



Congregation Ahavath Sholom

The Creative Spirit Dwells Here

Friday, 30 January 2026 ~ 12th of Sh'vat, 5786

Parashat Beshalach

Shabbat Shira

Thoughts on the Torah portion

Beshalach, when he let go. In this week's parasha we explore the tension between holding on and letting go. We have left mitzrayim, the physical space of our narrowness, our limited choices, and our slavery. We are now faced with the task of resolving our emotional ties to mitzrayim. The work of leaving behind all that we know, all that is familiar, all that is predictable. Our time in Egypt was so much more bitter than it was sweet. One would think it would be easy to let go. This week we discover that letting go is indeed quite hard to do.

Let's look at the experience of crossing the Red Sea. We've fled Egypt. We've camped at the edge of the sea. In the distance we can hear the hooves of the Egyptian army's horses, the squeaking of their chariot's wheels. We can see the cloud of sand moving ever closer to us. Panic is rising as we face the choice of heading into the sea where we believe we will drown or remaining on dry land where we believe we will be captured and brought back to Egypt, to slavery, to a narrow bitter place. And then it happens. The miracle. God splits the sea, we see dry land. Maybe there is an easy path to freedom. We're on our way across the sea.

I cannot begin to imagine the enormity of our feelings at this critical moment in time. The complete and utter awe at the sight of the sea splitting. The immense relief of knowing there is a path to freedom. The sense of urgency to cross quickly before the Pharaoh's army arrives. The uncertainty of what we will face once we reach the distant shore. The fear of leaving all that we have known. And yet we cross. Moses leads the way because as much as we want to go, a part of each of us is reluctant to leave. Vayasa, Moses leads the way.

Yet once when we reach the distant shore we do not immediately continue our journey. We pause. We see the Egyptians, their horses and their chariots consumed by the sea. According to midrash the Egyptians had adorned their horses with gold, silver and precious stones. We see these consumed by the sea as well. And we remain by the sea returning to the shore each morning to collect what has washed up. Have we become

enamored by a desire to amass wealth by collecting the Egyptian booty? Have we become complacent about our freedom, satisfied to remain here at the edge of sea? Or, is our need to collect the remnants from the sea representative of a deeper inner-struggle?

It is difficult to turn away from even painful and traumatic events. We've all experienced this on the highway. There's an accident up ahead. Although we don't want to see the mangled cars, and potentially the human injury, we slow down and look. It is human nature to use all our senses as we try to process pain and trauma. Interacting with physical items associated with a trauma can help us begin to develop an understanding of the unfathomable.

So maybe we can understand our lingering on the shore of the Red Sea in a new light. Maybe we needed to be there, in the place that marked the moment of our enemy's demise, to fully comprehend the power of our freedom. Maybe the shards collected from the sea are physical reminders of where we have come from that serve as reminders about why we must continue to journey forward. Letting go, even letting go of painful experiences, interactions and people, is difficult. May our experience on the shore of the Red Sea always remind us that often we need to hold on before we can let go. In times of letting go may we be kind to ourselves and to others. May we create space to both hold on and let go.

~Rabbi Jennifer Rudin

This Weekend

Sunday, February 1, 2:00-5:00 PM, **Congregational Retreat**, Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire, 1089 Main St, Housatonic (for **congregation members**). If you would like a Zoom link to join the informational part of the retreat, email rabbirudinahavathsholom@gmail.com.

Tu B'Shevat, the New Year of the Trees begins Sunday at sundown.

 Tu B'Shevat through a Kabbalistic Lens In Kabbalah, Tu B'Shevat marks a moment of hidden renewal. Though trees appear dormant, spiritual energy is already rising within them. This mirrors the inner life of the soul—growth often begins below the surface, before it can be seen. Kabbalists teach that this day invites us to restore balance between the physical and spiritual worlds. By honoring trees and eating their fruits with intention, we participate in tikkun—repairing the flow of blessing between heaven and earth. Tu B'Shevat reminds us that new life is already stirring, even when change feels slow or unseen.

Staying Connected

In this season—and at all times—please know that you are not alone. If you need support, are navigating a challenge, or have something joyful you'd like to share, I hope you'll reach out. Staying connected helps us care for one another as a community. Through our Hadar grant, we are strengthening the ways we show up for each other in moments of sorrow, challenge, and celebration. You can always reach the Rabbi by phone, email, or text.

Our deepest condolences to Alison Adams-Weinberg on the death of her cousin. We're holding Alison and her family in our hearts.

Looking Ahead

No Cafe Kehilah Wednesday, February 4, 2026. Rabbi Rudin will be meeting with the sofer (Torah scribe) to have our Torahs evaluated.

Friday, February 6, 5:00 PM Zoom Kabbalat Shabbat

Saturday, February 7, 10:00 AM Shabbat Services (location TBD)

Preparing for Shabbat Shira (the Sabbath of Song)

Prepare for Shabbat with song:  [*Mozi's Nigun / Ana B'choakh \(Kabbalat Shabbat\) · Joey Weisenberg · The Hadar Ensemble*](#)

 [*"Milt's Nign - Yedid Nefesh" \(2019\) by Joey Weisenberg and the Hadar Ensemble*](#)

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Rudin