

Nov-Dec: My Personal Shmita

Some of you may recall that on Rosh Hashanah evening, I spoke about the biblically mandated *shmita* year: the seven-year cycle in which the seventh year was a year of agricultural rest, suspension of ownership of land, a debt-forgiveness. Shmita is a larger-scale manifestation of the concept of Shabbat— one sacred day for rest in every week. I invited us all to consider how we might incorporate rest and a spirit of “enough” into our weekly rhythms, especially as this Rosh Hashanah began a new *shmita* year.

It has been more than six years since I began serving as Rabbi here at Temple Beth Israel, in July of 2015. I love that my seventh year coincides with the cosmic *shmita* year. This means that I personally will take sabbatical this winter. From December 15 to May 15, I will be stepping away from my duties as rabbi.

I will road-trip with my family, landing (God willing) for a few months in New York City before we return to Eugene. While I am away, I hope to spend a great deal of time outdoors with my children, to reinvigorate my love of Jewish learning with courses at the Hadar Institute, to connect with an old passion for composing chants and other music, and to check out the programming and best practices at some of the most inspiring New York-based synagogues.

Rabbinical sabbaticals are a time for guest and volunteer leadership to shine. Rabbi Yisraela Tubman, who joined our community last year, will be covering my pastoral duties—officiating funerals and checking in with our members who are ill, grieving and otherwise need attention. My “pre-rabbinic intern,” Mat Wilson (who delivered the dvar Torah on the first day of Rosh Hashanah) will be taking over some of my educational roles: family b’nei mitzvah class, weekly Torah study, and occasional divrei Torah. And a wonderful rotation of beloved leaders, old and new, will lead services.

Of course, we are fortunate that our community will still be led by our eminently capable and passionate Executive Director, Nina Korican, and President, Jared Rubin, and that we have committees like Tzdekah V’chesed (caring committee), Chevrah Kaddisha (death and burial guides), Bikur Cholim (visiting the sick) and Tikkun Olam (social justice), all serving the ongoing needs of our community.

If you have any questions about Sabbatical coverage, feel free to reach out to me or Nina. I will miss this community, but I hope to return to you well-rested and full of new ideas. I’ll be excited to hear about how you are inspired in my absence!