

the Shofar



Etz Chayim Conservative Synagogue's Monthly Newsletter

DECEMBER, 2014

KISLEV/TEVET, 5775

Friday evening services begin at 7:00 p.m.
Saturday morning services begin at 9:30 a.m.

FROM SHIRA M.T. ROSENBLUM:

Shalom to the Etz Chayim Community - I enjoyed our Shabbat together last month and am looking forward to joining you again very soon! The weekend after my last visit to Huntsville I had the opportunity to attend a Shabbaton with other students and members of the faculty at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. Rabbi Amy Eilberg, the first female rabbi ordained at JTS, served as the scholar-in-residence for the Shabbaton. Throughout the weekend, we focused on the subject of peace and it was truly a treat to learn from one of the women who made it possible for me to become a rabbi.

The Torah portion for that Shabbat, Vayera, includes the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and an important conversation between Abraham and God that immediately precedes it. In an interesting plot twist, God tells Abraham of His plan to destroy the two cities before destroying them. Until this point, God has not consulted with anyone besides the ministering angels before taking action so why does God feel compelled to let Abraham in on His plan? Perhaps God is questioning

His own decision and is looking to Abraham for affirmation.

In an unexpected turn of events, Abraham, who has never objected to any of God's previous actions or commands, tries to convince God to spare the cities. He exclaims that there might be some righteous people living amongst the wicked residents of Sodom and Gomorrah and asks how God could bear to kill them as collateral damage. Abraham and God go back and forth discussing the possibility of there being 50 righteous people in the cities and then 45, 40, 30, 20 and 10. Twice during this exchange Abraham uses the phrase, "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord..." Abraham recognizes the chutzpah of his comments in light of his status as God's servant and as a man who is but "dust and ashes." Ultimately, while the text does not explicitly confirm that even 10 righteous people cannot be found, it states that God finishes speaking with Abraham, goes on His way and Abraham returns to his place. This story reminds us that even as we remember that we are all "dust and ashes," we must be "bold as to speak to the Lord." Despite Abraham's failure to save Sodom and Gomorrah, we learn from his example that

we should strive to speak up for those who are disenfranchised or who might require saving.

Shira M.T. Rosenblum

DATES FOR ONEGS, 2015:

Men and Women of Etz Chayim,

Thank you so much for completing your commitment to provide 2 onegs in 2014. They were a tasty way to build community and celebrate Shabbat. 2015 will arrive very soon and all slots for onegs are open! Please email your request for a date to:

etzchayimoneg@gmail.com

Also, we have a few slots for you to have dinner with one of the visiting rabbis in the spring. Let me know of your interest on this as well.

Thank you for all you do!

Lynne Edmondson

SISTERHOOD

Greetings!

I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving with friends and family.

Our next most requested Sisterhood event will be December 8 at 7 pm. We'll have Game Night with Left, Right, Center, Bunco and if anyone can remember the directions, Mexican Train will be available. The gift shop will be open, and this will be a great time to pick up those last minute Chanukah presents. Holly and BJ are in charge of the gift shop. They ask that if you buy something

when they are not there, please leave a note with your payment telling them what items you purchase. Thank you. This will be a big help to them when it comes time to restock.

Our Lunch Bunch had an enjoyable time at the Mellow Mushroom. It's great to get together and enjoy each other's company. The next Lunch Bunch will be at I love Sushi on Carl T Jones on January 26. Please plan to attend.

I have been asked to remind you that if you have (or know any) Jewish students in college Shirley Roberts needs their names and addresses, NOW. Every year she sends our students Chanukah care packages, including menorahs and candles. I would like to thank Shirley on behalf of myself and the other parents of past and present Etz Chayim college students for this great service that she provides every year. I know she does this out of love, and it is very much appreciated.

Don't forget the Latke Party on December 14. You can't beat the price or the effort that goes into the quality.

Have a happy and healthy holiday. I look forward to seeing you often in the New Year.

Sandra

MEN'S CLUB, ETC.

Men's club meeting: Nov 25th, Tuesday, 7:30 PM. **No meeting in December.**

IMS: Deliveries made bi-weekly to **Food Pantry and First Stop**. Please drop off food and personal hygiene items in the entry way of the Synagogue at your convenience or

when you sponsor an oneg. It is greatly needed and appreciated.

Simcha & Memorial Plaques: \$50.00 & \$75.00 respectively; please contact Joe Sacks at 256-883-1889 for details.

Annual Latke Party: Sunday, December 14, sponsored by Sisterhood. Bingo at 11:30, sponsored by Men's Club. **Enjoy free bingo along with prizes. Fun for everyone!**

Happy Hanukkah to all.....Joe😊

BBYO INFO

On the 4th of December, BBYO is hosting a Game Night for 7th through 12th graders who are a part of, or are looking to join, BBYO. This event will be at Etz Chayim at 6:00 PM.

On the 14th of December, BBYO will help run games at the Latke Party at Etz Chayim, which begins at 11:30. Afterwards, BBYO will host a spirit event to help prepare for BBYO International Convention.

The BBYO International Convention will be held in Knoxville, TN, on December 21-24.

For more information, contact Ethan Smyth, or visit b-linked.org.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Planning Committee will meet on Tuesday, December 2, at the synagogue at 7:00 pm.

Old business carryovers from the last meeting will be 1.) to firm up the congregation's program of performing mitzvot such as visiting the hospitalized, preparing

meals for the sick, and reading to people in nursing homes; 2.) to discuss the possibility of setting themes for Erev Shabbat services; and 3.) to establish a program of welcome and orientation for new members.

From there we'll move on to brainstorm new programs focusing on the following areas: Religious, Educational, Social, Youth-Oriented, and Outreach.

Everyone is welcome and all ideas will be heard.

Jon

ONEGS

Nov 28	Leites
Dec 05	Yalowitz
Dec 12	Goodman
Dec 19	Sacks
Dec 26	Kalachman

DONATIONS

General Fund

From: Ray Applebaum
In Honor of the High Holidays

From: Ira Leitner
In Honor of the High Holidays.

From: Helen Green
Yartzeit of Monroe Green, the love of my life.

From: Lauren & Steve Goodman
In Honor of the High Holidays

From: Linda & Fred Kolchin

Randy Sacks Memorial Fund

From: Linda & Fred Kolchin

Rabbi Fund

From: Harriet & Joe Sacks
In Memory of Cele Krell, Aunt of Max & Millie Rosenthal

From: Sandra Wiederecht
In Memory of Cele Krell, Aunt of Max & Millie Rosenthal

From: Brenda & Cliff Liles
In Memory of Max & Millie Rosenthal's aunt, Celia Krell

From: Linda & Fred Kolchin

Jewish Education Fund

From: Martin Freeman
In Honor of Bill Goldberg and Raven Livingston for their efforts to make Shabbat morning services enjoyable.

BBYO Fund

From: Brenda & Cliff Liles
To: Shirley & Ted Roberts-thanks for the Chanukah packages for the students.

Sisterhood Fund

From: Janet Schindler
In Memory of Cele Krell, Aunt of Max & Millie Rosenthal. May she rest in peace.

From: BJ and Bill Brigadier
For the Etz Chayim Break the Fast meal.

From: Sandra Wiederecht

Outdoor Lighting Fund

In Memory of Gertrude and Perry Schlein from their daughters Natha Hancock and Robin Slomka and their families.

REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR- DECEMBER 7, 1941. 73 YEARS.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Dec 2	Planning Committee meeting, 7:00 PM at EC
Dec 4	BBYO Game Night, 7 th -12 th graders, 6 PM at EC
Dec 5-7	Rabbi Shira M.T. Rosenblum Shabbaton
Dec 08	Sisterhood Game Night, Gift Shop Open
Dec 14	Latke Party with Bingo at 11:30
Dec 14	BBYO help with Latke Party games followed by Spirit Event
Dec 21-24	BBYO International Convention, Knoxville, TN
Jan 9-11	Rabbi Kenneth Leinwand Shabbaton
Jan 26	SH Lunch Bunch, I Love Sushi

BIRTHDAYS

Nov 28	Yael Roberts
Dec 04	Joe Paddock
Dec 06	Gabi Lapidus
Dec 07	Daniella Pigott
Dec 11	Charlie Fisher
Dec 12	Nicole Sacks
Dec 13	Joe Roberts
Dec 13	Martin Freeman
Dec 16	Sue Paddock
Dec 18	Dennis Bulgatz
Dec 25	Holly Kent
Dec 27	Kaitlin Polin
Dec 31	Joshua Dixon

ANNIVERSARIES

Dec 14	Lucy & Charles Fisher
Dec 22	Arlene & Boyce White
Dec 23	Dorothy & Bill Goldberg

YARZHEITS

Nov 28	Kislev 06	Abraham Belsky*
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Nov 28	Kislev 06	Molly Levy Buchman
Nov 28	Kislev 06	Steve Sokolow
Dec 01	Kislev 09	Pauline Baron Kripke*
Dec 04	Kislev 12	Margareta Bernstein*
Dec 04	Kislev 12	Helene Kamisher*
Dec 05	Kislev 13	Gertrude S. Goldberger
Dec 08	Kislev 16	Sam Sokolow
Dec 09	Kislev 17	Irving Weinberger
Dec 10	Kislev 18	Lily Yedid
Dec 14	Kislev 22	Yetta Michaelson
Dec 17	Kislev 25	Katherine Harris
Dec 19	Kislev 27	Moe Post
Dec 20	Kislev 28	David Amiel Wertheim*
Dec 20	Kislev 28	Morris Freeman
Dec 21	Kislev 29	Rita Goldstein*
Dec 23	Tevet 01	Meyer Rodkin*
Dec 25	Tevet 03	Max Theodor Hoehne*
Dec 26	Tevet 04	Freida Makower*
Dec 27	Tevet 05	Katherine Harris
Dec 28	Tevet 06	Fannie Ginsburg
Dec 28	Tevet 06	Estelle Okeon
Dec 30	Tevet 08	Dan Polin*
Dec 31	Tevet 09	Florence Goldstein*
Dec 31	Tevet 09	Rose Kahn*

* Plaque

**Light Memorial candle at sunset of the previous evening

A CHANUKAH CONFESSION

By Ted Roberts

I have a Chanukah confession to make. I like Christmas. My family has long been aware of my weakness and attributed it to my peculiar form of insanity; an eccentricity (that's MY word - theirs is "nutty") about Judeo-Christian affairs

I can't help it. I know that I should feel "uncomfortable" in the month of December. A word many of my Jewish friends use. Why uncomfortable? I suppose because the season is full of reminders that numerically we're a small island in a dominant sea of Christianity, and historically it was a time of

suffering. Makes us feel "different", they say. This uncomfortable sense of alienation is not unique to 21st Century American Jewry. We have lived as a minority within the grasp of every significant society that has molded the mind of Western man. Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Roman, and Anglo-Saxon, to name a few. And our defenses - those 613 "weird" dictates in the Torah - the Pentateuch - that accented and advertised our uniqueness - worked to perfection. The Christmas season, when the air is heavy with carols and bells and Christmas greetings, is the mildest of challenges.

Admit it. We're a bowl of Latkes. Potato pancakes, next to the baked ham on the Christmas table; an owl in the Pear Tree. And as Gerard Manley Hopkins, a great Christian poet says, "Glory be to God for dappled things" - by which he means diversity - a recently rediscovered concept.

Sure we're a minority. But we sent our intellectual explorers around the cultural currents of the world. Christmas reminds me of that, too. "White Christmas" by Izzy Ballin (Irving Berlin) and piles of Yuletide films and plays and books; and most significantly the child who's the centerpiece of this adoration - all Jewish products. Maybe it's a proud season for us.

This all dawned on me one December afternoon in 1938. Me and the rest of my third grade class were singing Christmas carols. "Noel, Noel, born is the King of liiiiisrael." I was - as usual - shall we say Uncomfortable. Those alien songs underlined my lack of credentials for the affection of Betty Ann McIntosh. I didn't have enough trouble - once a year for two full weeks she was reminded that I was some exotic species different from her own.

Then I heard more clearly the words of the song - "Born is the King of Israel". Hey, this lyric had something to do with me and my kind.

Most of the kids didn't even know what "Israel" meant. I explained it to classmates and did a little PR work in the process. This was a couple of decades before the Dead Sea Scroll excitement. Well before public awareness of Jesus the Jew: "the Little Lord Jesus" was one of us. They were singing hymns of praise to a Jew! He never knew the word "Christian" in Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic. This greatly relieved my discomfort. It still does.

But if you ARE one of the Yuletide uncomfortables, Christmas Eve you should warm yourself with a nice cup of tea and think; isn't it amazing that my team is less than 2% of this nation, yet there's the echo of klezmer music in the Christmas bells and a Jewish flavor to every course of the Yuletide feast, which is Christmas.

I like the music and the food. The lights, too. And best of all, the rare attention paid to civility and kindness. I think it's a season when Christians earnestly examine their behavior and try to improve it. It's a Christian Yom Kippur.

And as to those who talk about the materialism of Christmas; well it all depends on what kind of spectacles you're wearing. Giving away your December paycheck in the form of gifts to others seems to me an excess of generosity, not the acquisition mania that characterizes materialism. So lighten up and thank the Lord that we live in the good ol' USA, and the knock at the door is only the mailman delivering a Chanukah present.

Ted Roberts, "The Scribbler on the Roof," is a syndicated Jewish columnist and longtime member of our Synagogue. Buy Ted's collected works at Amazon.com or the Sisterhood Gift Shop. Ted welcomes your comment and/or critique and can be emailed at: shirlr@hiwaay.net

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