



Temple House of Israel Bulletin

A Member Congregation of the Union for Reform Judaism
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January 2005, Tevet/Shevat 5765

From the
Rabbi's Desk

My dear fellow Valley Jews and Friends,

SHALOM!

I hope that you had a wonderful Chanukah and winter break, filled with food, fun, and family; steeped in love, blessings, and lots of everything that is good. It is my hope that the festival of lights filled you and your world with the light of many blessings.

THE CALENDAR & HOLIDAYS

The secular year has turned, and we are now in the year 2005 C.E. (Common era). Of course, for the Jewish calendar, it remains 5765 until we reach Rosh Hashanah in the fall.

The month of Kislev has merged into Tevet. Rosh Chodesh for the new month of Tevet was the evening of December 12th through sundown of December 13th.

The most noteworthy date in the month of Tevet is the Ta'anit Asarah Be'Tevet (the Fast of the 10th of Tevet). This fast day (sunup to sundown) commemorates the imposition of the siege of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E (we commemorated this sad event in Jewish history this year on December 22nd), and which leads in a few months up to the commemoration of the destruction of the Temple, observed on Tisha Be'Av (the 9th day of the month of Av), considered by many to be the saddest day of the Jewish year.

Rosh Chodesh for the new month of Shevat will fall this year on the 11th of January. You probably recall that the holiday of Tu Bi'Shevat ('15 in Shevat') falls on the 15th day of this month.

A word on 'TU'. In Jewish practice, we generally count using letters as values and markers. The system is alef=1, bet=2, gimel=3, daled=4, hay=5, vav=6, zion=7, chet=8, tet=9, yud=10, chof=20, lamed=30, mem=40, nun=50, samech=60, ayin=70, pay=80, tzadee=90, kuf=100, resh=200, shin=300, tav=400. For those numbers between, we form them from largest to smallest, so 11=yud-alef, 22=chof-bet, 135=kuf-lamed-hay, and so on.

To represent the year 5765, for example, we assume you will know which millenium you are talking about (most of us will not live long enough to be confused by dealing with spanning three thousand years!), so we identify the current year as tav-shin-nun-hay (400+300+60+5=765). Some pronounce the letters as a word, so this year is sometimes called 'Tashnah'. Others have the practice of finding phrases for which this is an acronym, which leads into the 'game' of Gematria, or numerology, equating or relating words with similar numerical values. Often there are many such phrases that can be formed from an acronym, so one can select among them, depending on their feelings and thoughts at the moment, or make a connection among them to seek a message! This can sometimes be an interesting diversion in an idle moment.

For the holiday of Tu Bi'Shevat, "Tu" is denoted as Tet-vav, or nine + six, for 15. You might ask, "why isn't it yud-hay", which is more in keeping with what I said about how we form the numeric values. Good question!

It turns out that the Yud-hay formulation is viewed as a representation of a name for G-d. It is, after all, half of the tetragrammaton (the four letter name of G-d, Yud-Hay-Vav-Hay) which we don't pronounce, and we use it in the phrase Halellu-Yah (Praise Yah!). In its stead we substitute the term 'Adonay' which means 'my lord,' 'my sir,' or 'my master'. As a recollection of the commandment not to take the name of G-d in vain, we do not use this shortened, familiar name to mark a day of the month, and instead, substitute 'tet-vav' for 'yud-hay'! So we have on the calendar the holiday of 'Tu Bi'Shevat', not 'Yah Be'Shevat'!

So after all that, what is Tu Bi'Shevat? The easiest way to describe it is to say it is the 'Jewish Arbor day', but of course, that is not really true. It turns out that there are a series of mitzvot (commandments) regarding the taking of produce of plants, such as the fruit of trees. Among these mitzvot is the mitzvah (commandment) concerning leaving the tree to grow and become firmly established before harvesting the fruit. It seems to make sense to me from both a practical standpoint and as an expression of showing respect for all living things to allow the root system of the tree to become strong enough to support the tree and to nourish it as it produces fruit. The rabbis felt that it would take a tree at least four years to create a strong enough root system to sustain a commercial harvest, so they ruled that one was not permitted to sell the fruit of a tree until it had passed its fourth 'birthday.' Unfortunately, most trees don't come with birth certificates! To establish a way to count, the rabbis decided that it would make sense to set a marker day to count. They picked the date of the 15th of Shevat because in Israel that is when the sap is thought to begin to rise in the Almond trees (the first to blossom), and the rabbis established the holiday of Tu Bi'Shevat, the 15th day of Shevat, as the 'birthday' or 'new year' of the trees. It is the latter that leads us to call the day Rosh Hashanah L'Ilanot (New Year for the Trees).

The Kabbalists of Tsefat (the mystics of Safed) viewed this holiday as both a practical agricultural marker date and as a mystical event, with the tree symbolizing Torah (tree of life), the connection of heaven and earth, and recalling the garden of Eden. Today, as the Kabbalists did, we celebrate the bounty and beauty of trees on that day with the Tu Bi'Shevat seder (order, the ritual meal similar to that at Passover) at which we partake for the first time in that year of the fruits of trees such as carobs, nuts, apples, and many other delicious products.

This year Tu Bi'Shevat falls on January 25th. We will celebrate it at Beth El, at THOI, and also in the Religious School. I hope you will join me at one of these times in celebrating this delicious and meaningful acknowledgement of the bounty of trees and the deeper significance of our reliance on the wonders of nature for sustenance and survival.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

The schedule of Religious services for me in January:

7 th	Beth El	Parashat Vayera
14 th	THOI	Parashat Bo
21 st	Beth El	Parashat Beshalach/Shabbat Shira
25 th	Beth El	Tu Bi'Shevat Seder
28 th	THOI	Parashat Yitro

The Adult B'nai Mitzvah class has shifted into a more individual mode for those

<p>Community</p>	<p>children from birth to age 5. Musikgarten’s programs awaken and develop a young child’s natural joy and talent for making music. Music’s melodic and rhythmic patterns stimulate neural pathways in the brain and develop listening skills, the foremost necessity for learning. Classes begin the week of January 11, 2005 and are held at the Staunton Academy of Ballet, 105 N. Augusta Street. If you or someone who know is interest in Musikgarten classes, please contact Sarah Grove-Humphries at 540-885-4223 or at humphries@rica.net. For more information about Musikgarten, please call 1-800-216-6864 or visit them on the web at www.musikgarten.org.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For anyone interested, CD recordings of the outstanding concert of Jewish music held at the temple in November are still available from Sarah Grove-Humphries for \$3 (to cover the duplication costs).
<p>News from the Women’s Group</p>	<p>We wish the following friends a #HAPPY BIRTHDAY in January:</p> <p>Michael Degen celebrates on the 6th Martin Schwartz on the 13th Rich Young on the 16th Riff Blair on the 27th Rachel Jordan also on the 27th Doug Degen on the 31st</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The next Women’s Group meeting will be Sunday, January 9th at 2:00 pm.
<p>Religious School</p>	<p>From the Rabbi: “I have been serving as a resource for teachers, and as the prime substitute teacher for the upper grades of the Religious school, as well as conducting the Assembly each week.</p> <p>I am regularly working one-on-one with all of the B’nai Mitzvah students. We have four of these events scheduled between now and July (Samantha Miller, Naomi Ornstein, Ariya Marks, and Jenna Cunningham), and one in October (Justin Goldberger). Getting to spend time with these young people and work closely with them gives me an opportunity to know them and to be impressed by them. I am sure that everyone will join me and kvell (fill with pride and joy) at their accomplishments as we reach their celebrations.</p>
<p>Adult Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Torah study group meets on Thursdays at noon at THOI most weeks. Everyone is welcome to drop in and take part. We often have a lively discussion. • Hebrew - Intermediate/Advanced classes will be held in January from 7- 8:30 P Mondays. @ BE Jan. 17, 24, 31 Thursdays. @ THOI Jan. 6, 13, 20 • The <u>Jewish Lecture Series</u> continues on Sunday evenings from 7 to 8:30 pm on the third Sunday of the month. Come to any or all, and if you have suggestions for topics, please feel free to tell me. Here is a list of the topics currently planned (subject to change). Jan 16th @ BE Jewish views on Life after Death Feb 20th @ THOI Jewish Ethics: End of Life Issues Mar 20th @ BE Jewish Lifecycle: Liturgy&Practice Apr 17th @ THOI Passover: Ritual & Rules

<p>Confirmation Class</p>	<p>From the Rabbi: “The Confirmation program has been very successful, in my view. We have had a series of discussions on a variety of topics, with an overall eye towards Jewish Ethics. These are smart, thoughtful young people, and I have thoroughly enjoyed the conversations we have had and always look forward to them.</p> <p>The goal of the program is to develop a deeper and more adult understanding of Judaism and what it offers in the areas of morality and ethics, social interactions, and religious views, and how these interrelate in a Jewish worldview. The culmination of the several year-long program is Confirmation – a celebration of the full Adult status of the participants at the end of their High School careers, as they prepare to go off as adults. This year we anticipate celebrating this milestone for Gabi Kalman and Eli Giovanetti at the Shavuot service on June 10th at Beth El. We will also be welcoming the incoming class of Confirmation students (those having their B’nai Mitzvah this year) at our YOUTH Service led by them and all the current Confirmation class members on June 3rd at THOI. I encourage you to hold the dates and attend both of these wonderful events.</p>
<p>Youth Group SHORTY</p>	<p>The Youth Group is a separate program from the Confirmation Class, but for the most part is the same group of young people. They have held some social activities, and now are looking towards social action programs, such as working with Special Olympics athletes. A number of the members of Youth Group have gone to regional Kallot (gatherings) for NFTY (the National Federation of Temple Youth), and more kallot are planned this year, including one in L.A.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 7th is the Youth Group Cosmic Bowling and Lock-In at Beth El following services. • January 21st Youth Group Ski Weekend: Youth Group Leads Services at Beth El for up to 100 Youth from various synagogues! • January 28th Youth Group leads services at THOI; Tu Be’Shevat is celebrated at THOI
<p>Judaica Shop</p>	<p>Thanks for supporting the Judaica shop during Chanukah! If you have any special needs, please call Dianne Mason at 885-6254.</p>
<p>Staunton Book Group</p>	<p>Our book group will meet on January 19th at 7:00 pm at Natasha Benenson’s home. We’ll discuss <u>White Out</u> written by James Marshall. Our first novel, but based on a true-life story, is a beautiful, frightening, evocative and pertinent-to-today story, set in Antarctica during World War II. There are 3 copies of this book in the Augusta County system. Our gatherings are informal and open to members and friends, so, come along!</p> <p>Directions to Natasha’s house: From downtown, take Frederick Street and turn right on West Beverley Street, continuing west. At the 2nd stoplight, turn left onto Hayes Avenue. (Valley Mission is on the right and Rite Aid is on the left). Take the 2nd right onto Packard Street and it’s the 1st house on the right: 1613 Packard St.</p> <p>The February book will be <u>Freak the Mighty</u> by Rodman Philbrick</p>
<p>Notes from the Editor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The deadline for each issue is the 20th of the preceding month. (February’s bulletin will go to press on January 20th.) I’d love to hear any ideas or suggestions you might have!
<p>Donations</p>	<p>We gratefully acknowledge and thank these generous members and friends who</p>

have given to the Temple during the past month:

To the social hall building fund Shirley and Rafael Brand
David and Rosalie Waterman
as a result of a grant written by Paul Klein, United Jewish Endowment
 Fund
 In honor of Eliana's baby namingBonnie and Mike Brown
 In honor of Sarah Grove-HumphriesRon and Michelle Ornstein

Yahrzeits for January	A. David Biatch	Pauline Krauss Prince	Abraham Weinberg
	Sophie Cohen	Emily Elias Schorsch	Ethel Strauss Weinberg
	Robert Davis	Morton L. Sloane	Johanna Barth Weinberg
	Morris Degen	Lamartine Gary Strauss	
	Marjorie Edelman	Augusta (Gussie H. Switzer	
	Milton Jerome Finkel	Solomon Switzer	
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January						1
2	3	4 Rabbi's office day	5	6 Torah study noon; Hebrew 7- 8:30	7	8
9 Women's Group @ 2:00 Film "Autumn Sun" @ 7:00	10	11 Rabbi's office day	12	13 Torah study noon Hebrew 7-8:30 pm	14 Shabbat Services at 7:30	15
16 Confirm Class @1:00 ; Youth Group @2:00 @THOI Lecture Series/ Life after Death 7-8:30 @ BE	17	18 Rabbi's office day	19 Book Club at 7:00 at Natasha Benenson's	20 Torah study noon Hebrew 7-8:30 pm	21	22
23 / 30	24 / 31	25 Tu B'Shevat Seder @ BE	26	27 Torah study noon Board Meet @ 7:00	28 Youth Group Led Services at 7:30 – Tu B'Shevat	29

Jan 4	Rabbi's office day 10 am – 5 pm
Jan 6	Rabbi's office day 11 am – 7 pm; Torah study at noon; everyone is welcome! Hebrew 7-8:30 pm
Jan 9	Women's Group meeting at 2:00; Film Series: "Autumn Sun" at 7:00 pm
Jan 11	Rabbi's office day 10 am – 5 pm
Jan 13	Rabbi's office day 11 am – 7 pm; Torah study at noon; everyone is welcome! Hebrew 7-8:30 pm
Jan 14	Shabbat Services at 7:30 Shirley & Rafael Brand 949-0529 and Sam Witt 943-5581 hosts
Jan 16	Confirmation Class at 1:00; Youth Group at 2:00 at THOI social hall; Lecture Series: Life after Death @ Beth El, Harrisonburg
Jan 18	Rabbi's office day 10 am – 5 pm
Jan 19	Book Group "White Out" discussion at 7:00 at Natasha Benenson's house
Jan 20	Rabbi's office day 11 am – 7 pm; Torah study at noon; everyone is welcome! Hebrew 7-8:30 pm
Jan 25	Rabbi's office day 10 am – 5 pm; Tu B'Shevat Seder in Harrisonburg
Jan 27	Rabbi's office day 11 am – 7 pm; Torah study at noon; everyone is welcome! Temple Board Meeting at 7:00 pm
Jan 28	Youth Group led Shabbat Services at 7:30; Tu B'Shevat observed; Chodrows 886-2252 and Kaufman-Goldsmiths 464-5196 hosts