

The Current

“The VOICE over many waters ...” Psalm 29

MAYIM RABIM

 מַיִם רַבִּים

 CONGREGATION



Celebrating Tu B'Shevat and Caring for our Planet



Our tradition teaches that shortly after the first human being was created, the Almighty instructed Adam to guard the world he was being given. “If you destroy this world,” he was told, “there is no one to come and set it right after you.” (Kohelet Rabbah 7:28) This Jewish teaching warns us not to ruin or devastate our world. Our planet is a delicate ecosystem that needs our continual care.

As I write this in the middle of December, there is much turmoil both locally and globally. And yet with all the darkness, there is a glimmer of hope with news from Paris of a climate accord to curb greenhouse gas emissions and prevent dangerous warming of the planet. Clearly the almost 200 nations who signed the pact recognize the need to avert an environmental disaster. While some are skeptical as to whether this accord goes far enough, others recognize that 196 nations embracing it is a victory for the planet.

How fitting that this historic environmental agreement takes place just prior to Tu B'Shevat, the Jewish New Year for the Trees. This year Tu B'Shevat begins the evening of Sunday, January 24th and continues through sunset on Monday, January 25th. While we have snow covering everything in Minnesota, in Israel at this time the first buds are appearing and spring is not far behind.

The name Tu B'Shevat is similar to the American July 4th in that the name of the holiday reflects the date of the holiday. The Hebrew letters tet and vav equal the number 15 and are not an actual word but the sound those two letters make when put together.

In ancient Israel, Tu B'Shevat was the legal date for determining the amount of fruit an orchard produced, not a holiday to be celebrated. In the Diaspora, it fell into obscurity. In the 1600's Jewish mystics in Israel reworked the holiday into a celebration that involved different types of fruit. The medieval kabbalists (mystics) developed a seder (ritual meal) for Tu B'Shevat that parallels our Passover observance, a version of which many still use. Verses about trees and the land are recited, songs of nature are sung, we bless God for the fruit of the trees which we then enjoy, and we drink four cups of wine: mixing white and red the color is changed from white to light red, half and half, and finally all red to symbolize the changing of the seasons.

In our time, Tu B'Shevat is a day that many have reclaimed for reflection on the importance of ecology and environmental conservation. With a day that has an ancient history but no religious observance attached to it, the holiday is ripe for opportunities. This most recent transformation has re-popularized Tu B'Shevat into a holiday of Jewish environmentalism -- a sort of Jewish Earth Day --because of its association with trees and, by extension, with nature.

Mayim Rabim will hold a Tu B'Shevat Seder on Friday, January 22 at 6:15 pm. Our focus this year will be on climate change. Please come and engage in a mindful celebration and exploration of our ongoing commitment to the earth with fruits and nuts and four cups of grape juice over a potluck dinner.

Rabbi Sharon Stiefel



Ritual and Program Schedule



*All events are held at 4401 York Avenue South
in Minneapolis (Friends Meeting House)
unless otherwise specified.*

Saturday January 9, 9:30 AM – Noon
**The Dance of the Individual and Community in Reconstructionist
Thinking: Shabbat Choreography**

Continental breakfast and study, followed by a story and a brief service.

Rabbi Jeffrey Schein will lead the study session. Using excerpts from the Kaplan diaries, we will explore the nature of Reconstructionist decision-making regarding technology in general and technology on Shabbat in particular. We will gain some insights from the experience of other Reconstructionist communities in New York and Cleveland. The goal will be to put into broader perspective the *k'lalim* (general principles) that might provide the foundation for any *peratim* (particular guidelines) adopted by the community.

*Note: There will **not** be a lunch following services.*

Tuesday January 12, 7-8:30 PM
Touched by an Angel, Study Session led by Rabbi Stiefel

What does Judaism say about angels? Who are they and do Jews believe in them? Come discover the rich and varied role angels play in the Jewish tradition and some modern insights into the relevance of angels today.

Friday, January 22, 6:15 – 8:00PM
Tu B'Shevat Seder and Potluck Dairy Vegetarian Shabbat Dinner



*Note that there will **not** be a Kabbalat Shabbat service this evening*

Tu B'Shevat, the Jewish New Year of the Trees, celebrates the time when the sap of the tree starts its ascent from the roots. Originated by 16th century mystics, this seder offers us an opportunity to join together for conversation and song as we engage in a mindful celebration of the earth with fruits, nuts and grape juice over a potluck dinner. This year's seder will focus on *Climate Change*. Challah, beverages, special fruits, nuts, and grape juices will be provided. Bring a vegetarian dairy dish to share if you can.



Ritual and Program Schedule



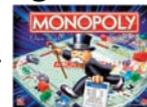
Saturday, January 23, 7 – 9 PM Annual Game Night



Please bring board games, card games, dice games, drawing games, games of skill, and/or games of chance. Any and all games and gamers of all ages are welcome!



Expect light refreshments and friendly competition.



Saturday, January 30, 5:00 – 7:00 PM Havdalah

In Jewish tradition, Shabbat ends with Havdalah, a beautiful sensory-filled ritual helping us cherish and remember the joy of Shabbat as we return to our daily lives. Join us to bid farewell to Shabbat together with songs, music, conversation and community.

...and in February

Friday February 5, 6:15 – 7:30 PM Kabbalat Shabbat Service

Services led by Rabbi Stiefel and congregants.
A dairy vegetarian potluck Shabbat dinner follows services.

Saturday February 20, 9:30 AM – Noon Shabbat Morning Service

Led by Rabbi Stiefel and congregants.
Torah Portion: Tetzaveh "You shall command".
A dairy vegetarian potluck lunch follows services.
Childcare is provided.

Sunday February 28, 2 – 4 PM Annual Meeting of the congregation



Update on work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Mayim Rabim Shabbat and Holiday Communal Ritual Practice

Mayim Rabim Congregation was founded in 1992. From its beginning it has been an urban pluralistic congregation. As a Reconstructionist congregation our goal has been to create and sustain spaces that enhance the practice of Judaism in the contemporary world. We are a house of prayer, of study, and *tikkun olam* (the repair of the world).

The task assigned to the Ad Hoc Committee was to clarify, articulate, and create guidelines and policies for Mayim Rabim communal ritual practice for Shabbat and Holidays.

From the beginning we were guided by the following: we cherish Shabbat and holidays as sacred moments, set apart from other days of the week and year. The goal of the policies developed is to nurture the creation of an inclusive *makom shalom* (a place and time of peace/wholeness) in which we can experience joy and delight as a community.

The committee, over the past year or so, engaged in research, study, and discussion to develop policies and guidelines to meet the goals set for us. Our sources included the ways we historically have practiced as a community on Shabbat and holidays, information from other Reconstructionist congregations, and basic Reconstructionist principles and guidelines.

The committee has completed the first phase of drafting a document that articulates Mayim Rabim's communal ritual practices for Shabbat and Holidays.

We look forward to the discussion of the draft at the annual meeting on Sunday, February 28, 2 - 4 PM and at small gatherings that will follow. This will lead to the development of the final document.

SHABBAT NIGHT OUT A ROUSING SUCCESS

On December 4, three of our member households welcomed guests for a Shabbat potluck dinner. These small get-togethers were a wonderful opportunity to schmooze, enjoy delicious food, and foster the welcoming environment that makes the Mayim Rabim community special. Many thanks to Barbara and Bruce Nordstrom-Loeb, Carolyn Belle/Sandra Levine and Marc Lamm/Josie Winship for hosting.

Thanks also to everyone who attended!





If you would like to make a contribution, send it to Mayim Rabim Congregation, 2751 Hennepin Ave S, Suite 236, Minneapolis, MN 55408. You may also donate online through PayPal on our website:

www.mayimrabim.org

We acknowledge with gratitude these donors to the general fund:

- Jerome and Judith Brin Ingber – in memory of Larry Kivens
- Robin Brown & Denise Pasmant
- Jeremy and Debbie Fisher – in gratitude for all of those who made the fundraiser happen
- Journey Gosselin
- Robert Momose
- Charlotte Sniderman

Mazel Tov! Mazel Tov to Jerri and Mike Pumroy on the birth of their first grandchild, Eli Nathan Rubinstein! 



Wishes for Refuah Shleimah/Speedy Recovery to Dave Kopperl and Barbara Sarapas



Welcome to Camille Bryant who was recently hired to help us with opening and closing for our services

Todah Rabah/Thanks to those who made the Chanukah Party a great success with fun, food, and fellowship — Patty Diamond, Barbara Davis, and the Fathers of Young Children Chanukah Party Planning Committee: Isaac Kaufman, Jeremy Fisher, and Josh Abrams.

Follow this link to see our candle lighting in photos 1-3!

<http://www.startribune.com/gallery-top-photos-dec-13/361727161/#1>





Mayim Rabim Board Meeting — November 4, 2015

Board Members Attending: Celia Gershenson, Larry Gravitz, Sandra Levine, Marc Lamm, Helen Romanishan

September Meeting minutes were approved.

The board established **liaisons** for each of the following committees and for staff

- Finance: Sandra Levine
- Ritual: Celia Gershenson
- Youth Programs: Celia Gershenson
- Membership: Marc Lamm.
- Tikkun Olam: Helen Romanishan
- Administrator: Sandra Levine
- Rabbi: Marc Lamm and Larry Gravitz

The Annual meeting will be scheduled for some time in February — tentative date February 28.

Committee Updates:

Finance: The status of the fundraiser scheduled for November 14 was discussed.

Ritual: The Ad Hoc Committee on Mayim Rabim's Communal Shabbat & Holiday Practices will report its progress and suggest next steps at the December meeting prior to its presentation to the congregation at the Annual meeting.

Youth Programs: Patty Diamond will be in charge of planning and coordinating the Chanukah party to take place on Sunday, December 13.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for December 2.



Welcome New Member Barbara Sarapas

Barbara introduces herself with the following:



I was born in the Worcester Massachusetts Litvak-Lugan neighborhood of Union Hill. My four grandparents immigrated from Lithuania in the 19-teens. My dad's father was from a *shtetl* east of Vilna; his wife, my grandmother for whom I was named, came to the U.S. through a job promised by a Jewish couple in Athol, Massachusetts. She was the only member of her family to get out.



My generation was not told about our Jewish heritage. I was raised an observant but intelligent Catholic, left that when I was 20, began studying Jewishly right away, and actively pursued becoming a member of *Am Yisrael* beginning in the mid 1980's. I am also affiliated at Beth Jacob Congregation in Mendota Heights.

I have one son, Joel, who is at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst completing graduate work next year.

I've had more than one career, the most recent being over 25 years as a Commercial Interior Designer, focusing on public buildings such as schools, libraries, and courthouses. In my role as a Minnesota State Accessibility Specialist, I have worked to ensure that facilities are accessible to people with disabilities. I hope to return to design work.

I have a special interest in Biblical Hebrew, particularly literal word meanings, grammar structure, and Torah leyning; and in Jewish spirituality.



**Wednesday, January 6 — Monday February 1
LOL!**

A Humor Exhibit at the St. Paul JCC

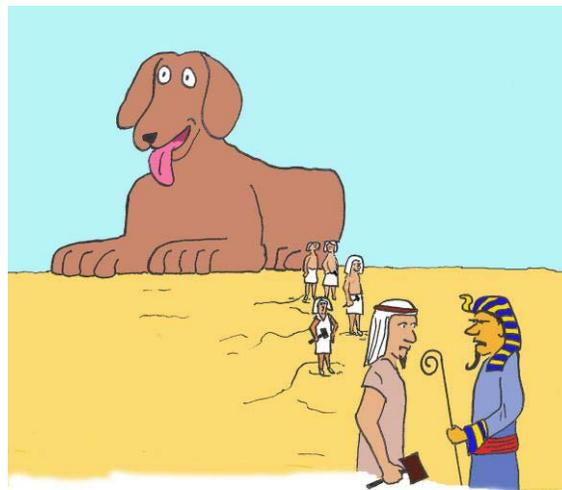
What: St. Paul JCC Gallery Walk Exhibit

Where: St. Paul JCC, 1375 St. Paul Ave, St. Paul, MN, 55116

Using humor, cartoonists Phil Witte and Mike Capozzola instigate creative thinking to process life and, of course, to evoke laughter! Although each of the two artists approaches his style of humor and art differently, the attempt to help us all take life a little less seriously is evident throughout each piece. You are invited to experience this fun exhibit, and are encouraged to laugh out loud!

LOL! is planned in conjunction with the 7th Annual Twin Cities Jewish Humor Festival, January 16 – 31, 2016

See more hilarious artwork by national and local artists in the Tychman Shapiro Gallery at the Sabes JCC.



"Try again."

continued on next page



Family Friendly
KOSHER FOOD
Festival

CrossRiver
**Koshers
Fest**

1st emcee
WCCO Meteorologist
Matt Brickman
appearance by
Twins Mascot
TC Bear

Sunday, January 10, 2016
12:00-3:30pm

\$15/adult | \$10/child

Featuring Chicago's
Milt's BBQ & Highland Pop

Food Vendors: Alakef Coffee, Aviv Vodka, Bare Snacks, Bogart's Doughnuts, Chabbad at UofM, Evergreen Wheatgrass, Joseph's Catering, Just Truffles, Kosherwine.com, McClures Pickles, Menchies, Nothing Bundt Cakes, Pretzilla, Resqwater, Rishi Tea, Ritas Italian Ice, Sabine's Collection, Shmaltz Brewing, Spirit of Asia, Zula Juice

January 16 – 31

**7th Annual Twin Cities Jewish Humor Festival
Events at both Sabes JCC and the St. Paul JCC.**

The 7th annual Twin Cities Jewish Humor Festival will be overflowing with opportunities to laugh with friends and family. A partnership of the St. Paul JCC and the Sabes JCC, this two-week Fringe-like festival of stand-up comedy will feature top-notch stand-up comedians from around the country, a community art exhibit examining how we see humor, a celebration of Global Belly Laugh Day, a visit from an Israeli Dream Doctor, and so much more! For more information, visit <http://www.sabesjcc.org/humor-fest.php>

Tuesday evenings: March 22 & 29, April 5, May 3 & 10

What: Adult Learning Series — *Technology and the Dance Between Jewish and World Civilizations*

When: Tuesday evenings, 7:00 — 8:30 PM

Where: Friends Meeting House, 4401 York Av S, Minneapolis

Teacher: Rabbi Jeffrey Schein

Cost: \$50, \$36 members of Mayim Rabim and Hineni Supporters

What is the nature of our relationship to technology as Jews and as human beings?

continued on next page



We explore Jewish wisdom as a way of gaining perspective on our personal, digital behaviors. And we take a hard look at Judaism's stake in this ongoing communications revolution. Our varied sources include Marshall McLuhan's *The Medium is the Message* and Mordecai Kaplan's notion of Judaism as an evolving religious civilization.

This series is part of a national Covenant Foundation Project--*Text Me: Ancient Jewish Wisdom Meets Contemporary Technology* which is helping to underwrite the cost of the program.

May 26 – June 2
Twin Cities LGBT Mission to Israel

SEE ISRAEL WITH PRIDE!

MAY 26 – JUNE 2, 2016

JOIN MEMBERS OF THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY FROM AROUND THE TWIN CITIES FOR THIS HISTORIC MISSION TO ISRAEL!

Marvel at Jerusalem's Old City one day and be dazzled by Tel Aviv's beaches the next. Meet with Israel's LGBTQ politicians, business leaders and innovators and learn what is being done to advance the rights of the LGBTQ community. Visit incredible sites where Federations are changing lives every day. Experience Israeli culture, cuisine and character. Take pride in Israel and her LGBTQ community on this unforgettable trip.

For more information contact:
Alyssa Huck, Minneapolis Jewish Federation Missions Manager at 952.417.2323 or ahuck@mplsfed.org

Minneapolis Local Chair - Josh Ribnick Mann
St. Paul Local Chair - Steve Greenberg

*National subsidies are available
*Options are also available to extend for Tel Aviv Pride on June 3, 2016

MINNEAPOLIS Jewish Federation
Jewish Federation OF GREATER ST. PAUL

Hi Everyone,

Here is proof of the effects of generosity — two happy people dining at the latest addition to the Broders' restaurant scene at 50th and Penn.

They are happy because they are celebrating birthday week at Terzo: Suzy's was the 24th of November and Randy's the 30th.

And it was a Broders' gift card from Mayim Rabim that helped make this possible and made Randy a birthday hero.



I am also the King of Delayed Gratification having held on to this treasure for over three months. Thank you so much for the gift card and to all of you who had such kind words at my last Shabbat potluck. It capped a 16 year friendship, most definitely unique and memorable.

*Shalom
Randy Tatum*



MAYIM RABIM CONGREGATION is affiliated with the Jewish Reconstructionist movement (www.jewishrecon.org). We are an urban Jewish community that comprises people of diverse ages, abilities, sexual orientations, cultural backgrounds, and financial resources. It is our mission to create and sustain spaces that enhance the practice of Judaism in the contemporary world; to that end, we are a house of prayer, of study, and tikkun olam (the repair of the world). As Reconstructionists, we view Judaism as an evolving religious civilization and claim a shared heritage with all Jews. Our synagogue is governed by an elected board of directors:

Marc Lamm, President
Sandra Levine, Treasurer and Finance Co-Chair
Helen Romanishan, Secretary
Celia Gershenson, Member At-Large
Larry Gravitz, Member At-Large
Jeremy Fisher, President Emeritus
Sharon Stiefel, Rabbi
Dana Fox, Congregational Administrator
Committee Chairs: Ken Granle, Tikkun Olam
Isaac Kaufman, Membership;
Barbara Nordstrom-Loeb, Ritual
Dana Fox, Finance Co-Chair
Patty Diamond, Youth Programs

Need information about Mayim Rabim?
Want to know times and places of events?

Website: www.mayimrabim.org

Email: office@mayimrabim.org

Phone: 612-247-5490

Unless otherwise noted, events are held at the
Friends Meeting House,

4401 York Ave. S, Minneapolis

Mailing Address:

2751 Hennepin Ave. S, #236, Mpls, MN 55408



The Current is a monthly newsletter of Mayim Rabim Congregation. Submission deadline is the 15th of each month for the month following.

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