

Starting off 2023 with a series of special services leading up to [Passover](#)

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Beginning Jan. 23rd, we entered a series of special Shabbatot, named by the special Haftarah read on that day.

The first one was [Shabbat Shirah](#), the sabbath of song, on which we read the Song by the Sea (Shirat Hayam) from Parashah Beshalach, which is attributed to Moses describing the miracles at the Reed Sea — Feb. 3-4 this year. This was also Refugee Shabbat, featuring a special guest, Lynn Clarke of West Virginia Interfaith Refugee Ministry, who gave the dvar Torah at Friday night service on Feb. 3. I hope you were able to join us, either in-person or online.

[Tu B'Shevat](#), the 15th day of the month of Shevat, known as the New Year for the Trees, our holiday marking creation and the environment, and fulfilling the mitzvah to allow a tree to develop a strong and healthy root system before commercially harvesting produce from it, was on Feb. 6 (we observed it in the [Shabbat service Feb. 3](#), along with Refugee Shabbat and Shabbat Shirah).

On [Feb. 17, we held another special Shabbat: Shabbat Shekalim](#), and the Torah reading was from [Parashah Mishpatim](#). In addition, this was Reproductive Rights Shabbat, including special readings and a guest to deliver the dvar Torah, Alannah Boyle of [NCJW, the National Council of Jewish Women](#).

Rosh Chodesh (the start of the new month) for Adar was February 21st and 22nd, getting us closed to the lead-up to Passover.

The Fast of Esther was on March 6 – this is an observance to remember the fast that Esther asked all the Jews to undertake with her as she prepared to risk going before the king without being summoned.

Then, the holiday of [Purim](#) itself was on March 7 (we observed it in the Shabbat service March 3 - this was also [Shabbat Zachor](#), the sabbath of remembrance, when we recall the evil that was intended by Amalek, connected by the Rabbis midrashically with Haman).

[Shabbat Parah, the sabbath of the red heifer](#), was March 10-11, and we read from Parashah Ki Tisa (Exodus 30:11-34:35; Numbers 19:1-22).

- Rabbi Joe Blair