



The Shofar

Jan - Feb, 2023

Congregation House of Israel

8 Tevet - 7 Adar, 5783



Happy Tu B'Shvat

February 6, 2023

(See the Tu B'shvat article by Sherrill Nicolosi on page 2)

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Tu B'Shvat

By Sherrill Nicolosi

It's the New Year-the secular one, that is- which means that Tu B'Shvat is right round the corner. Tu B'Shvat, which translates to the fifteenth of Shvat, typically falls early in the month of February. This year, 2023, it falls on February 6.

While considered by Jews to be a minor holiday, it has grown in importance in modern times, since the formal Statehood of Israel.

The Talmud refers to Tu B'Shvat as the "New Year of the Trees". It is the beginning of the season when trees in Israel begin to bud, after the winter rains have ended, and as Spring has "sprung". Celebrations include eating special fruit platters, sometimes including fifteen varieties, symbolic of the fifteenth of Shvat, and

enjoying carob, native to the Middle East, which has become the symbolic fruit of Tu B'Shvat. Singing songs, planting seeds, and donating money towards the reforestation of Israel, have become ways the festival of Tu B'Shvat is now celebrated.

Many Jews celebrate Tu B'Shvat with a Seder, which includes the five fruits connected with Israel: grapes, pomegranates, figs, olives, and dates. The holiday has grown in recognition in Israel, and among Jews worldwide, giving it the nickname of Jewish Arbor Day.

Tu B'Shvat is one more way of embracing our Jewish roots, and enjoying some traditions while putting our own individual spin on new ones.

Reb Shelly's Desk



Once the fall holidays come to a close, I find myself pondering: What is it that makes House of Israel a congregation? Sure, we all came out to observe the High Holy Days together. Many of us remained beyond Yom Kippur to celebrate in our brand new Sukkah (thank you, Reaglers),

and let's not forget our wonderful Sisterhood Hanukkah party. We experienced a wonderful sense of *ruach* and camaraderie during these times. Nevertheless, I wonder, what keeps us linked together as a congregation the rest of the year?

Elie Wiesel once asked: "What does it mean to be a congregation? It means to care about each other. Pray? We can pray at home. We come together as a congregation in order to share in each other's lives and in order to share in the life of the Jewish people — past, present and future."

Once the Gerer Rebbe, decided to question one of his disciples: 'How is Moshe Yaakov doing?' The disciple didn't know. 'What!' shouted the Rebbe, 'You don't know? You pray under the same roof?' You study the same book? You serve the same God? — yet you tell me that you don't know how Moshe Yaakov is, whether he needs help or advice or comforting? How can that be?

Here lies the essence of our way of life: every person has to share in every other person's life, and not leave anyone to themselves. Not in sorrow and not in joy.

When you visit someone in the hospital, you often learn that besides the family, you were the only one to have visited them during their illness. This should not be. Maybe it is because many people find it difficult to get intertwined with someone else's *tzuris*, or we just don't know the right words to say, but I usually find that just being there is the greatest help of all. As the rabbis teach us, when you visit someone who is ill, you take away 1/60th of their illness.

In reality, it is the duty of all Jews to perform such *mitzvot*. This isn't just a "service" that we join a synagogue in order to receive, rather it should be a natural expression of being a part of a caring community and sharing concern for one another. No one person can adequately fulfill this task alone,

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but as a congregation we can work to make sure that nobody is ignored in their time of need.

God willing, with your involvement, your concern for one another, and your support, together we can make CHI into just that kind of congregation.

Amen.

A Girl Named Joseph

By Rabbi Josh Weinberg

Was Joseph, the son of Jacob, transgender? Of course, the text doesn't necessarily say that, but a number of midrashim hint at the possibility. Nurit Zarchi, an Israeli author and poet, in her intense and beautiful poem "And She Is Joseph" not only allows for the possibility of such a thing but actively suggests it. She waxes lyrical about Rachel tucking in the curls of her "daughter" to appear as though she was the beloved son Jacob wished for from his most cherished wife. Zarchi, and her poem, came under fire from the incoming Deputy Minister of Jewish Identity Avi Maoz, who lambasted the educational system for wildly distorting the holy and profaning the sacred by teaching such things as part of the public school's TaNaKh curriculum. This, of course, is not true. The poem is only one of many suggested texts for literature studies and specifically not Bible. But that is of no concern to Maoz, whose almost singular focus is on combatting the "evils" (as he sees it) of gender fluidity and non-heterosexual identity.

Maoz's war on identity has upped the ante of the fierce expression of identity politics in Israel. A transition from a "politics of ideas" to a "politics of identity" is, perhaps, the major change that Israeli society has experienced in recent years. Sociologists, historians, political scientists, cultural critics, journalists, political commentators, and public intellectuals all offer interpretations of this shift. When exactly did this change occur? Was it the result of a single dramatic event or an inevitable by-product of the long and painful process of building a new society? Could this shift be a natural manifestation of an identity crisis that Israel is undergoing 75 years after its establishment?

This week we read the story of Joseph, and we will celebrate Hanukkah, the essence of which is inherently about identity. Some see Hanukkah as being about the preservation of Jewish identity. We might argue that one's focus on particular aspects of the holiday tells a lot about one's identity. And so we ask – What exactly do we celebrate on Hanukkah and what can we glean about ourselves when we do so?

Is it the Maccabees' and/or God's military victory

over the Assyrians? Is it a spiritual victory of Judaism over Hellenism? Is it the miracle in which one small jar of oil gave light in the Temple for eight days? Is it a holiday celebrating the victory of the Jewish people against religious oppression?

It's important to recognize that we live in a post-binary reality that reaches beyond the framework of past dichotomies. To draw lines between what was Jewish and what was Hellenistic more than two millennia ago might not be a particularly relevant question for today's North American Jews. The modern era eschews such dichotomies in favor of a multi-identity reality. A modern Jew holds multiple identities, and multiple loyalties, and is a traveler in an open marketplace of ideas in search of new synergies and meanings.

For decades past generations warned about assimilation and the shedding of one's core identity. In the "old country" one could be Polish or Jewish. Growing up there were many youth group moments in which we agonized over the semantics of being an American-Jew vs. a Jewish-American. One's answer highlighted and emphasized one's priorities and level of assimilation versus dedication to the Jewish people.

For an increasing number of Jews in North America today, Jewish identity feels like a liability. Many college students hide external symbols of Jewishness for fear of antisemitism. Many choose to disassociate with establishment Jewish life from fear of guilt by association with the extreme right-wing policies of the Israeli government.

This is the challenge facing many liberal and progressive Zionists. If I were to wear a t-shirt with an Israeli flag on it around campus, people might assume that I support right-wing ultranationalist politics. The same could be said for one who flies a large American flag outside their house. It is unlikely for a passerby to see the flag and conclude that

"that family, by flying their American flag, must be a staunch first amendment advocate who values freedom of speech. They must work tirelessly for voter advocacy, and the protection of minority rights as citizens of a liberal democracy in which freedom and tolerance are core values."

So it is with Hanukkah. In addition to the mitzvah of lighting candles on Hanukkah, the rabbis explained that we do so for the purpose of "*Pirsumei Nisa*" – to publicize the miracle. We are meant to place the Hanukkiyah where it will be

Continued on page 6

Sisterhood

Sisterhood Hanukkah Party 2022



Our Sisterhood Hanukkah party this year was a wonderful success, well attended and truly delightful.

Our sincerest thanks to all the people who brought, cooked, set-up and helped prepare for this event.

And our thanks, also, to Barbara Morgan and

Hannah Reagler for taking the photos that we were able to display.

*Photos: Top L: David and Glenda Kirsch
Bottom L: Shelly Kleinman
Top R: Hannah Reagler
Bottom R: Betty Feir
Center Top and Bottom: Great food tables*

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One might be concerned about a different halakhic concept known as *or mar'it-ayin*. This refers to actions that are fully permissible but because they might seem to observers to be in violation of Jewish law are prohibited to prevent passersby from arriving at a false conclusion.

For the Zionist Movement, there was no larger and more important symbol of the Jewish people's national resurgence than the Maccabees. They demonstrated devotion to their cause, fought against assimilation, preserved their identity, and showed physical strength and military prowess. Judah Maccabee became a folk hero and the term "Maccabee" became not only the name of Israeli sports teams but also Israel's HMO health clinic.

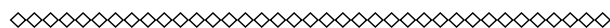
The ill-fated reputation of the Hasmoneans led to the holiday of Hanukkah being ignored within decades of its establishment until a new narrative of hope was created and disseminated including the story of a miracle of oil lasting eight days.

Sound familiar?

One could easily connect the story of Hanukkah to the modern State of Israel founded by those who believed in the right for Jewish self-determination and the survival of our people against all odds, a true testimony to the power of the meager over the mighty.

I fear that Jews outside Israel will reject the mitzvah of *pirsumei nisa* for fear of *marit ayin*. Lighting a Hanukkiyah on Sunday night ought to say: “our candles are here to spread light and joy in places of darkness, and we reject the Hasmonean dynasty’s history of aggression and belligerence.”

This year let the purpose of our lighting the Hanukkah candles be a celebration of the miracle of yesteryear and a commitment to maintaining Jewish identity as an essential part of my being.



The Shofar

January Yahrzeits

Kaddish Recited January 6

David Wigderson

Father of Sue Koppel

Sam Karnofsky

Great Uncle of David D. Reagler

Great Uncle of Rachel Schulman

Mona Goltz

Grandfather of Diane Goltz

Grandfather of Susan Siegel

Kaddish Recited January 13

Jason Kandel

Cousin of Mary Klompus

Harry Sedler

Father of Ross Sedler

Joanne Reagler

Mother of David D. Reagler

Mother of Rachel Schulman

Martin Fleischer

Father of Mark Fleischer

Father of Stuart Fleischer

Pearcy Crem

Great Uncle of Rachel Schulman

Great Uncle of David D. Reagler

David Reagler

Father of David D. Reagler

Father of Rachel Schulman

Kaddish Recited January 20

Dorothy Savel

Grandmother of David Cohen

Eric B. Wolken

Brother of Brad Wolken

Ida Cooper Ruskin

Mother of Phyllis Hearn

Pauline Brown

Aunt of Betty Forshberg

Ella Robins

Grandmother of Betty Feir

Lois Ginsburg

Mother of Millie Baron

Norma Mendel

Wife of Lenny Mendel

Kaddish Recited January 27

Walter Kleinman

Father-in-law of Betty Kleinman

Fanny Fielschmidt

Grandmother of Fred Korngut

Willisam Holtzman

Father-in-law of Fred Korngut

Paul Forshberg

Husband of Betty Forshberg

Caroline Suhl

Grandmother of Michael Waxler

George Z. Ginsburg

Grandfather of Millie Baron

Leslie Leviton

Uncle of David D. Reagler

Uncle of Rachel Schulman

Sarah S. Levine

Grandmother of Cynthia Rephan

Helena Peterson

Mother of Cheryl Cohen

February Yahrzeits

Kaddish Recited Februry 3

Lewis Goltz

Father of Diane Goltz

Father of Susan Siegel

Harriett Korgut

Wife of Fred Korngut

Milan Mendel

Step father of Lenny Mendel

Robert Burns

Step father of Glenda Kirsch

Kaddish Recited February 10

Eric Ross

Father of Elaine Wolken

Julia Levine Bauman

Mother of Cynthai Rephan

Rose Ginsburg

Grandmother of Millie Baron

Kaddish Recited February 17

Max Singeer

Father in Law of Lenny Mendel

William Boswell

Father of Anita Williams

Anni Hannah Grenman

Mother of Oded Grenman

Kaddish Recited February 24

David Stafin

Father of Myrna Taxed

Pinhas Grenman

Father of Oded Grenman

Sandy Carrington

Daughter of or Betty Forshherb

Stella Weisman

Grandmother of Larry Levi

Refuah Shelemah

The following people are in our thoughts and prayers for healing. Please offer prayers that they have a full and complete recovery.:

- Ken Baim
- Sam Banks
- Kathy Bracke
- Mitch Boley
- Camy Crank
- Hy Fishman
- Oded Grenman
- Carol Kleinman
- Mindy Lingo
- Pat McCarthy
- Steve Story
- Misty Stricklin
- Steven West
- Dennis Williams
- Anita Williams

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Anniversaries

Hal and Sue Koppel	Jan 12
Lori and Randy Lewis	Feb 6

Birthdays

Carol Levi	Jan 5
Ross Sedler	Jan 8
Kay Fleischner	Jan 27
Lori Lewis	Jan 28
Ken Baim	Feb 1
Louis Reagler	Feb 2
Tillie Reagler	Feb 2
Diane Goltz	Feb 12
David D. Reagler	Feb 18

January Parshiyot

Vayichee

January 7

Jacob desires to reveal the end of days to his children, but is prevented from doing so. Jacob blesses his 12 sons, assigning to each his role as a tribe: Judah will produce leaders, legislators and kings; priests will come from Levi, scholars from Issachar, seafarers from Zebulun, schoolteachers from Shimon, soldiers from Gad, judges from Dan, olive growers from Asher, and so on. Reuben is rebuked for “confusing his father’s marriage”; Shimon and Levi for the massacre of Shechem and the plot against Joseph. Naphtali is granted the swiftness of a deer, Benjamin the ferociousness of a wolf, and Joseph is blessed with beauty and fertility.

Shmot

January 14

The Children of Israel multiply in Egypt. Threatened by their growing numbers, Pharaoh enslaves them and orders the Hebrew midwives, Shifrah and Puah, to kill all male babies at birth. When they do not comply, he commands his people to cast the Hebrew babies into the Nile.

A child is born to Jocheved, the daughter of Levi, and her husband, Amram, and placed in a basket on the river, while the baby’s sister, Miriam, stands watch from afar. Pharaoh’s daughter discovers the boy, raises him as her son, and names him Moses.

G-d appears to Moses in a burning bush at the foot of Mount Sinai and instructs him to go to Pharaoh and demand: “Let My people go, so that they may serve Me.” Moses’ brother, Aaron, is appointed to serve as his spokesman.

Vaera

January 21

G-d reveals Himself to Moses. He promises to take out the Children of Israel from Egypt, deliver them from their enslavement, redeem them and acquire them as His own chosen people at Mount Sinai; He will then bring them to the Land He promised to the Patriarchs as their eternal heritage.

Moses and Aaron repeatedly come before Pharaoh to demand “Let My people go.” Pharaoh repeatedly refuses. G-d then sends a series of plagues upon the Egyptians.



The waters of the Nile turn to blood; swarms of frogs overrun the land; lice infest all men and beasts. Hordes of wild animals invade the cities, a pestilence kills the domestic animals, painful boils afflict the Egyptians. For the seventh plague, fire and ice combine to descend from the skies as a devastating hail.

Bo

January 28

The last three of the Ten Plagues are visited on Egypt: a swarm of

locusts devours all the crops and greenery; a thick, palpable darkness envelops the land; and all the firstborn of Egypt are killed at the stroke of midnight of the 15th of the month of Nisan. The death of the firstborn finally breaks Pharaoh’s resistance and he literally drives the Children of Israel from his land. Before they go, they ask their Egyptian neighbors for gold, silver and garments, draining Egypt of its wealth.

The Children of Israel are commanded to observe the anniversary of the Exodus each year by removing all leaven from their possession for seven days, eating matzah, and telling the story of their redemption to their children.

February Parshiyot

Beshalach

February 4

Soon after allowing the Children of Israel to depart from Egypt, Pharaoh chases after them to force their return, and the Israelites find themselves trapped between Pharaoh's armies and the sea. G-d tells Moses to raise his staff over the water; the sea splits to allow the Israelites to pass through, and then closes over the pursuing Egyptians.

In the desert, the people suffer thirst and hunger and repeatedly complain to Moses and Aaron. G-d miraculously sweetens the bitter waters of Marah, and later has Moses bring forth water from a rock by striking it with his staff; He causes manna to rain down from the heavens before dawn each morning, and quails to appear in the Israelite camp each evening.

Yitro

February 11

Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, hears of the great miracles which G-d performed for the people of Israel, and comes from Midian to the Israelite camp, bringing with him Moses' wife and two sons. Jethro advises Moses to appoint a hierarchy of magistrates and judges to assist him in the task of governing and administering justice to the people.

On the sixth day of the third month (Sivan), seven weeks after the Exodus, the entire nation of Israel assembles at the foot of Mount Sinai. G-d descends on the mountain amidst thunder, lightning, billows of smoke and the blast of the shofar, and summons Moses to ascend.

G-d proclaims the Ten Commandments, commanding the people of Israel to believe in G-d, not to worship idols or take G-d's name in vain, to keep the Shabbat, honor their parents, and not to murder, not to commit adultery, not to steal, not to

bear false witness or covet another's property.

The people cry out to Moses that the revelation is too intense for them to bear, begging him to receive the Torah from G-d and convey it to them.

Mishpatim

February 18

Following the revelation at Sinai, G-d legislates a series of laws for the people of Israel. These include the laws of the indentured servant; the penalties for murder, kidnapping, assault, and theft; civil laws pertaining to redress of damages, the granting of loans, and the responsibilities of the "Four Guardians"; and the rules governing the conduct of justice by courts of law.

Altogether, the Parshah of Mishpatim contains fifty-three mitzvot -- 23 imperative commandments and 30 prohibitions.

G-d promises to bring the people of Israel to the Holy Land, and warns them against assuming the pagan ways of its current inhabitants.

Terumah

February 25

On the summit of Mount Sinai, Moses is given detailed instructions on how to construct a dwelling for G-d so that it could be readily dismantled, transported and reassembled as the people journeyed in the desert.

In the Sanctuary's inner chamber was the Ark containing the Tablets of Testimony engraved with the Ten Commandments; on the Ark's cover stood two winged cherubim hammered out of pure gold. In the outer chamber stood the seven-branched Menorah and the Table upon which the "showbread" was arranged.

