

Words of Torah: *Shabbat Emor* Proclaim the day Holy!

By Rabbi Rick Rheins

You might have noticed that some Jewish calendars that are published by Orthodox institutions do not include the “new” holy days of *Yom HaShoah* (Holocaust Memorial Day), *Yom HaZikaron* (memorial day for the fallen Israeli soldiers and victims of terror), or *Yom HaAtzmaut* (Israel Independence Day). The reason they are not included is because these “new” days of sacred importance were not mentioned in the Torah.

You might respond, “Well, of course they are not included in the Torah. These new holy days reflect experiences of the Jewish people in the modern era. You might also point out that the sacred observances of *Chanukah* and *Purim*, as well as *Tisha B’Av* and *Lag B’Omer*, were not included in the Torah. Rather, they reflected experiences by Jews in later generations.

Indeed, this week’s Torah portion *Emor* (Leviticus 21:1-24:23) teaches us that we need to proclaim the days holy:

The Eternal spoke to Moses, saying: ² Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: These are My fixed times, the fixed times of the Eternal, which you shall proclaim as sacred occasions. ³ On six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there shall be a Sabbath of complete rest, a sacred occasion. You shall do no work; it shall be a Sabbath of the Eternal throughout your settlements. ⁴ These are the set times of the Eternal, the sacred occasions, which you shall celebrate each at its appointed time: (Lev. 23:1-4)

What follows is a detailed list of sacred times from Passover to Shavuot to Sukkot and the High Holy Days. Though the Torah lists them, we are given the responsibility of declaring them. It is this charge that has inspired generations of our people to declare certain days as “holy.”

This concept struck me deeply this past Sunday as I took part in the Rabbinic ordination of new Rabbis. Temple Sinai has a close and beloved connection to three new Reform Rabbis! All three are proud ordainees of Hebrew Union College, the oldest Rabbinic seminary in the world.

Rabbi Jordan Shaner, was ordained in New York. Jordan is the son of long-time Temple Sinai members Mark and Hanna Shaner and he served our congregation as a summer intern in 2017.

Rabbi Bryan Zive was ordained in Los Angeles. He blessed Temple Sinai for five years as our *Chazzan*, leading us in music and inspiring our members.

Rabbi Jordy Cohen will be ordained in Cincinnati. She will be our new Assistant Rabbi and her tremendous gifts and talents will soon endear her to our community.

I was in Los Angeles for Bryan Zive's ordination and had the emotional and spiritual honor of being his "Rabbinic sponsor" for the ceremony. In front of his parents, family, and friends, I was able to convey to him the feelings of support and admiration we all feel for Bryan. As I sat with the other sponsors, the power of this holy day moved many of us to tears. A classmate of mine shared words for his son as he became a Rabbi. Another colleague fought through his emotions to convey his message to his daughter as she became a Rabbi.

Indeed, though I could not be present for Jordan Shaner and Jordy Cohen as they were ordained, both know that Susan and I are absolutely thrilled to welcome them as new colleagues.

It is a holy day that we have proclaimed. These holy days of ordination celebrated the young people who completed five years of post-graduate studies to become Rabbis. (Note that lawyers and doctors have far fewer years for their post-graduate degrees.) These are young people who are devoting their lives to teach, nurture, and guide the future generations of our Jewish family. They know that there will be difficult challenges ahead (but they have no idea how difficult!). They know that though they have studied intensely and have had significant practical experiences at their internships, they have so much more to learn (again, they have no clue as to how much more!). And though they have had a taste of how rewarding it is to be a part of a family's spiritual journey, each will soon discover that the privilege of helping people through their most important and vulnerable experiences is more meaningful than they could ever imagine.

It was a holy day that we proclaimed. Three new Rabbis ordained. Three talented, dedicated, and caring young people who will serve the Jewish people . . . and each of them, is a part of our lives. These are sacred days and sacred responsibilities.

This *Erev Shabbat*, Friday, May 17 (7pm) we will celebrate with our Temple Sinai Confirmation class. Please attend this service to lend your support and your blessings to these young people who have continued their studies from *b'nei mitzvah* through the 10th grade.

B'vrakhah, With Blessings

Rick

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