

All,

The following is a long but hopefully informative introduction to a change in the rabbinical work week at Shir Tikvah, and a little preparation for the coming new year.

Thirty years ago this month, the architecture critic and social historian [Witold Rybczynski](#) published a fascinating essay in *The Atlantic* entitled "[Waiting for the Weekend](#)." In it, Rybczynski observes that:

Although the weekend is a time for sports, for shopping, and for household chores, it is foremost a manifestation of the structure of our leisure. The chief Oxford English Dictionary definition of leisure is "time which one can spend as one pleases." That is, "free" time. [The writer] [G. K. Chesterton](#) pointed out that ... the term "leisure" is used to describe three different things: "The first is being allowed to do something. The second is being allowed to do anything. And the third (and perhaps most rare and precious) is being allowed to do nothing."

...

The lack of carelessness in our recreation, the sense of obligation to get things right, and the emphasis on protocol and decorum do represent an enslavement of a kind. People used to "play" tennis; now they "work" on their backhand. It is not hard to imagine what Chesterton would have thought of such dedication; this is just the sort of laborious pursuit of play that he so often derided. "If a thing is worth doing," he once wrote, "it is worth doing badly." Chesterton held the traditional view that leisure was different from the type of recreation typically afforded by the modern weekend.

Rybczynski's essay also presents a history of the invention of the week and, later, the creation of the weekend, which expanded from Sundays (for worship) to Monday mornings (for hangovers, and mostly created by worker absenteeism) and then to Saturday afternoons through Sundays (so as to discourage drinking on Sunday). A BBC blurb [reports](#) that the two-day, Friday-night-to-Sunday-night weekend that we know and love came about in 1908, when "a mill in New England allowed a two-day weekend so that its Jewish staff could observe the Sabbath." It seems that some of the motivation for this was that Jewish employees would work on Sundays to make up for the missed time on Saturdays, offending the observant Christian majority. The BBC article continues in the next paragraph to state that [prominent antisemite Henry Ford](#) soon adopted the two-day weekend in his factories, awkwardly without mentioning that well-earned descriptor.

Why do I write so much this month about the weekend? Well, it is because of an important cultural change at Shir Tikvah: **Starting August 1st**, our rabbis' "day off" is moving from Tuesday to Monday! This means that most of the time, our clergy will have two *consecutive* days "off."

I put the "off" in quotes because I know how hard all of our staff work, no matter what day the calendar says it is. I hope, however, that we can lift up the idea that all of our staff are entitled to leisure, to genuine time off. And so I presented Rybczynski's history (which is short and worth reading, and there is a [book](#) too), because it lifts up Chesterton's third definition of 'leisure,' "being allowed to do nothing." If our lives permit it, we know that the freedom of unstructured time, the space for the mind to wander and the body to recharge, is vital to us.

Our tradition gets this. In addition to the weekly Sabbath, every seven years is a *shemita* year, a sabbatical year. As [My Jewish Learning](#) says it, in those years "debts are to be forgiven, agricultural lands to lie fallow, private land holdings to become open to the commons, and staples such as food storage and perennial harvests to be freely redistributed and accessible to all." The next *shemita* year starts, on our [Gregorian calendar](#), on September 7, 2021, the beginning of our Jewish new year. What can we do in this coming year to bring about a true *shemita* year?

In-person worship approaches!

We continue to monitor local and regional developments in the pandemic as we prepare for in-person worship, partnered with online worship. If staff believe there is a need to make a change, they will do so, in consultation with the Board. This Friday is our first in-person (by reservation) worship. Keep your eye on the e-news for more opportunities and instructions about doing so.

Shabbat services will continue to be offered online but will now be available through [Shir Tikvah's YouTube channel](#) and not through Zoom. But we will run a "Zoneg Hall" (Zoneg being a [portmanteau](#) of Zoom and Oneg) through Zoom. In the Zoneg Hall, you will be able to see each other and connect through the chat feature. We will no longer provide live captioning but will include the weekly script on the YouTube page and encourage you to download [Ava](#), a free service that can be used on a phone, tablet, or computer to provide captions. I've found Ava pretty useful in my limited experience.

High Holy Days

Be on the lookout for High Holy Day gift bags coming your way during the week of August 9. They will include a handmade cloth mask* made by (our very own) Anne Lawson, a cute little Shir Tikvah tote bag, a few recipes (including Michael Simon's grandmother's brisket recipe) and a few other things. Members living out-of-state or in certain more distant parts of Minnesota, as well as those with secured front doors in their apartment buildings, will have the bags arriving in the mail. For most everyone else, yours will be personally dropped off by a group of amazing Shir Tikvah volunteers (that is, your fellow congregants).

**The masks may be delayed but hopefully will be available at future services.*

Meet some members!

Please drop me a short note and a photo introducing yourself! Or even just [let me know](#) you're willing to appear, and I'll check in with you!



Welcome to Jackie Rathod (she/her). She writes "I'm originally from California, but I, along with my husband, Shailendra, have called the Twin Cities home for the past seven years. After growing up in Reform and Conservative congregations, I toyed with the idea of finding my 'adult' spiritual home. My experiences with Shir Tikvah have been so warm and wonderful, that I finally decided to go ahead and pursue membership. When I'm not working, I enjoy running, crochet, and studying foreign languages."



Khesed Bein-Evans (they/them) wrote this biography, by way of introduction: “They have been in the Shir Tikvah community for almost five years and have been an official member since February 2019. They’re passionate about Jewish ritual wisdom, climate justice, and fostering deep communal solidarity. You may have seen them captioning Zoom services, drashing on current justice issues, singing in the ensemble, or daring new friends to eat a clementine in one bite.”

Khesed is also the co-founder of the latest iteration of Shir Tikvah’s environmental work, now known as **the Climate Justice Minyan**. With inspiring leadership from community members and support from staff, the Climate Justice Minyan has become a strong partner in organizing for climate justice in Minnesota. Khesed and the team meet on the last Monday of each month to share our organizing goals, connect with each other, and grow into powerful learning and action. Currently, the Minyan’s biggest focus is stopping Enbridge’s Line 3 pipeline. The need for engagement is urgent. If you are interested to learn more about Line 3, go to stipline3.org. If you are ready to engage in this work with a Jewish affinity group, please fill out [this form](#).

As always, feel free to [contact me](#).

Bruce

