosak.

**Register to Attend. Buy Raffle Tickets. Join the Host Committee.
Make a Contribution.**

A DRAMATIC AFFAIR SPOTLIGHT

BESS WELDEN (www.besswelden.com) newest play with songs, *Death Wings*, recently won the 2020 Maine State prize of the Clauder Competition for New England Playwrights. The script was also a semi-finalist for the 2020 O'Neill New Play Conference and workshopped with Fresh Ink Theatre at Boston Center for the Arts. Her play *Refuge Malja*, winner of the Tel Aviv Jewish Plays Contest and a finalist in the 2020 National Jewish Playwriting Contest, was recently published by Smith Scripts, UK. *Refuge Malja* premiered on Portland Stage's mainstage and was nominated for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize in 2018. The new full-length version of *Madeleines* was named a top 20 semi-finalist in the 2021 National Jewish Plays Contest and received workshop readings with Maine Playwrights Festival and North Shore Readers Theater this past year. In fall 2020 she co-produced and performed *Hausfrau: The Webseries* on YouTube. *Mergirl Saves the Waves*, Bess' feminist, environmentalist adaptation of *The Little Mermaid*, is in development supported by a grant from the Maine Arts Commission. Her solo comedies *The Passion of the Hausfrau* (2009) and *Big Mouth Thunder Thighs* (2013) premiered in Portland Stage's Studio Theater, and her collaborative play-project with live music and illustration, *Legbala is a River*, premiered at Mayo Street Arts (2017). Last spring she participated as an invited writer at the National Winter Playwrights Retreat (HBMG Foundation) in Grand Lake, CO and was a member of Company One Theatre (Boston) PlayLab Unit 2020 cohort. You can hear her 15-minute audio rom-coms "What I Miss Most" and "Under My Skin" on the Meet Cute Podcast (www.meetcute.com).



Visit Bet Ha'am's website for more information about "A Dramatic Affair" and all other programs taking place at the synagogue this spring:

<https://www.bethaam.org/events/gala/>

Tikkun Olam

Welcoming The Stranger (WTS) Recruiting Mentors for Asylum Seekers

Welcoming The Stranger (WTS) is recruiting mentors to match with a growing list of prospective mentees seeking asylum. Please go to the [website](#) for more information and an [application form for mentors](#).



WTS is a grassroots project matching mentors with asylum seekers to help them integrate into the Greater Portland community. Bet Haam members have participated in this cross

cultural friendship and partnership since its inception in 2016 .

Mentors may provide a wide range of support through information, referrals, connections . This support may relate to transportation, housing, employment, education, English, culture, and more. Mentors are not expected to be Social Workers!

Along with knowing they are helping asylum seekers navigate a new community, mentors comment on the mutual benefits of cross cultural sharing and how mentees appreciate regular contact with someone who cares.

If you wish to contact a WTS Steering Committee member/experienced mentor, please go to our [contact page](#) or email info@wtsmaine.com.

Solar Energy Fundraiser

Support Local Maine Solar, Lower Your CMP Bill and Raise Money for Bet Ha'am

Bet Ha'am was recently contacted about a new fundraising initiative involving congregants who may be interested in community solar. PowerMarket is an operator of multiple community solar energy farms on the east coast including one located in Baldwin, Maine that is currently looking for "subscribers." Subscribers are self-designated CMP customers who wish to buy a portion of their electricity from a community solar farm. The electricity is sold at a discount and produced with a lower carbon footprint.



The initiative presented provides that PowerMarket and Darrell Cooper of Energy Audits Ltd. will donate \$150 to Bet Ha'am for each subscriber who signs up using the promo code "Bet Ha'am." There is no upfront cost to sign up, subscribers typically save about 10% on their CMP bill, and they can cancel at any time on 60 days' notice.

You can obtain more information, and if interested become a subscriber through the PowerMarket/Baldwin Community Solar project website at: <https://account.powermarket.io/bethaam.html>.

If you have questions about the donation to Bet Ha'am, please contact Mark Stone at lmstone@lmstone.com

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](#).



[Candle Lighting Sign-Up](#)

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.

Thanks, Chef Chris!



B'Yachad | Together

Note: The B'Yachad - Together social gathering on April 16 will be preempted by the Statewide Shabbat service. We will resume again next week.



Come relax and talk virtually with your Bet Ha'am community before Friday Shabbat services! We will meet every Friday except the second Friday of the month when there is a 6:00 PM Family Shabbat service. [Read more here](#). [Register here](#). Please contact congregant [Alan Davis](#) with questions.



TV and Movie Discussion Group

Please join congregants Melissa Montefel and Wendy Hayes, co-facilitators, for a discussion group about Jewish-themed movies and 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.

April 28: *The Present*

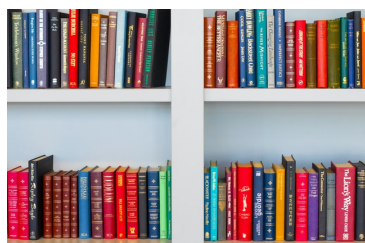
On his wedding anniversary, Yusef and his young daughter set out in the West Bank to buy his wife a gift. Between soldiers, segregated roads and checkpoints, how easy would it be to go shopping? NetFlix

May 12: *The Book Thief*

While subjected to the horrors of World War II Germany, young Liesel finds solace by stealing **books** and sharing them with others. In the basement of her home, a Jewish refugee is being protected by her adoptive parents.
Amazon Prime

June 9: *Shtisel*

A Haredi family living in an ultra-Orthodox neighborhood of Jerusalem reckons with love, loss and the doldrums of daily life. We'll be discussing all three seasons of Shtisel available on NetFlix so we're giving you plenty of time!



Curbside Library Borrowing

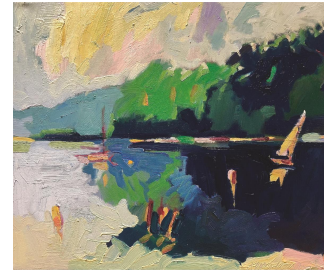
Although the building remains closed, you may borrow a book from our wonderful library using curbside pick up. Read more on our [library page](#).

So Much Going on in Our Community!

We are fortunate to be in a community where there is so much going on Jewishly that we cannot possibly list all of the happenings here. Please check out the websites listed below for all kinds of activities – movement, art, spirituality, books, movies, Jewish education, and more. Bet Ha'am often co-sponsors programs with these community leaders.

Maine Jewish Museum Virtual Art Auction 2021
Preview Starts: Sunday, April 18, 2021
Auction Bidding Opens: April 25th until May 9, 2021

Please join us for The Maine Jewish Museum's first ever online art auction generously curated by the founders of Barridoff Galleries, Annette and Rob Elowitch. Rob and Annette are back and better than ever and have gathered a varied and exciting roster of many of Maine's finest artists. Proceeds from the MJM Art Auction will help financially support the museum's mission of celebrating and honoring the contributions and diversity of Maine's Jewish community. Through exhibits, programming, and dialogue the Museum seeks to build bridges of appreciation and understanding with people of all backgrounds. We are tremendously excited to have reopened the Museum after the fire last May forced us to close for 9 full months while the building was entirely restored from top to bottom. While we are still limited by COVID-19 regarding the number of people that can visit us in person, through this MJM Art Auction, we can reach all of you virtually. **Auction link and more information can be found at [here](#).**



Sunday, April 25, 3:00 PM

The [Frances Perkins Center](#) invites you to the **Virtual Public Policy Forum 2021**

IMMIGRATION/REFUGEE POLICY
Conscience and Courage:
Frances Perkins and Dr. Feng Shan Ho
Little Known Heroes Who Saved Lives



[Click HERE for more information.](#)

Shlichei Tzibur Training



A Yearlong Prayer Service
Leader Training Program
for Community Members



Empowering Worship Service Leaders, with Cantor Nesis

Monthly classes on Tuesday evenings, 7–8:30 PM • Starting Tuesday, May 25

This yearlong experience is designed to empower individuals to lead worship services, shiva minyans, singing circles, and more, within their own communities. Through monthly online classes and individual coaching sessions with Cantor Sheila Nesis, participants will build the skills they need to succeed as prayer leaders. Enrollment will be limited.

Application deadline: Friday April 23. Applicants will be notified of acceptance to the program on Friday, May 7.

Tuition: \$120 for the yearlong program (\$10/month for class and individual tutoring).
Cost should not be a barrier to participating in this program.

Made possible by the Center for Small Town Jewish Life, the Messerschmidt Memorial Fund at the Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine, and the Covenant Foundation

[Learn More and Apply Here](#)

May 14-16, 2021

[The Jews of Color Mishpacha Project](#) invites you to:
The Jewish People of Color National (Virtual) Shabbaton

[Register](#) by April 18, 2021



[Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine](#)

[Center for Small Town Jewish Life](#)

[Southern Maine Jewish Cemetery Association](#)

[Maine Jewish Museum](#)

[Levey Day School](#)

[Maine Jewish Film Festival](#)

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.

[Donate Now](#)

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

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