
the Shofar



Etz Chayim Conservative Synagogue's Monthly Newsletter

FEBRUARY, 2017

SHEVAT/ADAR, 5777

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

FROM THE RABBI

Death of a Hero

Steven McDonald died on January 10. He was 59. New York City police commissioner James O'Neill said that "Steven joined the Police Department to make a difference in people's lives. And he accomplished that every day."

So, who was Steven McDonald?

Officer McDonald was on patrol in July of 1986, when he and his partner stopped three boys who were loitering in Manhattan's Central Park. As he began speaking with the boys, one of them, Shavod Jones, pulled out a handgun and shot Officer McDonald three times. The officer was paralyzed from the neck down, but he forgave his attacker and publicly hoped for his redemption. The paralyzed officer said of his would-be murderer, "I hope he can find peace and purpose in his life."

Officer McDonald was 29 at that time. His wife was pregnant. He was fated to spend the rest of his life with only a partial ability to speak, and he was able to breathe only with

the help of a respirator. And yet, the main sentiment that he expressed was the hope that Shavod Jones would be able to overcome his violent ways.

Two roads diverged on the path of life. Jones spent eight and a half years in prison for attempted murder. He was paroled in 1995. Within 4 days, he was dead. He was riding on a speeding motorcycle with someone doing "wheelies." The cycle crashed into several parked cars, and managed to injure his parole officer. Shavod Jones didn't accept the chance for redemption, although I'm sure that some people would suggest that a person like that never had a chance at redemption.

Steven McDonald, meanwhile, went on to a career of working for reconciliation and forgiveness. Until he died, he was a powerful example of hope, of bravery, of faith, of second chances, of forgiveness. Yes, the police commissioner is correct that Steven made a difference in people's lives every day.

Officer McDonald's wife and caretaker, Patricia Ann, is the mayor of Malverne, NY. Their only child, Conor, is a police officer.

Steven is gone, but it was said at his funeral that the entire nation should know his story. I don't know when, if ever, love and forgiveness will triumph in this world. But I absolutely agree that the entire nation should know the story of Steven McDonald. And so, with these few paragraphs we're doing our small part to promulgate the noble and loving spirit of that great man.

I look forward to our next weekend together, February 10-12.

Stephen Listfield

ONEG & HOSPITALITY INFO

Hi Fabulous Etz Chayim Friends!

As you may know, members provide dinner for the Rabbi on Friday and Saturday nights of his visits. Most of the people who do this carefully scour their calendar and sign up months in advance. However, I have 2 dates left this year without a sponsor, March 24 and April 22. Please email if you would like one of these times to socialize with the Rabbi or if you have a need for some serious conversation with him. Please anticipate well in advance and sign up now because it may be difficult to schedule one of these meals last minute.

Thank you for all you do for Etz Chayim!

Lynne Edmondson
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SISTERHOOD

Greetings Ladies,

Not much news this month. Once again, it's time to prepare for our Seder. Unfortunately, Lauren is unable to chair the committee this year, so we are in need of a Chairperson. There are many ladies that will help, and we have a wonderful caterer in Memphis who will prepare the food. There are lots of families who attend the Seder every year, and it would be a shame to have to cancel for lack of a chairperson. So, if you attend (or have never attended) and have never been the chair, now is your chance. If you are interested in being in charge, please contact me.

Unfortunately, arrangements with Homer Hickam have fallen through. I am sorry, as I was really looking forward to the program. If you have suggestions for any programs that you would like to attend/chair, please let Nannette Schwartz know. We are still considering a "game night" but have nothing definite on the horizon at this time.

I also want to invite everyone to the Rabbi weekend this month. Even with the terrible weather we had a good turnout last month, so please keep it up. A lot of effort takes place to make the weekends meaningful and even fun. You don't want to miss Rabbi Steve Listfield. He is so interesting, and his study group provides a lot to think about.

Natha Hancock

ONEGS

Jan 27	Zelickson
Feb 03	Kalachman
Feb 10	Reese & Schindler

Feb 17 Wiederecht, Sandra
Feb 24 Fisher

DONATIONS

General Fund

From: Natha & Scott Hancock

Sisterhood Fund

From: Diana & Howard Polin
To: Holly Kent - Your parents are still together, but we feel for your loss.

From: Janet Schindler
To: Holly Kent & Family - In memory of your parents, Raelene Shapiro & Max Kent.

From: Harriet Sacks & Family
To: Holly Kent - Our thoughts are with you and your family. In Memory of your parents.

From Sandra Wiederecht
To: Holly Kent & Family - May the Memory of your parents bring you peace at this time and last forever.

From: Shirley & Ted Roberts
To: Holly Kent & Family - So sorry for the loss of your parents. Hope you feel some comfort for all the good years you had them and that they had together.

From: Nannette Schwartz
To: Holly Kent-In memory of your parents, Raelene Schapiro & Michavsonovich (Max) Kent

From: Brenda & Cliff Liles
To: Leigh Miller & Family-May your father's memory bring you comfort.
To: Holly Kent-In memory of your parents.

Outdoor Lighting Fund

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

Rabbi Fund

From: Millie & Max Rosenthal
To: Holly Kent & Family - The memories of your parents will help you today and last you a lifetime.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb 10-12 Rabbi Stephen Listfield Shabbaton

BIRTHDAYS

Jan 26	Steve Goodman
Jan 30	Eliza Roberts
Jan 31	Adam Zelickson
Feb 02	Danny Bulgatz
Feb 03	Gordon Sacks
Feb 05	Jan Sainker Reed
Feb 08	Ezra Roberts
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	Lynne & Steve Edmondson

Yahrzeits**

Jan 29	Shevat 02	Harry Zeruld*
Jan 31	Shevat 04	Sylvia Kalachman*
Feb 01	Shevat 05	Royal Milton Jacobs*
Feb 05	Shevat 09	Ida Bernstein Sidel
Feb 05	Shevat 09	Alice Levine Yalowitz
Feb 06	Shevat 10	Selma Levitt
Feb 07	Shevat 11	William Flank*
Feb 07	Shevat 11	Hersh Schindler
Feb 08	Shevat 12	Henry Fleishman
Feb 10	Shevat 14	Rabbi Jeffrey Ballon
Feb 12	Shevat 16	Jerome L. Richard
Feb 13	Shevat 17	Esther Goldberg*
Feb 14	Shevat 18	Helen Flank Baum*
Feb 16	Shevat 20	Mildred Freedman*
Feb 17	Shevat 21	Bertha Flank*
Feb 20	Shevat 24	Rebecca Treister*
Feb 20	Shevat 24	Richard Irwin Kolchin
Feb 22	Shevat 26	Rose Belsky*
Feb 24	Shevat 28	Joseph Goodman
Feb 27	Adar 1	Lotta Chester
Feb 27	Adar 1	Mae Green*
Feb 28	Adar 2	Charles Kopman
Mar 01	Adar 3	Phillip Smolker

* Plaque

**Light Memorial candle sunset of previous evening

TU B'SHEVAT TIME

By Ted Roberts

Tu B'Shevat, Tu B'Shevat,
I like you a lot.

Tu B'Shevat.

No tears, no fasting.

Only wonder at G-d's plot.

Tu B'Shevat, degraded, diminished, and deluded by Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Pesach, as we all know, is the New Year of Trees. It's one of the holidays that is not in Torah, but found its origins in the Talmud. The New Year of Trees, we call it. Why? Because in Israel the 15th day of Shevat

signaled the end of winter. Trees bloomed with joy. Here in the USA the trees are black and Bubbe falls on the icy front porch stairs and fractures her hip, but in Eretz Yisrael Spring reigns.

Originally, this exotic holiday had to do with tithing, which is a euphemism for taxes. It was the modern equivalent of 15 April, in measuring what percentage of the fruit went to government or maybe charity. Jerusalem 200 BC or Washington, DC 2017 – government is government.

Tubees is celebrated over a wide range. Some send a fruit bowl to friends – others have Passover featuring the fruits of Israel. Others plant a tree. My friend, Herb, eats an apple and feels he has fulfilled a mitzvah.

All this is nice, but to this heretic, misses the point. To me, Tubees is a solemn declaration of the power of G-d and therefore his existence and reign over what we loosely call nature, which spans the orbit of Jupiter to the potential of an acorn.

Someday, when I'm the head Rabbi of America, I shall issue a presidential edict that on Tubees every parent must take his child into the backyard and plant a tree seed. (Maybe several to insure success.) What better way to convince a child of the power of the Almighty and to demonstrate the mystic force that enlivens Oak trees, puppies, all the animals of the zoo, and your loving parents. This is a feat that makes the Red Sea parting strictly minor league.

When that acorn, lifted by a power we still don't understand, clears his home – the earth – the heavens welcome him. There is a magic in seeds we still don't understand. You might even call it soul – that invisible, undetectable power in the human body. It

hides from the microscope and every other human apparatus. It is ethereal yet transcendental to the physical elements of the body. (By the way, don't use this seed demo to the kids if you live next to a yard full of squirrels – you'll only feed your fellow creatures, which come to think of it, is also a mitzvah.)

The ancient pagans had it all wrong, but given their level of knowledge, you must give them a smidgen of credit. They barely missed the mark. They knew there was a magic that fueled the world. But they worshipped the tricks, not the Master Magician. They worshipped the grove of trees on the hill – not He who turned a half-ounce seed into a ten-ton Oak tree. The Egyptians bowed and said prayers to the mother cat that fed, cleaned, and instructed the litter. They ignored the Master Creator, who hardwired this behavior into her essence.

They above may be of slight interest to some. But in all seriousness, there's nothing more important to your child – most of whom are growing up in a secular world – than to demonstrate the presence of a Master of the universe. Keep it simple. Together, plant a seed on Tu B'Shevat. Ten years later, you can say, "I told you so".

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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