

August 2025 Av & Elul 5785 Newsletter



Dear TCJRC Community,

While Av is famously a time for many awful events in Jewish history, curiously, there are also two quite joyous days. The 5th of Av is the anniversary of the death of the Kabbalist, Isaac Luria, whose work remains a beacon of hope. The 15th of Av (Tu B'Av; sometimes colloquially called "Jewish Valentine's Day") is a day the sages described as the happiest in the year and is when the sun and moon are full, when both the Divine masculine and feminine are elevated.

This timing in itself is a powerful reminder to us all. Even in our darkest moments and during the hardest times of the year, there is still light to be found. The light doesn't fully replace or remove the darkness, but nonetheless remains on the horizon as something aspirational and hopeful.

Following this is Elul, a month of repentance and forgiveness. This is of course when we prepare for the holiest time of the year and is a time of reflection as we contemplate who we have been and who we want to be. Similarly to the light and darkness of Av, we may find light and darkness in ourselves. There are moments from the past year we are proud of and others that we regret. Just as the reminder of the light of Tu B'Av carries us through Tisha B'Av, know that even when you feel you have made mistakes, there is still light in you. Put simply, don't be too hard on yourself!

L'shalom,
Student Rabbi Adam Kersch
TCJRC Administrator

TCJRC Jewish Spiritual Book Meeting Monday, August 4 at 7pm on Zoom.

Please RSVP with your name and email to TCJewishRenewal@gmail.com for the Zoom link discussing God and the Big Bang, (2nd Edition): Discovering Harmony Between Science and Spirituality (chapters 8 and 9) by Daniel Matt. Please save Monday, September 8 from 7 – 8:30 PM for our next meeting.

Broken Open: A Tisha B'Av Inspirational Retreat

Sunday, August 3, 11:00 - 4:30 PM

Led by Rabbis Sara Brandes and Debra Rappaport and Kohenet Riv Shapiro

At the Marsh in Minnetonka

Registration: \$90 – your payment in full allows us to have security present; \$36 – reduced rate

Co-sponsored by TCJRC

Register [here](#).

Tisha b'Av, according to rabbinic wisdom, gives our people a one-day outlet for our collective grief. All the disasters that have befallen the Jews are commemorated in this one day. And yet, as the day progresses, the point is not to get lost in our despair, but to choose life. Join us in sacred space to honor the essence of our heart-grief, with gratitude and love.

This will be a day for bringing our whole selves, as we are. We join together because this is not private pain. Rabbi Debra Rappaport will facilitate practices inspired by Joanna Macy, who teaches, “When we reconnect with life by choosing to bear our pain for it, the mind retrieves its natural clarity.” Awakened Body founder Rabbi Sara Brandes will guide us in building resilience by drawing on the wisdom of our bodies. Over the course of our day, we will have opportunities for personal reflection, communal sharing, movement and release.

Climate Justice: Stories of Hope and Action

Sunday, August 10, 4:00 - 5:30 PM

Jewish Community Action

at Shir Tikvah Congregation and on Zoom

Register [here](#)

The world around us seems to be going through an ever-shifting crisis. Our administration cuts staffing and funding to national parks and tries to sell off public land; climate change threatens fragile ecosystems and human lives alike; and corporate greed pollutes and razes land in favor of profit. It's hard to comprehend the scope of the problem, let alone talk about it.

But now more than ever, we need to talk about it if we're going to become effective advocates. Join TCJRC and other Twin Cities congregations in welcoming Rabbi Daniel Swartz for Climate Justice: Stories of Hope and Action, a workshop on crafting narrative and storytelling for environmental justice. Rabbi Swartz is the Executive Director of COEJL, the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, and the rabbi of Temple Hesed in Scranton, PA. He has spoken at environmental gatherings around the globe and participated in interfaith dialogues on climate change at the Vatican. Rabbi Swartz will lead us in a workshop where we dig deep into our personal connection to environmental justice and learn how to use storytelling to talk about — and take action on — of the most important issues of our time.

Exploring the Landscape of Love Through the Song of Songs: An Evening of Chating with Rabbi Shefa Gold

Monday, August 11 7:00-8:30 PM

Under the Tent at Adath Jeshurun

TCJRC are cosponsors with Hineni, Adath Jeshurun, and Mayim Rabim

\$18 suggested donation Registration

“The whole Torah is Holy,” says Rabbi Akiva, “but The Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies.” Furthermore he said that “Had the Torah not been given, we could live our lives by the Song of Songs.” What would it mean to place this erotic, sensual, sexually explicit and most beautiful poem at the center of our tradition? What would it mean to live our lives by the Song of Songs? How can we use this text as a guide in growing our love for each other and for The Great Mystery that is God? These are the questions that Jewish mystics have wrestled with for thousands of years.

In this workshop, we will enter into the landscape of this Sacred Song through the practices of chant, meditation, and the contemplation of our path as Lovers.

Register [here](#).

Earth-Based Judaism Experience

Sunday, August 17 12:30 - 2 PM

St. Paul in-person location will be provided close to the event date

Members \$12, non-members \$18, pay what you can option available. Tickets [here](#).

In our modern world, connecting to the Divine or any kind of spirituality can feel difficult. We have endless worldly obligations and experience almost constant sensory overload. Thankfully, there are traditions in Judaism that offer us a way to connect to the Divine through nature. By intentionally slowing down and taking notice of changes in the plants and animals around us, we can repair and strengthen our relationship to the Divine.

In this experience, student rabbi Adam Kersch will lead a discussion on the relationship between nature and Judaism with the goal of helping participants feel more connected to their spirituality through nature - even in our busy city! We'll learn outdoors, rain or shine, and then go on a short hike to practice noticing the natural world. This event is held with support from a St. Paul Jewish Federation Ignite Grant.

Save the date - Kabbalah and Gender Workshop, September 10th. More details TBA.



Torah Yoga Workshop: I Lift My Eyes to the Mountains/Ancestors

Wednesday, September 3, 7:00 - 8:30 PM

At Mount Zion Temple

\$18 for TCJRC/Mt Zion members, \$25 for general public. Tickets [here](#)

The Twin Cities Jewish Renewal Community (TCJRC) and Mount Zion Temple are thrilled to host internationally-known Diane Bloomfield, the Israeli founder of Torah Yoga®, to lead a Torah Yoga® workshop for the Twin Cities. Her unique approach combines Jewish mysticism and wisdom with yoga for a truly exceptional experience focused on learning and growing holistically.

In the Hebrew word for mountain הרים we find a hint to our ancestors הורים. The Chassidic Rebbe Sfot Emet teaches: “The words of Torah are engraved in the body of a person, but they are hidden and need to be discovered.” Through the study of Torah and the practice of yoga we will lift up our eyes to uncover the ancient-living qualities of Abraham and Sarah within our body, mind, heart and soul.

Following the workshop, we will have light snacks, questions and books will be for sale. Please bring a mat or blanket.



Adat Ha'araphel: Congregation of the Cloud Shabbat Services

Summer Schedule: August 9 Vaetchanan / Maybe August 23 Reeh September 13 Ki tavo; Rosh Hashanah September 22; Yom Kippur October 11; Simchat Torah October 15.

Gather at 9:15 AM CT and begins 9:30 AM

Join us in the cloud for a spiritually infused, musical service. Please contact Sherry at tcjewishrenewal@gmail.com for Zoom details. All are welcome to attend. Service leaders include Rabbi Marc Labowitz from Temple Adath Or in So. Florida, Rabbi/Chaplain Leon Olenick, Jackie Olenick, and a host of other talented Jewish Renewal leaders such as our own TCJRC member, Chaiya Isenberg.

We are currently seeking an immediate local Social Media, Website, Event, Administrative paid Intern for 3 months up to one year. Please email Adam at adamtcjewishrenewal@gmail.com or Sherry at tcjewishrenewal@gmail.com for the job description if you are interested.

TCJRC Membership and Donations

We hope you decide to join us or renew as a TCJRC/ALEPH Member! Your \$72 membership includes immediate family members, and enrolls you in both TCJRC and ALEPH (our national organization). We are able to bring in talented national leaders and grow with your support. Plus, you'll get a discount on many of our events and activities while helping us offer even more.

Now is the time to embrace that personal connection to God by reaching beyond religious boundaries and institutional structures. We offer a contemporary egalitarian approach, which includes Jewish Mystical/Chasidic traditions and social transformation. Come immerse yourself in a different, joyful way of experiencing Judaism.

Various opportunities include designated ALEPH courses, free community webinars, resource sharing, Shabbaton with Renewal leaders, network community open houses, Rosh Chodesh participation, our national biennial Kallah conference and scholarships through grants.

Local Events

Shabbat Lunch featuring Yiddish Favorites with Maggie Burton

Friday, August 1, 11:30 AM - 1 PM

Minnesota JCC Capp Center St Paul

Registration: \$22

Join us for a delicious Kosher Shabbat meal followed by Yiddish Favorites with Maggie Burton. Songs will include Yiddish folk and theatre music. Sing along, clap, or just listen. Lyrics, background, and translations will be provided.

Devotional Healing: Open to Divine Flow at Episcopal House of Prayer, Collegeville, MN Tuesday, August 12, 5:30 PM to Sunday August 17, 1:00 PM with Rabbi Shefa Gold

Registration: Suggested offering: \$720 (includes food and accommodations)

This summer I'll be teaching a retreat at EHOP (one of my very favorite holy places) on Devotional Healing. It will be a time of exploring the idea of MISHKAN in the dimensions of heart, body, field, relationship, and community... so that we can open to the Divine flow and be a vehicle of healing for our world. We do this work of becoming and of building the MISHKAN, in order to meet the challenges of this world with our own unique healing presence. I've included some thoughts about MISHKAN and Shechina, that might inspire you to join us on this special retreat.

To register for the Hineni Torahteynu: Gather & Learn summer events below, click [here](#)

Everyday Holiness

Tuesday, August 5, 12 PM

at Beth El Synagogue with Rabbi Alexander Davis

Exploring Collective Belonging

Thursday, August 14, 6:00 - 8:30 PM

At Shir Tikvah with Rabbi Arielle Lekach-Rosenberg

We'll explore the Talmudic teaching “כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה” – All of Israel are ‘aravin/responsible to each other – as a way of deepening our understanding of the power (and challenges) of community.

Siyyum: The Healing Nature of Learning**Wednesday, August 20, 7 PM****at Beit HaMidrash at Hineni Talmud Torah St. Paul with Rabbi Debra Rappaport**

This Midrash (Shir HaShirim Rabbah 2:5:3) has been an inspiration for our summer series. We'll explore this text in depth, examining the brilliance of midrash as a teaching tool and taking stock of this summer's learning.

Dip into Elul: A Lake Immersion to Prepare for a New Year**Sunday, August 24, 2 PM and 4 PM****Location provided upon registration****\$36 suggested, pay what you can \$5-\$72**

The introspective month of Elul sets the stage for the work we do over the High Holy Days. It is a time of self-reflection, spiritual preparation, and intention setting. The ritual of mikveh immersion is deeply rooted in Jewish tradition and is a powerful way for us to prepare ourselves for renewal and transformation. You are invited to join us for this meaningful immersive experience. Co-sponsored by Maayanot and Hineni

Sholom House's Third Annual Family Fun Day**Sunday, August 24, 2:30 — 5:30 PM.****3620 Phillips Parkway, St Louis Park**

Come together for celebration with food trucks, a bouncy house, complimentary valet parking, and all-ages activities. Free. Register [here](#).

ALEPH Events

Friday Healing Circle**Fridays, 11:30am to 12:30pm ET****with Rabbi Diane Elliot**

The Friday Healing Circle, led online by R. Diane Elliot and friends, offers a weekly space to connect, to feel, to praise, to learn, to grieve and to love. Join us each Friday at 8:30am PT / 11:30am ET for an hour of song and movement, Torah, poetry and healing prayers to expand your spirit and lead you into Shabbat. Gatherings are recorded and a link sent to all on our mailing list, so you can partake at your convenience. The Circle is freely offered; contributions are appreciated. To sign up for the mailing list and receive the Zoom link email rabbi.diane18@gmail.com

Register for a Public Course from the ALEPH Ordination Program (AOP)!

Each course has 13 weekly meetings and is conducted live using Zoom. Our Fall 2025 semester starts on August 24. Courses include: North African Jewish Music; Leynen for the Rest of Us; Biblical Hebrew 101.; Liturgical Hebrew; Rabbinic Hebrew Workshop; Antisemitism in Context: A Historical and Deep Ecumenical Perspective; Exploring Jewish History from Rabbinic Roots to the Dawn of Modernity; Narratives of Bible; Foundations of Jewish Philosophy and Theology; Exploring the Siddur; Foundations of Jewish Practice; Jewish Traditions of Sacred Time; Leviticus: Entryways into Earth-based Perspectives [See Course & Register](#)

Nechamah Minyan Every Evening (not Friday) at 8 PM CT

Led by Rabbi Geela Rayzel Raphael and friends. Please email ALEPH's Spiritual Arts Director (rrayzel@shechinah.com) for zoom room link. Providing nechamah (comfort) beyond time and space. Serving to connect people across denominational lines; people who need a place to pray; to heal; to grieve; to experiment with different forms and modalities of prayer. Please bring your prayers and songs for peace.

