

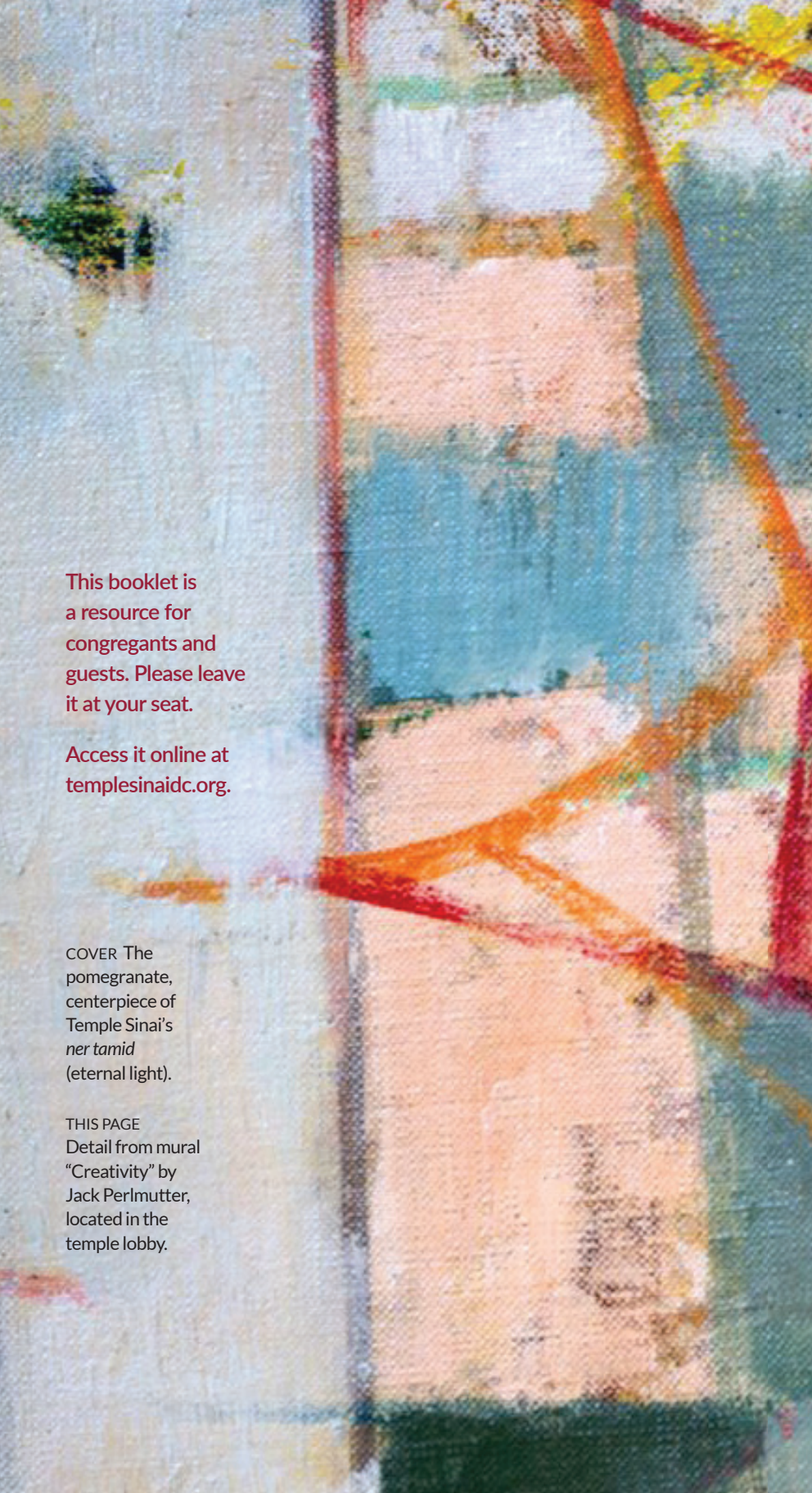


# Temple Sinai

WASHINGTON, DC

Our  
Sanctuary  
and  
Shabbat  
Services





This booklet is  
a resource for  
congregants and  
guests. Please leave  
it at your seat.

Access it online at  
[templesinaidc.org](http://templesinaidc.org).

COVER The  
pomegranate,  
centerpiece of  
Temple Sinai's  
*ner tamid*  
(eternal light).

THIS PAGE  
Detail from mural  
"Creativity" by  
Jack Perlmutter,  
located in the  
temple lobby.





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**Please keep  
our sanctuary  
a place of  
prayer and  
meditation.**

Silence mobile devices.

Refrain from texting  
or talking on phone.

Do not take photos or  
videos during service.



## WELCOME TO TEMPLE SINAI

Temple Sinai is a vibrant place of learning with a respected nursery school, a thriving religious school, an active teen program, and varied adult education classes and lectures. Our library is filled with excellent Jewish resources. We offer a variety of worship services on Friday evenings, Saturdays, Holy Days, and holidays as well as during festivals.

Organized in 1951, Temple Sinai is a Reform Jewish congregation affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ). The Reform movement has enabled the Jewish people to introduce innovation while preserving tradition, embrace diversity while asserting commonality, affirm beliefs without rejecting those who doubt, and bring faith to sacred texts without sacrificing critical scholarship.

We have a proud tradition of being at the forefront of social justice, working with religious and secular groups





throughout the Washington, DC, area on social action. We are a congregation that embraces the needs of our diverse membership. We welcome all people.

We know that our congregation's strength rests on a caring, welcoming community of Jewish life from birth to death. We support each member's unique value and continue to build a strong foundation for the future.

The cornerstone, set in 1956 at the front doors of the main entrance, is a relic from the third wall of ancient Jerusalem. The stone was excavated in 1925 and the founding documents of the congregation are sealed in a case under the stone.





## THE TREASURES IN OUR SANCTUARY



A *kippah* (yarmulke or skullcap) and *tallit* (prayer shawl) are symbolic garments worn voluntarily during a prayer service. They are available in both the main sanctuary and *Bet Am*, our smaller space for worship (see page 20).

Every synagogue contains religious symbols that evoke centuries of Jewish history. In Temple Sinai's main sanctuary, we are surrounded by religious sacred objects that are also works of art.

Satterlee and Smith, the architects of the temple building, sought to give a sense of entering a desert tent, reminding us of the Israelites' 40 years of wandering after the Exodus from Egypt.

**Bimah.** The focal point of the sanctuary is the bimah (the elevated stage). Its overall appearance and artwork were conceived by Boris Aronson (z"l\*), a noted painter and theatrical designer. His setting for our sanctuary is rooted in traditional Jewish symbolism. The chairs and lecterns

*\*Zichrono (ah) livrachah* is an honorific for the deceased meaning "of blessed memory."



Boris Aronson (1899–1980) conceived the design for our bimah. He was an artist known for set design of Broadway shows including *Cabaret*, *Company*, and *Fiddler on the Roof*.

on the bimah were designed by George Nakashima (z”), known for creating innovative, elegant furniture that grows out of the beauty of its wood.

**Aron HaKodesh (Holy Ark).** The centerpiece of the bimah is the ark, the sacred cabinet containing the Torah scrolls. The front of the ark—framed by two dramatic teak columns—represents an opened Torah scroll supported by two wooden poles. In Hebrew, the term for Torah pole is *eitz chayim*, which literally means “tree of life.”

Sculpted into the two teak columns are the Hebrew words “*Adonai echad*, God is One,” the basic tenet of Judaism. Beneath the ark is a crown carved of teak, symbolizing both the Crown of the Torah and the Crown of a Good Name.







## THE TREASURES IN OUR SANCTUARY CONTINUED

***Ner tamid* (eternal light).** Above the ark, the flame of the *ner tamid* is always lit. The flame is sheltered in a pomegranate, a biblical fruit with many allegorical interpretations. The *ner tamid* is placed in a triangle representing the one shaped by fingers of the high priest raising both hands in benediction to bless the congregation. Above these hands curves a shofar (ram's horn), which in ancient times was blown to summon the congregation to prayer. Its penetrating call—said to reach to the throne of God—continues to be heard on the High Holy Days of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. The curve of the shofar culminates in the letter *yod*, which stands for God.

**The Torah scrolls.** The Torah, the most revered and sacred object of Jewish ritual, is the handwritten scroll of the Five Books of Moses. The Torah is written on parchment rolled around two wooden poles. It is kept in the ark with a cloth covering, often adorned with *rimonim* (silver ornaments) and a breastplate. The text of the Torah, unchanged through countless generations, is scribed by hand and must be letter-perfect.

Of the Torah scrolls in our sanctuary, the tallest one has a special significance. It was written in 1780 for the Pinkas Synagogue in Prague, Czech Republic. It is one of hundreds of Torah scrolls rescued after the Holocaust and distributed to synagogues throughout the world by the Czech Memorial Scrolls Trust. See pages 12 and 15 for more about the Torah.

THE TREASURES IN OUR SANCTUARY CONTINUED

**The doors of the ark.** On an enameled background of blues and greens, the doors of the ark present an intricate sculpture of Judaic symbols and Hebrew words. The designs in four rows read from right to left, as does Hebrew.

The Hebrew word kadosh (holy). The ark contains the Torah, the one object in the sanctuary considered holy.

A red menorah (candelabrum).

This plaque in three segments depicts a blue chuppah (marriage canopy), representing Judaism's commitment to the perpetuation of life, according to the commandment, "Be fruitful and multiply."







The Lion of Judah (mentioned in Genesis) is depicted in orange.

The Magen David (Star of David) is an ancient symbol of the Jewish people.

A landscape of arcs highlights three Hebrew letters to the right of the menorah: *shin*, *dalet*, and *yod*—spelling the word *Shaddai*, an early name for God.

A garnet-colored water jug represents the ancient Levites, drawers of water at the Temple. Another inscription of *kadosh* is positioned at the top of the plaque.

A scroll of the Book of Esther and a second Magen David.







**Candlelighting.** The blessings welcoming Shabbat (the Sabbath) are traditionally said in the home at sundown on Friday. They have been included in the Reform Shabbat synagogue services as well.

**Menorah.** The temple menorah at the front of the sanctuary (see photos on pages 5 and 16–17) reminds us of the seven-branch candelabrum of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. It symbolizes the seven days of the Creation. Standing eight feet tall, our menorah, as are all of the other cast bronze ceremonial objects, is by sculptor Harvey Moore (z"l). The spiraling shapes of the seven candles recall the braided challah, the bread we eat on Friday evening after lighting the Shabbat candles.

The menorah in the rear of the sanctuary is a *chanukiyah* (pictured above), lit during the festival of Chanukah. It has eight branches—one for each night of the holiday—as well as an additional holder at the base for the candle called the *shamash* (servant), used to light the other candles. This *chanukiyah* was originally designed to burn oil, which is the tradition of the festival.



## THE SHABBAT SERVICE

During the two millenia in which the Jews have been dispersed among the peoples of the world, two traditions, the Sabbath day of rest and Torah study, have enabled the passing-on of Jewish traditions and the survival of our people. Shabbat traditions emphasize two principles: *oneg* (celebration) and *menuchah* (rest or desisting from work). Although Jews observe these in a variety of ways, there is no other commandment or ritual observance for which one can find such expressions of affection and devotion as for Shabbat.

Shabbat is a reminder of both the Creation of the world and the Exodus from slavery in Egypt. Shabbat observance emphasizes the separation of that day from the remainder of the week, making time itself holy. Shabbat begins at sundown Friday evening (Erev Shabbat) and ends at sundown Saturday (see *Havdalah*,

ABOVE  
During the  
Torah service,  
the reader uses  
a *yad* (hand)  
to follow the  
text on the  
parchment  
scroll.





Members of the choir, in-house band, and other volunteers give their time to bring musical programs to the community.

page 19). Shabbat services are held on Friday evening and on Saturday morning.

Historically, the entire Shabbat liturgy was chanted by worshipers. Today, many prayers are set to music and sung by the congregation. A few melodies are very old, while others were composed more recently. In Jewish communities all over the world, liturgical music has evolved, drawing on cultural and musical traditions.

Besides the regular clergy-led Shabbat services, there are opportunities to pray and connect as a community. Options include: lay-led Shabbat services, Shabbat healing services, and “Praying with our Feet,” an opportunity to observe Shabbat and perform acts of social justice.

For blessing on Shabbat, wine is poured into a *Kiddush* cup. Wine is a symbol of goodness and gladness.



**Blessings and songs.** It is customary for those who are able to bow and/or rise at specific points during our prayers: during *Bar'chu* as it is the call to worship; at the start and end of the *Amidah* as we envision ourselves standing before the throne of God; and during the *Aleinu* when the prayer specifically mentions bowing.

**Friday night** — In addition to saying the blessings welcoming Shabbat at home at sundown on Friday, candlelighting and *Kiddush* (recited to bless the wine) also mark the beginning of the worship service. An opening song is “*Lchah Dodi*” (“Come, my beloved, to meet the Bride”), which conveys the idea that the Shabbat is the Bride, the Queen, the source of joy and blessings, and is God’s gift to us.

**Saturday morning** — The blessings give thanks to the Creator of Life for the new day. The opening song is often “*Mah Tov*,” which welcomes the community into our house of worship.

***Bar'chu.*** As we rise and respond to the “call to worship,” we acknowledge our willingness and readiness to begin worship as individuals and as a community.

***Sh'ma.*** The *Sh'ma*, “*Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad,*” is from Deuteronomy 6:4–9. It is the affirmation of God’s oneness. Traditionally, the *Sh'ma* is the first prayer a Jewish child is taught and the last a Jew says as death approaches.

***V'ahavta.*** This prayer instructs us to “Love God with all your heart, soul and might ... teach the words of the Torah to your children ... and inscribe them on your doorposts ...” Because Deuteronomy commands us to place the words on our doorposts, the words are inscribed on a tiny scroll inside a container called the *mezuzah*, found on the doorposts of Jewish homes.

***T'filah (prayer).*** *T'filah* is one of the oldest liturgical rubrics in our service. The Shabbat version consists of seven blessings that are said while the congregation is



A *mezuzah* is placed on the upper right door frame of a Jewish home or building.



standing—also called the “*Amidah*.” The seven blessings on Shabbat are:

<i>Avot v’Imahot</i>	For ancestors (patriarchs and matriarchs)
<i>G’vurot</i>	God’s might
<i>Kedushah</i>	God’s holiness
<i>Kedushat Hayom</i>	Sanctity of the Day
<i>Avodah</i>	For the acceptance of our worship
<i>Hodaah</i>	For thanksgiving
<i>Shalom</i>	For peace

Following the prayer for peace, we often take a moment for silent meditation.

**Torah ritual.** The Torah is the central text of Judaism, and the study and reading of Torah is an obligation and privilege of all Jews everywhere. The Torah is divided into portions; one *parashah* is read each week.

Of all the objects in the sanctuary, the Torah scroll is the only one honored as holy. Before the open ark, the congregation stands and now says the *Sh’ma* a second time, reminding us that it is God we are worshipping.

Before the Torah is read, it is often carried in a joyous procession, or *hakafah*, through the sanctuary. While songs are sung, congregants may reach out to touch the Torah with their prayer book or tallit (prayer shawl), then kiss the prayer book or tallit as a way of cherishing its teachings. The *hakafah* reenacts the principal event at Mount Sinai: “... and Moses took the Torah to the people.”

Congregants are honored by being “called to the Torah,” either to recite the blessings before and after the reading, or to read the week’s Torah portion. These participants are said to “have an *aliyah*,” which literally means “going up.” While the Torah is open, we honor those who are celebrating a life cycle event, such as blessing a bride and groom, naming a child, or marking a birthday or anniversary. We also offer a healing prayer, the *Mi Shebeirach*, to think of loved ones and offer their names aloud before the blessing.



To follow the reading (in Hebrew and English), pick up *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, available near your seat.



## THE SHABBAT SERVICE CONTINUED

**Haftarah reading.** On Shabbat and holidays, following the Torah reading, there is a reading from the haftarah (selections from the prophetic books of the Bible). There is a specific haftarah section for each Torah *parashah*; the haftarah portion's theme relates to the Torah portion or to the holiday cycle for that day.

**Sermon.** A member of the clergy, *b'nei mitzvah* service leaders (see page 18), or a guest speaker may give a sermon or lead a discussion, usually on a theme relevant to the week's reading. Special musical presentations may also occur at this point in the service.

***Aleinu.*** The *Aleinu*, sung before the open ark, expresses adoration of God as the infinite Creator and Ruler. It looks to a time when God's being, sovereignty, and values will be acknowledged by all people; a time without war, malice, hatred, or oppression.





A closeup of the temple's cast bronze menorah (see page 11).

**Mourner's Kaddish.** An affirmation of the continuity of life, the Mourner's *Kaddish* has no mention of death, yet this prayer is traditionally recited by those who are bereaved or commemorating a loved one's death. The anniversary, or *yahrzeit*, of the death of a loved one is marked both at home (where a candle is lit) and at the synagogue by reading the name before *Kaddish* is recited.

At Temple Sinai, all those who are able rise for *Kaddish*. We do this because it would be a source of great sorrow for many Jews to think that there would be no one to say *Kaddish* for them. Thus, each individual in the congregation accepts the responsibility of saying *Kaddish* for Jews martyred in past centuries or in the Holocaust, when whole families often perished.

**Conclusion.** The service ends with a song and may be followed by a benediction, a blessing of the congregation.

## B'NEI MITZVAH SERVICE

*B'nei mitzvah* are people who, having reached their 13th year, mark the transition from childhood to adult religious responsibility. The custom of the *b'nei mitzvah* ceremony, in which the 13-year-old Jewish boy was “called to the Torah,” originated in the 13th century C.E., relatively late in Jewish history. Today at Temple Sinai, we emphasize becoming a leader—the student leads the worship service, participates in Torah study, chants the blessings, and reads from the Torah for the first time. Each student coordinates a social action project to contribute to *tikkun olam*, the healing of the world.



The ceremony of *b'nei mitzvah* is the first step in assuming the responsibilities of an adult Jew. It is a *simchah*, a joyous occasion, to share with family, friends, and the community.



Adults can become *b'nei mitzvah* through a two-year program, *Limmudei Sinai* (Lessons of Sinai). There is also the “second *b'nei mitzvah*.” *Pirkei Avot*, a section of the *Mishnah* containing 2,000-year-old rabbinic proverbs, contains a guideline that a “normal” lifespan is 70 years. Therefore, an 83-year-old can be considered to be in the 13th year in a second lifetime.

One prayer, the *Shehecheyanu*, is always part of the *b'nei mitzvah* service and other joyous occasions. The *Shehecheyanu* expresses our gratitude to God for “giving us life, for sustaining us, and for enabling us to reach this happy day.”





*B'nei mitzvah* may be celebrated either at the Saturday morning or the Saturday afternoon *Minchah* service. In the fall and winter months, when *Minchah* ends as the sun is setting, the service concludes with *Havdalah*, the ceremony marking the transition from the sweetness of Shabbat to the ordinary concerns of the work week.

Pictured are *Havdalah* ceremony objects (from left): a spice box, passed among participants to smell and remember the sweetness of Shabbat, the braided candle, and *Kiddush* cup.





## BET AM—HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE

Ami Shamir (z'l), designer of the bimah in the *Bet Am*, was an Israeli artist whose painting, sculptures, and stained glass works have been exhibited and commissioned worldwide.

ABOVE The dove and rainbow symbolize peace and remind us of God's covenant with Noah.

Temple Sinai's small sanctuary, the *Bet Am* (House of the People), is a multi-purpose space.

When used for secular events, the panels on the bimah enclose the ark (see photo on right). When used for a religious service, the two center panels move to reveal the ark, as shown in the photo above.

On the doors of the ark, shaped like the tablets of the Ten Commandments, are words from the *Pirkei Avot*. These words remain our highest values today:

על האמת ועל הדין ועל השלום

*Al ha-emet, v'al ha-din, v'al ha-shalom.*

**Upon three things does the world stand:  
upon truth, upon justice, and upon peace.**



ABOVE RIGHT  
The word shalom (peace) sits atop rays of light emanating from the sun. They represent the light of justice and are a sign of the Creation.



On the ark's second set of doors is a menorah, one of the oldest symbols of the Jewish faith. Below is Jerusalem, city of peace and symbolic center of Jewish life. Water waves represent the Creation and evoke the prophet Amos's image of justice welling up as water.

Dedicated to the memories of  
Rabbi Eugene J. Lipman (z"l)  
and Rabbi Balfour Brickner (z"l)

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