

the Shofar



Etz Chayim Conservative Synagogue's Monthly Newsletter

APRIL, 2020

NISAN/IYYAR 5780

Etz Chayim services (Friday and Saturday) are cancelled due to Corona Virus. Live streaming services are available from Ahavat Achim Synagogue at <https://aasynagogue.org/live-streaming/> on Friday, at 5:30 pm and Saturday at 8:45 am or from Temple Beth El on Friday at 5:45 pm and Saturday at 9:30 am, at <https://livestream.com/tbebirningham>

FROM THE RABBI

DISAPPOINTMENT

Dear Friends,

I can't tell you how disappointed I am that our March weekend had to be canceled. Of course, we all understand the necessity for Etz Chayim to be closed and for all of us to stay safe. We really had no choice in the matter. I'm simply writing to tell you how disappointed I am.

Now we look forward to Pesach, and the annual festivity of the seders. But who knows what *those* evenings will be like this year? We can't hold our congregational seder. We are rightly wary of inviting more than a very small group to any of our private seders. I am next scheduled to be in Huntsville for the weekend of April 17-19. Having missed you in March I am really looking forward to our April get-together. But, again, as

of this writing we are all unsure of what April will bring.

My colleague and friend, Rabbi Martin Cohen, wrote a prayer for our turbulent times. I re-produce it here, with the hope that all of you are finding the resources of prayer, along with faith and inner fortitude and calm and courage, such that we will emerge from this scourge of the coronavirus even stronger than before. Here are the words of Rabbi Cohen:

Avinu Malkeinu, Dear God in Heaven, protect our families, our friends, and our neighbors as we negotiate these troubled seas in which we find ourselves afloat. Ever mindful of the fact that we are all Your creatures, we turn to You for guidance and for strength as we pray that the public officials charged with bringing us through this crisis be granted wisdom, intelligence, and insight born of compassion and charity. And we pray too that the physicians, nurses, and hospital

employees who are on the front lines be spared all distress and disease as they care for the stricken, for the elderly, and for the infirm. Most of all, we pray that You look with kindness and generosity on us all, and particularly on those already infected for whose recovery we this day ardently pray, as is written in Your holy Torah, "For I, the Almighty, am the source of Your healing." Amen, may such be Your will!

Happy Pesach,

Stephen Listfield

YOUR GUIDE TO PESACH
PREPARATION: DISHES, UTENSILS,
FOOD—AND A LOT MORE

The Rabbinical Assembly publishes a fairly comprehensive guide for the complex festival of Passover. Here is the link. You will find that it addresses a lot of our annual questions:

<https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/jewish-law/holidays/pesah/pesah-guide-5777.pdf>

TO SELL HAMETZ FOR PASSOVER,
PLEASE SEE THE FORM AT THE END
OF THIS PUBLICATION

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings,

We had a great Purim. Lots of people showed up, and the Nefesh Yehudi Choir was a very welcome addition to the

Magilla. Donna, Michelle and their helpers did a great job with the hot dog dinner. There was great participation. I believe a great time was had by all.

I know that this isn't what we all have on our minds at this time. The only thing we have all been thinking of is the virus. We are a family at Etz Chayim. We look out for each other and step in immediately when needed. We are a small congregation with a big heart, and we are showing that on a daily basis. From personal experience I see this. I have multiple people that call me every day to make sure I am alive and well and offer to shop for me or pick up prescriptions. I am very grateful for their concern and kindness. I hear from others that people have generously taken their time to pick up and deliver items that they need. Our congregation, old and young, pitch in and take care of each other. There is no such thing here as politics, age, gender. We are genuinely a family community that, wanting no acknowledgment or thanks, does these acts of kindness because it is the right thing to do. This congregation is truly a blessing. Sometimes it takes a tragedy to realize what we have.

It was with deep regret that I had to cancel our Seder, the Rabbi visit and the Friday and Saturday services. The Board has been in constant contact with one another and (from home) has discussed the concern for our congregation for each one of these events. We do not take this lightly. We will continue to keep you posted when anything changes and when we can resume our regular activities. If you are in need of prescriptions, vital groceries, just need to talk because you are going stir crazy or just want to make sure someone is OK, please use our year

book to keep in touch. Just because we are at home doesn't mean that we can't still take care of each other. If you need anything please do not hesitate to call. Keep in touch. We are all in this together.

Sandra Wiederecht, 256-797-4013, text or call

THE BOOK CLUB WILL TRY TO MEET IN APRIL

With the whole world seemingly shut down due to the COVID-19 virus, the Etz Chayim book club hopes to be an island of learning and civility.

Since the book club meetings have six or seven members attending, that shouldn't pose a threat. Furthermore, since we would have a separate table for every attendee, maintaining proper social distancing won't be a problem. Thus, unless there are any new developments we will discuss "We Stand Divided" by Daniel Gordis at the synagogue at 11:30 am on Thursday, April 23.

If anyone feels that this is inappropriate in any way please contact Jon Berger at 256-457-0277 (phone or text) or jonaberger@gmail.com

SISTERHOOD

Ladies,

What can I say...I hope everyone is well and sheltering in place. And I hope you are able to have a nice Passover.

As you know, our Passover celebration has been cancelled as well as the Hadassah Challah Bake (rescheduled). I want to thank all of the ladies (particularly Lynne Edmondson and Millie Rosenthal) who had already begun planning for the Seder. Work was performed even though it was cancelled.

The Sisterhood is not scheduling anything for April and probably not for May. We will keep you informed. We will have to plan our election of officers for a later date. If you would like to be on the Sisterhood Board next year, please let Sandra Wiederecht or me know.

Natha

UPCOMING EVENTS

Apr 8	EC Seder Cancelled
Apr 8-16	Passover
Apr 17-19	Rabbi Listfield Shabbaton--TBD
Apr 21	JFHNA virtual Yom HaShoah--TBD
Apr 23	Book Club
Apr 30	Mega Challah Bake Postponed

DONATIONS

General Fund

From: Lucy & Charlie Fisher
To: Shirley Roberts & Family – In
Memory of Ted Roberts

From: Arlene White
To: Shirley Roberts & Family – We will miss Ted, much love to you and your family.

From: Lauren & Steve Goodman
To: Shirley Roberts & Family – In Memory of Ted Roberts.

From: Marie & Mike Sumerall
To: Shirley Roberts & Family – We are thankful for having known Ted. Wishing comfort and support for you and your family.

From: Michal & Gary Hall
In Memory of Ted Roberts

From: Arlene Averbuch
In Memory of Ted Roberts

From: Sandy & Marvin Kalachman
May memories of Ted and the love of family and friends surround Shirley and her family and give them strength.

From: Judy & Larry Moss
To: Shirley Roberts, Joe Roberts & Family, and Lisa Harris & Shawn Wood – In Memory of Ted Roberts.

From Michelle & Jonathan Persons
In Memory of Ted Roberts.

From: Carla & Robert Krigelman
To: Shirley Roberts & Family – We are saddened to learn of the passing of Ted Roberts. We loved and respected Ted as a pillar of the Huntsville Jewish community. He will be missed by all who knew him.

From: Beverly & Lou Weiner
To: Shirley Roberts & Family – In Memory of Ted Roberts

From: Suzanne & Arthur Back
To: Shirley Roberts & Family – In Memory of Ted Roberts

From: Marlyn Lockard
To: Shirley Roberts – In Memory of Ted Roberts

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

Sisterhood Fund
From: Diana & Howard Polin
To: Shirley Roberts & Family – Our sympathy is with you. Ted left so much love and humor and treasured memories. For that we are blessed.
To: Lou Weiner – It is such a joy to see you up and about.
To: Janet Schindler – Be well, we wish our dear friend Health & Happiness always.
To: Amy & Matt Mauldin – Mazel Tov on the birth of baby Beau Joseph.
To: Brenda & Cliff Liles – Mazel Tov on the marriage of your son Adam and Eliana.

From: Karen Hirsch
To support Sisterhood group activities (when we can gather together again!)

From: Shirley Roberts
In Memory of Ted Roberts

THE MEGA CHALLAH BAKE

POSTPONED

In light of the events affecting our country and community, the Huntsville Mega Challah Bake will be POSTPONED until a later date. We are still sorting out details that allow us to change the date with our venue, so please be patient with us.

Until then, stay healthy and safe, and enjoy baking challah in the comfort of your own kitchen!

BIRTHDAYS

Apr 02 Dr. Arthur Polin
Apr 04 Diane Belsky
Apr 04 Dorothy Goldberg
Apr 06 Eli Sacks
Apr 15 Sandy Kalachman
Apr 15 Howard Polin
Apr 16 Katie Meyer
Apr 17 Lynne Edmondson
Apr 18 Jacob Sacks
Apr 19 Joshua Brigadier
Apr 19 Gavin Hancock
Apr 21 Blake Zelickson
Apr 21 Megan Polin
Apr 22 Lisa Roberts Harris
Apr 23 Susan Levitt
Apr 27 Gary Hall
Apr 28 Louis Weiner

ANNIVERSARIES

Apr 03 Leigh & Randy Miller
Apr 15 Helen & Robert Woodham
Apr 17 Ginger & Howard Nelson
Apr 30 Sharon & Jeff Yalowitz

THANK YOU

Thanks to all who contributed to the first shiva meal after the funeral of Ted Roberts: Janet Schindler, Millie & Max Rosenthal, Brenda & Cliff Liles, Diana & Howard Polin, Sandra Wiederecht, Michelle & Jonathan Persons, Sue & Joe Paddock, Amy Mauldin, Natha & Scott Hancock, Bill & Dorothy Goldberg, Michal & Gary Hall, Leigh & Randy Miller, Nannette Schwartz, Natalie & David Young.

YAHREZEITS**

Apr 01	Nisan 07	Paul Schlein*
Apr 01	Nisan 07	Gertrud Schlein*
Apr 02	Nisan 08	Morris Wittenstein*
Apr 03	Nisan 09	Cecile Hollenberg*
Apr 04	Nisan 10	Irwin Goldstein*
Apr 05	Nisan 11	Norman Greenbaum
Apr 09	Nisan 15	Yakov Cszerny Drake
Apr 09	Nisan 15	Yolanda Cszerny Drake
Apr 10	Nisan 16	Millie Goldstein
Apr 10	Nisan 16	Marvin M. Schreiber*
Apr 10	Nisan 16	Lilian Jaffee
Apr 10	Nisan 16	Isadore Cassuto
Apr 14	Nisan 20	Henry Sevin
Apr 16	Nisan 22	Simon Blum*
Apr 17	Nisan 23	Jeffrey Weinman*
Apr 17	Nisan 23	Leo I. Goldberger
Apr 23	Nisan 29	Joseph Goldstein*
Apr 24	Nisan 30	Leo Ginsburg
Apr 25	Iyyar 01	Frieda Margol Katz
Apr 26	Iyyar 02	Goldie Fuerst
Apr 27	Iyyar 03	Robert F. (Bob) May
Apr 29	Iyyar 05	Alvin Hollenberg
Apr 29	Iyyar 05	Sherri H. Cassuto
May 03	Iyyar 09	Mitchell Fuerst

* Plaque

**Light Memorial candle sunset of previous evening

THE DEATH OF GONZALO CEREZO
BARREDO, FATHER OF FORMER
MEMBER FERNANDO CEREZO

Baruch Dayan HaEmet, Etz Chayim is very sad to announce the death of Gonzalo Cerezo Barredo, father of former member Fernando Cerezo. He was 94 and passed away peacefully Monday, March 19, 2020, in the Hospital de La Princesa in Madrid, Spain. He was a victim of the Corona Virus pandemic.

He was a prominent politician, a reporter, a writer, and mostly he was the beloved leader of a very extended family. He and his wife Esquela (who pre-deceased him in 2012) had ten children: Begoña, José Antonio, Covadonga, Gonzalo, Luis, Ignacio, Almudena, Santiago, Fernando and Juan Pablo. The children produced 20 grandchildren and 8 great grandchildren. Sandy Pepper, Nathan, Claudia and Fernando had recently visited Spain to join with the family in celebration of the 94th Birthday of their patriarch. At that time, he was in good health, but the virus changed his condition very quickly.

Memorial donations in lieu of flowers may be made to Etz Chayim Congregation, 7705 Bailey Cove Rd. SE, Huntsville, AL 35802

May God comfort the entire Cerezo-Pepper extended family along with all the other mourners of Israel and Jerusalem.

MY FATHER

by Russ Roberts



This is a version of what I said at my father's funeral.

He passed away on March 2, 2020 at the age of 89.

May his memory be a blessing.

Years ago, my dad told me the phrase he wanted on his tombstone:
His heart was full of stories

He got that one so right. He wrote hundreds and hundreds of stories on Jewish themes, sports, daily life, his children and his grandchildren. They appeared in publications all over the world. The New York Times. The Wall Street Journal, the Reader's Digest, the Forward, Hadassah. You can read some of them here. We published some of the best of them for him here for his 75th birthday.

But he didn't just write stories. He wrote poems. Song lyrics. He wrote and narrated dozens of stories for the radio as part of WLRH's Sundial Writers Corner.

He wrote a children's book called Oodles of Noodles. One of his grand-daughters illustrated it. He even wrote what he called a fight song for Etz Chayim, set to a melody he improvised:

ETZ CHAYIM — it's a heckuva shul.
ETZ CHAYIM — it's a heckuva shul.
It's got latkes and chochkes and kiddush,
too
A wonderful place to be a Jew
ETZ CHAYIM — it's a heckuva shul.

Or something like that. The middle part varied depending on his mood and what struck his fancy. I mainly remember the heckuva shul line which he would sing with great relish.

But there was one thing he loved more than words. Family.

On a Saturday night in 1947 in Memphis, Tennessee at a dance at Beth El Emeth Synagogue, a 17-year-old named Ted Roberts asked a 15-year-old named Shirley Goldberger for a dance. The rest is history. Four years later they were married, a dance that lasted 69 sweet years, years where his love for his bride burned fiercely without flagging. Just last month he referred to her as his bride.

At a party, someone once asked him: How did someone like you ever get a saint like Shirley to agree to marry you?

Without smiling, he dead-panned: I have a lot of money.

That certainly wasn't true in 1951. Eventually, my dad had what he thought of as enough money. He used to tell me

that his measure of success was supporting his family and staying out of jail.

He and my mom created the incredible home that nurtured all of us and in turn, our children, too.

He was an incredible father. He was an incredible teacher as generations of bar and bat mitzvah students at Etz Chayim can attest.

He liked to say: In families, love flows downhill. And did it ever. Not by declarations of love that he usually found cloying and that he disdained, but through the time he gave his children and the love he showed, but rarely proclaimed. We felt that love beyond words.

And what a grandfather he was. He turned his sit-down lawnmower into an amusement park ride, putting a grandchild on his lap and letting them steer it around the yard. He'd make homemade waffles and lemonade.

He would take the grandchildren fossil hunting. He came to know the kind of rocks and hillside that could yield the imprint of a shell in a stone and maybe something grander. My daughter wonders if he planted them. Of course not, I reassured her. But he would have if he could have. That would have been so Dad.

He loved sending his children and grandchildren letters. With little presents and goodies. He'd send his grandkids a cicada in a cylindrical pill container. He'd find a dead frog that had been run over in

the street, peel it off the asphalt, tape the corpse to a piece of paper and send it to one of the grandkids — look at this! Isn't it interesting?

When he came to visit us, my kids followed him around the house like he was the Pied Piper. Papa — tell me a story! Tell me a story! Tell me a story! And so he would tell them a story. And then another. And another. All from his fertile imagination and eager heart.

People loved my dad. But he was a complicated man. On the surface he wore the mask of a clown and sometimes he was the gentle prankster who verbally winked while spinning a story with a straight face. But he was like Pagliacci, the clown from the opera who had a broken heart beneath the painted smile. With Dad, something deeper lay beneath the surface.

Rabbi Listfield eulogized him perfectly, saying that my dad combined the curiosity of a child with the wisdom of a sage. That's exactly right. Everything interested him. And he drank deep from the spring of knowledge. History, poetry, opera, horticulture, diplomacy, Judaism, Christianity — all interested him endlessly.

My dad was a contrarian, a skeptic, someone who had little respect for so-called conventional wisdom. He did not believe you should drink eight glasses of water every day. He did not believe breakfast is the most important meal of the day. He told me years and years ago, that Judaism and Christianity would come closer together over time. I thought he was crazy. But when I read about the

Christians who hold Passover Seders and build sukkot, and who sign Jewish wedding contracts because they want to affirm the Jewish origins of their Christianity, I realized that Dad was on to something.

To say he was unconventional doesn't begin to cover it. He rode a bike into his 80s and never wore a helmet. He liked the feeling of the wind in his hair, even when there wasn't much of it left. He usually ignored your birthday. He preferred spontaneous presents when they were unexpected. He said it was good to walk barefoot through the grass. Yes, there were snakes in the world, but you've got to feel the grass between your toes.

My dad was the original cat that walked by himself. I think that's part of the reason he liked cats so much. He identified with their unwillingness to curry favor with their owners.

My dad, like Robert Frost, had a lover's quarrel with the world, and with many things. Especially Judaism. He studied the Hebrew Bible endlessly finding new meaning, new puzzles, new questions. Mostly questions. He loved rabbis so he could learn from them, but he also liked to give them a hard time from time to time.

His soul ran deep. He saw the Divine in the everyday. He loved to tell me that if you're looking for God, observe the cat. Look at how the mama cat takes care of its kittens, how it nurses, and how it will hide the kittens if she feels there is danger. We call that instinct. For my dad that was just a word to describe a

mystery that enchanted him. Or a fig tree. That the fig is pollinated by a special breed of wasp, he found especially satisfying.

One of my dad's best stories was about Amos Goodheart, a fable about a man the king sends out on a journey to a faraway land with the proviso that he can only take with him that which cannot be carried.

It's a long journey and the path uncertain. Amos is frightened. And bewildered.

It's the journey that all of us must take.

What can he take that cannot be carried?

And Amos discover the one thing we can take which cannot be carried. His good deeds. The voices of those he has helped in his lifetime bring Amos Goodheart home.

My dad is Amos Goodheart. The king has sent him on a journey, but I am sure he will find his way home, escorted by his good deeds—his work as a teacher at Etz Chayim. His volunteer work for the Clearview Cancer Institute. But most of all by the great gift of time and attention he gave to his family.

Being a father was a craft my dad worked on relentlessly. The letters he wrote us before email and when long-distance phone calls were expensive. The stories he told us. The poems he read to us. The ideas he shared from all those books he read. The imaginary world he let us inhabit through his deadpan, funny stories. All this required devotion.

Along with my mom's gifts from her heart that complemented Dad's — they created our family. That closeness we share is as real as any plaque or inscription honoring those who are more generous in more tangible ways. My dad never wrote an epic poem or a novel. His masterpiece was the relationships we shared with him and still share with each other.

I sometimes think my dad could have been a more renowned storyteller if he had spent less time with his children and grandchildren. But the tradeoff was easy for him.

He chose us.

So if you want to honor my father's memory, spend more time with your children. Or your Parents. Or those you love. For dad, quality time demanded quantity time. It's harder than it seems. So many things, more tangible, more alluring, with more immediate returns, call for our attention and distract us. Spend the time. It's more precious than rubies.

And if you are as lucky and devoted as my father was, perhaps love can defy the odds and flow uphill as it surely did from all of us toward Dad.

One of my Dad's poems, called Strength, captured how he felt about family, and the bittersweet nature of life. He wrote it for my sister when he was on a business trip and missed the haven for him that was his family:

May our family laughter
Family smiles
Bring warmth and strength
For all the joyless miles
That we must travel
Separately

And even though our dreams
Only briefly light the night
And praise comes small and late
At home they think
We 're greater than the great.

Dad, the day has finally come that you
must travel separately from those who
love you and who you loved so fiercely.

The laughter you gave us, and yes, even
the tears, will bring us warmth and
strength. And Dad, as always, you were
too modest. Even people outside your
home think you're greater than the great.

Godspeed my father, Avraham ben
Baruch Bendit haLevi v'Etta. May flights
of angels sing you to your rest.

To sell your hametz for Passover, the
following form can be mailed to Rabbi
Listfield at 3402 Landen Pine Ct. NE,
Atlanta GA 30305, or emailed to
slistfield@aol.com .

HAMETZ SELLING FORM

Shtar Harsha'ah ~ Authorization to Sell
Hametz

I, the undersigned, empower Rabbi
Stephen Listfield to act in my behalf to
sell all hametz possessed by me and my
household – knowingly or unknowingly –
as defined by Torah law. This transaction
takes effect at noon Wednesday, April 8,
and will be in effect for the duration of
Pesach, which ends Thursday night, April
16 at nightfall.

Signature

Name (print)

Home Address
