
the Shofar



Etz Chayim Conservative Synagogue's Monthly Newsletter

December, 2016

Kislev/Tevet, 5777

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

FROM RABBI LISTFIELD

POINTING FINGERS

The front page of the New York Times on Sunday, November 13 proclaimed "Clinton Blames F.B.I. Director For Her Defeat." Mrs. Clinton told donors on a 30-minute conference call that "Mr. Comey's decision to send a letter to Congress about the inquiry into her private email server 11 days before election day had thrust the controversy back into the news and prevented her from ending the campaign with an optimistic closing argument."

Dear friends, in all the months leading up to last month's presidential election I didn't offer any political comments. Now that the election is over I am going to adhere to the same restraint. However, eschewing political comment does not mean that I avoid religious comment. And here is a great principle of religion: Before blaming anyone else for your problems, look at yourself. The Jewish way of saying this is a two-word phrase, *cheshbon hanefesh*. It means, basically, "Look in the mirror before you cast stones at others."

In an election that may have been the most unusual in our nation's history, an election in which 128 million voters participated, it is precarious to suggest that there is one particular factor that explains the outcome. Surely there were a multiplicity of issues in play. But there's no doubt that the actual performance of the candidates had something to do with the outcome! Before pointing a finger at someone else, a candidate should be honest about his or her own acts. Why wouldn't you perform *cheshbon hanefesh* if you lost an election that almost everyone thought you would win? Moreover, isn't it humble and gracious to greet your supporters with some self-analysis before you blame someone else for your defeat?

My field is religion. And all I'm saying is that in the Jewish religion, you may very well be totally blameless for something that went wrong. It may well be that the dog ate your homework or that you got up on the wrong side of the bed or that the director of the F.B.I. ruined your big moment. Truly, Mrs. Clinton's lament about James Comey may have some merit. It's not wrong to point that out.

But before you do anything else, look to your own behavior. Do a *cheshbon hanefesh* and do it on **your** *nefesh*. The only person whose deeds you control is yourself. I submit that this is good advice whether you are a normal citizen living in Huntsville, AL, or a contender for the presidency of the United States. We are all human. We all make mistakes. And so, we all can use some healthy self-examination. Look at your own deeds — that is always the place to begin.

Looking forward to seeing all of you
December 2-4,

Stephen Listfield

HAPPY CHANUKAH

Contributed by Rabbi Listfield

The eight-day Jewish celebration known as Chanukah commemorates the rededication during the second century B.C.E. of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, where according to legend Jews had risen up against their Greek-Syrian oppressors in the Maccabean Revolt. Chanukah, which means “dedication” in Hebrew, begins on the 25th of Kislev on the Hebrew calendar. This year the holiday begins Saturday evening, December 24. The holiday is celebrated with the lighting of the menorah, traditional foods, games and gifts.

The events that inspired the holiday took place during a particularly turbulent phase of Jewish history. Around 200 B.C.E., the Land of Israel came under the control of Antiochus III, the Seleucid king of Syria, who allowed the Jews who lived there to continue practicing their religion. His son, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, proved less benevolent: He outlawed the Jewish religion and ordered the Jews to worship Greek gods. In 168 B.C.E.,

his soldiers descended upon Jerusalem, massacring thousands of people and desecrating the city’s holy Second Temple by erecting an altar to Zeus and sacrificing pigs within its sacred walls.

Led by the Jewish priest Mattathias and his five sons, a large-scale rebellion broke out against Antiochus and the Seleucid monarchy. When Mattathias died, his son Judah, known as Judah Maccabee (“the Hammer”), took the helm; within two years the Jews had successfully driven the Syrians out of Jerusalem, relying largely on guerrilla warfare tactics. Judah called on his followers to cleanse the Second Temple, rebuild its altar and light its menorah—the gold candelabrum.

According to the Talmud, Judah Maccabee and the other Jews who took part in the rededication of the Second Temple witnessed what they believed to be a miracle. Even though there was only enough untainted olive oil to keep the menorah’s candles burning for a single day, the flames continued flickering for eight nights, leaving them time to find a fresh supply. This wondrous event inspired the Jewish sages to proclaim a yearly eight-day festival.

-- From History.com

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

As we move into the New Year (5777), I am encouraged by the increase in participants leading our services. On the other hand, I am also encouraged by an increase in participants at our services. The warmth and friendliness that comes from praying together also helps reminds me that we are one people. I hope that you all feel the same way. If you have any ideas that can

contribute towards our unity, please share them with any board member. Remember also that our board meetings are open to all members. We generally meet at 6:30 on the second Tuesday of the month.

שלום

Barry

YOU ARE INVITED TO THE LATKE PARTY!

WHERE: EC SYNAGOGUE
WHEN: DECEMBER 18TH AT 11:00 AM,
LUNCH SERVED AT NOON
WHAT: BINGO AND OUR FAMOUS
LATKES (WITH SOUR CREAM
& APPLESAUCE), MEGA
SALAD BAR, AND DESSERT
COST: \$7 EACH, CHILDREN UP TO 18
ARE FREE

DONATIONS

General Fund

From: Michal & Gary Hall
In Honor of Ethan's Bar Mitzvah

From: Dorothy & Bill Goldberg

From: Arlene Polin
In Honor of my mom & dad, Diana & Howard Polin

From: Ray Applebaum
In Memory of Isa-Monika Applebaum

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

Outdoor Lighting Fund

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

Sisterhood Fund

From: Shirley & Ted Roberts
To: Sandy Kalachman - Glad your surgery is over, speedy recovery.

From: Sandra Wiederecht
To: Sandy Kalachman - Speedy recovery and continued good health.

From: Janet Schindler
To: Sandy Kalachman - We wish you a complete and speedy recovery.

Rabbi Fund

From: Millie & Max Rosenthal
To: Sandy Kalachman - We miss you. Our prayers are with you for a speedy recovery from your surgery and continued good health.

SUKKAH DECONSTRUCTION

Thanks to all the guys who came out to help take down the Sukkah: Ira Leitner, Bill Goldberg, Jon Berger, Fred Kolchin, David & Noah Rush. Noah Rush did such a good job that he has been promoted to "Schleper First Class."

Max

ONEG SIGN-UP

Hi Ladies and Gentlemen,
It is that time of year again. Yes, everyone is asking for donations. I am asking for a donation of your time and some kosher desserts for the January-June (2017) onegs. This is one way every family/individual member can be an active member. Please contact me soon with your date of choice, otherwise a date will be assigned to you.

Sincerely,

Lynne Edmondson, 776-9898

Onegs January 2017-June 2017

Jan: 06 (Rabbi visit), 13, 20, 27

Feb: 03, 10 (Rabbi visit), 17, 24

Mar: 03,10, 17, 24 (Rabbi visit, Joe Sacks Memorial), 31

Apr: 07, 14 (Pesach), 21 (Rabbi visit), 28

May: 05,12, 19 (Rabbi visit), 26

Jun: 02, 09, 16, 23, 30

CALL FOR MUSICIANS

Are you interested in playing music or singing with other synagogue members?

Let's get a group together and rehearse for a possible spring performance. Call or email to tell us you're interested. Tell us what instrument you play, or for singers what is your voice range if you know it. Also, tell us the day and time that is best for you.

Everybody is welcome- men and women of all ages.

Call or email Lynne Edmondson or Jon Berger at 256-457-0277 or jonaberger@gmail.com

SISTERHOOD

Greetings Ladies,

I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving. Those of you who missed the Sisterhood Craft Project in November missed a lot of fun. Natalie Young taught us to make glass mosaics. Ten of our members selected a box or picture frame to cover with glass pieces. Thank you to Natalie for once again helping us to make something beautiful. Also thanks to Natalie, Brenda Liles, Nannette Schwartz, and Scott Hancock for donating the glass pieces.

We are all looking forward to the Latke Party on December 18. We'll have Bingo and our delicious latkes and salad bar. In order for it to be a success we need volunteers to help with the preparation. Please contact Max Rosenthal to help with the potato grating (8:30 AM), Shirley Roberts to help with the latke making and the Salad Bar.

There will be no Sisterhood meeting in December, but we are trying to finalize a big surprise for January or February. We will let you know!

I hope everyone has a wonderful Chanukah.

Natha Hancock

UPCOMING EVENTS

Dec 2-4	Rabbi Listfield Shabbaton
Dec 18	Latke Party

ONEGS

Dec 02	Rosenthal
Dec 09	Yalowitz
Dec 16	Young
Dec 23	Fisher
Dec 30	Levitt

ANNIVERSARIES

Dec 14	Lucy & Charles Fisher
Dec 23	Dorothy & Bill Goldberg

BIRTHDAYS

Dec 04	Joe Paddock
Dec 06	Gabi Lapidus
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

YAHREZEITS**

Nov 27 Cheshvan 26 Joan Zelickson
 Nov 29 Cheshvan 28 Rose Feitelberg*
 Nov 30 Cheshvan 29 Samuel Belsky*
 Nov 30 Cheshvan 29 Rose Goldberg
 Dec 02 Kislev 02 Dr. Harold Isaac Goldman*
 Dec 04 Kislev 04 Suzanne Ivy*
 Dec 05 Kislev 05 Rose Soble*
 Dec 05 Kislev 05 Rhonda Beth Baker*
 Dec 06 Kislev 06 Abraham Belsky*
 Dec 06 Kislev 06 Sam Sokolow
 Dec 06 Kislev 06 Molly Levy Buchman
 Dec 09 Kislev 09 Pauline Baron Kripke*
 Dec 12 Kislev 12 Margareta Bernstein*
 Dec 12 Kislev 12 Helene Kamisher*
 Dec 13 Kislev 13 Gertrude S. Goldberger
 Dec 18 Kislev 18 Lily Yedid
 Dec 22 Kislev 22 Yetta Michaelson
 Dec 27 Kislev 27 Moe Post
 Dec 28 Kislev 28 David Amiel Wertheim*
 Dec 28 Kislev 28 Morris Freeman
 Dec 29 Kislev 29 Rita Goldstein*
 Dec 30 Tevet 01 Meyer Rodkin*
 Dec 30 Tevet 01 Murray Golub
 Jan 01 Tevet 03 Max Theodor Hoehne*

* Plaque

**Light Memorial candle at sunset on the previous evening

ON CHANUKAH, DAUGHTERS DREAM
 AND FATHERS SCHEME

By Ted Roberts

It was the second night of Chanukah and the house was full of her excited grandchildren,

who shrieked and wailed and chattered like the construction crew that worked on the Tower of Babel. Was it totally random, the old lady wondered, or was there a script for this bedlam? I shouldn't be so cranky, she reasoned. But twelve kids - some exultant with their gifts, some complaining - could shatter the glass in the windows.

And such lavish Chanukah gifts. In my day, thought Bubbe, I'd be lucky to get a piece of fruit and a silver dime.

The gifts had been distributed, the latkes consumed, and both adults and kids had taken the ceremonial peck at her cheek. So, soon it would be time for the Chanukah finale, the traditional "then and now" seminar with Bubbe; an old family custom.

The kids clustered around her. "Tell us how it was when you were a girl, Bubbe," as though they believed she had ever been anything but a short, round lady who smiled more than she talked. A Jewish Queen Victoria with a decidedly un-English accent who they were forced to call on the phone every weekend.

Last year she told them the story of her voyage in the filthy hold of the SS Wilhelm to the glittering new world of the Lower East side. The year before, she'd left them shocked and wide-eyed over the tale of her older brother's abduction by a band of drunk Cossacks. And every word was true and every word was a lesson. If these children didn't know about yesterday, how could they prepare for tomorrow?

Instruction. Wasn't that Bubbe's role, like smiling and offering the drooping cheek to pursed lips? These kids should know how it was back then. Beginnings are as useful as endings. Didn't she still have a sharp mental

picture of her brother and their Polish village? Didn't her mouth remember endless meals of cabbage and potatoes? And who could forget her entire family stuffed in an Eastside tenement that only glittered when ice silvered both sides of the windowpane?

"So tell us a story, Bubbe. C'mon, c'mon," they persisted.

"OK," she agreed, "but first a cup of tea and a slice of lemon and two Sweet 'n Lo's." Quickly they obeyed.

She sat at the dining room table; they crowded around, two of the little ones to a single chair.

"I'll tell you about my best friend, Dora. And every word is true and every word is a lesson. She was 16, like me. We had both been in America since we were six. So we considered ourselves Americans - not Greenhorns. We even had boyfriends, not boyfriends like you mean now, but, ya know, special friends. My best girlfriend, Dora, had a boy downstairs in the tenement who she watched out of the corner of her eye. You know how it is. You look at him. He turns shyly away. But you hope he looks back.

"Anyhow, Dora loved Jacob Plesovsky. He was 18 and already he was peddling ladies' dresses around town. Like I say, he'd never taken her out. Who had money for that --- but they had talked plenty. I think they had a plan.

"Daughters dream, but fathers scheme, as they say. One day her father waits 'til everybody's out of the room and he sits Dora down across the dining room table for a talk. And he tells her she's gonna have the best second night of Chanukah ever; because on the second candle of Chanukah, little Dora is

going to be a married woman. Dora is so fetumult, so mixed up to hear this, that for a minute she thinks her papa has gone to the Plesovskys and made a deal. How did he know about her plan, which she had only revealed to her best friend? Me. Then through a fog, as though her father is shouting from a passing ship, she hears a name unknown to her."

"Papa, Jacob Plesovsky, that's who I want. You got the wrong boy." But daughters dream and fathers scheme.

"Listen," says Papa, "this boy you'll love in a couple of years. He has a good job in the textile district and he's handsome. Grayish blue eyes and light brown, wavy hair. No moles, no blemishes. And as the Americans say, he is high-spirited. They'll never tie him to a tailor's bench. Now, that's that! Go help your mama with the supper dishes." Dora's futile tears mixed with the dirty dishwater in the sink.

Bubbe paused to let the truth sink into youthful minds. "Yes, her father had selected her husband."

At first, silence. Then a chorus of revolt. "So what happened to your friend? And what about Jacob?"

"Well, they didn't die of a broken heart. I don't know what became of Jacob. I think he ended up working in a men's clothing store in the Bronx."

The children muttered rebelliously about slipping out of bedroom windows at midnight and running off to some renegade Rabbi for a quickie. "That's what we'd do now," said two of the smaller mutineers. "And what about Dora?"

“Dora - she did OK,” said the Bubbe as her eyes wandered over a room full of twelve vibrant, high-spirited kids. Many with grayish blue eyes and light brown wavy hair.

On this second night of Chanukah, it was more apparent than ever to the old lady that daughters dream and fathers scheme. Next Chanukah she'd tell them how her father's choice had softly tiptoed into her heart.

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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