
the Shofar



Etz Chayim Conservative Synagogue's Monthly Newsletter

FEBRUARY, 2016

SHEVAT/ADAR, 5776

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

FROM THE RABBI

No Time for Heads in the Sand

If a cadre of Jews had studied violent passages in the Torah, and had been urged to act on those passages by rabbis, and then had shouted “Shma Yisrael” or “Yitgadal ve-yitkadash” as they proceeded to shoot, bomb or behead innocent people, I would conclude that something was deeply wrong in that expression of Judaism. I would condemn the Jews who interpreted their Judaism in such abominable manner. I would join with fellow rabbis — and trust me, there would be thousands of us — in proclaiming to the world that hatred and murder are anathema to Judaism. I would re-affirm the Torah teachings that we hold dear, and would renounce as a perversion of the faith any interpretation that promotes hate and violence.

Here is what I would not do, regarding acts of Jewish-inspired terror: I would not deny that Jewish terrorists were Jews. If rabbis encouraged the savagery, I would not deny that the rabbis were Jewish rabbis. (Is there any other kind?) Ashamed, horrified and outraged though I would be in the face of

Jewish terrorism, I would admit that this behavior is some sort of expression of Judaism, but that it is a sick, perverted and unacceptable expression; it's a poisonous offshoot of a healthy tree. I am sure that every Jew I know would join me in horrified condemnation of the criminals, as would 99% of Jews world-wide.

Given the above, it continues to perplex me that Islam gets to play by different rules. There are Muslim individuals, quoting Koranic teachings and Muslim imams, shouting what has become the Muslim war-whoop (“Allahu akbar”), who are murdering innocent people around the world. As far as I can tell, most Muslims are silent about these horrors. And, while I'm on the topic, the president of the United States goes through major contortions in order to claim that Islamic barbarism has nothing to do with Islam.

Just within the last three months the world was treated to the murder of 14 office workers in San Bernardino by an ISIS husband-and-wife team, the Paris massacre by ISIS of 130 people, the killing a day earlier of 43 people in Beirut, the downing by ISIS of a Russian jetliner in

which 224 civilians perished. To show that ISIS's reach is global, a suicide bomber killed 2 people and injured 23 near a Starbucks coffee shop in Jakarta.

As I'm writing this article I see in the news that 28 people were slaughtered overnight at a hotel in Burkina Faso. Al-Qaeda proudly took credit....

So here's what I think, speaking as a rabbi. These depravities are indeed an expression of Islamic religion. Peaceful Muslims have to show that their view of the faith will prevail over the violent interpretation. It's not up to Christians, Jews or agnostics to explain what Mohammed really wanted. That task is obviously for Muslims themselves. In my opinion, the Muslim world is doing a poor job. The voices of moderate imams are muted, the masses are silent, reform thus far is nugatory.

Does the Western world have *any* role in this? Yes. We need to make clear that we don't issue a blanket condemnation of Islamic religion nor of Muslim individuals. Indeed, we value Islam insofar as it contributes to the principles of fairness and compassion, and we honor those Muslims who live by those values. Muslims who side with the good should feel encouraged by knowing that decent people around the world are on their side.

I wish I knew why President Obama doesn't see things this way. One would hope that the leader of the free world would not lead from behind. I believe that he is making a serious moral error by not recognizing the most threatening scourge of our times.

We Jews are a people who pray all the time for world peace. We are the people who brought the concept of the Messiah to the

world. You could say that we are idealistic. Maybe we are naive. And yet we are not a people in denial. Religion deals with good and evil. Jewish religion certainly deals with those categories. We don't condemn an entire religion. We condemn a toxic form of a religion. We don't declare war on an entire people. We declare war upon people who have declared war on us.

The battle against Islamic terror will continue to be bloody. The battle for mental clarity should be much easier. Political correctness, fear, and some deluded leadership within the free world are making the battle all the more difficult. Islam is fine. Islamic terror must be annihilated. In eight words, that is the moral dispensation of our century.

Stephen Listfield

RABBI LISTFIELD'S TOPIC FOR SUNDAY BRUNCH, 2-14-16: HITLER AND DARWIN

Two of my favorite people of all time were born on the same day: Abraham Lincoln and Charles Darwin. (I once called it a remarkable coincidence that Lincoln and Darwin were born on the exact same day, February 12, 1809. Someone asked me, "But was it the same year?")

I recently came across an article in my files titled "Evolution and Religion." The writer faults Darwin and his theory for all sorts of evils, and he includes the not uncommon accusation that Darwin helped foster Hitler's genocidal ideas. Why I saved that article from 25 years ago, I cannot say. I assume that I wanted to retain it as a bad example. The article, although by an educated and accomplished person, certainly had nothing of positive value to it.

I don't want to reveal everything that we'll discuss on Sunday, February 14, beginning with breakfast at 9:45. Suffice to say that I plan to present the theory of evolution by natural selection as a very great idea (it has been called the greatest single idea ever taught). I plan to address the challenge to religion and spirituality if, as Darwin says, we are descended from apes (actually, we are related to apes but Darwin did *not* say that we are descended from apes). And overall we shall celebrate Darwin's birthday weekend by discussing anything on your mind about science and its relation to religion, atheism, Intelligent Design, and anything else. Please come — it'll be grand!

Stephen Listfield

JOIN US FOR ISRAELI MOVIE NIGHT

Etz Chayim will hold another Israeli Movie Night on February 28, at 7 p.m. We'll show the film *Waltz with Bashir* (2008, 90 mins.): An Israeli film director interviews fellow veterans of the 1982 invasion of Lebanon to reconstruct his own memories of his term of service in that conflict.

Please join us for this unique opportunity. Thank you to Linda Maier Kolchin for helping us provide these films.

BBYO

Rocket City BBYO Chapter is on fire. At the Regional Convention in December our chapter and its members received honors, awards and accolades. Among them: Jiji Plotka was elected Regional VP and awarded the Silver Star of Debra, Ethan Smythe received the Silver Shield of David and Regional Best 4 Year Member. Our girls

won the volleyball tournament, and Jessica Banks was chosen as Regional AZA Sweetheart. We also received 3 awards as a Chapter.

While at the Regional Convention we created Jars of Smiles, which are gifts and activities for hospital bound kids. We were able to create the most the hospital organization has ever received. Convention also gave Chapter members the opportunity to learn about Israel from Israelis, become more familiar with Jewish prayer, dance at the Silent Disco and make meaningful Jewish friendships.

In January, a new board was elected at our Dinner Lock-In. More to come on what they'll be planning. Coming up in April (15-17) is the Mega-Kallah with the Atlanta Council and Southern Region in Talladega, Alabama.

If you know someone interested in BBYO, please call. You may speak to me or one of our fabulous teens.

Shoshanna Rosenthal

MEN'S CLUB, ETC.

Next meeting: Feb. 23, Tuesday, 7:30 PM

IMS: Deliveries made bi-weekly to the Food Pantry and First Stop. Please place items in foyer of Synagogue, It's a Mitzvah!!!!

Simcha & Memorial Plaques: \$50.00 & \$75.00 respectively. Please see Joe Sacks for further details (256-883-1889).

Keep warm, healthy & happy.....Joe

SISTERHOOD GAME NIGHT

Grab your favorite games...Scrabble, Mexican Train, Dominos, Monopoly, Pick-Up Sticks, etc...and come on down to Etz Chayim on Monday night, February 15th at 6:55 to play. All women in the congregation are welcome!

The games will be preceded by a 5 minute business meeting (for Sisterhood members only) to discuss/vote on funding new flooring.

SISTERHOOD

Greetings,

It is good to be home. I just returned from Seattle, and I thought of our synagogue often. I have been in synagogues in Oklahoma, Philadelphia, Atlanta, St. Louis, and Seattle this year. Most have worries about getting more attendance on Friday, Sisterhood participation and wanting more people to participate behind the scenes. They all have this in common - some more than others. Another common thread was that the services were similar, which made me feel at home. I left with the impression that our synagogue is very special. Our participation, Sisterhood support and our people who care and are willing to step up is amazing. I noticed that synagogues with 600 and 1000 families only had 12 people there Friday evening. We may be small but we more than make up for it with people who care about each other and people who try to enrich our Jewish experience. You have no idea how lucky we are.

Our Latke Party was wonderful. We had a good crowd, and we had a great time. Thank you to all the people behind the scenes that made this Sisterhood sponsored event a

success. This has never been a fundraiser- it is another event that exists just to enjoy each other's company and give our children and members a chance to experience another Jewish tradition.

I have been told that the January Lunch Bunch had a great lunch. If you did not attend, you missed some good food and great company.

Our February event will be a Game Night at 7 PM on the 15th. Bring a game you want to play, or join one someone else brings. Let's get together for a fun night. Our Programming Vice President, Nanette Schwartz, is doing a great job presenting us with new and different events. Please make an attempt to take advantage of these activities.

As always, if you have any questions please call or text me. Sandra Wiederecht, 256-797-4013.

ONEGS

Jan 29	Dunne/Ross
Feb 05	Reese/Schindler
Feb 12	Wiederecht
Feb 19	Schwartz
Feb 26	Sacks

DONATIONS

General Fund

From: Co-Workers of Alex Harris
In Memory of Steve Harris, Alex's father.

From: Dorothy & Bill Goldberg
To: Mr. & Mrs. Dave Barrows - Our deepest sympathy on the loss of your mother, Barbara Barrows.

From: Nancy Engle
In Memory of Steve Harris, he was a special person.

From: Dorothy & Bill Goldberg

Rabbi Fund

To: Dave & Deb Barrows - Our thoughts are with you. In Memory of your mother, Barbara Barrows

To: Fred Glickman's family - Sorry to hear of the loss of your father, Fred Glickman, we have wonderful memories of him.

From: Shirley & Ted Roberts
To: Dave & Deb Barrows - Thinking of you. We are so sorry about the loss of your mother.

From: Diana & Howard Polin
To: The Glickman Family - In Memory of your Dad, Fred Glickman, so much a part of Etz Chayim's history. With much respect and affection.

From: Sandy & Marvin Kalachman
In Memory of Sylvia Kalachman, mother of Marvin Kalachman

From: Dorothy & Bill Goldberg

From: Paulette Goldstein
In Memory of Marge Flashner with sympathy to her son, Perry

From: BC Pearson
In Memory of Steve Harris

BBYO Fund

From: Diana & Howard Polin
To: Darlene Gollop - Wishing you healing, speedy & complete

From: Millie & Max Rosenthal
To: Darlene Gollop - Thinking of you, speedy recovery. We miss you at "Maj".

Outdoor Lighting Fund

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan 24	Israeli Film Night, 7:00 PM
Jan 26	Men's Club Meeting, 7:30 PM
Feb 12-14	Rabbi Listfield Shabbaton
Feb 15	SH Game Night, 5:45 PM
Feb 23	Men's Club Meeting, 7:30 PM
Feb 28	Israeli Film Night, 7:00 PM

BIRTHDAYS

Feb 02	Danny Bulgatz
Feb 03	Gordon Sacks
Feb 05	Jan Sainker Reed
Feb 08	Ezra Roberts
Feb 09	Marion Shelman
Feb 10	Ashley Bostick
Feb 12	Steve Edmondson
Feb 12	Daniel Yalowitz
Feb 14	Aryeh Roberts
Feb 17	Cliff Liles
Feb 18	Sarah Drake
Feb 25	Andrew Edmondson
Feb 28	Michelle Lapidus

ANNIVERSARIES:

Feb 04	Shirley & Ted Roberts
Feb 14	Marion & Don Shelman
Feb 14	Lynne & Steve Edmondson

Yahrzeits**

Jan 26	Shevat 16	Jerome L. Richard
Jan 27	Shevat 17	Esther Goldberg*
Jan 28	Shevat 18	Helen Flank Baum*
Jan 30	Shevat 20	Mildred Freedman*
Jan 30	Shevat 20	Jennie Greenbaum
Jan 31	Shevat 21	Bertha Flank*
Feb 02	Shevat 23	Hannah Rosen
Feb 03	Shevat 24	Rebecca Treister*
Feb 03	Shevat 24	Richard Irwin Kolchin
Feb 05	Shevat 26	Rose Belsky*
Feb 07	Shevat 28	Joseph Goodman
Feb 10	Adar 1	Lotta Chester
Feb 10	Adar 1	Mae Green*
Feb 12	Adar 3	Phillip Smolker
Feb 13	Adar 4	Gladys Moiseev
Feb 14	Adar 5	Stanley B. Brown
Feb 14	Adar 5	Benjamin Bierstein
Feb 16	Adar 7	Helena D'Acosta Weingarden*
Feb 16	Adar 7	Philip Aronowitz*
Feb 16	Adar 7	Mary Hoffman Baker*
Feb 16	Adar 7	Rose Leites*
Feb 19	Adar 10	Sarah Rachel Schindler
Feb 22	Adar 13	Lou Harrison*
Feb 22	Adar 13	Max Moiseev*
Feb 22	Adar 13	Sam Okeon
Feb 24	Adar 15	Jeffrey Tillman*
Feb 25	Adar 16	Bernard Flank*
Feb 25	Adar 16	Goldie Merzon Ludmer*
Feb 26	Adar 17	Joe Brown
Feb 26	Adar 17	Anna Fleishman
Feb 27	Adar 18	B. H. Ledbetter*
Mar 01	Adar 21	Melvin Harris Kirsch*

* Plaque

**Light Memorial candle sunset of previous evening

MODESTY AND OTHER VIRTUES

By Ted Roberts

The Bible is full of mysteries. Aside from its poetry, philosophy, theology, history, it's brimming with mysteries that have baffled the rabbis, theologians, and secular scholars of the ages. Some are well known and have

been explored for centuries. Let me pose one which slapped my face as I read the familiar story of disobedience by the first newlyweds: Adam and Eve. Such a simple story crowned by an anomaly that mystifies this scribbler and a schoolroom full of scholars. What is this obsession with nudity?

As we know, the snake, so to speak, seduces Eve. She, and naïve Adam swallow his marketing speech. Now they both metaphorically have ingested the wisdom of the Tree of Good and Evil. But to us, the ban on such a luncheon is already a puzzle. Why should G-d's finest creation not know the difference between good and evil? It would seem the finest ingredient of mankind. Sin – the ingestion of the fruit of the tree – why the connection with nudity? There wasn't a single tailor in Eden?

First a strange interlude BEFORE they indulged their passion for the fruit of the tree: "they were both naked, the man and his wife and they were not ashamed". How strange. Why should they be ashamed? What's blameful about nudity thousands of years ago? And who was to view their nakedness – the bluejays, the snake, the brown bear? A conundrum if there ever was one. And why would their disobedience bring on nakedness?

But we are not through. They do eat of the Tree of Good and Evil. And immediately they see something evil in their "nekkidness", as we say down here. Why? They sew up underwear from fig leaves. Why does their violation affect the lower reaches of their bodies and not their minds? Why are they suddenly sensitive to the revelation of their body? They just violated G-d's command and they're worried about the world's first burlesque show! How

irrelevant. What an imbalance.

The charade – this relevance to the disobedience of an all-powerful G-d and underwear continues. It's a puzzle.

G-d calls out to Adam – basically “where are you” – as though He doesn't know. Adam, now wearing a fig leaf suit and matching vest, tells his Creator that he was afraid to answer, “because I was naked”. Shocking. Adam is afraid to stand nekkid (as we say down here) in front of his G-d. And furthermore his nudity evidently reveals the fact that for the sake of an apple he has shattered one of the only two commandments that G-d has levied upon him. Little does he know that centuries later his kin will receive 613 more! The dialogue that we and all mankind are familiar with follows. The punishment: Adam has to get a job. Poor Eve is plagued with childbirth pain.

And when the lecture is over unbelievably, G-d, Himself, “made tunics of skin and clothed them”. Why? Why is the Designer and Master of the galaxy shocked by nudity? Every living creature is naked!

This is mind bending. Evidently, the newlyweds' lack of wardrobe even impresses the Creator. And it loudly announces to G-d that the two naked ones have broken the only sanctions imposed on them.

Why is it so important? We're talking about a primeval wilderness, not Times Square. And why would the G-d of all creation worry how His children are dressed? There is some meaning behind here that we are missing. I mean, if you carved the Alps and scooped out the trench for the Pacific Ocean and hung the planets in the virgin sky, what difference does a fig leaf here or there

make? Clearly, the translation misses something. Modesty is far from the top of the virtue chain. But I'm just a scribbler. Go ask your Rabbi.

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Buy Ted's collected works at <http://www.lulu.com/content/127641>