
the Shofar



Etz Chayim Conservative Synagogue's Monthly Newsletter

JANUARY, 2017

TEVET/SHEVAT, 5777

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

FROM THE RABBI

WHEN MULTI-TASKING IS A VERY DANGEROUS IDEA

I was driving home on Peachtree Rd. in Atlanta the other day and I stopped at a red light. I glanced to my right, and noticed that the driver was looking at his cell phone while waiting for the light to change. That is an unpleasant sight and so I turned to my left. Unfortunately, that driver was texting. For better or worse, there are a lot of traffic lights on Peachtree Rd., and so at the next light I glanced (despite myself) to one side and saw yet another driver, deeply engaged with her cell phone.

The National Safety Council reports that cell phone use while driving leads to 1.6 million crashes each year. Nearly 330,000 injuries occur each year from accidents caused by texting while driving. One out of every 4 car accidents in the United States is caused by texting and driving. From my unscientific appraisal of the situation, the problem is only getting worse.

I recently read *A Deadly Wandering*, by Matt Richtel. It's about a University of Utah student who sent a brief text from his cellphone while driving, and killed two rocket scientists on their way to work. If you look for the book on Amazon.com you will find — and I was slightly surprised to find — that there are dozens of books on the dangers of cellphone use while driving. Many of the books are geared to young drivers, but the fact is that everyone who owns a cellphone is at risk. Glance away from the road for one second...and any number of lives might be changed forever.

Books have been written. Warnings have been posted. Grim statistics have been publicized. And yet I can't help but feel that we still need ongoing reminders of the hazards of texting while driving. And so, this is my little contribution to that cautionary effort: These days we have to be more certain than ever that we keep our eyes firmly on the road. We need to do so lest we get distracted; and we need to do so because, alas, there are so many people driving right next to us who seem quite willing to let themselves be distracted!

I wish you happy civil new year, happy Martin Luther King Day, and safe journeys throughout 2017.

Stephen Listfield

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am excited that we have been seeing our open door at work over the recent months, as we have added some friends of the Congregation as members. I'm hopeful that we can continue to congregate, not only on the week-ends of Rabbi Listfield's visits on January 6-8 and February 10-12, but on other times as well.

Barry

BOOK CLUB

The Etz Chayim Book Club is off to a great start. We've read and discussed "Louis D. Brandeis: An American Prophet" and our next book is "Abba Eban: A Biography."

The book club focuses on nonfiction books that cover a broad range of Jewish topics. It's open to all who love to read, learn and discuss. The book club is available to all, no matter what their schedule. People have plenty of time to read the books and then we meet once at 11:00 AM and a few days later at 7:00 PM for those who can't meet during the day.

We're starting now to read "Abba Eban: A Biography" by Asaf Siniver (published in 2015), and we're scheduled to meet and discuss it on January 26 and January 31.

Then, down the road, we plan to read "Nine Essential Things I've Learned About Life" by Rabbi Harold Kushner and "The Great

Partnership: Science, Religion and the Search for Meaning" by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks.

For additional information contact Jon Berger at 256-457-0277 or jonaberger@gmail.com.

SISTERHOOD

Greetings Ladies,

I have some news for our congregation, so--
*****SAVE THE DATE*****

We have a wonderful program planned for Feb 20 at 7:00 p.m. Homer Hickam is going to be a guest speaker at our Synagogue, sponsored by the Etz Chayim Sisterhood. Homer Hickam is the author of the New York Times Best Seller Rocket Boys which was made into the movie "October Sky." Mr. Hickam's latest book is Carrying Albert Home. He will tell us about these semi-autobiographical books and will also have some available for sale (and autographed). He has written approximately 20 fiction and autobiographical books as well as technical and non-fiction books. When Mr. Hickam was starting his writing career he worked as an engineer at the Missile Command and later at NASA. He trained astronaut crews for some of the Spacelab and Shuttle Missions and was the Payload Training Manager for the International Space Station program. Since retirement he enjoys spending most of his time writing books for us to enjoy. If you want more information, please visit his website: www.homerhickam.com. This will be a small gathering primarily for our congregation and will not be open to the general public. More details to follow.

The Latke Party on December 18 was a

huge success as usual. We want to thank Shirley Roberts for coordinating it as well as all of her volunteers. Not only is preparation lots of work, but also all that shopping!!! We also want to thank Max Rosenthal for coordinating the grating and making of the latkes. Lots of greasy work. Parties like this take a lot of volunteers, so I want to thank all of those who helped. The food was yummy.

I also want to invite everyone to the Rabbi weekend this month. I guess it is the weather, but the turnout for the last couple of visits was smaller than usual. You don't want to miss Rabbi Steve Listfield. He is so interesting, and his study groups provide a lot to think about.

I hope everyone had a wonderful Chanukah.

Natha Hancock

ONEGS

Hello Etz Chayim Congregation- Thank you so much for coming forward to sponsor an oneg. Each member family pitches in twice a year to provide drinks and snacks after Friday night services. There are eight Friday night onegs without a sponsor. If your family is not signed up from January to June, please contact me to schedule an oneg. If you have never done one before, I can pair you up with a pro to guide you through providing desserts in our kosher kitchen.

The open dates are: March 10, March 17, April 7, April 21, April 28, May 5, May 12 and May 26.

Sincerely,
Lynne Edmondson
776-9898

JANUARY ONEGS

Jan 06	Rosenthal
Jan 13	Thompson
Jan 20	Liles
Jan 27	Zelickson

DONATIONS

General Fund

From: Lynne & Steve Edmondson

To: Sandy Kalachman - Get well soon

To: Harriet Sacks & Family - In Memory of Joe Sacks

To: Nannette Schwartz - In Memory of Nannette's sister, Lynda Citron Siff

Sisterhood Fund

From: Diana & Howard Polin

To: B.J. Brigadier - Hurry, hurry and get well soon.

To: Sandy Kalachman - You are home and on the mend and that is very good news.

From: Shirley & Ted Roberts

To: B.J. Brigadier - Get well soon and continued good health.

From: Harriet Sacks

To: Sandy Kalachman - Wishing you a speedy recovery.

To: B. J. Brigadier - Get well soon and continued good health.

From: Janet Schindler

To: B. J. Brigadier - Our thoughts are with you for a speedy recovery and continued good health.

From: Harriet Sacks

From: Natha & Scott Hancock

From: Lori Weinberger

From: Warren Novick

Outdoor Lighting Fund

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan 08 Tenth of Tevet*, Fast Day
(dawn-dusk)

*Tenth of Tevet (8 January) is a minor Fast Day (dawn to dusk). On the 10th of Tevet of the year 3336 from Creation (425 BCE), the armies of the Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem. Thirty months later -- on Tammuz 17, 3338 -- the city walls were breached, and on Av 9th of that year, the Holy Temple was destroyed. The Jewish people were then exiled to Babylonia for 70 years.

BIRTHDAYS

Jan 01 Ron Goldberg
Jan 04 Adam Bulgatz
Jan 05 McKenzie Rosenthal Sanders
Jan 10 Sarah Isabell Sainker
Jan 11 Joe Sacks
Jan 12 Michael Rosenthal
Jan 23 Alicia Hall
Jan 23 Sam Sainker
Jan 24 Alan Sacks
Jan 26 Steve Goodman
Jan 30 Eliza Roberts
Jan 31 Adam Zelickson

ANNIVERSARIES

Jan 01 Diana & Howard Polin
Jan 15 BJ & Bill Brigadier
Jan 17 Ana & Seth Spraggins

YAHARZEITS**

Dec 30	Tevet 01	Meyer Rodkin*
Dec 30	Tevet 01	Murray Golub
Jan 01	Tevet 03	Max Theodor Hoehne*
Jan 02	Tevet 04	Freida Makower*
Jan 04	Tevet 06	Fannie Ginsburg
Jan 04	Tevet 06	Estelle Okeon
Jan 06	Tevet 08	Dan Polin*
Jan 07	Tevet 09	Florence Goldstein*
Jan 07	Tevet 09	Rose Kahn*
Jan 10	Tevet 12	Gilbert Brodtkin
Jan 10	Tevet 12	Lou Herbin*
Jan 10	Tevet 12	Bea Smolker*
Jan 12	Tevet 14	Betty K. Greenberg
Jan 14	Tevet 16	Bertha P. Smolker*
Jan 15	Tevet 17	Joseph Cohen*
Jan 16	Tevet 18	Howard S. McCall
Jan 17	Tevet 19	Bruce Roberts*
Jan 18	Tevet 20	Abigail Michaela Sawyer*
Jan 21	Tevet 23	Anna Rodkin
Jan 23	Tevet 25	Martin Klazmer
Jan 29	Shevat 02	Harry Zeruld*
Jan 30	Shevat 03	Hannah Rosen bat Schmuel
Jan 31	Shevat 04	Sylvia Kalachman*
Feb 01	Shevat 05	Royal Milton Jacobs*

* Plaque

**Light Memorial candle sunset of previous evening

MY JEWISH CAT

By Ted Roberts

I think my cat has lived so long with us that she's Jewish. How do I know? Well, she never works on Shabbos – never drives – never even flicks a light switch. That's better than me.

She keeps kosher, too. Won't touch a pork cutlet – won't mix meat and milk. I NEVER saw her eat a cheeseburger. It's true she doesn't go to Temple, but I notice she spends hours – like a studious Tsadik – meditating. Eyes closed, oblivious to the world, she's thinking Torah and Talmud, I

just know.

This creature made by G-d is one of His more creative moments. The wiring, the celestial circuits, the engine, if you will, that G-d put into His furry, clever feline should be enough to make any non-believer shout Hallelujah. And I'm afraid I offend some of my ultra-orthodox friends by pointing out that there's more of G-d in the cat than in the Talmud. The cat is an everyday, common demonstration of G-d's power. Who can explain its motivation? Who can understand how the maternal instinct allows it to suckle its young? Who told her they need milk? And in what universal language did her Creator tell her they must be groomed? And why will she fight to the death to protect her genes that flourish in her progeny? Who explained genetic theory to this mother? And where does her curiosity and the motivation to explore her surroundings – a survival mechanism if there ever was one – whence cometh it? Easy, from her creator. And don't answer that it's merely "instinct" – a word that explains nothing. A shadow of a word, which translates into – "I don't get it". You can autopsy a million cats and never find their instinct. In a world of space exploration, we don't know why your cat purrs with delight if you scratch her head or scratches to cover up her digestive output. How does she know that in her wild days she could be tracked by her waste? No longer true in her litter box days – but she's still wild and doesn't understand that predators don't inhabit your house. Yes, maybe the split of the Red Sea was nice – certainly conveniently timed – but probably just a wind. But it doesn't compare with the cat's knowledge that she must sever the umbilical cord of its kittens. Again, who told her and in what meta-language?

I have a Christian friend. An outstanding man. As devout as Aaron. He might prefer I

compare him to Saint Frances. He knows, he tells me, that his dog is going to Heaven. "Really, Dick?" I say. "Does an animal have a soul?"

"I dunno," he answers, "but I know G-d wants me to be happy in the afterlife. And I won't be happy without Blacky."

I understand. I won't be happy without my cat – a bundle of miracles.

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