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# the Shofar



Etz Chayim Conservative Synagogue's Monthly Newsletter

DECEMBER, 2023

KISLEV/TEVET, 5784

For information on joining  
virtual services and events, please see our website:  
<http://www.etzchayim-hsv.org>

## FROM THE RABBI

### Power and Powerlessness

Jason Rubenstein, rabbi for Jewish Life at Yale, wrote shortly after the Hamas massacre of October 7 that there was absolutely no justification for Hamas' action. "No one is inevitably forced to kidnap babies, or massacre wheelchair-bound revelers at a rave.

"Antisemitism isn't primarily about hurting or killing Jews, and it's not based on some theory of racial inferiority (or superiority). Instead, antisemitism is a fear, and hatred, of Jewish power — expressed primarily as a readiness to believe that Jews, when organized and acting together on large scales, are dangerous, the very essence of evil."

I understand what Rabbi Rubenstein means. I would add the word "envy" along with the word "fear." We Jews are no better and no worse than anyone else. But insofar as there is remarkable Jewish achievement in this world, some people

react not with admiration but with downright envy. And envy can lead to hate.

But here's what struck me when I read the rabbi's words. Yes, antisemitism is a hatred of Jewish power. But October 7 was about Jewish weakness. The thousands of Jews who were massacred and tortured and raped and kidnapped and wounded on that one day were — in terms of power — actually very weak. Teenagers at a music festival. Workers for peace between Israelis and Palestinians (a particular irony). Toddlers. Babies.

Haters around the world erupted in glee literally the next day. In other words, antisemitism erupts when Jews are powerful, and antisemitism erupts when Jews are vulnerable. What's the answer? There is no answer. But I will say that between the two, I'd rather see Jews be powerful than vulnerable. Stay strong, dear friends.

Happy Chanukah, a time to remember some Jewish power,

Stephen Listfield

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Hello Etz Chayim family,

December is here along with daylight savings time. Our start time for regular services will continue to be 7:30pm.

Sorry for any confusion, we want to be sure all families are able to get from work, to dinner, to services!

Etz Chayim Board voted to have police security for each congregational activity throughout the month of December. We do have a board approved, updated safety plan and police procedure plan. Safety information will be posted throughout the building. Linda did a great job of leading us through our 3 sessions of safety training. If you have not received a copy, pick one up from the synagogue. In November, a building assessment was administered and we look forward to that write up and subsequent recommendations. We should have some results to discuss at the January Congregational Meeting. Thank you for your donations to security, general fund, BJ Brigadier Fund, and Israel.

Updated dates: We do not have a rabbi weekend in December, but a Saturday Shabbat is scheduled for December 16. Also, December 8 (exception start time 7pm) join us for a Children's Service with Ms. Gabi Lapidus. December 10th is the Latke Party.

The Etz Chayim Board did update the Bi-Laws. Look for that document in your email by early January. The congregation will have a chance to approve the updated By-Laws. Remember we are Huntsville Conservative Synagogue; operating as conservative with both a capital and lower case "C". So, everything contained within the By-Laws will fall within the rules of USCJ and our Rabbi's interpretation. The congregation will also vote on Rabbi and Safety expenditures for 2024 at the January 21, 2024, 4 p.m. Congregational Meeting.

### **The Results of the Huntsville Conservative Synagogue: Etz Chayim Congregation Interest Survey completed Fall 2023**

Members liked the following about Etz Chayim: services, social, prayer, education, lay led, Saturday Shabbat Services.

You want to see the following change: more Saturday a.m. services, person leading services should not have to let zoom folks in, more people work together on Rabbi luncheons.

Start time for Friday night services was evenly divided between 7 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. However, after further research, families voting for 7:30 p.m. were less flexible with the time.

Five out of eight respondent families were interested in Saturday morning Shabbat services.

Vote for Children's Services every other month, with the children singing more music.

The following people said they can be called for last minute minyan: Bill, Fred, Max, Donna, Kathy, Karen, Lynne, Summerville, Howie. Bill, Karen, and

Kathy said they are willing to do anything to help with leading services. Fred wants to carry Torah.

Suggestions for Etz Chayim Book Club: Israel & Judaism, women of Bible, more variety.

Three people said they were interested in learning conversational Hebrew; maybe someone will come forward to teach on zoom.

Folks are interested in occasional activities outside of the synagogue: sports, music, educational speakers, games, hiking, restaurants, visit nursing homes.

Other comments: How do we energize more Jews to join or participate with Huntsville Conservative Synagogue, Etz Chayim Congregation?

Sincerely,

Lynne Edmondson  
President  
Huntsville Conservative Synagogue, Etz Chayim Congregation

WE WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER  
PEARL HARBOR

DECEMBER 7, 1941  
82 YEARS AGO

“A DATE WHICH WILL LIVE IN INFAMY”

### EC BOOK CLUB

The Book Club is reading *The Beauty Queen of Jerusalem* and will discuss the book on January 11, 2024. And for the first time, we will be reviewing a book that

was made into a Netflix 2 season-streaming movie. So, even if you don't read the book, you have the opportunity to participate in our brilliant discussion of it by watching the Netflix series.

Max

### SISTERHOOD

Hi All,

Be sure to join Etz Chayim for the popular Latke Party on December 10<sup>th</sup>. We start with Bingo at Noon and serve lunch at 1:00 PM.

There will not be a Lunch Bunch for the month of December. We'll pick them up again in January.

### DONATIONS

#### General Fund

From: Dorothy & Bill Goldberg, a most generous donation  
In Honor of our congregation and the High Holidays

From: Julie Lindy  
In Memory of Stormy Wiederecht

From: Friends of Lydia Honan  
In Memory of Lydia's mother, Roslyn Honan

From: Brenda Liles  
In Memory of Stormy Wiederecht

From: Antonia Spector  
In Honor of our Congregation

From: Millie & Max Rosenthal  
In Memory of Marvin Kalachman's brother

### BJ Brigadier Fund

From: Bill Brigadier

In Loving Memory of B.J. Brigadier

### HPD Security Fund

Donna Lyonnais

Joan Gettleman

Martin Freeman

Kathy Stora

Lauren & Steve Goodman

Sue & Joe Paddock

Natha & Scott Hancock

Robin Slomka

### Cantor Fund

From: Lynne Edmondson

In Memory of BJ Brigadier.

### Outdoor Lighting Fund

In Memory of Gertrude & Perry Schlein

From their daughters, Natha Hancock  
and Robin Slomka, and their families

### THANKS

A special "Thank You" to Steve Duncheske, who just donated to the Synagogue Library 1) A full set of the Soncino Books of The Bible, 2) A set of 5 books of the Zohar, 3) A full set of the Babylonia Talmud, all in English for your reading enjoyment, 4) Several other biblical books. The donation is a wonderful addition to our reference library.

### BIBLICAL HEBREW FOR BEGINNERS

Atlanta resident Jim Dricker, a good friend of Rabbi Listfield, offers an on-line Biblical Hebrew class for beginners. You

will need the text books, which you can order in advance from the publisher. The next course begins on December 5. To register, email [jhdricker@gmail.com](mailto:jhdricker@gmail.com). Below is a short description of the class followed by a more detailed announcement from Jim Dricker:

Learn Biblical Hebrew to translate the Tanach (Hebrew Bible) and the Siddur (Jewish prayer book). This is a slow-paced class designed specifically for adults who lead busy lives.

This class, its textbook, plus 15 minutes a day 6 days a week for review and homework are all you'll need to make this happen.

I sent out the Zoom link for this class to all students who are registered as of today, as well as all students who are currently on my Biblical Hebrew mailing list. If you or anyone you know wants to be added to the class list, just let me know ([jhdricker@gmail.com](mailto:jhdricker@gmail.com)) and I'll forward the link to them.

I will make a video recording of each class as it meets, and I'll send it out to the students on this mailing list in case you can't attend the live class when it occurs.

I'm excited about restarting this course sequence for all new or returning students. Feel free to email me directly if you have any questions.

Jim Dricker

### ANNOUNCEMENT OF CLASS

The next course of Biblical Hebrew for Beginners will begin on Tuesday, 5

December, 2023 at 7:30 – 8:45PM  
Eastern Time.

It will continue to meet weekly in this time slot (except for occasional holidays, vacations, or travel days) throughout the next couple of years. This is a course that will equip students with the skills and knowledge to begin to translate Biblical Hebrew passages. It is not a course in conversational Modern Hebrew.

**Prerequisites:** Students must be able to sound out Hebrew words. They must also have a reliable internet connection and a device (desktop computer, laptop, tablet, smartphone, etc.) that allows connecting to a live feed over Zoom.

**Cost:** I offer this course at no charge or expense to students. The Hebrew class is absolutely free except for the cost of materials.

**Location:** Wherever you might be. I teach this course over the internet using Zoom as my classroom.

This class is open to any adult with a sincere desire to learn to translate Biblical Hebrew, regardless of religious identity, affiliation, or lack thereof.

**Textbooks:** (1) **The First Hebrew Primer** Third Edition Revised with New Explanatory Notes, by Simon, Resnikoff and Motzkin, EKS Publishing Company. (2) **Answer Book** for The First Hebrew Primer Third Edition, EKS Publishing Company.

You should be able to purchase both books directly for the publisher at [ekspublishing.com](http://ekspublishing.com).

Is there homework? Yes. 15 minutes a day, six days a week should be sufficient to keep up with the class. If you can find more time, all the better. But this is the minimum expectation. Why not an hour and a half a week? I'll explain the difference in the first class.

Jim Dricker

### UPCOMING EVENTS

Dec 01 7:30 PM, Erev Shabbat service  
Dec 7-10 Hanukkah  
Dec 08 Children's Shabbat Service at 7 PM  
Dec 10 Latke Party, Noon for Bingo, 1 PM for Latke Lunch, \$9 (children under 13 free)  
Dec 15 7:30 PM, Erev Shabbat service  
Dec 16 Shabbat morning service at 9:45 AM  
Dec 17 NACHaS Winter Break  
Dec 22 7:30 PM, Erev Shabbat service  
Dec 24 NACHaS Winter Break  
Dec 29 7:30 PM, Erev Shabbat service  
Dec 31 NACHaS Winter Break

### BIRTHDAYS

Dec 04 Joe Paddock  
Dec 06 Gabi Lapidus  
Dec 12 Nicole Sacks Dillard  
Dec 13 Joe Roberts  
Dec 13 Martin Freeman  
Dec 16 Sue Paddock  
Dec 21 Eric Bram  
Dec 23 Sarah Shepard  
Dec 27 Kaitlin Polin  
Dec 30 Tia Smith  
Dec 31 Joshua Dixon

## ANNIVERSARIES

Dec 23 Dorothy & Bill Goldberg

## ONEGS

Dec 01 Stora  
Dec 08 Lapidus  
Dec 15 Levitt  
Dec 22 Feigenblatt  
Dec 29 Edmondson

## Yahrzeits\*\*

Nov 25	12 Kislev	Margareta Bernstein*
Nov 25	12 Kislev	Helene Kamisher*
Nov 25	12 Kislev	Beatrice Kolchin*
Nov 26	13 Kislev	Gertrude S. Goldberger
Nov 30	17 Kislev	Irving Weinberger*
Dec 01	18 Kislev	Lily Yedid
Dec 07	24 Kislev	Charlie J. Fisher*
Dec 08	25 Kislev	Margaret Albin
Dec 10	27 Kislev	Moe Post
Dec 11	28 Kislev	David Amiel Wertheim*
Dec 11	28 Kislev	Morris Freeman
Dec 12	29 Kislev	Rita Goldstein*
Dec 13	01 Tevet	Meyer Rodkin*
Dec 13	01 Tevet	Murray Golub
Dec 14	02 Tevet	Dr. David Sidel
Dec 16	04 Tevet	Freida Makower*
Dec 18	06 Tevet	Estelle Okeon
Dec 20	08 Tevet	Daniel "Danny" Polin*
Dec 21	09 Tevet	Florence Goldstein*
Dec 21	09 Tevet	Rose Kahn*
Dec 21	09 Tevet	Sylvia Listfield
Dec 24	12 Tevet	Gilbert Brodtkin
Dec 24	12 Tevet	Louie Herbin*
Dec 24	12 Tevet	Bea Smolker*
Dec 26	14 Tevet	Betty K. Greenberg
Dec 28	16 Tevet	Bertha P. Smolker*
Dec 28	16 Tevet	Walter Delengowski
Dec 29	17 Tevet	Joseph Cohen*
Dec 30	18 Tevet	Howard S. McCall
Dec 30	18 Tevet	Julius Malcom Lindy, Jr.
Dec 31	19 Tevet	Bruce Irwin Roberts*
Jan 01	20 Tevet	Abigail Michaela Sawyer*
Jan 04	23 Tevet	Anna Rodkin*

Jan 06 25 Tevet Martin Klazmer  
**\*\*Light Memorial candle sunset of previous evening**

## CHANUKAH: THE WAY WE WERE

By Ted Roberts, (1930-2020), the  
*Scribbler on the Roof*



Wow, has Chanukah changed! In my day it was a thrifty, little holiday wherein kids received a few coins on each of the eight days. A thin, silver dime was a pleasant surprise on the first night of the Holiday.

In my time - and we're talking the forties - Chanukah meant only a dime - maybe a quarter if you were a world-class kid. It also meant potato latkes, naturally; and a visit to grandparents and aunts.

We kids lined up in front of Great Aunt Dora - the mother of all grandmothers. The line ended at a deep armchair that Aunt Dora filled up nicely. She was old and large. And she smelled like her kitchen, whose walls were impregnated with sixty years of onion odors. When your parents pushed you into Aunt Dora's arms, you knew right away she was an Olympic fryer of onions. And when you kissed her, you couldn't help thinking that she probably loved cold goose grease smeared on pumpernickel.

But on Chanukah it was worth it because after the oniony hug, she pressed a coin into your little hand. She gazed steadily into your eyes and with her hands on yours, folded your finger around a dime? A quarter? A half dollar? Who knew?

The protocol of the event called for you to answer her steady gaze with your own and not immediately examine your gift. That was greedy. The bag beside her was full of coins - from nickels to silver dollars. Maybe, I thought, she rewarded the best huggers and kissers with silver dollars. And the shrinkers who only offered a light squeeze - trying to avoid all those onion fumes - earned only nickels. I was usually strong enough to squeeze a quarter out of the ordeal. My cousin, Arlene - a wily charmer who was manipulative enough to visit Aunt Dora a week BEFORE Chanukah - always scored with a shiny silver dollar.

Besides visits to Aunt Dora, coins, and potato cakes, the holiday featured frequent re-telling of the feats of the Maccabee brothers, the leaders of the ragged Jewish army that ambushed the Syrian hordes of Antiochus in Judea's mountain passes. It was a glorious victory. It was one of our few victories. The year, remember, was early forties, pre-Israel. Jewish victories were as rare as those of the Washington Senators on the baseball field. In fact, as far as we kids understood history, the last time a Jewish army had won a war was the face-off with the Canaanites. And we didn't get full credit for that because the Almighty, with "outstretched arm and mighty hand", marched at our side.

Besides, we heard our parents discussing the news out of Germany and Poland. More humiliation. Chanukah reminded us that at least once, the Jewish team won a pennant. And Hank Greenberg's heroic feats with the Detroit Tigers confirmed that Jews could be athletes as well as accountants, physicists, and novelists;

professions we considered inferior to that of first baseman for the Detroit Tigers.

So once a year we kissed Aunt Dora and feasted on applesauce-smothered potato cakes - or latkes as we called 'em.

In the living room, the adults talked about business, family, and Aunt Dora's ailments as they listened to the music of frying latkes coming from the kitchen. My cousin, Arlene, used to desert our games and sit and listen at Aunt Dora's knee. Thinking all the while of next year, I'm sure.

Then, we all sat around the dining room table and dug into mounds of latkes. Aunt Dora- due to her age and silver dollars - always went first. My cousin, Arlene, usually cut up her potato cakes for her. I know what was on her mind. She was already planning on next year's reward from Aunt Dora.