



Shaaray Circles: 2022-2023/5783
December Edition

Journey through the Jewish and secular holidays with
others so that we may challenge ourselves with
love and compassion, in community.

Covenant for Shaaray Circles: Temple Shaaray Tefila Small Groups

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ-הָעוֹלָם, יוֹצֵר קִהְלָה קְדוֹשָׁה שְׁלָנוּ.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam, yotzeir kehilah kedoshah shelanu.

Blessed are you, our Holy Source of Blessing, who allows us to be in sacred community with one another, sharing of ourselves and supporting one another with love and care.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ-הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְעֲסֹק בְּדִבְרֵי-תוֹרָה.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu la'asok b'divrei torah.

Blessed are You, our Holy Source of Blessing, who has sanctified us with commandments, and commanded us to study words of Torah.

Statement of Purpose:

This small group allows Temple Shaaray Tefila members to form meaningful relationships with one another outside the synagogue walls. We will gather based on mutual interests, and we will stay because of the connections that we foster. We will show respect and care for each other, and we will do our best to follow the guidelines below:

Brit/Working Covenant:

Accountability

I will attend our small group meetings/get-togethers on the agreed upon times, and I will do my best to be on time to every meeting.

Presence

When we are together, whether in person or on Zoom, I will be present and engaged.

Confidentiality

What we say in our group will remain confidential unless otherwise noted, and we will maintain that confidentiality throughout our time together.

Respect

I will speak to others with respect and I will always assume best intentions. I will remember that we are all here for a common purpose – to create long-lasting and meaningful relationships!

Listening

I will be aware of my presence in the conversation, and step up or step back as needed. I will listen when someone else is speaking instead of preparing what I am going to say next.

Curiosity

Judaism is a tradition of questions more than answers, and I will do my best to approach others and our conversations with curiosity rather than judgment.

Ownership

This is our small group to own, shape, and grow as we see fit. We will get out of it what we put into it, and we will work as a team when making decisions.

December - Celebrating Happiness with Hanukkah:

- a. **Review covenant/working agreement/say blessing (5 min- worth the 5 minutes!)**
- b. **Check-in question:** When it comes to latkes, the traditional potato pancakes we love eating on Hanukkah, what toppings spark joy? **(10 min)**
- c. **Learn and share (40 min)**

Poppies by Mary Oliver (please read the poem out-loud twice, each time with a different participant)

The poppies send up their orange flares; swaying in the wind, their congregations are a levitation	as it floats above everything with its yellow hair. Of course nothing stops the cold, black, curved blade from hooking forward— of course loss is the great lesson.	palpable and redemptive. Inside the bright fields, touched by their rough and spongy gold, I am washed and washed in the river of earthly delight—
of bright dust, of thin and lacy leaves. There isn't a place in this world that doesn't		
sooner or later drown in the indigos of darkness, but now, for a while, the roughage shines like a miracle	But I also say this: that light is an invitation to happiness, and that happiness, when it's done right, is a kind of holiness,	and what are you going to do— what can you do about it— deep, blue night?

Anchoring Hanukkah in the Jewish Calendar:

“After discussing the correct way to light the candles, the Talmud queries, “What is Hanukkah?” Apparently, not everyone knew of this holiday! In the response to this question, we find the very first mention of the famous miracle of the little cruse of oil that lasted for eight days. With this brief interpretation, the rabbis not only put Hanukkah securely on the Jewish holiday map, but also shift the

focus of the holiday from a military struggle for national independence, to a religious festival celebrating God's miracle."

-Rabbi Julie Hilton Dan

Questions for exploration:

- i.) If you were to take a snapshot of happiness, what would that snapshot look like, and what would it tell us about you?
- ii.) What did Hanukkah represent to you growing up, if anything? And what does it represent to you now? What are the places in your life, in our world, that are also points of light and hope?
- iii.) How do your expectations and your stage in life inform your experience of happiness?

d. Siyyum/Closing/Gratitude (5 min)

You are invited to **read over the bolded text of the poem again** and conclude with short responses to the following question: Looking to 2023, how will you be a source of light and inspiration in the year ahead?