

# Temple Beth El

VOLUME 56, No. 9  
FEBRUARY 2025  
SH'VAT 5785



The Temple Beth El Bulletin is published monthly according to the Gregorian calendar.

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## Rabbi's Message – Dov Gottesfeld

### The Jewish Perspective on Caring for Trees

Shalom to all

**Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 20:19 (JPS)** – *"When you besiege a city for a long time, making war against it to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them. You may eat from them, but you shall not cut them down."*

Today, we reflect on a fundamental mitzvah given to us by the Torah—the responsibility to protect and nurture God's creation. Trees have always played a sacred role in Jewish tradition, symbolizing life, wisdom, and sustenance. The Torah explicitly commands us not to destroy fruit-bearing trees, even in times of war, teaching us the profound value of conservation and respect for nature.



**Dov Gottesfeld**

Judaism recognizes trees as a source of blessing. The Talmud tells us that when a person walks into a land and finds trees, they must continue planting for the generations to come, just as their ancestors did before them. Tu B'Shvat, the New Year of the Trees, reminds us of our duty to care for the environment and be responsible stewards of the world.

Unfortunately, modern challenges like deforestation and climate change threaten the balance of creation. As Jews, we must see environmental care as not just a social obligation but a divine one. By planting trees, reducing waste, and living sustainably, we fulfill our role as shomrei adamah—guardians of the Earth.

What can we do? First, we can plant and care for trees, ensuring a thriving environment for future generations. Second, we can educate ourselves and others about Jewish ecological values. Third, we can commit to sustainable living, reducing harm to the world God has entrusted to us.

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### February Schedule of Services:

February 7th Diane Borad-Mirken (7:30 PM)  
February 14th Josué Medrano (7:30 PM)  
February 21st Rabbi Dov Gottesfeld (7:30 PM)  
February 28th Diane Borad-Mirken (7:30 PM)

### Educational Activities

Etz Chaim Children's Religious School 9:30-10 AM

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Let us not take for granted the trees and the beauty of nature around us. Instead, let us embrace our sacred duty to preserve and protect them. As we do so, we honor God, who created this world with wisdom and entrusted it to us.

May we all be like the tree described in Pirkei Avot 3:22, *"One whose wisdom exceeds their deeds is like a tree with many branches but few roots; one whose deeds exceed their wisdom is like a tree with strong roots."* Amen.

Happy Holidays of Trees

Rabbi Dov Gottesfeld

February 13, 2025

TBE Board of Directors for 2024-2025

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# President's Column – Guest Columnist Anita Friedman

## ***Speaking the Word:***

Our English words *thing*, *word*, and *speak* are distinct. They look different, sound different, and mean different things. No one trying to communicate in English would say *thing* a *thing*, *word* a *word*, or *speak* a *speak*. The closest you could get is *word* a *sentence*, *talk* the *talk*, or *say* a *saying*.

Not so in Hebrew. The noun *davar* (plural *d'varim*, word pair plural *divray*) means both *word* and *thing*. Other meanings include: saying, utterance, command, statement, matter, and event. (English is more specific in this matter. For example, the legal term *res*, generally translated as *matter*, is Latin for *thing*.)

The same Hebrew letters without vowels *dalet-bet-resh* are the root of an emphatic verb usually translated as *speak*. In biblical Hebrew one could say, “*diber davar*” “He spoke a word.”

Let's look at some examples from the Torah.

“Achar ha-*d'varim* ha-ayleh haya *d'var* HaShem el Abram ...” – “After these *things* (or *events*), the *word* of HaShem came to Abram ...” (Gen. 15:1)

“Hinay na ho'alti *l'dabayr* al adonai v'anochi afar va-ayfer” – Indeed, now I desired *to speak* to my Lord although I am [but] dust and ash.” (Gen. 18:27, Abraham speaking to God regarding Sodom and Gomorrah)

“**Bi** adoni *y'daber* na avdecha *davar* b'a-z'ni adoni” – “If you please, my lord, may your servant *speak* a *word* in the ears of my lord.” (Gen. 44:18, Judah speaking to Joseph to save his brother Benjamin.) Note the exquisitely courteous language of Abraham and Judah when using the word *diber* to their superiors.

“*Vaidabayr* Elohim et kol ha-*d'varim* ha-eleh laymor:” – “*And God spoke* all these *words* (or *things* or *statements*) saying;” (Ex. 20:1, preface to the Ten Commandments)

*D'vray* Aseret refers to the Ten *Commandments* (or *Utterances*). “vayichtov al ha-luchot et *divray* ha-b'rit aseret ha-*d'varim*” – “and He wrote on the Tablets the *words* of the covenant, the Ten *Commandments*” (Ex. 34:28). The usual Hebrew word for commandment is *mitzvah* (plural *mitzvot*), rather than *davar*.

The fifth book of the Torah, Deuteronomy, is called *D'varim* in Hebrew and opens with: “Ayleh ha-*d'varim* asher *diber* Moshe” – “These are the *words* which Moses *spoke*.” (Deut. 1:1)

“Panim b'panim *diber* HaShem imachem bahar” – Face to face HaShem *spoke* with you (plural) on the mountain. (Deut 5:4)

*D'var Torah* is literally a *Word of Torah*; it is an explanation of a Torah passage. *Divray Hayamim* translates as history or the Book of Chronicles. The literal translation is *The Words (Events or Things) of the Days*.

The Friday night Shabbat service includes other examples.

“Shamor v'zachor b'*dibur* echad” – “Safeguard and Remember in a single *command*” (Lecha Dodi)

“... asher *bidvaro* ma-ariv aravim.” – “... who *by His word* brings on evenings” (Maariv Aravim)

“V'nis-mach b'*divray* toratecha ...” – “And we will rejoice *in the words* of Your Torah ...” (Ahavat Olam)

“V'hayu ha-*d'varim* ha-ayleh asher anochi m'tza-vecha ha-yom al l'vavecha ... v'*dibarta* bam” – “Let these *matters* (*words* or *things*) that I command you today be upon your heart ... and *speak* of them” (V'ahavta)

Conflicting interpretations of the Torah may evoke the following words: “Elu va-elu *divray* elokim chayim” – “Both [lit. this and this] are the *words* of the Living God.” The idea is that the Torah has many faces (*panim*) and the seeming contradictions are due to our inability to see them all. The next time you *speak*, read, or hear the *words* of the Torah and prayers, may you recognize more of them.

Sources: 1) *Chumash*. ArtScroll & ArtScroll Interlinear, Hirsch, and Hertz versions. 2) *Siddur*. ArtScroll. 3) *The Joys of Hebrew*. Lewis Glinert. 4) *Etymological Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew*. Matityahu Clark. 5) *Roots: A Hebrew-English Word-List* Mordechai Kamrat and Edwin Samuel. 6) *Hebrew & English Dictionary*. Bantam.

**By Anita Friedman**

# Bulletin Briefs

## February Anniversaries

14 Abby Lassen & Michael LeCover

## February Birthdays

12 Amber Medina  
23 Gabrielie Romero  
23 Vicky Burg

## Donations

In memory of Boots Hersh and Corinne Bernstein from Andi and Jeff Portney

### **Weekly Torah Portion Discussions and Shabbat services at Temple Beth El for TBE members whose main language is Spanish.**

The Spanish-speaking portion of our membership meets just about every Saturday morning at the temple starting at 9:30 am. We use a Spanish/Hebrew prayer book and hold a Shabbat service and a discussion of the weekly portion in Spanish. We are not a separate group from the temple (TBE) membership but are members of it whose main language is Spanish and feel that this space creates for us a comfortable way to immerse ourselves in the study of the Torah. Everyone is welcome to join with us, even the English speaking who are striving to learn Spanish as well as our Jewish heritage. We are pleased that we have a space to accommodate our needs and we thank the Board of Directors who encouraged this. The leader of our group is Raul Medina (805) 922-4171 or (805) 868-8153).

Discusiones semanales de la porcion de la Tora y servicios de Shabat en el Templo Beth El para los miembros de TBE cuyo idioma principal es el español. Los miembros de habla hispana de nuestra sinagoga se reune casi todos los sabados por la mañana en el templo a partir de las 9:30 am. Usamos un libro de Rezos en espanol / hebreo y celebramos un servicio de Shabat y una discusión de la porcion semana en español. No somos un grupo separado de la sinagoga (TBE), sino que somos miembros de el cuyo idioma principal es el español y sentimos que este espacio crea para nosotros una manera comoda de sumergimos en el estudio de la Tora. Todos son bienvenidos a unirse a nosotros, incluso los de habla inglesa que se esfuerzan por aprender espanol, asi como nuestra herencia judia. Nos complace tener un espacio para acomodar nuestras necesidades y agradecemos a la Junta Directiva que permita esto. Para mas información comunicarse con Raúl Medina al 805-868-8153.

## Sisterhood

The Sisterhood resumed our dinner meetings in February! We had a well-attended dinner at The Villa restaurant which meant there was enough interest to continue.

Diane Borad-Mirken has taken the helm and will be organizing our meetings on the second Tuesday of each month. Our March dinner will take place on Tuesday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 PM, at the Ming Dynasty Chinese Restaurant which is known for its wonderful buffet. The address is 2011 S. Broadway (Turn into the parking lot at the Western Village light. The restaurant is on the right.) Everyone is invited; bring friends along. Please RSVP to Diane: (805) 478-1463 so we know how many to expect.

**Marsha Epstein**

## Brotherhood

The next Brotherhood meeting will be held on Sunday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9:00 AM at the Temple. Join us for our famous breakfast of lox and bagels, eggs, muffins and extras.

As usual, I will send out articles of interest to members of the group. Our seminar conversations have been lively, interesting, and informative and all interested people, men and women, are welcome to join us.

**Gary Epstein**

## February Yarzheits

2/1/25	Harry Kunarsky*			
2/6/25	Hope Howard			Friend of the community
2/8/25	William Hart			Father of Gregory Hart
2/9/25	Cirilo Medina	6	Shevat	Father of Raul Medina
2/10/25	Nathan Eschen			Grandfather of Donna Eschen
2/10/25	Harry Mintzer	16	Shevat	Uncle of Marsha Epstein
2/10/25	Nathan Weiser			Father of Sid Weiser
2/10/25	Dorothy Young			Mother of Frank Young
2/11/25	Eric Lee Levinson	9	Adar	Cousin of Niki Eschen
2/12/25	Elma Traub	14	Shevat	Aunt of Ken Wolf
2/13/25	Bert Coe	15	Shevat	Father of Andrea Coe Portney
2/14/25	Marjorie Gross			Aunt of Abby Lassen
2/14/25	Norma Miller	16	Shevat	Aunt of Kenneth L. Wolf
2/15/25	Michael Gerber			Cousin of Diane Borad-Mirken
2/16/25	Valerie Cohen	7	Adar	Daughter of Ed Cohen
2/17/25	Louise Black Robertson	16	Adar	Mother of Eric Berge
2/17/25	Corinne Bernstein*	5	Adar	Wife of Maurice Bernstein
2/18/25	Robert L. Cohen			Father of Edgar Cohen
2/19/25	Mort Russell*	13	Adar	Husband of Rose Russell
2/19/25	Leo Schutz*	21	Shevat	Friend of Tom Geiger
2/19/25	Hattie Lester Schwartz*	21	Shevat	Mother of Stephen Schwartz
2/19/25	Marcia Tunick*	21	Shevat	Wife of Art Tunick
2/20/25	Gladys Zicherman*	20	Adar	Mother of Marsha Epstein
2/20/25	Elmer Vincent	22	Shevat	Uncle of Kenneth L. Wolf
2/21/25	Richard Meisler			Nephew of Mike Kaver
2/22/25	Sam Zuckerman*	24	Shevat	Father of Anne Berkowitz
2/23/25	Sam Berkowitz*	25	Shevat	Husband of Anne
2/25/25	Bertha Goldberg*			Mother of Susan Schwartz
2/25/25	Harold Pawlan	25	Adar	Father of Suzanne Levy
2/28/25	Marion A. Gabler*			Mother of Elliott Gabler
2/28/25	B. Jack Meltzer*	30	Shevat	Father of Lori Meltzer-Sutton

## Months of Mourning

Mel Kalish	Husband of Esther	7/30/24
Willis Oren Wagner	Father of Randy Wagner	8/30/24
Phyllis Green	Mother of Steven Green	9/17/24
Beverly Lassen	Mother of Abby Lassen	1/22/25
Carolyn Koepke	Cousin of Gary Epstein	1/25/25

# February

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						<p>1 Raúl Medina leads Shabbat service &amp; Torah study (9:30 AM)</p> <p>Also: Amber Medina leads Etz Chaim class (10 AM)</p>
<p>2 Brotherhood Breakfast (9 AM)</p>	3	<p>4 Board of Directors meeting (7 PM)</p>	5	6	<p>7 Diane Borad-Mirken will lead Shabbat service (7:30 PM)</p>	<p>8 Raúl Medina leads Shabbat service &amp; Torah study (9:30 AM)</p> <p>Also: Amber Medina leads Etz Chaim class (10 AM)</p>
9	10	<p>11 Sisterhood's dinner at La Villa (6:00 pm)</p>	12	<p>13 Tu B'Shevat Seder (5 PM)</p>	<p>14 Josué Medrano will lead Shabbat service (7:30 PM)</p>	<p>15 Also: Raúl Medina leads Shabbat service &amp; Torah study (4:30 PM)</p> <p>Also: Amber Medina leads Etz Chayim class (10 AM)</p>
16	17	18	19	20	<p>21 Rabbi Dov Gottesfeld will lead Shabbat service (7:30 PM)</p> <p>Potluck (6 PM)</p>	<p>22 Rabbi Dov Gottesfeld leads Torah discussion (10:30 AM)</p>
23	24	25	26	27	<p>28 Diane Borad-Mirken will lead Shabbat service (7:30 PM)</p>	