

Reflections from Temple Beth El

Each week one of our Leadership Team members writes a blog. Some are straightforward. Some are complex. Some are whimsical. All reflect what our professional leadership is thinking about.

Recent blogs have inspired people to get involved, take action, reflect on life, and think about new perspectives. Did you have a chance to read any of the following blogs?

* Creating Sacred Space with Sacred Sound by Cantor Andrew Bernard

* The Power of Reframing, or "What I Learned in Yoga This Week" by Rabbi Dusty Klass

* Accidental Intertextuality and You by Cantor Mary Rebecca Thomas

* Warm Cookies and Cold Milk Are Good for You by Dr. Laura Bernstein

On July 22, Rabbi Asher Night wrote Sh'ma Yisrael: Listen Israel. We share this blog in its entirety with you here:

On the third Shabbat of this month, we will read a verse of Torah that is better known than any other in our scriptures. Recognized as the watchword of our faith, the verse contains six Hebrew words:

Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad
Listen Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One.

Venerated by centuries of our people, the Sh'ma has been taught to our children, exclaimed by our martyrs, and recited at the bedsides of the sick. The phrase is our monotheistic standard, proudly exclaiming belief and the ethics of our faith: God is the unifier of the universe, the parent to creation and humanity. Because we are created in the image of the one God, we are responsible for one another and all of God's creation.

It is interesting that the verse begins with a command to listen. One could argue that the words, Sh'ma Yisrael aren't needed because the statement of faith would be complete with the words, "Adonai is our God, Adonai is One!" But the Sh'ma is powerful precisely because it isn't just a theological statement.

The command to "listen" is an important reminder about how we live as God's partner. Through listening, we pay close attention to

God's oneness. We listen to ourselves, to our breath and heartbeat. We give attention and presence to our families and their needs. We listen to the world around us, even to voices that have been muted or sometimes come across harsh. Why? Because listening is an imperative first step in being effective partners with God in knowing ourselves, raising children, living in community, and helping people in need.

My first step as your rabbi is to listen. I don't assume to know what is on your minds. I don't assume to know what is central and important in your lives. Each member of our congregation has desires and interests. Each member of our congregation is facing the dynamics of modern society in similar and different ways. Each of us is a central element to the living faith that we build, together. In the last month, I have begun to listen. I will continue over the next year. Indeed, we are in the beginning stages of planning conversations, in both smaller and larger settings that




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will help us listen and learn from one another.


I invite you to help weave a social fabric of shared belonging – shaped by the idea that when we listen to one another, we are better able to be in relationship, be well-connected, care for the well-being of one another, and better support each other's learning and spiritual growth. That is what the Sh'ma is all about. That is what Temple Beth El is all about.

Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad.

Please visit our website at www.templebethel.org to read or subscribe to our weekly blog posts. Thanks for reading and joining in on the conversation. ☆



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