



CONGREGATION NEVEH SHALOM

Rituals for Marking a Year



The Week of March 14-20

Dear Neveh Shalom Kehillah, Community,

March 16, 2020 marks the day that our schools and buildings closed last year and our lives were drastically changed by the reality of Covid -19 reaching Oregon. As the soundtrack of Rent put it: “525,600 minutes, how do you measure a year?”



Living according to the Jewish calendar provides us with one answer to this question. We measure our year by completing the full cycle of holidays and Jewish rituals. We light candles weekly to welcome Shabbat (or take up a new hobby of making sourdough challah!), we celebrate each festival in its time, this year finding new ways to gather even in the absence of physical presence, we mark the important life cycle rituals of birth, Bris or Simchat Bat, B’nai Mitzvah, weddings, deaths, and yahrzeits.

Time, and our need for our community and these rituals haven’t stopped in this year, even though so many of our usual ways of marking these holy moments have been interrupted.

Our contemplative text of Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) teaches:

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die;

A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted...

A time to weep, and a time to laugh;

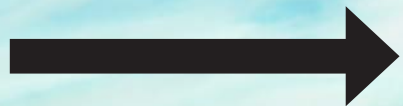
A time to mourn, and a time to dance;

A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;

A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing.

As we approach the milestone of this unique and challenging year, we recognize that this year has encompassed deep loss and grief, innovation and resilience, as well as joy and hopefulness.

In order to mark this moment, we invite you to explore the following pages and engage in any of the **four rituals or blessings that speak to you during the anniversary week of the beginning of the pandemic.**



RITUAL #1: Lighting a Yahrtzeit candle to remember a loved one or to recognize the grief we've held in this year.

The Talmud teaches us that “just as one blesses on the good, so too [we] bless on the bad” (Berachot 48b). The blessing we utter when we hear of a death is “*Baruch Dayan HaEmet* – Blessed is the True Judge.”

This year many of us have lost loved ones, and we haven't gotten to grieve in the ways we are used to, with family, in shiva minyanim, with hugs, or by sharing food. There have been so many other losses as well – we are well aware of them, and yet it can be validating to recognize them on this anniversary so we can also acknowledge our strength and resilience for living with these losses for 365 days and counting.

There is no specific blessing for lighting the yahrtzeit candle, but we light it to remember those we have lost and to mark time since their passing.

Rabbi Posen's blessing for lighting a yahrtzeit candle to remember with love those we've lost:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁנָּתַן לָנוּ הַזְדַּמְנוּת לִזְכֹּר בְּאַהֲבָה

Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam sh'natan lanu hizdamnut lizkor b'ahavah.

Blessed are You, Adonai our G!D, Creator of the universe who has given us this opportunity to remember in love.

Pandemic blessing on grief by Rabbi Arnold Steibel:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֱדֹנָי אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ נִפְשׁ כֹּל חַי וְרוּחַ
כֹּל בְּשָׂר אִישׁ

Ba-rukh Ata Ado-nai, ashe b'yado nefesh kol chai, v'ru'ach kol basar ish.

Holy One of Blessing, in Your hands are all souls and the spirits of all flesh.



RITUAL #2: Shehechyanu blessing: We are grateful to be here at this time!

Our blessing of the Shehechyanu allows us to pause at special moments and thank God that we have arrived at this moment.

Shehechyanu blessing

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁהַחֲיֵנוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ
וְהַגִּיעְנוּ לְזִמְנוֹ הַזֶּה.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech
HaOlam, shehechyanu, vkiymanu,
vhigyanu lazman hazeh.*

Blessed are You Adonai our God, who has kept us alive and sustained us and brought us to this day.



Find a meaningful moment to say the Shehechyanu with your family around the anniversary of the pandemic, or join us for our Congregational Shabbat Candle Lighting on March 19 (more on page 7).

You might want to talk about:

- What has it meant to celebrate the full cycle of holidays during the pandemic?
- What have we learned this year?
- How have we changed?
- What are we grateful for?

RITUAL #3: Rock garden

With spring on the way, Covid-19 rates down, and vaccination rates rising, many of us have reason to feel hopeful. We certainly hope to be able to join together as a community more in the near future.

Ritual: Decorate a stone and help us make a rock garden at CNS!

Whether you are feeling hope, grief, gratitude or anything else right now:

1. Find a rock (any size/shape that you can pick up!)
2. Paint or decorate it with acrylic paint or sharpies. You can paint a message of hope on one side and grief on the other, or dedicate your rock to the memory of someone you lost this year, or write or draw a message of hope—anything that speaks to you.
3. Bring it to CNS and leave it in the bin at the Peace Pole at our traffic circle by Friday, March 19, 10:00am. We will shellac it for you and add the waterproofed rocks to the CNS Rock Garden, which will have a permanent home by the Peace Pole.

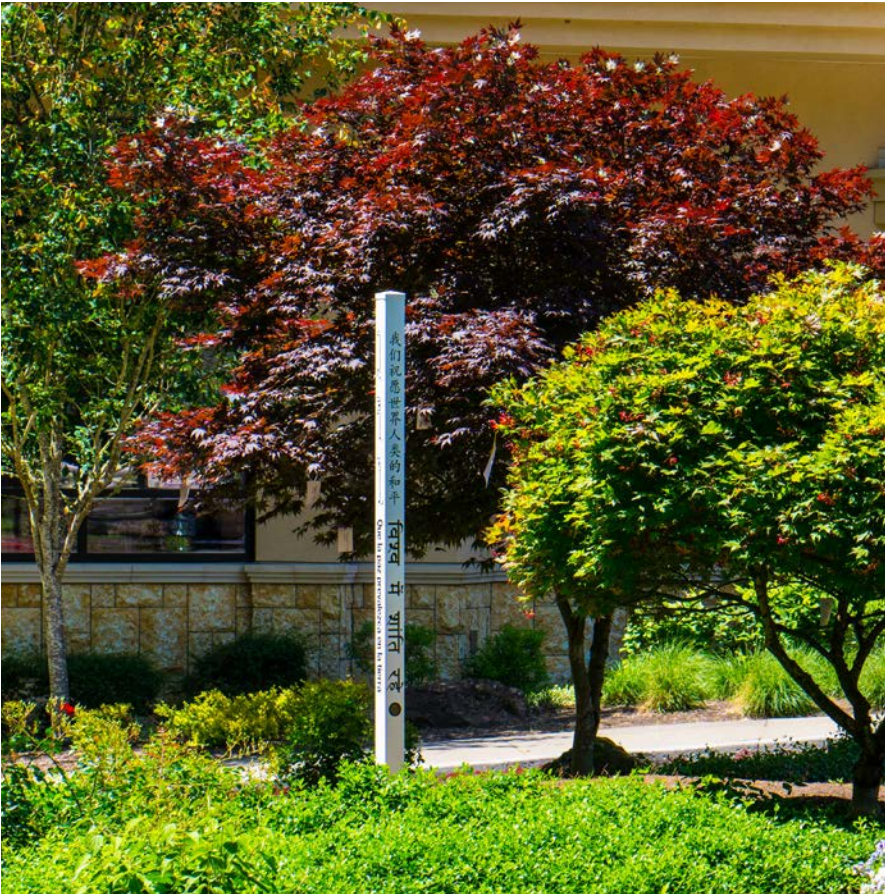


If you need a rock or sharpies, or a yahrtzeit candle or Shabbat candles for lighting, we have extras! Call the CNS office to arrange a time to pick up: 503-246-8831.

RITUAL #4: Communal Shabbat Candle-Lighting

Our week culminates with a short candle-lighting, which clergy will lead from the rock garden that will be created around the peace pole, on the Shabbat anniversary of the pandemic: **Friday, March 19, 2021 at 6:00pm.** Watch for the Zoom link in eblast.

We hope you will be able to join us in this ritual and the others we have offered, to hold space for ourselves and our community as we mark such a such a a unique and complicated year.



ACCIDENTAL MONKS, a Pandemic Poem by Alicia Jo Rabins

Sometimes I am glad to retreat from the world
Sometimes I can't bear my longing for it

Sometimes I am certain I've grown wiser
Sometimes I know I know less than ever

Sometimes I think I could do this forever
Sometimes I think I can't last another minute

Sometimes I wonder which is real
This life or the one I had before?

I live with other accidental monks
We study the holy books of love & distance:

Some days, love across distances
Some days, the distances inside love

We never meant to be monks, my love
But here we are

Not the first to find ourselves
Inside a sudden solitude

Walking these stone corridors
Navigating this open sea

Praying to learn the simplest
And most difficult lesson

How to move through the days
With grace



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