

Temple Beth Torah

May 2020 Bulletin

**NEW ONLINE OPPORTUNITIES KEEP COMING IN!
PLEASE CHECK YOUR EMAIL REGULARLY SO YOU DON'T MISS A THING!**

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CELEBRATE SHABBAT EVERY FRIDAY NIGHT AT 7:00 PM WITH RABBI DAN GORDON, CANTOR VADIM TUNITSKY AND YOUR TBT FRIENDS

Fridays, May 8, 15, 22, 29 7:00 PM

Tuesday, May 5, 2020 12:30 PM - Coping in a Time of Coronavirus

Self Help Tips with Clinical Psychologist Dr. Susan Pollard

Send your questions for our speaker to Rabbi Dan at rabbi@tbthumble.org or Susan Pollard at spollard@tbthumble.org.

Wednesday, May 6, 2020 7:00 PM - Story time with Rabbi Dan

Acceptable for all ages. Wind down from your day with special stories from Rabbi Dan Gordon.

Saturday, May 9, 2020 5:00 PM - Special Mother's Day Weekend Celebration: Havdallah Service and Concert for the Entire Family

Our Special Guest Performer is Nashville's Rising Star Ellie Flier



The spirit and purity of Ellie's voice have moved audiences since she was a child. Now an inspiring performer, cantorial soloist, and song leader based in Nashville, she has found her passion and purpose in writing Jewish music. Listeners can't help but feel a connection to her songs, whether calling for social justice or celebrating the Joy of Judaism. The songs on her latest album, Pray for Open Eyes, are melodic, catchy and ideal for soloists, song leaders, or congregations. From California to Tennessee and around the globe, Ellie's original songs and poetic interpretations of traditional prayers bring a vibrant new voice that will inspire every heart.

For a taste of Ellie, check out her YouTube video:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/ellieflier>

Sunday May 10, Jewish Family Services presents Cantor Vadim Tunitsky in Concert – 1:00 PM

Cantor Tunitsky will be presenting an online concert for Mother's Day called Songs of Inspiration, Part 2. To view it, go to the Facebook page for Jewish Family Service of Houston Sunday, May 10 at 1:00PM. It will also be recorded for future viewing.

Tuesday May 12, 12:00 PM LUNCH AND LEARN with Rabbi Dan

Nourishment for the Body, Mind and Soul

Rabbi Dan Gordon facilitates a relaxed discussion on a variety of topics, including mitzvot, Torah, holidays, current events and Jewish Practices. Each meeting is a different topic and everyone gets a chance to participate. Enjoy your own lunch, and get ready to nourish both your mind and your body! You will receive an email update regarding how to log on with the zoom meeting link.

Sundays at 10:00 AM - ADULT EDUCATION - TORCH CLASS,

TORCH Rabbi Yaakov Wolbe leads a discussion of **Pirke Avot** (Ethics of the Fathers). All meetings will be through zoom. Below is the link to Zoom. Any questions please contact Dan Kullman at dkullman@tbthumble.org.

Join Zoom Meeting

Sundays at 11:30 AM - ADULT EDUCATION - BOOK DISCUSSION,

Welcome to an open discussion of our next book, Holy Rascals by Rabbi Rami Shapiro. Please contact Susan Pollard if you are interested in joining the discussion at spollard@tbthumble.org. The Book discussion group will be meeting through zoom.

Save the Date!

Sunday, May 17 1:00 PM ZOOM Gali Gali

A Musical Tribute to Learning with Cantor Vadim Tunitsky and Rabbi Dan Gordon Honoring our Students and Teachers.

More information and zoom links to follow.

Have a suggestion for a Zoom program for TBT? Please send your ideas to admin@tbthumble.org."

RABBI'S MESSAGE

Four Questions for the Mystery ba-Midbar

Ba-Midbar is the Hebrew name for the fourth book of the Torah. Literally, it means “in the dessert” and can also be translated as “in the wilderness.” Among other things, this book of Torah chronicles the journey of the Israelites along a mysterious path that took us from *Mitzrayim*/Egypt (also translated as “a narrow place”) to our eventual landing in the Promised Land. In many ways, we ARE on a mysterious journey today.

During our time in Egypt, all the Hebrew people suffered as slaves. Some probably suffered more than others. Some had tasks that were harder or masters who were more oppressive. Others may have had other difficulties, such as lack of strength or tolerance, that made the work even harder. Some may have suffered from illnesses or contracted illnesses and injuries due to their labors that made the work unbearable. And presumably, some may have experienced overseers who were more compassionate; these Hebrews may not have been beaten as severely, but they certainly were not free.

After being freed into the wilderness we struggled with a difficult journey and the rigors of nomadic living. It was a challenge to find adequate food and water and I imagine that the social dynamics of living in temporary encampments must have been very unsettling to say the least. With all these challenges, I imagine the most difficult aspect must have been the uncertainty. Can any of us imagine the questions going through the minds of our ancestors? So, as we are used to in the Passover Seder, I imagine there might have been Four Questions from our time in the dessert:

- 1) *How much longer?*
- 2) *Will there be enough food and other essentials for survival?*
- 3) *Do our leaders know what they're doing?*
- 4) *Will the “Promised Land” prove to be a better life than we had in Egypt?*

Regardless of how they experienced enslavement, every Hebrew person's life was changed by participating in the Exodus. Their world changed.

Our world has also changed. It's not nearly as dramatic as the Exodus, but the change is significant. Some lives have been affected minimally; others more extensively. Each of us is adjusting to a new way of living, new ways of shopping, worshipping, gathering and communicating. During this quarantine, some can spend more time with family. Others must be distanced from family. Households may become more crowded, leading to tensions; or less crowded leading to loneliness. Some people are enjoying a simpler life; others are going stir crazy for lack of connection. For some, our only connection to Coronavirus is watching the news and changing our lifestyle. Others have had a more personal, scary connection by either becoming sick or having someone close to them become sick. There have been deaths. There have been funerals in which mourners could not attend. There have been *simchas* – births, weddings, bar/bat mitzvahs, etc. that could not be celebrated in the ways that were anticipated when first scheduled.

The mystery is difficult. Four more questions:

- 1) *How long will **this** last?*
- 2) *How safe are we?*
- 3) *What will happen with our personal and collective economy?*
- 4) *How will life be the same or different in the future?*

G-D willing, we will soon be face-to-face before long. Moving forward, we can recognize the importance of learning from the experience. We are learning the challenges of staying connected while living apart. Just as the Israelites began to rebuild after their journey in the wilderness, we will continue our own communities by remembering to cherish every day, every person and every opportunity to be together.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Dan Gordon

TORAH PORTIONS for May 2020

Compiled by Rabbi Dan Gordon

May 1-2, 2020 Acharay Mot/Kedoshim (Double Portion), Leviticus 16:1-20:27

Following the death of Aaron's sons for apparently being disrespectful in the presence of the Sacred, G-d warns about the importance of how the Priests enter the "Holy of Holies" – the Ark of the Covenant. While the Temple no longer exists, we can take these lessons to examine our state of mind and being when we prepare to take on sacred tasks. Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is talked about in this section, including the practice of the "scapegoat" to run away with OUR transgressions. Today, our lesson is that we cannot run away from our actions, nor blame someone else, but we must accept responsibility and take appropriate action.

Kedoshim is the "Holiness Code." It includes a list of sexual prohibitions, primarily those related to incest. Continuing with the Holiness Code, Kedoshim begins with "You shall be holy, because I, the LORD your G-d, am holy." Most of these regulations are related to morality, including fair business practices and treating others with kindness. It repeats these themes multiple times, such as "Love your neighbor as yourself" and "Treat the stranger as one who resides with you, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." This portion reminds us that kindness to others is not merely a nice thing to do, but a sacred commandment from G-d.

May 8-9, 2020 Emor, Leviticus 21:1-24:23

Emor begins with instructions for the priests, who were considered separate from others. Priests could not have any blemishes and had to refrain from any activity that could potentially contaminate their purity. Several rituals are described, including setting aside a portion of "cake" as a burnt offering. In modern times, this burnt offering is still practiced by many who bake challah. We are also given instructions for harvesting our fields. We are to leave the corners for poor people to be able to glean what they need without the embarrassment of having to ask.

May 15-16, 2020 Behar/Bechukotai (Double Portion), Leviticus 25:1-27:29

Just as people and animals must observe a Sabbath every seven days, the land must have a Sabbath every seven years. The land will produce enough in the sixth year to provide for the seventh, so no harvesting shall take place. In the fiftieth year, on Yom Kippur, a jubilee is celebrated. Debts are reduced and slaves are freed. The Torah portion ends with a reminder of the prohibitions of idolatry and the obligation to observe the weekly Sabbath. This reminds us that freedom always comes with responsibility, and the Jubilee year is no exception.

In *Bechukotai*, G-d promises that there will be great rewards for following the proper path of the commandments. Not only will the rain come at the proper times and produce our necessary food, but we will also live without fear of enemies. G-d will remember the promises made to Jacob, Isaac and to Abraham (curiously listed here in reverse order) to help us maintain our homeland. We're also commanded to tithe, donating ten percent of all we gain, realizing that all our gifts come from G-d.

May 22-23, 2020 Ba-Midbar, Numbers 1:1-4:20

At the beginning of the Book of Numbers, Moses is instructed to take a census of the entire Israelite nation. Each of the tribes is listed with their descendants, and a number is assigned to each. Each tribe is given specific tasks. Aaron and his sons prepare the sacred objects and curtains connected to the Ark of the Covenant, where the tablets of the Ten Commandments are carried throughout the desert.

May 29-30, 2020 Shavuot – Commemorates Receiving 10 Commandments at Sinai

Shavuot (which means "weeks") comes exactly seven weeks after Passover. It commemorates when we received the 10 Commandments at Mount Sinai. It is one of three holidays in which ancient Jews made a pilgrimage to the sacred Temple in Jerusalem for special offerings. The holiday is traditionally celebrated with all night learning and eating dairy foods. Dairy is to remind us of our infancy as a people when we received the Law.

SIMCHAS IN MAY:

Birthdays

1 Vicky Aizenberg
1 Susan Pollard
1 Adam Waxman
2 Tony Curtis
5 Leslie Witkov
6 Caleb Brawn
8 Allan Carroll
8 Sydney Baur
11 Richard Shuman
11 Cameron Miller
22 Sara Bleiberg
22 Brandon Curtis
22 Emmanuel Miller
24 Zachary Bleiberg
25 Andrea Miller
25 Stephen Levy
27 Guillermo Velasquez
29 JQ Delap
31 Hiedi Bassett

Anniversaries

15 Jonathan and Sarah Couch
16 Vitaly and LiJuan Aizenberg
17 Tom and Iris Graf
17 Mel ad Ruth Spiel
18 Dan and Shawna Kullman
19 Cameron and Sarah Miller
21 Greg and Mindy LaCour
23 Jim and Susan Meinholz
27 Bruce and Susan Pollard
29 Michael and Susan Cahn

Yahrzeits in May:

The following names will be read each week during May to acknowledge those who have passed away who were connected with our community. If there are mistakes or omissions, please e-mail the temple at admin@tbthumble.org or leave a message at 281-446-5611.

Tommy Mounger, Riva Kremer, Ruth Gerhardt, Edythe Levy, David Auerbach, Beverly Litt, Evelyn Lovitt, David Sayovitz, Lester Nussbaum Sr., Victor Rosen, Jolan Halpern, Morton Wallack, Irwin Gotfried, Philip Salkin, David Rosenberg, William L Denbina, Benjamin Hirsch, Alice Dunnam, Spurgeon Dunnam, Cliff Thomas Smith, Ernest Graf, Irving Biegel, Robert Kharasch, William Hulland, Sadie Nussbaum, Harold J. Gordon

DONATIONS

GENERAL FUND –

Norm and Marsha Weiss - for Security

Social Action – Meals for FamilyTime

Greg and Mindy LaCour

Ken and Bernice Troxclair

David and Debye Lurie

RABBI DISCRETIONARY FUND –

Dale Vine

BURT LEVY MEMORIAL LIBRARY FUND -

Rhoda Dubin – In Honor of Iris Kelley and all her hard work in the Library

TBT Donate a Brick Campaign:

A wonderful way to honor a birth, marriage, or special occasion as well as remember someone special. Please visit the website at www.tbthumble.org to download the form.

AMAZON SMILE

Shop on amazon and give tzedakah to TBT. Type this web site www.smile.amazon.com and log into your amazon account and choose TBT (Temple Beth Torah) and a percentage of your shopping will go to TBT.

KROGER card to support TBT

Kroger has recently upgraded their Community Rewards system and as a result TBT has a new account number- VE980. Please use this new number when linking your Kroger card to TBT so we can receive a percentage of your Kroger purchases. It's an easy way to help TBT earn some money. New members can enroll by searching for either VE980 or Temple Beth Torah. If you are a Kroger shopper, please link your Kroger card to TBT at no cost to you.

DONATIONS

Making a donation to TBT is a perfect way to honor a joyous occasion, like a birthday, anniversary, wedding/engagement, new home, job change, or retirement. It is also appropriate to honor someone who has passed away with a donation in his/her memory at the time of the passing or on the yahrtzeit (anniversary) of the passing. All donations to Temple Beth Torah are tax deductible. You can choose where you would like your donation to be applied.

GENERAL FUND

Any donation that is not specified to another specific fund goes to the General Fund, which helps maintain the operating budget of the temple. Building expenses, insurance, staff salaries and all program expenses that are not underwritten come out of the General Fund, as well as support for the Religious School.

RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

This separate tzedakah fund enables the rabbi to make confidential contributions to help individuals and causes that may be in crisis. The rabbi may also use this fund to help support unbudgeted programs that will benefit the temple or community.

BURT LEVY MEMORIAL LIBRARY FUND

This fund maintains the library and helps purchase new books. Our library, located in the back of the sanctuary, is named after TBT's founding president, Burt Levy, who was a major inspiration in starting Temple Beth Torah.

TRACY TOBIN JOHNSON MEMORIAL EDUCATION FUND

This fund provides scholarships to Jewish summer camps for children and for educational conferences for teachers. It also helps support special educational programs that are not in the general budget. The fund honors Tracy Tobin Johnson, who was an active TBT member, volunteer and teacher before passing away at a young age.

TOM THERIOT MEMORIAL PROGRAM FUND

This fund supports special dynamic programs, often related to the arts. It is named after Tom Theriot, a lover of the arts, who was a constant presence at TBT and supported every cause.

DONATIONS NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

You can now make donations online for any fund donation except for dues payments. Now there is an easy way to honor the memory of loved ones or acknowledge a joyous occasion by giving tzedakah. Tell your friends and family to visit our newly named website, www.tbthumble.org, to make use of this mitzvah.