

Vayikra: The Alef Between Chance and Fate

I got a flat tire this past week. In the tow truck on the way to the auto shop, I struck up a conversation with the driver, Miguel. I mentioned that I work as a rabbi and, as often follows, Miguel told me his life story: how he came from a broken home in South LA, fell into drug dealing in his teens, alienated his pregnant wife and child, and ultimately contemplated suicide. On the night he planned to take his own life, as his last cigarette was about to go out, a woman on the street handed him a Bible, told him not to give up, and disappeared. That woman—whom Miguel believes was an angel—changed the course of his and his family's life for the better.

Was it chance or fate? The Torah would have us decide. The book of Leviticus, which we begin this morning, opens with the word *vayikra*: "God called to Moses." There is hardly a more explicit statement of divine calling, of destiny. Yet, as Rabbi Jonathan Sacks points out, the last letter of this word is smaller than the rest, that it might be read *vayikar*: "It so happened." What was calling becomes mere coincidence; Heaven's voice, happenstance.

The truth hinges on that small, last letter, which happens to be an *alef*, a silent letter. It is the *alef* of Anochi, "I am God," the first word of the Ten Commandments. Tradition has it that this letter is all that was spoken at the moment of revelation: the sound of sacred silence. It's the same sound that continues to call out to each of us today—if, like Miguel, we have our ears, our eyes, and our hearts open to perceive it.

Shabbat Shalom.
Rabbi Moe Howard



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Affiliated with the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

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Special thanks to the staff and lay leaders who make Shabbat services exceptional:

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MISSION STATEMENT

Sinai Temple is dedicated to providing a welcoming and caring community for its members, devoted to Jewish learning and support for Israel and the Jewish people, and committed to improving ourselves and the world through a growing relationship with God from generation to generation. We are committed to the principles and values of Conservative Judaism and we welcome Jews of all backgrounds and affiliations to observe life cycle events, and pursue our mission through prayer, rituals, learning, music and the other gifts God has given us.

SHABBAT CHILDCARE

Ages Potty Trained - 5 Years Old
9:45 AM | Room 114

MINCHA & KABBALAT SHABBAT

in Kohn Chapel
Every Friday at 5:45 PM
Also available to watch on [YouTube](#)

DAILY MINYAN

in Kohn Chapel
Monday-Friday at 7:30 a.m.
Sunday morning at 8:30 am
Sunday-Friday evenings at 5:45 pm
Saturday evenings 9:00 p.m. (online only)
Please consult the website for holiday locations and times.



SINAI TEMPLE

3 NISAN 5786 | 21 MARCH 2026



PARASHAT VAYIKRA | ויקרא
THE BAT MITZVAH OF OLIVIA A. SAWDAYI
Torah reading begins: Leviticus 1:1 (page 585)
Maftir: Leviticus 2:14-16 (page 592)
Haftarah: Isaiah 44:13-23 (page 610)
"Two More New Years" - Sermon by Rabbi Erez Sherman

SHABBAT SERVICE

in Ziegler Sanctuary at 9:00 a.m.
The Bat Mitzvah of Olivia A. Sawdayi
Also available to watch on [YouTube](#)

TORAH AT THE TABLE

in Blumenthal Library Classroom at 9:00 a.m.

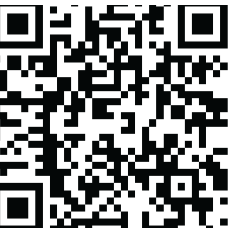
TORAH IN THE ROUND

in Kohn Chapel at 9:30 a.m.
The Bar Mitzvah of Ethan Waterman

TOT SHABBAT

in Lower Traub at 10:15 a.m.

Honor or remember someone special with a meaningful gift to Sinai Temple. Scan this QR code to make a contribution in their name and create a lasting tribute.



Find us on YouTube at www.youtube.com/@SinaiTemplePresents



TEMPLE EVENTS

Book Signing and Conversation with Dr. Arnold Gilberg

Author of *The Myth of Aging*

TOMORROW, March 22, 2026 | 11:00 AM

Join Sinai Temple for a book signing and conversation with Dr. Arnold Gilberg, author of *The Myth of Aging*, in discussion with Rabbi Wolpe. Enjoy brunch and an engaging exploration of health, longevity, and living well.

Volunteer with Keen & Zooz Fitness!

TOMORROW, March 22, 2026 | 12:30 PM

We need your help playing basketball with our Keen+ Members, led by coaches at Zooz Fitness, in the 3rd Floor Weinberg Gym at Sinai Temple. Join us on the court for an energetic and inclusive experience supporting fun, fitness, and community.

ROCK Wednesday!

THIS Wednesday, March 25, 2026 | 6:00 PM

Join us for Rock Wednesday as we support efforts connected to Israel by writing cards to American and Israeli soldiers and making Happy Hats for those injured in the war. Pizza dinner will be provided.

Foundations: Israel History Class with Dr. Saba Soomekh

THIS Thursday, March 26, 2026 | 6:30 PM | Online Only

Explore the history of Israel in an engaging four-session online class with Dr. Saba Soomekh, offering valuable context, discussion, and time for questions.

Shabbat Shalom & Welcome Home Membership

Shabbat Dinner

Friday, March 27, 2026 | 6:30 PM

Please join us for services at 5:45pm in Kohn Chapel

Celebrate Shabbat with good food and great company. Our Membership Shabbat Dinner is a chance to welcome new members, reconnect with familiar faces, and share a meaningful evening together.

An Afternoon at the Movies: *The Prince of Egypt*

Sunday, March 29, 2026 | 3:00 PM

Step into an unforgettable afternoon of film and community with a screening of *The Prince of Egypt*. Experience the powerful story of courage, faith, and freedom on our big screen, followed by time to connect with friends and neighbors. All ages welcome.

Learning with Rabbi David Wolpe

Join Rabbi David Wolpe to explore the wisdom, texts, and teachings that have shaped Jewish life across generations. Together, participants will trace Jewish thought from its ancient foundations through medieval interpretation and into its enduring relevance today.

The next session will take place at 7:00 PM on March 24 in Kohn Chapel.

Torah Fund Luncheon - THIS Tuesday, March 24

Please Join Sinai Temple Sisterhood for a Torah Fund Luncheon honoring Jay Harwitt and Sharona Rachmani with the Ha'Yay Olam Award. Register below.



To make a Torah Fund donation in honor of Jay and Sharona, please scan the QR code.



Passover at Sinai Temple

Join us at Sinai Temple for a meaningful and enriching Passover experience, with a full schedule of services, programs, and community offerings throughout the holiday. From Shabbat HaGadol and Erev Pesach to Yizkor on the final day, there are opportunities for worship, learning, and connection for all ages.

As you prepare for the holiday, we invite you to join us on **Wednesday, March 25 at 7:00 p.m.** for *Sinai Speaks: Pre-Passover Prep* with Rabbi Gavriella Kornsgold and Rabbi Candice Levy. This session will offer helpful guidance, practical tips, and meaningful ideas to enhance your Seder experience.

Join us at **7:30 a.m. on Wednesday, April 1** in Ziegler Sanctuary for Daily Minyan and Siyum Ta'anit B'khorot / Fast of the First Born, followed by breakfast, sponsored by the Diamond and Smotrich families.

For complete details, including service times, locations, special programs, and registration, please visit sinaitemple.org.

SAVE THE DATE

Join us on May 17 for the annual Sinai Temple Gala, a festive dinner and dance honoring President Mehrzad Roshan.

WANT TO PLAN AN EVENT?

Host your next event at Sinai Temple, where exquisite catering meets a stunning setting to create unforgettable experiences. Let our expert caterers transform your special occasion into a celebration filled with flavor, elegance, and impeccable service.

For more information, please contact Judy Begin at jbegin@sinaitemple.org or 310-481-3222.

SPONSOR AN ONEG SHABBAT



Honor a simcha or yahrzeit by sponsoring an oneg! Your sponsorship will be featured in the Shabbat bulletin and announced from the bimah on Shabbat.

To sponsor, contact Judy Begin at jbegin@sinaitemple.org or 310-481-3222.



Scan the QR code to RSVP and to learn about more events.

For more information contact Amanda Harrison at aharrison@sinaitemple.org or 310-481-3246