
the Shofar



Etz Chayim Conservative Synagogue's Monthly Newsletter

FEBRUARY, 2019

SHEVAT/ADAR 1, 5779

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

THE RABBI'S MESSAGE

The Inherent Virtue of Human Beings

It's probably a good idea to pay attention to anything that Winston Churchill wrote or did. Here is something he wrote almost a century ago. It is prescient as to the last eight decades of the 20th century, and it is remarkably applicable to the world today.

"Certain it is that while men are gathering knowledge and power with ever-increasing and measureless speed, their virtues and their wisdom have not shown any notable improvement as the centuries have rolled. The brain of a modern man does not differ in essentials from that of the human beings who fought and loved here millions of years ago.... Under sufficient stress the modern man we know so well will do the most terrible deeds.....We have the spectacle of the powers and weapons of man far outstripping the march of his intelligence; we have the march of his intelligence proceeding far more rapidly than the

development of his nobility....

"Without an equal growth of mercy, pity and love, science herself may destroy all that makes human life majestic and tolerable. There never was a time when the inherent virtue of human beings required more strong and confident expression in daily life."

Dear friends, in our social and especially political life today it seems that dishonesty, cynicism, cowardice and any number of related vices are more common than the virtues of which Churchill reminds us. It's not difficult to make the case that too many nations are consciously choosing to be governed by their bigotries and fears rather than rationality and harmony. How is it that cruel dictatorships like Iran and North Korea are building nuclear capabilities while so many free democracies are floundering in confusion and gridlock? Why does it seem that there is so little problem-solving while there is so much finger-pointing?

I possess no governmental sway nor

historical profundity. But I am pleased to quote a person who did. At Etz Chayim we are fully committed to the practice of “mercy, pity and love” so that we all might reap the blessings of a better and stronger life rather than an increasingly cramped and suspicious one. Winston Churchill pretty much saved Western civilization. We at Etz Chayim are vastly more modest in our reach — but we come to synagogue and we encourage each other because we at least want to share the good virtues that are within our grasp.

See you February 8-10,

Stephen Listfield

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings:

We had a great turn out for our Rabbi weekend. Saturday morning it was a pleasure to see so many women of our congregation up at the Bima being honored and recognized for their contributions to our synagogue. Our meal was prepared by Brenda and Natha, and as usual, it was exceptional. No one left hungry. The discussions Saturday and Sunday were both interesting and informative. I always learn something new when we have a Rabbi weekend. Thank you, Rabbi Listfield. Saturday night was a pure pleasure. Havdala service, pot luck, and a chance to really visit with people for a quality length of time was refreshing and very enjoyable. Thank you to the Hirsch family for not only providing your home, but for most graciously making us all feel welcome. The evening went way too fast. Sadly,

Sunday we had to end our wonderful weekend, but not before Michelle Persons provided us with a great brunch and the Rabbi led us in another interesting discussion.

This was a perfect weekend. Good food, good friends and wonderful services where everyone participated (not necessarily in that order). One of my biggest pleasures during services is listening to so many voices participating in each service. You all made me so happy that I am a member of Etz Chayim.

Thank you,

Sandra

BEGINNER’S HEBREW CLASS

Folks,

Responding to requests, we will be offering NJOP Hebrew Reading Course Level 1. See <https://njop.org/partners/programs/hebrew-reading-crash-course/> .

The course is designed for people with little or no background in Hebrew and concentrates on teaching the Hebrew alphabet and reading skills. The introductory Level 1 program can teach participants to learn to read Hebrew in as few as five 1 ½ hour weekly sessions. NJOP has also published a Reishith Binah Hebrew primer, which we will use.

If you are interested, please contact Bill Goldberg, wm.goldberg@yahoo.com, or call 256-882-2918.

SISTERHOOD

Ladies,

I just got back from our "Lunch Bunch" at Honest Coffee Roasters. Everyone enjoyed the meal and the camaraderie. "You should have been there!" Thanks, Amy for planning it. Next month, Feb 18 at 7:00pm, we are sponsoring a Family Game night. The charge is \$5 per family. We will have some table games, card games, and prizes. If you want to play a particular game, please bring it. More info will follow.

I also want to thank Karen Hirsch for opening her home for a "pot luck" party when the Rabbi was here. It wasn't a Sisterhood function, but it was a lot of fun. The Sisterhood is considering this as an idea for later this year. If you would be interested in attending something like that (or hosting it), please let one of the Sisterhood Board members know.

If you are interested in being on the Sisterhood Board next year, please let me know. We really appreciate our new board members this year and would love to have some more.

Natha

DONATIONS

Rabbi Fund

From: Elisabeth Keller & Richard Kalish
To: Rabbi Listfield – In Memory of Martin Keller. Thanks to Rabbi Listfield for officiating at his funeral; Martin Keller's love of Jewish learning, language and culture should be shared by all.

From: Shirley & Ted Roberts
To: Bill Brigadier – Thinking of you. Get well soon and hope you will be 100 per cent.

From: Millie & Max Rosenthal
To: Bill Brigadier – Glad your knee surgery is over, get well soon.

General Fund

From: Jennifer Nelson

From: Joseph & Charlotte Marcus
Mazel Tov!

Outdoor Lighting Fund

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

BOOK CLUB MEETING

Limited Time Book Club Offer - Your First Book is Free

Have you ever thought of participating in the Etz Chayim Book Club? First of all, it's exciting. The discussions are actually fun. Second, you learn a lot of interesting stuff. And third, if you join now, we'll buy you the first book free.

We're reading "Judaism and Christianity: A Contrast" by Rabbi Stuart Federow. Many people focus on the similarities between Judaism and Christianity, but the religions are really quite different. This book, published in 2012, will help us understand these differences from the Jewish perspective. Rabbi Federow has been the Rabbi at Shaar Hashalom, a conservative congregation in Houston, TX, since 1995.

If you'd like to participate, there's plenty of time. We'll discuss this book at 11:30 am on February 21, 2019, at the synagogue.

For more information contact Jon Berger at 256-457-0277 (phone or text) or jonaberger@gmail.com. To join the club just call me, and I'll give you a copy of the book free. How's that? You can't beat free.



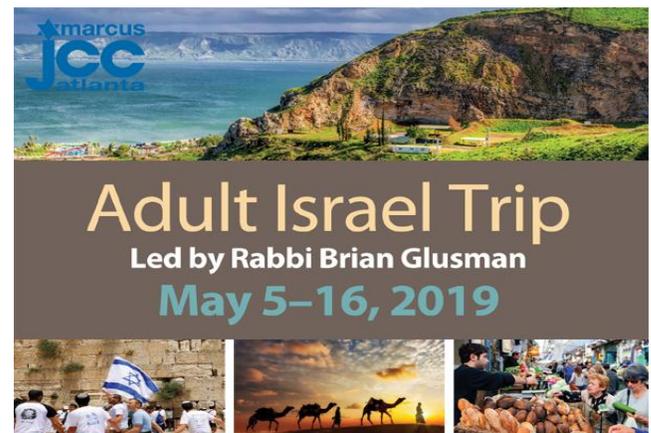
INVITATION FROM RABBI BRIAN GLUSMAN

"Just wanted you to know that I am leading a trip to Israel in May and would

appreciate if you could share the information with the Etz Chayim community. This one is a Deluxe Trip to Israel for Adults. I am very excited about this trip, which is for singles, couples of all ages and backgrounds. One of the highlights is that we will be celebrating Israel Independence Day in Israel!

Information appears below, and a Media Release is attached."

Thank you,
Brian G



The JCC is excited to host a Deluxe Trip to Israel for adults! This trip is perfect for first-timers and for those who have been before. Open to singles, couples and people of all faiths and backgrounds. A highlight will be celebrating Israel Independence Day in Israel!

View and download itinerary and application at www.israeltour.com/marcusjcc

If you are interested and would like additional information, please send an email to rabbi.glusman@atlantajcc.org

ONEGS

Jan 25 Zelickson
Feb 01 Hancock
Feb 08 Rosenthal
Feb 15 Hall
Feb 22 Hirsch
Mar 01 Lapidus

UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb 02 EC & TBS Men's Clubs at
Havoc Hockey Game, prepaid
tickets
Feb 8-10 Rabbi Listfield Shabbaton
Feb 18 Family Game Night, \$5 per
family, 7 PM
Feb 21 EC Book Club, 11:30 AM

BIRTHDAYS

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 16 Barry Meyer
Feb 17 Cliff Liles
Feb 18 Sarah Drake
Feb 23 Benjamin Camenker
Feb 25 Andrew Edmondson
Feb 28 Michelle Lapidus

ANNIVERSARIES

Feb 04 Shirley & Ted Roberts
Feb 14 Lynne & Steve Edmondson

Yahrzeits**

Jan 27	Shevat 21	Bertha Flank*
Jan 30	Shevat 24	Rebecca Treister*
Feb 02	Shevat 27	Richard Irwin Kolchin
Feb 01	Shevat 26	Rose Belsky*
Feb 03	Shevat 28	Joseph Goodman
Feb 06	Adar 01	Lotta Chester
Feb 06	Adar 01	Mae Green*
Feb 07	Adar 02 II	Charles Kopman
Feb 08	Adar 03	Carolyn Greenbaum
Feb 08	Adar 03	Phillip Smolker
Feb 09	Adar 04	Gladys Moiseev
Feb 10	Adar 05	Stanley B. Brown
Feb 10	Adar 05	Benjamin Bierstein
Feb 12	Adar 07	Helena D'Acosta Weingarden*
Feb 12	Adar 07	Philip Aronowitz*
Feb 12	Adar 07	Mary Hoffman Baker*
Feb 12	Adar 07	Rose Leites*
Feb 15	Adar 10	Sarah Rachel Schindler
Feb 18	Adar 13	Lou Harrison*
Feb 18	Adar 13	Max Moiseev*
Feb 18	Adar 13	Sam Okeon
Feb 18	Adar 13 II	Joseph Sacks
Feb 19	Adar 14	Hannah Rosen
Feb 20	Adar 15	Jeffrey Tillman*
Feb 21	Adar 16	Bernard Flank*
Feb 21	Adar 16 II	Goldie Merzon Ludmer*
Feb 22	Adar 17	Joe Brown
Feb 22	Adar 17	Anna Fleishman
Feb 23	Adar 18	B. H. Ledbetter*
Feb 25	Adar 20	Cynthia Kopman
Feb 26	Adar 21	Melvin Harris Kirsch*
Mar 02	Adar 25	Rebecca Sacks*
Mar 03	Adar 26	Diana Sidel
Mar 04	Adar 27	Rose Freeman
Mar 04	Adar 27	Phillip Makower*

* Plaque

**Light Memorial candle sunset of previous evening

NO TEARS FOR THE GOLDEN YEARS

By Ted Roberts

I used to be a father. I still am, and now in my golden years I'm a grandfather, too. The job description is similar, but a little fuzzier. And a lot harder. The job you left behind you must be replaced with an avocation that's a) Fun, b) Important - not world-shaking, just important, c) Stressless, and D) Most of all, satisfying. Katherine Hepburn said it best. "Old age (pardon her bluntness) ain't for sissies." I thought about it for a few minutes.

There's gardening, but you just get dirty and run up your water and energy bill. There's sports, but it seems to be sliding into corruptibility. There's volunteering in community affairs. Nice. Worthwhile for sure, but not earthshaking. . . waitamminute, if it's earthshaking you're looking for, how about immortality? And where do you find immortality? In your children and grandchildren, of course. Why not spend that last decade or two structuring, guiding their lives?

The job calls for inspiration of young minds and young hearts; especially grandkids who are geographically remote and therefore consider themselves safe from my constant inspirational messages.

Yes, despite TV and video games and other electronic paraphernalia we Jews honor and cherish words printed upon paper. We still are the People of the Book. Give us a pencil and a piece of paper, and we'll find something to say to those grandkids.

So, I write a lot of letters to my brood. For only 49 cents (it goes up every year - no competition will do that every time)

you're allowed a large number of words written on paper. And a wise grandfather, besides counsel, advice, and family gossip, can include a candy bar, a stick of gum, a newspaper clipping, or a baseball card to lure the young mind into the civilized joy of correspondence. Try THAT in an e-mail. What teacher ever taught successfully without incentives? It's a trick I learned years ago from the Crackerjack people. They marketed candy with cheap, fragile toys. I market family pride. What a worthy avocation. Beats napping in the recliner every time.

History hints that Socrates - you've heard of the Socratic School - kept a big jar of black olives beside his desk to reward precocious students, and I do the same with my letters.

I use wiles of all kinds to encourage my younger kin to rip open their envelopes with frantic enthusiasm. "Wonder what he sent this time? Maybe if I write back today, he'll send me another Hershey bar."

Yes, Hershey bars are great. Nice and flat - but they have their disadvantages in July unless you live in Nome, Alaska and your granddaughter hangs out with her kids in Anchorage. Kids love letters with or without sweet bonuses. They love their name in big, bold letters on the envelope. They love the ritual of sorting through the mail and throwing the discards on the floor before finding THEIR letter.

And like I say, I rarely write without including something that is either amusing, edible, or ethically fortifying. That's how I foster my benign immortality. My favorites are clippings from my local

newspaper (“human interest” stories, we used to call them). So educational! Encourages kids to read and observe the world outside of home and school. And if you pick your stories with care, you can package amusement and even morality in your envelopes. For example, I just mailed off to eight grandkids a story of a 65-year-old lady who wrote a confession to her high school principal; she cheated in a high school writing course 47 years ago! My small audience loved it and marveled at her delayed, but full confession.

They were full of questions: “Did she have to take the class over? Did she get a punishment? Did they send her a new report card? I assured them she was not punished and maybe - because of her honesty - they renamed the auditorium in her honor. Lesson: Honesty is sweet and rewarding.

But my kids usually award the family Pulitzer Prize to the vignettes I call “Pet Saves Family”: The collie who pulled Jamie out of the river. The cocker spaniel that barked and alerted the family to their smoldering home. And of course, the whole category of dog-finds-missing-child story. We humans, even after we’ve lost the glow of childhood, still have a soft spot for animal rescue stories. It goes back in history to the gabbling geese that saved Rome. A story probably told in a grandfather’s letter of 300 BC.

We don’t always need burning homes and swollen rivers. Kids of the right age (say over 3 and under 10) love any animal story. Naturally. They love animals. There’s a kinship there of smallness, innocence, helplessness that we just don’t understand.

Just this month I mailed out a tearjerker that couldn’t fail to warm the juvenile heart. A 2-column report of a 3-legged dog - yes, a handicapped mutt who had lost a race with a truck and forfeited one of his four limbs - found a lost child. The sheriff and an army of searchers failed, noted the article, but the dog, only 75% effective, found the missing child.

The returns from my young readers have been overwhelmingly enthusiastic about this theme. More! they cry. They want more. But that’s not so easy. I’m at the mercy of the newspaper industry, which is attracted to war, corruption, crime, and disease rather than the uplifting genre of “Pet Finds Child”.

Besides the inspirational value, there’s a selfish payoff to my letter writing campaigns: I like the return mail. And maybe decades from now when I’m old and my pen trembles on the paper; and my poor old grinders are loose and wobbly, my mail will be full of attentive notes sweetened with easy to chew Hershey Bars. Bread on the waters, you know. Can you think of a better way to spend your now plentiful leisure time? Ah, my golden years.

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:

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