

MESSAGE FROM BOARD MEMBER ALISON LOERCHER

This morning, I woke up to snow on the ground--again. I honestly couldn't believe it, despite the forecast. I feel spring coming so tangibly, from the flowers starting to grow on my daphne to the buds of the daffodils, I really thought we were done with the snow. I am so craving our beautiful temperate rainforest spring, with everything in bloom and the subtle shifts in warmth that suggest that maybe you don't, actually, need a jacket today. I have been preparing for spring since last fall, actually, when I planted garlic cloves in my garden anticipating their shoots greeting me at the first sign of spring. Proud and determined the cloves shoot forth when it is finally warm enough to grow their tops after having rooted deep into the ground all winter. The invisible (to me) work they've done pays off and they search for sunlight.

We, as individual microcosms of nature, have also been working through the winter, growing our roots to prepare for spring. At the UnShul, we have fertilized our souls with song, prayer and community and as we get excited for the celebration of Purim we can call on our deep winter roots to propel us towards the promise of new growth.

What have we been working on, quietly all winter, perhaps invisibly, that might spring forth from us? What have we been preparing for? Maybe now, this year, the weather is right for us to call for the justice, peace and well being we are seeking and be heard and honored. The root vegetables that over-winter through the cold get sweeter in response.

I hope this sweetness is true too, for us as we struggle through our own personal and collective winters--the political climate, personal growth, health challenges and difficult relationships--may the victories the new season brings be even sweeter and be cause for great celebration.

As we look forward to our Purim celebration on March 23rd and prepare for our historical triumph, I wonder what modern day triumph awaits us just about a month from now? What have we been preparing for all winter that will spring forth as the days--really--get warmer again? How will the seeds we planted around the high holidays bloom around Purim? Whatever you have been struggling with this winter, may it ease as the weather warms and inspire you to come celebrate with us (in costume and in song!) on Purim. I, for one, can't wait.

A BISSEL TORAH FROM OUR RABBAH

Purim and Speaking Truth to Power

On Adar Bet 14, the evening of March 20, we begin our celebration of Purim, the one holy day that we are taught will continue to exist in messianic times.

There are so many lessons that Purim teaches us which might be considered the rationale for this belief. One of them is that if we do not speak truth to power we can

never be safe, never be free. And we have all we need to be the agents of our own salvation.

On Monday, February 18 I had the opportunity to give testimony to two committees at the Oregon State Legislature, an opportunity to speak true (and Torah!) to power. For this month's bisell Torah, for your reading pleasure, below is what I offered up.

*May our joy at last double in this leap year, when we have two months of Adar!
Rav brachot/huge blessings, Rabbah D*

Rabbi Kolodny testimony for House Bill 2020, February 18, 2019

Co-Chair Dembrow, Co-Chair Power, and members of the Committee: my name is Rabbi Debra Kolodny and I'm the Rabbi of Portland's UnShul, the Executive Director of As the Spirit Moves Us, a religious justice organization and the convener for the Portland Spirit Led Justice Alliance.

I am here to urge you to pass the strongest possible version of House Bill 2020.

As a rabbi I am guided by the wisdom and dictates of the Jewish tradition, which begin in Genesis, where we are told to be shomrei adamah, guardians of the earth. Later in our scriptures, in Deuteronomy we are instructed how to perform this role. We are told *lo taschit*-do not destroy or waste.

This command was analyzed extensively by our sages and by 1500 the broad scope of its instruction was clear. Wasting ANY resources of benefit to humans is prohibited by Torah. For example, in the late 11 hundreds Maimonides taught that a Jew is forbidden to "smash household goods, tear clothes, demolish a building, stop up a spring, or destroy articles of food." Perhaps his commentary is the source text for reduce, reuse and recycle!

Rabbeinu Yerucham in the early 1300's rails against wasting water when others are in need. By the 1800's Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch made clear that that *lo tashchit*, "do not destroy," is "the most comprehensive warning to human beings not to misuse the position which Gd has given them as masters of the world and its matter through capricious, passionate, or merely thoughtless wasteful destruction of anything on earth."

But it doesn't take a theologian to know that our very existence on this planet is at stake and that no other Bill this session will do more to reduce climate pollution in Oregon.

The cap-and-invest system set up by Clean Energy Jobs guarantees that harmful pollution will be reduced as it builds our economy and communities.

I ask you to pass a strong bill with a meaningful cap to reduce emissions as quickly as scientists say we must. We must reduce GHG emissions by 20% by 2025, at least 55% by 2035 and 100% by 2050.

We must hold major polluters accountable with a price on greenhouse gases and not allow exemptions for ANY polluting industries, including aviation, marine, and railroad fuels, as well as fluorinated gases and solid waste incinerators. Any attempt to exempt the proposed Jordan Cove LNG terminal from coverage in the legislation must be denied. Those hit first and worst by climate change should be a priority for job opportunities and other community benefits. This means prioritizing low-income, rural, communities of color and Oregon Tribes for investments, jobs, and training.

Finally, decision-making structures must be transparent, equitable, flexible, and accountable. All advisory and oversight committees should have an over-representation of historically underrepresented communities; the Environmental Justice Task Force, equity groups, and Sovereign Nation representatives must play significant and meaningful roles. I ask you to champion bold climate action with a strong HB 2020.

Rabbi Debra Kolodny Testimony on SB 608, Monday, February 18, 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today on Senate Bill 608. My name is Rabbi Debra Kolodny and I'm the Rabbi of Portland's UnShul, the Executive Director of As the Spirit Moves Us, a religious justice organization, and the convener for the Portland Spirit Led Justice Alliance.

While I believe that anyone with a conscience would see the housing crisis we face in this state and see for-cause eviction and rent stabilization as the absolute minimum necessary steps for providing affordable housing, I speak today as someone guided by clear directives in the Jewish tradition.

For example, under Jewish law landlords are forbidden from evicting tenants without due warning, and may not evict tenants during the winter months, when new housing will be hard to find. According to Moses Maimonides, a landlord must give the tenant sufficient notice before terminating a lease "so that [the tenant] can look for another place and will not be abandoned in the street". The landlord, Maimonides suggests, will be held responsible if a tenant becomes homeless as the result of eviction.

In addition to protecting tenants from premature eviction, Jewish law requires landlords to keep rented units habitable. Landlords are required to fix doors, windows, and ceilings, and to perform other repairs generally done by specialists. At least one authority emphasizes that it is the tenant, and not the landlord, who determines what repairs the home needs. The landlord cannot refuse to repair the windows based on his or her assessment that the house does not need more light.

I also speak today as a native New Yorker, accustomed to the kinds of basic protections that SB 608 would provide. To be blunt, I am shocked that they do not already exist in the progressive state of Oregon.

Today, people who rent their homes in our great state can be evicted without reason with as little as thirty days notice, or can receive an unlimited rent increase. It is unconscionable that every Oregonian does not have the safety and stability of a home, without fear of eviction for no reason or a rent increase that will displace us from our communities.

This must simply end. The Legislature must limit no cause evictions, and provide statewide rent stabilization to prevent displacement.

The bill's limitations on annual rent increases likewise constitute the bare minimum protection for our most vulnerable neighbors. A limitation of 7% plus the consumer price index in a 12-month period is necessary to help stem the tide of our houseless crisis. This is especially true in Portland, where dramatic population increases and development are driving out affordable housing to devastating effect for those now houseless.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you today. I urge you to pass Senate Bill 608 in its entirety.

THIS MONTHS HAPPENINGS

Shabbat Morning Service

Saturday March 2nd 10:00 am

3561 SW Custer St PDX 97219

At the home of Rabbah D'vorah

**This space has two steps at its entrance after a walkway with an incline to the door, but we have a portable ramp that converts it into a wheelchair accessible entryway. The bathroom does not have grab bars.*

Lyrical, musical, joyful, meaningful, heart opening, transcendent—all words used to describe Shabbat morning davenning with Rabbah D. This Saturday we lift our voices in prayer together from 10-12 and then dive deeply into meditation and mystical Torah study from 12-12:30. Together we will open Judaism's deep well of wisdom through the lens of the Zohar, Sfat Emet, and other mystical commentators. If you yearn for a beautiful Shabbat morning service in an intimate environment, this service is for you. Can't wait to see you!

Friday Night With The Rabbah

Friday March 15th 7:00 pm

**6005 NE Holladay St., Portland
97213**

** Entrance to this space has no stairs. The bathroom is on the first floor but is not wheelchair accessible.*

At the home of Sara Carr. This home is vegetarian/pescetarian. Please make sure packaged food is Kosher.

Please bring the following according to last name:

A-E: Entrée (fish or vegetarian)

F-G: Gluten free dessert

H-M: Entrée (fish or vegetarian)

N-O: Vegetable side dish no dairy

P-S: Salad

T-Z: Wine or Juice

PURIM PARTY!!!

Don't miss out on our amazing Purim Party: For the first time ever in the history of the world, the Megilla, the Purim story will be sung karaoke style through contemporary music woven with narration. You will not be LISTENING to the Megilla, you will be SINGING it along with a little help from Tina Turner, Lady Gaga, Carly Simon and more. *Don't forget your costume!!*

**** WHAT:** *PURIM* Karaoke with the UnShul!

**** WHEN:** Saturday, March 23rd 6:00 pm

**** WHERE:** The home of Tom & Rivka Gevurtz 1055 SE Liberty Ave, Gresham, OR 97080

PESACH IS COMING . . .

PLEASE PUT SATURDAY, APRIL 20th, 6 pm on your calendar for our annual *Queer Second Night Seder* that is not just for Queer folk!

Join us at the Q Center 4115 N Mississippi Ave, Portland, OR 97217 This year we have SO MUCH LIBERATION to discuss!

(\$20 per person in advance, \$36 two days prior/at the door)

BYO plate, cup & silverware, we will have a fleish/meat potluck, so we'll be dairy free. **REGISTRATION REQUIRED!!** We have a few ways for you to register for our seder:

- **Send a \$20 check made out to “As the Spirit Moves Us” and mail to 3651 SW Custer Street 97219**
- **Or - PayPal: <http://bit.ly/2uFu9N1>**

Community Happenings

MONDAY, MARCH 4 -- TWO EVENTS

Creating a Caring Community 11:30 am – 1:30 pm Congregation Neveh Shalom

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/events/944407615748033/>

Event: jewishportland.org/Sharsheret

Workshop facilitated by Jenna Fields of Sharsheret and Rabbi Barry Caplan, Community Chaplain

Learn how to support loved ones facing difficult diagnoses. For current caregivers, friends or family members of someone impacted by illness, Hesed committee members, Jewish communal professionals, and clergy.

What’s Jewish About Breast and Ovarian Cancer? 6 pm MJCC

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/events/402663763839091/>

Event: jewishportland.org/Sharsheret

Exhibitor Fair and Panel of Experts

Panel

Dr. Lucy Langer, Medical Oncologist, Practice President, Director of Compass Oncology’s Genetic Risk Evaluation and Testing (GREAT) program, and Medical Director of Cancer Genetics for US Oncology

Dr. Dana Kostiner Simpson, Department Chief and Clinical Geneticist at Kaiser Permanente

Talia Schwartz, Breast cancer survivor, wife, mother of three (including a recent bat mitzvah), and inspirational speaker

Come hear from a panel of experts who will discuss the latest in genetic testing, cancer prevention, and how it impacts you and your family.

New Membership Option

Through the wonders of modern technology we are inviting out of town folks and others who can't be physically present to drink from the well of our joyous prayer and learn from Rabbah D'vorah and our whole community through our deep Torah discussions.

Starting in January we will be Zooming our twice monthly (2nd and 3rd) Shabbat morning services live! You can be with us, even if you can't be in the room. We start at 10 am and end at 12:30 pm, and we will also be saving the services on a link so you can access it at any time.

We would so love to have you join us! If this sounds like something you'd be interested in, we are offering it for just \$240 a year donation, which comes out to only \$10 per service. You can pay via paypal with a monthly recurring donation of \$20, or a one time payment (<http://bit.ly/2uFu9N1>) or by sending a check made out to **As the Spirit Moves Us** sent to Rabbah D'vorah at 3651 SW Custer Street, 97219,

In addition to sending your payment, email us to confirm your intent, so we will be sure to send you the Zoom information for our first Zoomed service: January 12, 2019.
