

RSVP for the Community Hanukkah

Celebration at the Temple

Temple Israel Bulletin

Volume LXXXII

Bulletin No. 4

December 2022

Kislev / Tevet 5783

The event will be Dec. 19 — Bring your menorah & candles to fit (3 total for 2nd night) for the display!

Rabbi's Message

Shalom & greetings!

As I write this, we are approaching the secular Thanksgiving holiday, in the period between the High Holy Days and Hannukah. I include information covering the period from the last bulletin article through December.

There are many events during this time, including the midterm elections, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, Native American Heritage Day, Black Friday, Black Monday, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and World Human Rights Day, and many others. We also note Christmas and New Year's Day in view, and recall there are holidays for other faith traditions this time of year.

On the Jewish calendar, we note the Yahrzeit of Yitzhak Rabin on Nov. 4, the anniversary of Kristallnacht Nov. 9-10, Rosh Chodesh for Kislev Nov. 24-25, the Nov. 30 anniversary of the start of the Israeli War of Independence in 1947, Hannukah (Kislev 25 - Tevet 2 — beginning the evening of Dec. 18 through sundown Dec. 26), and Rosh Chodesh Tevet on Dec. 25.

Calendar Events

This is a rather slow period on the Jewish calendar. Other than Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh, there is no significant holiday until we arrive at Hanukkah. Please note that the joint Temple-

Synagogue Hanukkah dinner will be held at 5:30 PM on Monday, Dec. 19. The RSVP deadline is Dec. 14. Please contact Shelly Winowich on her cell phone or by email — both contacts are in your Sisterhood yearbook. Please note that reservations can be accepted only for members of Temple Israel or B'nai Jacob Synagogue.

By no means does this mean we are not active: There will be many activities not necessarily related to holidays. I invite you to participate in our services, classes, events, programs, and meetings!

Highlight Summary Since the Last Bulletin

The following is a list of significant events, from my perspective:

Weekly Shabbat services, with Torah and special events included

Review of the High Holiday services with the Ritual Committee

Torah Study, on Dec. 4 and Jan. 8

Jewish Literature, on Dec. 11 and Jan. 8

A Bissell Torah — for now, focusing on the Haftarot and Prophets

Two Charleston Rabbis, on Dec. 2 and Jan. 4

WV Council of Churches: I participated in the [Interfaith Webinar on Repentance, Reparation, and Reconciliation, and the follow-up to the Dismantling Racism Task Force](#).

[WV Faith Table](#): I'm on the Executive Committee and the Communications Committee.

WV OLLI Course I taught a two-session course in November, "A Peck of Poetries 2: Yehudah Amichai"

I was invited to deliver the invocation at the ceremony following the annual American Legion Veterans Day parade

Charleston Death Café, on Dec. 25

Havdalah services are scheduled for Dec. 10, Feb. 25 and May 6

Tzedakah (Charity)

Please see p. 5 for a list of Sojourner's Shelter needs for the upcoming holiday season. Other charities need help during this time as well.

Thoughts, Blessings, & Salutations

With the conclusion of Simchat Torah in mid-October, we entered anew the Torah reading cycle, this time in the first year of the triennial reading pattern. This means that we started the Torah from the very beginning, at chapter 1 of Bereshit/Genesis, and moving sequentially through the readings, week to week. Upcoming Shabbat readings include Chayei Sarah, Toldot, Vayeitzei, Vayishlach, Vayeshev, Miketz, Vayigash, and Vayechi on Jan. 7, concluding the Book of Genesis, then beginning Shemot/

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Shabbat worship services & Torah study

Religious services are both in-person and online (Zoom and Facebook)

Torah study sessions are online only (Zoom)

Friday, Dec. 2	5:30 PM	Shabbat service, followed by a covered dish dinner, hosted by Sisterhood
Sunday, Dec. 4	10:30 AM	Torah Study, Gen. 32:4-36:43, online ONLY
Friday, Dec. 9	5:30 PM	Shabbat service with Torah reading, Parashah Vayishlach
Saturday, Dec. 10	7:00 PM	Havdalah service
Friday, Dec. 16	5:30 PM	Shabbat service
Friday, Dec. 23	5:30 PM	Shabbat service
Friday, Dec. 30	5:30 PM	Shabbat service
Friday, Jan. 6	5:30 PM	Shabbat service, followed by a covered dish dinner, hosted by Sisterhood
Sunday, Jan. 8	10:30 AM	Torah Study, Ex 1:1-6:1, online ONLY

Message from the Temple president

Dear Members of the Temple Israel Community,

Despite the many challenges we have faced in the past two and a half years, the members of our congregation have grown stronger together. We reopened our Temple and committed ourselves to making our congregation a community of belonging, worship, fellowship, healing, education, and fun!

The Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) leads the largest Jewish movement in North America, and being a part of the URJ places our congregation within a committed, progressive network that provides vision and voice to build strong communities that, together, transform the way people connect to Judaism, and change the world. "Our Judaism is for everyone." – Rabbi Rick Jacobs, URJ President

The URJ has played a vital role in the resurgence of purpose. The collective action of the URJ has accomplished things that none of us could do alone. Our URJ has worked with the Religious Action

Center of Reform Judaism, and with Congregations from across the country, to advance justice and compassion throughout the world – especially now – as we urgently defend reproductive rights and voting rights. As Reform Jews, we work together to protect the most vulnerable among us and to connect with our fellow citizens.

Learn how to participate in the Reform Jewish Movement's 2022 Campaign to protect, expand, and strengthen democracy. Visit the Religious Action Center's website

<https://rac.org/take-action/every-voice-every-vote/subscribe-for-updates>

Please don't forget about our Jewish Community Hanukkah Dinner on Monday, Dec. 19 at Temple Israel. Please see the box on this page for details.

I look forward to seeing everyone. Please contact me at fot51@aol.com if you have any questions or concerns.

Francine Thalheimer



RSVP by Dec. 14 for the Community Hanukkah Celebration at the Temple

Temple members: if you haven't yet made your reservation for the joint Temple-Synagogue Hanukkah Dinner on Monday, Dec. 19, please do that no later than Dec. 14.

RSVPs must be called in ONLY to event co-chair Shelly Winowich, NOT the Temple office.

Attendance is limited to members of Temple Israel and B'nai Jacob Synagogue.

Please let the Temple office know if you're moving, or if you have new contact info such as new email address or phone number, or if you've dropped your landline.

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Francine Thalheimer, *President*
Joseph M. Blair, *Rabbi*

Rabbis Emeriti
Rabbi James D. Cohn, Z"L
Israel B. Koller, Z"L

December Yahrzeits—names are read at the Shabbat service prior to the Yahrzeit date

December 2nd

Dave Kahn Jr.	Dec. 3
Mary Beth Chadwick	Dec. 4
Minnie Elgart	Dec. 4
Fran Fahey	Dec. 4
Frances B. Kay	Dec. 4
Edward B. Cohen	Dec. 5
Dr. Leonard M. Eckmann	Dec. 5
Aaron Morton Kaye	Dec. 5
Goldie Mendelsohn	Dec. 5
Lavalie Bixby Hoss	Dec. 6
Howard J. Klapper	Dec. 6
Frederick Barkus	Dec. 7
Marcus Lopin	Dec. 7
Albert Thalheimer Jr.	Dec. 7
Selma Widman	Dec. 7
Frederic J. Glazer	Dec. 8
Mary Schuchat	Dec. 8
Jean Loewenstein Lazarus	Dec. 9

December 9th

Eloise Ella Atkinson Carrol	Dec. 10
Hershel R. Hark	Dec. 10
Emma Rae Jones	Dec. 10
Abbon Kamons	Dec. 10
Jo Marshuetz	Dec. 10
Maxwell Lewis Broverman	Dec. 11
Jess Cohn	Dec. 11
Minna Gersman	Dec. 11
Bernard Mordecai Weinstein	Dec. 11
Anna Klein Broida	Dec. 12
Sheila Ross	Dec. 12
Patricia Logan	Dec. 13
Lee Stern	Dec. 13

Esther Darling Weingarden	Dec. 13
Evelyn Forman	Dec. 15
Marion Goldenberg	Dec. 15
Severna "Cissie" Herman	Dec. 15
Cecile Rossin	Dec. 15
Larry Zakin	Dec. 15
Hugh M. Jones Jr.	Dec. 16

December 16th

B. Paul Broida	Dec. 17
Sara Goldhirsh Dash	Dec. 17
Teresa Roberts Davis	Dec. 17
Louis Engelman	Dec. 17
Manuel Pickus	Dec. 17
Sidney Robbins	Dec. 17
Louis Schuchat	Dec. 17
Avraham Angel	Dec. 18
Helen Baer	Dec. 18
Regina Goldberger	Dec. 18
Milton Cohen	Dec. 19
Jeanette Green	Dec. 19
Robert Silverstein Sr.	Dec. 19
Esther "Mickey" Baer	Dec. 20
Manuel Cremer	Dec. 21
Sanford "Sandy" Darling	Dec. 21
Samuel Rosen	Dec. 21
Hyman Bernstein	Dec. 22
Goldie Cohen	Dec. 22

December 23rd

Naomi Jean Bright	Dec. 24
Susan Fretwell	Dec. 24
Louis Levey	Dec. 24
Zelda Plotkin	Dec. 24

Kate Srulovitz	Dec. 24
David Selinger	Dec. 25
Kaethe Wells	Dec. 25
Beatrice H. Kleeman	Dec. 26
Francis Roseblatt	Dec. 27
Edward Doernberg	Dec. 28
Paul Joseph Kaufman	Dec. 28
Rose Jean Kaufman	Dec. 28
Steven Miles Kaufman	Dec. 28
Eva Waisburd	Dec. 28
Fanny Wertheim	Dec. 28
Nathan Forb	Dec. 29
Dorothy Allen	Dec. 30
George Badner	Dec. 30
Suzie Greenwald Chaskin	Dec. 30
Rudolph Grinberg	Dec. 30

December 30th

Max Greenstein	Dec. 31
Sydney Joseph Kaufman	Dec. 31
David Sanger	Dec. 31
Otto Spiegler	Dec. 31
Charles H. Levine	Jan. 1
Sarah Rebecca Orelowitz	Jan. 1
Albert Reinfeld	Jan. 1
Irma Lowenthal Swarts	Jan. 2
Edwin Yunker	Jan. 2
Samuel Beren	Jan. 4
David Goldenberg	Jan. 4
Coleman Jacobs	Jan. 4
Sidney Marks	Jan. 4
Goldie Remer	Jan. 4
Dorothy Loeb	Jan. 5
Fedor Poppelsdorf	Jan. 5
David Cremer	Jan. 6
Helene Esler	Jan. 6
Jean T. Goldman	Jan. 6
Anna Sloman	Jan. 6

December at a Glance

This is a projected calendar of events; it may be incomplete at press time or could change after publication. Worship services are both in-person and online/virtual. All meetings, classes, programs, and events are both in-person and online unless otherwise announced. Masking is requested; full vaccination is required to attend in person. If you aren't receiving emails from Rabbi Blair about these online sessions, please let him know.

Thursday, Dec. 1 at 4:15 PM – A Bissell Torah, online ONLY

Friday, Dec. 2 at 5:30 PM – Shabbat service; Covered Dish Dinner to follow

Sunday, Dec. 4 at 10:30 AM – Torah Study, Gen. 32:4-36:43, online ONLY

Wednesday, Dec. 7 at 6:15 PM – Two Charleston Rabbis Discussion, online ONLY

Thursday, Dec. 8 at 4:15 PM – A Bissell Torah, online ONLY

Friday, Dec. 9 at 5:30 PM – Shabbat service with Torah reading, Parashah Vayishlach

Saturday, Dec. 10 at 7 PM – Havdalah

Sunday, Dec. 11 at 11 AM – Sisterhood board and general membership meeting, program and luncheon (see p. 5 for details)

Sunday, Dec. 11 at 4:15 PM – Jewish Literature, online ONLY

Monday, Dec. 12 at 10 AM – Zoom Leadership check-in, online ONLY

Tuesday, Dec. 13 at 5:30 PM – Temple Israel board of trustees meeting

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In the Congregation & Community

[This includes only those who have approved having their name included.]

Refuah Shelemah/Mi Sheberach (Healing & Wholeness/Blessings) to those who have been included in recent Mi Sheberach lists at services, and wishes for continued good health for those who are on the mend or have returned to full health. This list includes those on our list during the time since the last bulletin article who agreed to have their name listed:

Jonathan Freedman
Karl Gattlieb
Jack Goldfarb
Dona Hall
Margie Hutt
Mel Hutt
Dorothy Kurland
Laura Malloy
Julie Margolis and family
Gary Markham
Debbie Matthews
Carolyn Ostand
Hedy Poppelsdorf
Mark Schaul
The Sebell, Sklar, and Heffron families
The Shapiro and Shumofsky families
Barbara Braun Tweddle
Natalie Winowich
Nick Winowich
Rachel Leah bat Shayna Chaya veShmuel

All who are impacted by the Pandemic or other illnesses

All affected by natural or man-made disasters or violence

All others in need of prayers for healing and wholeness

Mazal Tov (Congratulations):

[Please tell us about these events so we can acknowledge them as appropriate.]

To those who reached or will reach milestones in the past month or this one, and to all who had any birthday or anniversary or other life event worth celebrating! Among those we know who are/were to be acknowledged we include:

November: Barbara Braun, Roger Forman, Jennifer Stern, Mark Schaul, Natalie Winowich (MILESTONE), Betty Stern (MILESTONE), Jill Epstein, Gregg Stern, Stephen Meyer, Anne Fishkin, Kim Aaron

December: Ellie Schaul, Beth Emrick, Steve Jubelirer (MILESTONE), Barbara Braun & Allan Tweddle, Cookie Glasser, Robert Hess, David Feibelman, Melissa Cadle (MILESTONE), Jackie Artz, Laura & Jace Goins, Ellyn & Ed Goldberg, Marion Baer, Arla Ralston & Roger Forman, Phyllis & Harvey Sherman (MILESTONE), Joy Kleeman

January: Russel Emrick, Caroline Ostand, Ken Silverstein, Elizabeth Kantor-Bright, David Kushner, David Winowich, Ellyn Goldberg (MILESTONE), Raya Redmond, Richard Holicker, Tiana Hall, Hedy Poppelsdorf, Richard Gottlieb, David Shapiro, Laura Goins, Beth Winter (MILESTONE)

Other Events:

Mazal tov to Dona Hall on her retirement effective October 28th, 2022!

Belated Mazal tov to Marsha Albert on the birth of her great-grandson, Kai Pushkin!

If you have a milestone event of any kind, or any birthday, anniversary, or life event that is worthy of celebration, please let us acknowledge and celebrate it with you! Tell the Rabbi about it.

December at a Glance, continued



(Continued from page 3)

Thursday, Dec. 15 at 4:15 PM – A Bissell Torah, online ONLY

Friday, Dec. 16 at 5:30 PM – Shabbat service

Monday, Dec. 19 at 5 PM – Jewish Community Hannukah Dinner (RSVP to Shelly Winowich deadline Dec. 14; in-person ONLY)

Wednesday, Dec. 21 at 6 PM – Leora May Book Club, in-person ONLY, location TBA

Thursday, Dec. 22 at 4:15 PM – A Bissell Torah, online ONLY

Friday, Dec. 23 at 5:30 PM - Shabbat service

Sunday, Dec. 25 at 7 PM – Charleston Death Café, online ONLY (tentative)

Monday, Dec. 26—all day—legal holiday

Thursday, Dec. 29 at 4:15 PM – A Bissell Torah, online ONLY

Friday, Dec. 30 at 5:30 PM – Shabbat service

Next month

Monday, Jan. 2—all day—legal holiday

Wednesday, Jan. 4 at 6:15 PM – Two Charleston Rabbis, online ONLY

Thursday, Jan. 5 at 4:15 PM – A Bissell Torah, online ONLY

Friday, Jan. 6 at 5:30 PM – Shabbat service; Covered Dish Dinner to follow

Sunday, Jan. 8 at 10:30 AM – Torah Study, Ex 1:1-6:1, online ONLY

Sunday, Jan. 8 at 4:15 PM – Jewish Literature, online ONLY

Sisterhood Message

“Showing up” is key to a healthy, vibrant Jewish life — walk through our beautiful doors for spirit-raising and yummy food

Traveling recently in Hungary, Austria and Germany was eye-opening for me, in that, what used to be thriving Jewish communities have become mostly memorials to the dead. This seems morbid, yet it is easy to see that, though there are a few synagogues, Jewish museums, and even a Jewish community center (in Munich), it seems these places are really only tourist attractions. The days of a healthy, vibrant Jewish life is a thing of the past. And European Jewish-flavor and -culture mainly exists in musicals such as *Fiddler on the Roof*, or the new Broadway play by Sir Tom Stoppard, *Leopoldstadt*.

These observations touched my soul and saddened me instantly, when comparing them to my childhood and growing up within an active Jewish community. “Good old days” sort of applies, but then reality sets in. Keeping our faith is important, but somewhat difficult when considering the dwindling and aging population of Jews.

We in Charleston, W.Va. are more fortunate than most with our two thriving Jewish congregations, thanks to our leadership, diligence and the largest population of Jews in the state.

My message at this time includes a big invitation to come back inside our elegant facility. Attend the many planned events and offerings. Get involved in the worship services and many activities. Let’s show up and congregate.

Sojourner’s needs for the holidays

Sojourner’s Shelter provides daily services for homeless women and families, currently serving around 60 clients.

Over the coming holidays while schools aren’t in session, that number will include about 15 children who will be “home” for all three meals and three snacks a day.

So, Sojourner’s will need extra fruit juice, juice boxes, fruit, cereal, raisins, yogurt and other healthy snacks to keep the kids content during the days they are out of school. Please think of their special needs over the holiday break! Thank you for caring for them!

Caroline Ostand

I fail to be discouraged and decline blaming everything on the Pandemic or the fear factor.



*Jewish Museum Vienna:
illustrating the difference
between “then and there”
and “here and now.”*

Photo by Marsha Albert

Showing up guarantees the reward of heartwarming music, spirit raising services and sermons, and yummy food always. What could be a better invitation? Just walk through our beautiful doors.

Please note that the date of our upcoming Sisterhood combined board and general meeting has been changed to Sunday, Dec. 11 at 11 AM. An interesting program (please see the article on this page) and luncheon will be included. Then on Monday, Dec. 19, we are again having a joint Hanukkah dinner/gathering with B’nai Jacob Synagogue here at the Temple (reservations are due by Dec. 14; please call Shelly Winowich). Let’s celebrate this joyous holiday together. Come light your menorahs and sing “The Dreidel Song.”

*Marsha Albert, Sisterhood
President*

Special Sisterhood program Dec. 11

Sisterhood is excited to announce an informative and heartwarming program for our Dec. 11 board and general membership meeting (please note the change in date from the Sisterhood yearbook calendar). Mary White, CEO of the Children’s Home Society of West Virginia, will join us in-person at 11:45 AM – following the meeting, which begins at 11 – to share the Society’s mission.

If you are unable to be with us in person, the program, along with the meeting, will also be available on Zoom.

Mary will address adoption, foster care, emergency child shelter care, in-home and in-community services that the Society provides to more than 13,000 children and their families at 13 primary locations throughout the state. We will learn about local, county, state and national policies that affect these West Virginia children, as well as the advocacy services the Society provides their behalf.

A lovely luncheon will be offered after the program, and we hope you will mark your calendars to attend this engaging Sisterhood event in person.

Cookie Glasser, Program Chair



Our Thoughtful Contributors



Photo by Greg Proctor

Thanks for making Shabbat even more special

Nov. 4—Thanks to Ina Angel for providing the Oneg Shabbat reception after the service

Nov. 11—Thanks to Dona Hall for giving the flowers for the Bimah



Checks to Sisterhood funds should be made payable to Temple Israel Sisterhood.

Checks to the Library Fund, Rabbi's Discretionary Fund, Social Action Fund, or Unrestricted Fund should be made payable to Temple Israel.

Please write separate checks when making contributions to more than one fund or when paying membership dues.

There will be a Shabbat Covered Dish Dinner following the service on Dec. 2nd. Please join us and bring a dish to share—the Temple will supply roast chicken—or just bring yourself. Join us for a wonderful Friday night with friends and family. Please contact Fran Thalheimer for more info.



Tzedakah (Charity)

I keep saying it, but it is always true. Please be generous – needs locally, nationally, and around the world continue to run very high in light of the many issues, including natural and man-made disasters, limitations on immigration, and the effects of war, oppression, and violence that are seen widely.

Needs are extreme, both domestically in the United States and overseas. Please be generous and do what you can, wherever you can.

Please remember the many Tzedakah opportunities that we have supported over the years, including, nationally, Mazon, Jewish National Fund, and locally, Federated Jewish Charities of Charleston, Covenant House, and Manna Meal.

Tzedakah is among the highest of all mitzvot possible; may your heart be moved to give a little bit more than you otherwise might, may your generosity be a blessing for those who receive it, and may that blessing reflect back onto you and your loved ones.

Rabbi Blair

Ways to stay in touch at the Temple

As always, I want to serve you in as many ways and as well as it is possible. Please be in touch with me (the rabbi – see below for my email and phone number), or alternatively, the Greg in the office (templeisraelwv@gmail.com, or (304) 342-5852, the house coordinator, David McAfee at templeisraelhouse@yahoo.com

Members of the board of trustees and committee members welcome hearing about your needs, suggestions, concerns, or questions.

You are also invited to attend the monthly Zoom Leadership Check-ins as another forum where you can talk to leadership and other members.

If you feel you would like to talk to me, have any pastoral

concerns, know of someone who needs pastoral or rabbinic support or assistance, have a suggestion to improve what we are doing, or a concern about our community, please feel free to call me (the rabbi) **on my cell phone** at (304) 989-4014, or email me at RabbiJoeB@gmail.com

I am available Sunday through Thursday much of the day, and Friday generally until 3 pm. I am in the building for at least part of most days and I read email and texts quite regularly (Shabbat and holidays excepted, when I try to avoid using devices that require me to type).

In an emergency, please phone me, and if you leave a message, please express the urgency of the call and the nature of the need in the message.

Rabbi Blair

Rabbi's Message, continued

(Continued from page 1)

Exodus the following week. We follow this pattern for important reasons: this concept of cycling, or return and review, is deeply embedded in Judaism – hence the rabbinic adage, “hafoch bah ve’hafoch bah, dkulah bah,” translated as “turn it, and turn it, for everything is within it” – in reference to the Torah, surely, but also true, it seems, for much else in life, and perhaps about life itself.

In fact, we live in the midst of repetitive patterns – sunrise and sunset; the movement of stars, sun and moon; the sequence of the weeks and months, the cycle of morning, afternoon, and evening prayer; the weekly celebration of Shabbat and the return of profane time; the prayers that we repeat and recite in services; and remembering those from our past through Yahrzeits and Yizkor at particular times.

I was reminded of one of these cycles again this week, and it caused me to think about this pattern of cycles and repetition:

I am sure you recall from the recent High Holydays the greeting that we offer each other is “Shanah Tovah”, or “good year.” This greeting is ripe with allusion and meaning, referencing the entire realm of cycles and patterns. Specifically, the term Shanah, which we most often translate as year, is the same root as in the word Shaynah, to sleep or slumber (something we do as part of our own cycle, the circadian rhythm). Vocalized as Shunah, it means to be changed, altered, or switched, and as Shinah it becomes the active form, meaning to change, alter, switch, and to make a difference!

When we write it as Me’shuneh, it carries the meanings of strange, unusual, weird, or incomprehensible – things that defy the pattern of the normal.

The form of Mish’neh is a deputy or agent.

We often refer to the Mish’nah,

meaning the material that repeats the “black letter law” derived from Torah, and serves as the seed of the Talmud (with the rest being the Gemarah, which explicates and ‘completes’ it, along with commentary, glosses, and references; based on this usage Mishnah also takes on the concepts of doctrine or theory).

Finally, when we vocalize it as Mish’neh, it contains the meanings of double or doubly, twice as much, two or more times (twice or more than the usual), and implies caution, importance, vigor, and repetition, as well as return and review – so coming to the concept of study by repetition – as in the Mishneh Torah – the review of Torah by Maimonides. This is how we come to think of the Mish’nah as the summation or review of the Torah, including additional understanding to the text by repeating and studying it.

Based on this root in the Hebrew language, we enter into the cycle of the year as we return to the beginning and repeat what has come before, following the pattern to create the annual cycle. The same is true for the biblical readings: we engage with the Torah sequentially, in the order of the text (excluding special readings for holidays), and continue week by week through the entire set of five books, at the conclusion of the last of which we return and repeat the cycle again the following year. [Reform, as well as most non-Orthodox communities, has also abbreviated the weekly reading in most cases, subdividing the parashah (or segment for that week) into three parts, and following a three year cycle, so that the first part is read in the first year, the second part in the second year, and the third part in the third year, stretching out the time it takes to complete a full reading of the entire text of the Torah over three years, but maintaining the same sequence and synchronizing with other communities and congregations.]

This embedded idea that we return and repeat the readings, studying them again, anew each year, and finding new

meaning and understandings in them, is at the heart of Judaism. The deeper and broader understanding fostered is the result of following the rabbinic adage – by our sacred engagement with the text time after time, we are truly turning it and turning it, continually finding new things in it. The Torah is not just a text – it is what might be termed an Ur-text; the original version: as in music, this is the original composition expressed as the composer intended. The text is then placed before the world, open to interpretation and understanding of the reader (or musician), which may modify slightly, or change significantly the message taken from that text by the reader/listener. Not only on the first reading/hearing, but in each encounter with it. In this way, the text becomes a living document, understood and appreciated by each reader/listener in their own way, with those readings/understandings also subject to change as that reader/listener re-encounters it, bringing new life experiences and different ways of engaging each time. Torah and life intertwine and reflect and change each other – and both change the reader/person involved with them.

My conclusion is that the system of repetition and review encompassed within Judaism affects us as the reader and the person unpacking the meaning of Torah and the text of our life. Cycles and patterns, repetition and review, return and reengagement; these are apparently essential tools for life as a Jew, and for living as a human being. The rabbis were right, and demonstrated deep understanding of how we function. May we all benefit from the cycles and patterns in which we are surrounded, and may we continually find blessings, meaning, and understanding in their midst.

B’virkat Shalom (with blessings of peace),

Joe

Rabbi Joe Blair

RabbiJoeB@gmail.com

(304) 989-4014

(my cell phone – please call this number to get in touch directly with me)

