

The Maggid Feb 2026

Congregation Etz Chaim

P O Box 3752
Merced CA 95344



Tu Bishvat: Trusting What We Cannot See

Just as life moves beneath the soil and sea, the Jewish holiday of trees reminds us that the world is fuller than it often appears.

BY RABBI ADINA ALLEN

President's Message from Belinda Braunstein

The Search for a Rabbi

Longtime members of Etz Chaim will know that for decades the congregation has hosted and mentored student rabbis from HUC (Hebrew Union College). Some stayed the expected one year of service, and many continued for a second year, I am told. Our last student rabbi, following COVID, left us early on for her own reasons. Since then, Rachel has been admirably leading services twice per month with Linda-Anne providing the monthly formal service drash – interpretation on that week's Torah portion. They've really been "holding down the fort," as my mom would say.

But what about a new student rabbi? In January I spoke with the HUC Rabbinic Fieldwork Coordinator about the possibility of our securing a student rabbi for 2026-27.

The upcoming year does not look promising for several reasons, but 2027-28 looks better. So what to do? I think we'll pursue one of three paths:

- 1) Secure a student rabbi as hoped (not likely, but we'll know in April).
- 2) Seek an experienced rabbi to come monthly for services and adult education through the Small Congregation Clergy Collaborative, through which we located Rabbi Berlin last summer for High Holidays.
- 3) Continue on as we are now and get creative for those interested: occasionally carpool to services in Fresno and Modesto; take advantage of Rabbi Lotker's virtual classes/discussions on Mondays and Wednesday nights
- 4) (<http://lotker.com>).

If you have any ideas or suggestions, please email me at bbraunstein@ucmerced.edu.

If you would like to try your hand at leading one of the monthly lay-led services, I'm sure Rachel would enjoy the break. Several congregation members can help you prepare. Let me know! It's up to all of us to hold down the fort and maintain our small but vibrant Jewish community.

B'shalom,
Belinda

Activities

Please plan to join us:

Friday, February 6, 7:00 pm Formal Kabbalat Shabbat Services,
at our Chavurah House

Friday, February 20, 6:30 pm Potluck dinner followed by
7:30 pm Lay Led Kabbalat Shabbat Services,
at our Chavurah House

Saturday. February 21, 10:00 am Breakfast at Granny's Pantry in Atwater
Followed by a driving tour of the almond orchards in bloom

Other Upcoming Community Events

March 7 - Purim Party

April 4 - Community Passover Seder

May 3 - Annual Membership Meeting and 2026/ 2027 Board Elections

High Holidays - Passover

Weekly Shabbat Challah Deliveries

**Contact Rachel Hadley (rhadleyfam@gmail.com) for more information,
or to be added to or removed from the deliveries list
(Merced area deliveries only)**

October - April

1st Fridays: 7:00 Formal Lay Led Services with Torah Reading

**3rd Fridays: 6:30 Potluck and 7:30 Lay Led Kabbalat Shabbat Services
at our Chavurah House on Parsons Ave**

2025/ 2026 Annual Dues are DUE

Our Fiscal Year is July - June

\$500.00 per Year per Family Unit


Please mail your 2025/ 2026 Dues payment to:

Congregation Etz Chaim

P O Box 3752

Merced CA 95344

For those who prefer, we do accept monthly Dues payments year round



CONGREGATION
ETZ CHAIM

*Breakfast
and
Blossoms*

Saturday, Feb. 21, 2026

Breakfast at Granny's Pantry in Atwater at 10am

followed by car touring of almond orchards

(If the blossoms aren't ready, we'll just eat breakfast together.)

Please RSVP by noon on Thurs., Feb. 19,
to Rachel at rhadleyfam@gmail.com





Please send your tributes to: Congregation Etz Chaim, P O Box 3752, Merced, CA 95344

Congregation Etz Chaim gratefully acknowledges the following tributes:

MaryJane Victor in loving memory of her husband Marty Victor

MaryJane Victor in loving memory of her son Philip Victor

Kathy Ellis in loving memory of her husband Bill Ellis

Rachel Hadley in loving memory of her father Don Moore

Rachel Hadley in loving memory of her grandmother Pauline Miller

Ardene Shaeffer in loving memory of her good friend Mary Kaplan

Ardene Shaeffer in loving memory of her mother Muriel Katz Gobler

Ardene Shaeffer in loving memory of her brother Jeffrey Gobler

Ardene Shaeffer in loving memory of her aunt Muriel Goldstein Gobler

May their memories be a blessing זכרונם לברכה

Rich Kleitman in Honor of Rebekah and Jacob Friedman's holiday visits

MaryJane Victor in honor of the good memories and fellowship of their time with Congregation Etz Chaim. In particular Carol Davis' guitar playing, the Brodies and Passovoyes, and Auntie Rose and her love of boxing, tea with the Lewis', Mary Hofmann and the loving and caring community.

More Beautiful than Before...



January Yahrzeits

Alan Blankstein	Bertha Salwen Kleitman
Harry Brodie	Eugene Lewis
Herman Brodie	Uasina Mantin
Donald Coleman	Sonia Matlin
David Davis	Milton Matlin
Evelyn Giventer	Pauline Miller
Jeffrey Gobler	Donald Moore
Muriel Katz Gobler	Marvin Peletz
Mary Greif	Rose Davidson Peletz
Lena Hackman	Rebecca Shapiro
Jacob Hackman	Barbara Winkelstein
Marjorie Hadley	Leonard J. Yamshon
Albert Kalmus	William Zwilling

January Birthdays

Everest Colnic	1/5
Greg Friedman	1/13
Rachel Hadley	1/14
Sylvia Ruth Mason	1/23
Linda-Anne Rebhun	1/30

February Yahrzeits

Lothar Brodman	Gilda Robinson
Anna Brodofsky	Lloyd Robinson
Muriel Goldstein Gobler	Sam Robinson
Ernest Hadley	Norman Silva
Andrew Rebhun	Esther Wax
Sidney Zweig	

February Birthdays

Amy Colnic	2/11
Henry Fultz	2/23
Roseanna Jolly Davis	2/27
Carol Davis	2/29

In the year of their passing

Raissa Moore (05 - 2025)
Mary Kaplan (01 - 2026)

זכרונם לברכה

May their memories be a blessing