

the Shofar



Etz Chayim Conservative Synagogue's Monthly Newsletter

October, 2016

Elul/Tishrei, 5776-5777

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

Copy and paste the following for the High Holiday season schedule of services:

<http://www.etzchayim-hsv.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Prelim-5777-Huntsville-Etz-Chayim-HH-Services-Schedule.pdf>

FROM THE RABBI

HOW MUCH HAPPINESS CAN WE TOLERATE?

The great chasidic rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav used to say, *mitzvah gedolah lih'yot be-simcha tamid* — “It is a great obligation to be constantly joyous.” Sounds wonderful, although we might point out that there really is no such mitzvah in the Torah. Yes, we are commanded to rejoice on the *holidays*, and on one particular holiday we are supposed to super-rejoice. (Gold star if you know which holiday: It's Sukkot.) But out of 613 commandments there is not one that tells us to be constantly happy. Also, we probably should point out that Rebbe Nachman himself seems to have been manic depressive.

Well, despite these stipulations and disclaimers I stand with Rebbe Nachman. Whatever our abundance of problems, we are alive. We are citizens of a very great country. Some folks might not be happy with the presidential candidates but we have the right to vote and to make a difference, which itself is a very great thing. We are Jews, a people with a proud tradition of over 3,000 years. Many times we had enemies who sought to destroy us, and yet here we are at the threshold of year number 5777, and we and our fellow Jewish people are still doing great things.

“Choose life.” That *is* in the Torah. It is a mitzvah to live. And if we are going to live, then why not fill the time with happiness? Why not meet even our most challenging moments with a courageous gusto? Why not laugh right back at the worrisome thoughts that sometimes assail us? Most of what we worry about never happens anyway! Why not laugh at *ourselves*?

Why not figure out that every hour has 60 minutes whether we like it or not. And so why wouldn't we rather spend each 60 minutes with a feeling of joy than with some lesser, unfulfilling and nagging emotion? Bottom line, why wouldn't we rejoice constantly at the wonder and the splendor of all that is around us?

It's a New Year. May we focus on rejoicing all the way through. It's a tall order, but then again, why not? We are the most blessed people that we can imagine!

I wish everyone at Etz Chayim a joyous New Year all year long. Leslie and I look forward to seeing you October 2-4 for Rosh Hashanah, Oct. 11-12 for Yom Kippur, Oct. 28-30 for Ethan Hall's bar Mitzvah, and one weekend a month after that. It will be joyous!

Shanah tovah,
Stephen Listfield

A BRIEF GUIDE TO THE HOLIDAYS THIS MONTH (THE HEBREW MONTH OF TISHRE)

Contributed by Rabbi Stephen Listfield

ROSH HASHANAH

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year, is both a time of rejoicing and of serious introspection, a time to celebrate the completion of another year while also taking stock of one's life. Rosh Hashanah is also known as the Day of Judgment, on which God opens the Books of Life and Death, which are then sealed on Yom Kippur. The rabbis of old determined that Rosh Hashanah is the day on which humanity was created. Thus, it is the "birthday" of every one of us, and so it is a good day to make resolutions to live honorably and devotedly in the year to come.

The two days of Rosh Hashanah usher in the Ten Days of Repentance, which culminate in the major fast day of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

YOM KIPPUR

The theme of Yom Kippur is repentance. During the holiday all thoughts are supposed to be centered on this theme. From Kol Nidrei to the repeated Viddui (confession of sins) to Neilah, the day revolves around the theme of communal repentance for sins committed during the past year, in order that both the community and the individual be inscribed in the Book of Life for the coming year.

The liturgy of Yom Kippur is completely centered in the synagogue. Yom Kippur is ushered in while it is still light out with a powerful and ancient prayer called Kol Nidrei, in which the congregation asks that all vows made under duress during the coming year may be considered null and void before God. Yizkor, the memorial service, is recited. During the course of the holiday, a major component of the liturgy is the repeated communal confession of sins, the Viddui. The day closes with a unique and emotionally powerful service called Neilah, during which the liturgy imagines the gates of heaven closing at the end of the High Holiday period. Neilah, during which it is traditional to stand since the ark is opened, ends with a long blast of the shofar or ram's horn, understood by many as signifying God's redemptive act in answer to true repentance.

SUKKOT

Sukkot is a seven day holiday. The two days following the festival – Shemini Atzeret and Simkhat

Torah - are commonly thought of as part of Sukkot but are actually separate holidays. Sukkot is referred to as Zeman Simkhateinu, the Season of our Rejoicing.

The word "Sukkot" means "booths," and refers to the temporary dwellings that we are commanded to live in during this holiday. Like Passover and Shavu'ot, Sukkot has a dual significance: historical and agricultural. The holiday commemorates the forty-year period during which the children of Israel were wandering in the desert, living in temporary shelters. Sukkot is also a harvest festival, and is sometimes referred to as Chag Ha-Asif, the Festival of Ingathering. Another observance important to Sukkot involves the four species. We are commanded to take four plants – etrog (a citrus fruit native to Israel); lulav (a palm branch); hadas (a branch from a myrtle tree); and, arava (a willow branch). Joined together, they are used to "rejoice before the L-rd."

SHMINI ATZERET and SIMCHAT TORAH

Shmini Atzeret is the day after Sukkot. We might therefore say that it's the eighth day of Sukkot, but the Talmud states that it's a holiday of its own. Fine, but the trouble is that nobody knows just what this holiday stands for. The Torah gives no explanation! The most appealing explanation of the holiday may be that of Samson Raphael Hirsch, a 19th-century German rabbi. He infers the meaning of the holiday from the word atzeret, which he renders as "to gather" or "to store up." Accordingly, on this eighth day of Sukkot, the final day of celebration, we must store up the sentiments of gratitude and devotion acquired throughout the entire fall holiday season; nearly two months will pass until we celebrate another holiday, that of Hanukkah.

Simchat Torah conveys a HAPPY message about the centrality of Torah in Jewish life. It is both a source of Jewish identity and a precious gift from God. Simchat Torah is the day on which the whole community gathers to come into direct contact with the Torah and to express our joy in having received it.

(Sources: Myjewishlearning.com and Jewishvirtuallibrary.com)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

There are times throughout the year when our heritage beckons us to the Synagogue. These may include birthdays, wedding anniversaries, yahrzeits, and, of course, Holidays such as Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. An additional way to celebrate those times would be to host an Oneg to share them with your Jewish Community. You can provide a date (Hebrew or Secular) to Lynne Edmonson to reserve your time in the future. Don't be concerned if your date is currently taken as Lynne would be happy to work out accommodations, especially going forward.

L'Shanah Tovah,
Barry Meyer

SISTERHOOD

Greetings Ladies,

La Shana Tova to everyone. I want to thank all of the ladies who came to the Sep 11 clean-up of the Synagogue so they could help polish the silver. We really appreciate the fact that Diana has done this for many years, but it was time to help her out, so thank you to all who helped (I was out of town so I was unable to help).

Since the holidays are later than usual this year, I want to remind everyone to bring a pareve or dairy snack (already on a tray that you can trash or take home) for the Rabbi's reception on Erev Rosh Hashanah. Also, we want to thank BJ and Bill Brigadier for the Break-the-Fast that they are once again sponsoring for the congregation. They have been doing this for us for many years, and it is greatly appreciated.

We get to build and decorate the Sukkah on Sunday, October 16, which also happens to be the first day of Sukkot so please come to help if you can.

If you haven't paid for your new year booklet greeting or memorial, please send a check to Brenda Liles. The books will be in the Synagogue lobby for pickup during the Holidays, as usual.

If you have any suggestions for Sisterhood activities/programs that you would like to attend, please contact Nannette Schwartz or me. Also, if you are a new member of the congregation, your first year's dues to the Sisterhood are complimentary, so if Millie Rosenthal has not contacted you, please let her know. We love new members!

Natha Hancock

MEN'S CLUB, ETC.

Joe Sacks Men's Club

There's a plan underway to reactivate the Joe Sacks Men's Club. Most of it won't happen 'til after the Holidays, but we've had a lot of terrific input that will mean fun and benefit for the whole congregation.

We plan to be long on action and short on meetings; and activities will be open to men and women.

Here's just a little heads up on what's coming:

- Light physical activities like pitching horseshoes, badminton, and a walking club.
- A Jewish Book Club. For our first book we've chosen "Louis D. Brandeis: American Prophet." It's a new (June 2016) examination of his life and impact.
- Visits to the Tutt Fann Veterans Home.
- Expanded support for the Food Bank.
- Plans for the picnic.
- Providing one of the Sunday morning Rabbi Breakfasts.
- Bingo, and support for the traditional activities such as building the Sukkah, grating potatoes for latkes on Chanukah, taking care of the grounds, entertainment programs, and a lot more activities still on the drawing board.

We will communicate. We'll make sure people have enough notice to participate in everything they want. If you have comments or questions, contact Jon Berger or Max Rosenthal.

HEBREW READING FOR BEGINNERS

Etz Chayim Synagogue will again offer a Class in Hebrew Reading for Beginners.

Sponsored by the National Jewish Outreach Program (NJOP) - The first class in this Hebrew I Course (6 classes) will meet on Wednesday, October 19 at 7:00PM at Etz Chayim Synagogue, 7705 Bailey Cove Road SE, Huntsville, AL. Classes will meet weekly for 1.5 hours & the course will finish in December. Students are asked to make a \$20 donation to cover the cost of extra class materials. No prior knowledge of Hebrew is required to take this course.

Please call (256-882-2918) or email Bill Goldberg at zevgold@yahoo.com to register. Your registration by October 14 will be greatly appreciated.

You can find out more about the beginning Hebrew Crash Course at www.NJOP.org.

Regards,
Bill Goldberg

THE JEWISH FEDERATION OF HUNTSVILLE AND NORTH ALABAMA

We were very sorry to have left Laura King's name off of our 2015 HONOR ROLL of supporters. Laura is not only a Past President of the JFHNA, but also a yearly solicitor who devotes hours and works diligently to raise funds for Israel in our community.

GROUNDS CLEANUP THANKS

As usual the synagogue members really came through with a great job of cutting, trimming, raking, and cleaning up the synagogue grounds.

A big "Thank you" to the grounds crew: Jeff Zelickson, Joe Paddock, David Rush, Bill Goldberg, Shoshanna Rosenthal, Michelle Lapidus, Fred Kolchin, Howie Ross, Charlie Fisher, Steve Goodman, Howard Polin, and Jon Berger. And our thanks to the ladies who prepared a breakfast for the crew and who polished every bit of the silver for the High Holidays. We appreciate the work of Millie Rosenthal, Shirley Roberts, Harriet Sacks, Janet

Schindler, Lauren Goodman, and the chief polisher, Diane Polin.

Max

ONEGS

| | |
|--------|--------------------|
| Sep 30 | Sacks/Schindler |
| Oct 07 | Zelickson |
| Oct 14 | Edmondson |
| Oct 21 | Kirshtein/Thomason |
| Oct 28 | Hall |

DONATIONS

Rabbi Fund

From: Millie & Max Rosenthal

To: Gadi Shapira & Family - May the fondest memories of your mother, Leah, help during your time of sorrow.

From: Lucy & Charlie Fisher.

Sisterhood Fund

From Diana & Howard Polin

To: The Shapira Family - Our sympathy to Gadi and family on the loss of your mother, Leah.

To: Diane & Stan Belsky - We miss you and want to hear that you are both doing well.

To: Sandra Wiederecht - You are much too helpful, caring, and kind not to be feeling well. Feel good soon.

From: Renata Limmer

From: Sandra Wiederecht

From: Janet Schindler
For High Holy Days flowers.

From: Shirley & Ted Roberts
To: Gadi Shapira & Family-In Memory of your mother, Leah

From: Diana & Howard Polin
For High Holy Days flowers.

General Fund

From: B.J. & Bill Brigadier

To: Gadi Shapira & Family - We are so sorry for your loss.

From: Sandra Wiederecht
To: Gadi Shapira & Family - In Memory of your mother, Leah.

From: Janet Schindler
To: Gadi Shapira & Family - In Memory of your mother, Leah

From: Harriet Sacks
To: The Gadi Shapira Family - In Memory of Gadi's mother, Leah.

From: Shirley & Ted Roberts
To: Gadi Shapira & Family - Sorry for your loss. We are thinking about you.

From: Brenda & Cliff Liles
To: The Hall Family - In Honor of Ethan's upcoming celebration of his Bar Mitzvah. Mazel Tov to him and his family.

Outdoor Lighting Fund

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

| | |
|-----------|---|
| Oct 2-4 | Rosh Hashanah |
| Oct 11,12 | Yom Kippur with Break the Fast to follow after services |
| Oct 16 | Build the Sukkah at 2:30 PM; Decorate the Sukkah at 4 PM |
| Oct 17-21 | Sukkah- morning services, at 9:30 AM; Kiddush in the Sukkah daily at 5 PM |
| Oct 19 | Hebrew Reading for Beginners, 7 PM, EC |
| Oct 24 | Shemini Atzeret, morning service, 9:30 AM |
| Oct 24 | Simchat Torah Pot Luck Supper, 5:45 PM, Evening Hakafot Services at 6:30 PM |
| Oct 28-30 | Rabbi Listfield Weekend/Hall Bar Mitzvah |

ANNIVERSARIES

| | |
|--------|--------------------------|
| Oct 09 | Nannette & Gary Schwartz |
| Oct 09 | Susan & Larry Levitt |
| Oct 27 | Millie & Max Rosenthal |

BIRTHDAYS

| | |
|--------|--------------------|
| Oct 02 | David Wiederecht |
| Oct 03 | Zev Roberts |
| Oct 03 | Marc Zelickson |
| Oct 10 | Sheri Bulgatz |
| Oct 10 | Leigh Miller |
| Oct 12 | Renate Stone |
| Oct 13 | Max Rosenthal |
| Oct 14 | David Rosenthal |
| Oct 16 | Jonah Roberts |
| Oct 20 | Marvin Kalachman |
| Oct 21 | Ethan Hall |
| Oct 21 | Frederick Kolchin |
| Oct 23 | Paulette Goldstein |
| Oct 23 | Marla Polin |

YAHREZEITS**

| | | |
|--------|------------|-----------------------|
| Sep 28 | Elul 25 | Percy Sacks* |
| Oct 04 | Tishrei 02 | Daniel Flank* |
| Oct 07 | Tishrei 05 | Louis B. Lepp* |
| Oct 08 | Tishrei 06 | Sylvia Zarovsky |
| Oct 09 | Tishrei 07 | Sam Natt* |
| Oct 10 | Tishrei 08 | Jerome Gaftman |
| Oct 11 | Tishrei 09 | Rose Schindler |
| Oct 12 | Tishrei 10 | Shirley Irene Jacobs* |
| Oct 13 | Tishrei 11 | Murray Rosenthal* |
| Oct 15 | Tishrei 13 | Bernard Fisher |
| Oct 16 | Tishrei 14 | Terry Lee Green* |
| Oct 18 | Tishrei 16 | Capt. Robert Secher* |
| Oct 22 | Tishrei 20 | Randy Sacks* |
| Oct 22 | Tishrei 20 | Alex Greenbaum |
| Oct 22 | Tishrei 20 | Mariam Wertheim |
| Oct 29 | Tishrei 27 | Louis Klazmer |
| Oct 29 | Tishrei 27 | Steve Sokolow |
| Oct 30 | Tishrei 28 | Bella Flank* |
| Oct 31 | Tishrei 29 | Leo Krell |
| Oct 31 | Tishrei 29 | Rose Natt* |
| Nov 01 | Tishrei 30 | Harold Pizitz |

* Plaque

**Light Memorial candle at sunset of the previous evening

SUCCOS EXPLAINS A CULTURAL MYSTERY

By Ted Roberts

Succos, like perfect sweet and sour cabbage soup, has two flavors. A single holiday with two themes. We celebrate the bounty of the grape and olive harvest in the Promised Land; also we commemorate 40 hungry years of wanderings in that huge sand pile - the Sinai Peninsula – a garden that can only grow rocks.

The Chumash commands us to relive our wilderness days. “Ye shall dwell in booths seven days...that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths” when he took us out of Egypt. This holiday is one of the three special ones when the Israelite male was required to show up at the Temple.

A booth, a succah, must have been a challenge on those chilly Sinai nights. It’s cold as only a desert can be bone-cold at night. So you can bet most adults were drawn to the social warmth of the campfire. Conversation, maybe a little music from a homemade flute, and somebody might be passing around a skin of fermented goat’s milk.

Some sages say that the Jewish love for books and literature was born on those long Sinai nights. You see, Moses and Aaron and their Levite kinfolk had plenty of time to sit around and talk since there was yet no temple to attend to. Moses, himself, didn’t have the leisure of his brother Levites since he was busy as a Goshen scribe putting down all that he heard on the mountaintop. You remember he spent forty days and nights listening to the Master Magistrate lay down the law.

And sitting around the fire, Moses passed on the message from the mountaintop. Those five books were full of tales of love and adventure. But full of rules, too, which occasionally brought on heavy eyelids and deep breathing to the nighttime audience huddled close around the fire. “Ten is enough,” they groaned. “613? We can’t even remember them. Let’s go back to Genesis. Tell us some more about that garden.” The men especially loved the story of Eve and the snake.

(Mark Twain, a spiritual skeptic who had a remarkable short attention span and therefore never went to synagogue on Yom Kippur, remarked that nobody heard a word a preacher said after the first

ten minutes. He would have hated my synagogue.)

So, the first and greatest prophet of Israel, blessed with divine understanding of human inattention and the human temptation to doze off when anyone lectured for over ten minutes, knew he had to vary his curriculum. So, he told stories, the best of which found their way into the oral tradition.

Moses was careful to only repeat the best, the most fabulous tales. He knew he had a tough audience. Often he told the story of Malcha, who invited the handsome, but weary traveler into her succah and quenched his thirst and put a platter of lamb chops in front of him. Too late did the innocent victim find that her succah was a chupah. The men hated this story. But you can bet that once in a while, when Moshe told the same story for the fifth time, some creative Israelite got up and told one of his own inventions. It was like the Improv where freshmen storytellers tried their skills.

But the mystics tell us that on those star-glittered nights when Moshe cut back on the adventure tales and went back to his revelation of the Word of G-d to Israel, the desert creatures beyond the light of the campfire, quietly listened. No night birds sang and even the desert fox refrained from calling his mate.

Time, as still as Horeb itself, ceased to exist so that the prophet could look both before and after. Did he not tell of history that was, and would be? Some say the scroll of time stood before him like a giant Torah as he recited to the people the oral tradition. Moses and the people talked. Many, many words - outnumbering the stars - filled the night. They talked ‘til the moon grew pale and weary. And I think that’s why the ancestors of these wanderers predominate in today’s world of words.

Historians, sociologists, anthropologists still today, wonder about this mystery of Judaism. I mean, how could it be that we’re about .025 percent of the world’s population, but we write about 20% of the books. (Check the best seller lists.) Why do we win all the Pulitzer Prizes? Why do we predominate in the world of entertainment, movies, and television? Jewish themes, Jewish scriptwriters, Jewish producers, Jewish actors, including Mel Gibson’s plot about one of our better known kinsmen. (And Mary, the mother of the subject of the movie, is a Jewish actor yet.)

What is it about words and their sequencing into literary art - like jewels on a bracelet - that attracts the former Children of Israel - now known as Jews?

It's almost like the old-fashioned anti-Semites used to say. Wherever you look, you see the Jew. Well, in the world of ideas it's as true as the wisdom in Proverbs. Where stories are told, you'll find Jews. But why?

I say it was those wild Sinai nights around the campfire when Moses told his tales. When the audience trooped back to their succahs, their

wilderness huts, they had plenty to think about. Oh the dreaming that went on in those succahs. And it still goes on - and on.

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

**Huntsville Conservative Synagogue
L'ShanahTovah!
High Holy Day Services
2016 -5777**

Rosh Hashanah

| | | | |
|--|------|--------|-----------|
| Evening Services & Welcome Rabbi Listfield | Sun | Oct. 2 | 7:30 p.m. |
| Morning & Shofar Services | Mon | Oct. 3 | 9:30 a.m. |
| Tashlich Service | Mon | Oct. 3 | 1:30 p.m. |
| Evening Services | Mon | Oct. 3 | 7:30 p.m. |
| Morning & Shofar Services | Tues | Oct. 4 | 9:30 a.m. |

Shabbat Shuvah

| | | | |
|------------------|------|--------|-----------|
| Evening Services | Fri. | Oct. 7 | 7:30 p.m. |
| Morning Services | Sat. | Oct. 8 | 9:30 a.m. |

Yom Kippur

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------|------------|
| KolNidre Service | Tues. | Oct.11 | 6:00 p.m. |
| Morning Services | Wed. | Oct.12 | 9:30 a.m. |
| Torah Services | (approximately)at | | 10:30 a.m. |
| Mincha, Yizkor & N'ilah Services | | | 5:00 p.m. |
| Maariv & Break the Fast Dinner | | | 7:00 p.m. |

Sukkot

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| Build Sukkah at EtzChayim | Sun. | Oct. 16 | 2:30 p.m. |
| Decorate Sukkah at EtzChayim | Sun. | Oct. 16 | 4:00 p.m. |
| Morning Services | Mon-Fri | Oct 17-21 | 9:30 a.m. |
| Evening Services | Fri. | Oct. 21 | 7:30 p.m. |
| Morning Services | Sat. | Oct. 22 | 9:30 a.m. |
| Hoshanah Rabah Morning Services | Sun | Oct. 23 | 9:30 a.m. |

Kiddush in Etz Chayim Sukkah daily at 5:pm

Shemini Atzeret

| | | | |
|------------------|--------------------|---------|-----------|
| Morning Services | Mon | Oct. 24 | 9:30 a.m. |
| Yizkor | (approximately) at | | 10:30a.m. |

Simchat Torah

| | | | |
|--|------|---------|-----------|
| Evening Congregation Pot Luck Dairy Dinner | Mon. | Oct. 24 | 5:45 p.m. |
| Evening Hakafot Services | Mon. | Oct. 24 | 6:30 p.m. |

"IT IS A TREE OF LIFE TO THEM THAT HOLD FAST TO IT "